

of the committee of the "Spanish Christian Church" have taken exception to the above statement,—“He who leaves the ‘one fold’ in Spain has ‘no place to flee unto, and no man cares for *his* soul.’ In his reading, in his thought, in his hope, in his prayer, in his belief, *for him* there is simple, sheer, utter loneliness: it is ‘*chacun pour soi*’ in everything.”

The writer of the statement complained of here begs to assure the members of the "Spanish Christian Church" that he intended neither to disparage nor to ignore their generous and devoted efforts to spread evangelical truth. Before writing his remarks, he had not only made himself acquainted with parts of their good work, but he had also attended some of their places of worship, and joined in the services there performed with sincere gratification.

His reason for not mentioning their labours is simply this—that the centres of Protestant Church life and work are so few and far between, that they can hardly be considered as havens for the majority of the Spaniards who have broken with their old faith. What, the writer would ask, is one room set aside for service in one of the largest towns of Spain?

But to the self-devotion and earnestness of many of the members of the "Spanish Christian Church" the writer is happy here to bear warm and favourable testimony; and especially he would speak of their success as regards *schools* for the children.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## MURILLO'S HOUSE AT SEVILLA.

I HAVE often thought that the religious influence of natural or artificial beauty upon the heart and mind of man is greatly underrated, and, indeed, almost lost sight of. What I intend to convey by this statement is this, that the beauty or grandeur of nature spread around us is, by the Great Artist of Nature—next to prayer and earthly love, given and received, whereby chiefly we realize what Divine love must be—meant to be looked upon and used as one Divine means of elevating and refining man's heart and soul.

Take a man who from his childhood has been brought up in the narrow, noisy streets or back slums of some huge smoky city,—who has been insensibly lowered in character, hopes, and aspirations, year by year,—whose ears have long been accustomed to the squalling of dirty children and the indecent song,—whose one luxury has been the comfortless bench in the blazing gin-shop at the corner of his street ; take such a one, who has been, to a certain extent, supported by some secret visitations of that spirit which, like the wind of heaven, “bloweth where it listeth,” and let him walk on a soft, bright, English summer eve through and amongst the peaceful, lovely parterres of an English garden,—let him smell the sweet, chaste perfume of the rose,—let him sit and meditate upon the soft, wide-spreading lawn ; take

him to the greenhouse, with its excelling wealth of tropic flowers; let him here "see the works of the Lord" in all their beauty, fresh from the Creator's hand,—would not he, for a while at least, be raised to despise his former pleasures, to dream of things, and of knowledge, and of beauty too wonderful for him?—would he not be half constrained to become a new creature? I think he would. Very beautifully has our English country poet said,

"God made the country, and *man* made the town;"

and a well-known preacher of our day has embodied the same idea in his usual terse and graphic language, where he says, "The question of an innocent child, *or the smell of a spring flower,*" may be the means of awakening the slumbering heart and conscience of a careless man.

Let one who is simply immersed *in self*; who never looks above or beyond his own low, cunning, petty schemes; whose soul is dead to all that is grand and noble in life; or one who is conceited and proud, or one who glories in his own strength, and thinks that he is the great one of the earth in physical power,—let such a one wander down, on a wild stormy night, when all is blackness and darkness, and the winds hold fiercest revel, to the very edge of some bleak, lonely rock,—let him see and hear nothing but the white seething waters breaking in snow upon the reef, the roar of the retreating surge, and the distant thunder of the gun of some vessel labouring heavily and in distress; or let him stagger on deck in some fierce tropic storm, and see nothing but waves rolling mountains high, the dark clouds drifting across the sky, hear no sound but the wind howling through

the creaking rigging,—will not such a scene of wild, desolate grandeur, when the soul is brought, as it were, face to face with its God, have power to elevate and raise the soul above its own littleness and pride, and teach the great lesson “that man is nothing, and God all in all,” better than any other teacher?

Why has the sailor's name become a proverb among us to denote a certain bluff, blind superiority to all that is little, mean, and petty? Is it not because the wild scenery of coast and headland, of blinding spray, and rolling wave, is the tutor to his soul, and makes him partaker in part of its own grandeur of character?

Who, again, has not felt the effect of an English autumn landscape upon his own heart and mind? to walk, with tired, homeward-hastening feet, through wood and avenue, while the grass is growing dewy and dank under foot, when nothing is heard but the tinkling of the sheep-bell on the wold, and the hoarse cackling of the pheasant, scared from his roost, overhead, and the bark of the sheep-dog in some lonely farm, and the rustling red leaves, telling of change and decay, driven across the path,—to walk through such a homely scene often fills the mind with, to use a common phrase, “thoughts of better things”—holy, gentle, truthful, anxious thoughts, yet thoughts of peace and hope.

Every season, with its changing scenes, seems to me to awaken, if it be allowed to awaken, a different train of thought, and to have its distinct influence upon a man's heart. Whose heart has not bounded to see the green fields, and hear the bleat of the newborn lamb, and smell the first cowslip of spring-time?

Every different aspect of scenery seems to me also to have a different effect upon the mind. How many

a real prayer—not for earthly blessings, but, like all *truest* prayer, for spiritual blessings, to be made wise, and true, and good—has been prompted by the very natural surroundings of the spot where the long line of surf beats and breaks upon the desolate shore at the shades of eve—who has not felt it?

*Could* one have an impure thought as he wanders around his garden, with its peaceful flowers dripping with chaste dews of night, at *early morning*, and listens to the “sweep of scythes in morning dew?”

*Could* one be proud of his own mental, intellectual power, as he looks up on some keen, wintry night through the frosted, naked foliage at the heavens, studded with their myriad stars? Does not the very contemplation of them lead one to “look through Nature up to Nature’s God,” and say within one’s own heart, “How great is He whose hand made all these things; lo! heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him”?

*Could* one be faithless, and presumptuous, and boastful of his own strength who wanders amongst the colossal shattered rocks and mountain-passes of Ronda, the Styrian Highlands, or the Tyrol?

There are those, of course, on whom all these things have but *little* influence, there are those on whom they have long ceased to have *any*; but that they *may* have, and constantly *do* have, a really blessed effect upon man’s heart and soul, no one who thinks will deny.

There was much rough, stern truth in a father, who, speaking of a young man who had unhappily embraced the tenets of utter, blank Atheism said,—“Take him out for a voyage to New Zealand in a good clipper, and *let him see a storm at sea* ;” much

truth in the dictum of a poor Sussex peasant, who, returning from tending his flock on the short, thymy sward of the South Downs, on a lovely summer's eve, said,—“One ought not to feel quarrelsome when the Lord has made all so peaceful;” much truth in the words, on the other hand, of a poor costermonger on a Spanish wharf, who, when the bargaining and haggling began at five o'clock on a dark, wintry morning, ere the sun had risen on its hungry, eager crowds, and while the first rush was being made to the early “coffee and aguardiente shop,” said,—“*It is very hard to be religious if you have to get your bread here.*”

And if the beauty, or grandeur, or loneliness, or peacefulness of Nature have a certain power and influence on the mind of man, and beget in it similar feelings—throw, as it were, a tinge of their own hue over it, so surely does the beauty or grandeur of Art exercise upon it an influence corresponding in kind although not in degree.

It is for this reason, and not only for their intrinsic beauty, that we cherish and love so well, and prize so highly, the works of the great masters of painting, or poetry, or sculpture; because their contemplation has a directly beneficial effect upon the heart and soul, and is, as it were, as a handmaid for other more directly religious influences; and it is for this reason that many good and thoughtful men would desire to see the museum or the garden, each with its soul-elevating store of artificial or natural grandeur or beauty, opened to the working-classes on the Sunday. True, it is matter for regret that the opening of these places necessitates *hard work* on the part of a few on that day which should be a “day of rest;” but look-

ing out into this strange, confused world of ours, is it not the *rule of life*, from the day when One suffered for all on Calvary, that *the one* should suffer for the good of the many?

I will not, in speaking of the effect upon the mind and heart of a peaceful contemplation of works of art—beauty, particularize much; but who can look on that exquisite copy of a great painting (now so common in Spain that the poor buy it for twopence-halfpenny) “*El Divino Rostro*,” with the simple words under it,—

“ See *what I* suffered for *thee* :  
Say, what wilt *thou* suffer for Me? ”—

the Divine head of our blessed Lord, crowned with thorns; the drops of sweat, as it were blood, falling down; the exceeding intense agony and earnestness of that face,—who, I say, can look on that without feeling some response within him to the Divine question? I mention this instance—not even knowing of *which* of the great masterpieces it is a copy—simply because, during the months of my sojourn, it has taken such a hold on the heart and mind of religious Spain.

Who, again, can look at the marvellous, the heavenly pensive sweetness of the “*Virgin and Child*” of Alonso Cano, in Seville Cathedral, without feeling that there may be an exceeding sweetness, peacefulness, truthfulness, steadfastness, and purity, written in a woman’s face—written so clearly and so indicative of character, as to remind one that human nature, although lower, need only be “a little lower” than the angels?

How many chords—to come to simpler and more

homely themes—have been awakened in how many thousand hearts by that picture of O'Neil's 'Eastward Ho,' that hung but a few years since on the walls of the Royal Academy in London.

The "Good Shepherd" bearing home the sheep that was lost, or extricating it from the thicket, the "Last Judgment," the many *Matres Dolorosæ*, or that most striking illustration of "Neither do I condemn thee"—all these and hundreds of others, which have exercised, and still exercise, a really blessed and elevating silent influence upon human nature, I pass over, merely asking those who read these pages to give a fair trial to two much overlooked means of grace, the contemplation of works of natural and artificial beauty or grandeur. True, they will never heal a broken heart or wash a sin-stained conscience, but, as handmaids of religion, they are blessed agents to elevate, and cheer, and charm.

Who, among painters, has done his work more nobly, or more skilfully, than the painter of Seville, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo?

It was a bright sunny evening in December, 1873, when, fresh from the contemplation of the fixed, dark, steadfast gaze of his "San Francisco receiving the Stigmata" (now in the Academia de Bellas Artes at Cadiz), and his exquisitely sweet "Angel de la Guarda," or Guardian Angel—one of his most intensely beautiful paintings in the cathedral of Seville, I bent my hasty steps toward the home of this great artist in Seville.

I passed through the narrow winding streets of the "Juderia," or Jewish quarter, now no longer restricted to the Jewish population. The sun hardly



ever looks upon these narrow paved paths with their tall houses seeming almost to meet overhead; but they were growing wet with the evening dews, which fall heavily in winter in this climate, partly making up for the lack of rain.

In a little street, called now "Plaza de Alfaro," or running out of that little square, is the great painter's simple house, with "No. 2" written over its lowly Spanish portals. A Spanish man-servant and a dark-eyed, good-natured Andalusian lassie were standing laughing and love-making at the door. I told them my errand, and the girl pointed lazily—and wondering evidently what on earth the English señor had come to see the house for—to a little marble tablet just inside the door, fixed in the wall, to the left hand as you enter.

Like the house itself and all the surroundings, it was most unpretending and unobtrusive. On it was the simple inscription—

"En esta casa fué ciertamente  
En la que murió  
el día 3 de April de 1682  
El insigne pintor Sevillano  
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo."

It is a plain, white-washed, modest Spanish house, consisting of a ground floor and two upper floors. The little street in which it stands is narrow; part of the house fronts another house, the rest overlooks a garden, with a high wall around it, making the look-out from the lower rooms still duller than would a house fronting it. Under the wall of this garden a few muleteers and gitanos, in picturesque and gaudy costumes, their bronzed-brown faces reminding one of

the truthfulness of the great painter's colouring, were watering their donkeys and mules.

I asked leave to go over the house, and asked where, in which room, Murillo painted. "Why, how *can I* tell," said the good-natured lassie, "in which room he painted. *Every one says* that he painted under the orange-trees in the old walled garden of the alcazar opposite; but come (*vamos!*) over the house." So we went. On either side of the tiny "hall," as you enter, is a narrow door, each day opening into a small, narrow, ill-lighted room, with floors of common red tiles, and a dark cupboard in each room, if my memory serves me in good stead.

My Andalusian lassie trundled up the narrow winding stairs—*so narrow, so dark*, only the width of five bricks placed lengthways, and with a little fronting of worn wood-work. On the first story the doors are still small, the rooms dark and narrow. They were inhabited by a Spanish family, and I did not more than step inside them.

To the top, or second story, the staircase is little better than a creaking wooden ladder; but at the top my guide showed me a little niche in the wall. "Here," she said, "used to be one of his paintings." All the rooms have floors of red brick or tile; all are narrow and dark. On the top story is the old kitchen, the only inhabitant of which was a black, white-breasted retriever puppy, who welcomed us with every noisy demonstration of delight, and evidently did not at all appreciate the honour of being a prisoner in Murillo's kitchen! The shambles or the fruit-market would have been more, I fear, to *his* liking!

The lassie, romping with her mute companion,

threw open a door, through which I crouched and squeezed, and we stood upon the roof—a tiny space, sloping down to the front, only five yards by three, looking straight down into the walled garden of the alcazar, a typical Spanish garden, with its gorgeous orange and lime trees, its rich irrigated plots of vegetables, its square regular beds, and neat ever-green borders.

Here, I thought, more likely than in the dark, narrow rooms, the great master wrought. The view was very beautiful. Spanish housetops, remember, are not like our smoky English housetops, fit only for sparrows, and smoke, and cats. Spanish cities are *smokeless, chimneyless*; no smuts fly about; and on Spanish housetops we can safely dry our white snowy linen.

The view was very beautiful—over the old garden, over the tops of snow-white houses, with flat, brown roofs; above was nothing but the cloudless blue sky, with the setting sun sinking below the distant sierra, in red and golden splendours, to his rest.

And then I passed out; the dark-eyed hoyden locked up her dog once more in the classic kitchen, only too glad to return to her chat and her love-making.

This, then, was the humble house of the great painter. Here lived, and here died in April, 1682, aged sixty-four, by an unlucky fall from the scaffold, as he was painting one of his grandest, or at least most elaborate paintings, the "Marriage of Santa Catalina," which has been taken from its home in the Convent of Los Capuchinos, in Cadiz, during the Revolution of the summer 1873, and placed in the Academia de Bellas Artes, in the same city. Here,

in this humble house, lived and died the one, perhaps, of *all* painters who excelled in *every* style that he undertook; the *frio*, or dark and sternly marked, as in his 'San Francisco receiving the Stigmata'; his earliest style, the *cálido*, defined outline, with warmer colour, as in his 'Adoration of the Shepherds,' in the Gallery at Madrid; and the *vaporoso*, or blending style, something akin to the style of our own Turner, of which, as an example, may be quoted his 'Martyrdom of San Andrea,' also in the Madrid Gallery. Here dwelt and died the painter of *the* 'Holy Family,' work full of peace and love; of more than one *exquisite* "Concepcion"; of 'La Virgen de los Dolores,' so full of mournful pathos; of 'San Juan con el Cordero,' full of fervour; of 'San Francisco embracing his Crucified Son.'

Here, in this humble home, he dwelt. Perhaps in the tiny plot of waste garden-ground, for such there is attached to the house, he tended his fruits or flowers; on these narrow streets, and on this self-same gorgeous sun, at any rate, his eye rested, day by day.

Strong men, so runs the adage, *make* circumstances; weak men are made by them. Truly Murillo was of the "strong"; his genius triumphed over all the sordidness of his house and its surroundings.

A few doors from the little house which "ciertamente" was that of Murillo, stands another, more pretentious, which claims the honour of having been the house in whose bright, quiet garden Murillo was wont to paint. The kindly señora, on my presenting my card and asking leave to enter the garden, at once sent her servant to conduct me thither. We passed through the courtyard of the house and into

the garden, which consisted of two small quadrangles, but, oh, so beautiful! Well might the great master exchange his dark, narrow rooms, and his tiny strip of sunny roof aloft, for the peacefulness and beauty of this quiet spot!

The orange-trees, crowded with green and yellow fruit, lent their shade, the lime-tree, with its larger fruit of sicklier hue, the fig-tree, with its broad, cool leaves, all grew in quiet profusion; hard by, sheltered by cypresses, was a tank, and a trickling, gurgling fountain of crystal water; the grape-vine climbed over a rustic trellis-work; the pimicento, or pepper-tree, the most graceful of Spanish trees—like to, but more graceful than, the English weeping-willow—lent also its shade. Two fountains, with their trickling waters, soothed the ear of those who sat and worked or read in this shady spot; magnolias, camellias, climbed the walls; the sweet lemon-verbena, the scented geranium, or “malvarosa” of the Spaniards, the heliotrope, the scarlet geranium, and the crimson and clove carnations, straggled over the trim box-hedges that enclosed their beds.

In the inner quadrangle, like the first, *very* small, an ancient mule, under the shade of a fig-tree, still more ancient, was slowly turning round the water-wheel, with its shining, dripping caskets of an old Moorish Noria; all around him, and overhead, the lime-tree and the orange-tree showed their bright yellow fruit to the setting sun. Truly, I thought to myself, here a painter might paint, a poet sing to the tune of the turning wheel and the gushing fountains, with the scent of exotic plants filling the balmy evening air.

A few doors from this house is an open, small, dusty

space, a barren oval, belted in by stunted acacia trees, with a solitary gas-lamp in its centre; it is called now "Plaza de Santa Cruz," Santa Cruz being the name of a tiny church which, in 1858, was pulled down here. On one of the walls (of a private house) fronting this little oval, is a marble tablet, with the inscription—

"Para perpetuar la memoria  
de que en el ambito de esta plaza  
hasta poco hace templo sagrado  
hastan depositadas las cenizas  
del celebre pintor Sevillano  
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo  
la Academia de Bellas Artes  
Acordó poner esta lapida.  
Modesto monumento, pero el primero  
Que se consagra a su illustre fundador  
1858."

And so, as the shades of eve drew on, I left the haunts of the great painter—the painter of truth and of *life* as *he* saw it, and as those in Andalusia see it at the present day.

Of Murillo's life I know nothing; but no scandalous or libellous report has ever, I believe, currently attached itself to his name, as it did for a period to that of another exceedingly beautiful painter, Alonso Cano, most falsely.

Murillo, however, neither *needs* nor claims any notice of his life; into his *works* he *threw* his life, and he lives in his works—works that have elevated and refined thousands of souls—and he cannot die; he needs no memorial stone, no tablet, no biography: as is the case with all the good and great, "his works do follow him"; and, perhaps, amid all his toils and labours to the last—for he died at the

age of sixty-four of a fall from a scaffold while painting one of his masterpieces—he looked forward to no reward for himself, but to the elevating and ennobling of others who should follow him, and could breathe that prayer so hard to be breathed by one living amid all the seduction of this present life, “Show Thy servants their *work*, and their *children* Thy *glory*.”

## CHAPTER XXIV.

NOCHE-BUENA ; OR, CHRISTMAS-EVE IN SPANISH WILDS.

“Esta noche es Noche-Buena,  
Y no es noche de dormir.”

So runs a favourite Spanish couplet, in every one's mouth at this season, on the subject of Christmas-Eve. The lines, literally translated, simply mean—“This night is the Good Night, and the Good Night is not the night for sleep.” The Noche-Buena, or, to speak in language more orthodox, La Noche de Navidad of the Spaniards, is our Christmas-Eve.

Many who read these pages will be interested to know how the Noche-Buena is observed in the interior of Spain, with the feast-days that follow in its wake : the Pascua, or Christmas-day ; the Feast of San Esteban, or St. Stephen's Day ; that of San Juan, or St. John's Day ; and that of Les Innocentes, our Innocents' Day. To one who passes his first Christmas in a foreign land, with strange voices and stranger sights and sounds, there is, at that festal season, a blank and a miss—a want of something. Do you ask me what it is that one misses ? It is the joyous peal of bells clashing out over frosty English fields, and bringing back—oh how many !—associations of the bright and blessed past ; of days of childish joy, and innocence, and simplicity, when a toy or a few sweetmeats at Christmas had power to



cheer and charm the simple mind of the child; of holidays, when the dull desks of the cold school-room were left behind, and one sat with father, mother, and sisters round the dear old English fire; or, later on in life, of one's country curacy when at Christmas-tide one had made glad many hearts with not much, but what is accepted by God and man alike "quod potuit tamen fecit," and one sat down to the hearty Christmas dinner with the rector or squire, and made one of their genial party. One misses one's homely English poor very greatly at Christmas time abroad, I find. But there are other blanks. The memory at Christmas time, more than at any other time, wanders back to the well-loved faces that used to wear a sweeter smile than than at any other time. One has gone, another has gone; many an arm-chair is empty; the place one called "home" is home no more; and there may be a loved one stretched on the couch of illness even now; "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not," so the full heart ponders, "and you will take Benjamin away." All these things made my first Christmas abroad a dull one. And then how an Englishman in the interior of Spain longs for a good roaring fire to sit beside; and we have no fires, nothing but little braziers of charcoal, in the interior. And then how he longs for a good Christmas carol, and a sight of the frosty faces of the carollers, and the joyous sounds of their rude music, and a good hearty Church Service in the old church, decked with holly and mistletoe, and the dark green ivy: all these the eye and the heart look and long for, and they look and long in vain. Yes, in the landscape, in the skyscape (to use a word newly coined), in the sounds of men and things around one, Spain is indeed different from