

But our list of remarkable buildings has already grown portentously long, and we must hasten past all the other typical or noteworthy places into which we would wander. There is Santa Maria del Pino, a worthy model of many of the city's churches, with its impressive single nave, and rich Gothic detail, its crypt of Santa Espina, its pictures by Viladomat, its strange Capilla de la Sangre, and its belfry-tower—cousin of Valencia's Miguelete. There is the little series—small but valuable—of the very earliest Romanesque, in the churches and cloisterings of San Pablo del Campo, and San Pedro de las Puellas. There is the thirteenth-century Colegiata de Santa Ana, spoiled indeed as to its interior, but still preserving its sweet and graceful cloister; and the Belén, imposing in size and proportion, and wonderfully rich in its marble lining. There are the old Renaissance houses in the Calles Moncada and Mercaders, some of them—notably the Casa Dalmasas—quite pictures in their way; and lastly, but worthier than all the rest, there is the great people's church of Santa Maria del Mar, of even more beautiful and characterful Catalan-Gothic than the cathedral itself, and quite glorious in its stained glass, and treasures of delicate tracery work.

Not the least interesting feature about a quiet investigation of these spots is the mass of quaint tradition and custom to be come upon here and there. In Santos Justo y Pastor, for example—perhaps the earliest Christian church in Barcelona—there is a little chapel

near the Capilla Mayor, on the Gospel side, before the altar of which the litigants in suits to be decided by single combat, took oath to employ none but fair means in the fight; where Jews were wont to be sworn upon the table of the Ten Commandments, and where, in the case of any one dying intestate, a disposition of his goods could be established by the making of a solemn declaration that such and such were the last wishes of the defunct. This last privilege still remains unabrogated, but will probably soon go the way of all other forms of pure good faith. There is Santa Maria del Pino, too, with its traditions about the Patrona being found close by, shut up in the trunk of a pine tree; or San Pedro de las Puellas (= maidens), where the nuns disfigured their faces, at the time of Almanzor's threatening of the city, to avoid being swept off into Moorish harems. These and other similar tales are poured out to one with a simple faith and goodness which quite put to shame a cold-hearted and unbelieving Northerner, and which, together with the popular attributing of special virtues to certain natural objects, make one sorely grieve over the decadence of folk-lore in England.

But there is something outside of all this for which to care—beyond even the girdle of dreary and dust-laden territory which hugs Barcelona all round, and makes her environs a byword and reproach with indolent or easily daunted visitors. Not much beyond, however, for once past the suburbs of Gracia, San Gervasio, Sarriá, or Pedralves, and out upon the circle

of hills that send back their ramifications inland for many a day's journey, we may find scenery and interest which will quite justify the assertion that the city's best adorning is her unspoiled Nature's surrounding.

Let us take the way by Pedralves, for the sake of spending an hour in its fine fourteenth-century monastery church, and then strike out up the San Pedro Mártir slope which closes in the long circle of hills on the south. It is bare, scrubby ground at first, though even here all is beautiful in spring with wild flowers and flowering shrubs. And, once at the crest of the hill, we shall forthwith lose all sense of weariness in the enchantment of the panorama before us. All the plain on the south-east seems filled by the whitened city and its belt of suburbs, shut in between the sea and the sweep of mountains that trend away from where we stand right round till they seem to dip into the blue water. It is a high land of all lovely outline and colouring. Not just a belt of hills, one may see now, but a series of outposts of a country that is all crumpled up and tossed about as far inland as the eye can reach, here dark-green with waving pine-woods, there brown to golden with vine slopes. Turning round, and looking out south and west there is still the open sea, and then the great plain of the Llobregat, with its shining villages, and the silver streak of its tortuous river; while, if the day be very clear, the mountains of Mallorca may be made out, rising up due south over

the watery horizon. From San Pedro Mártir there is an easy road along the crest of the hill, through sparsely-planted pine-wood, and dwarf ilex coppice, and always with those same wonderfully contrasted views over the white and dust-ruled haunts of man on the one side of the ridge, and the dark, solemnly restful realm of Nature on the other. At each step a more perfected knowledge is to be gained of the great inland peaks—jagged Montserrat, San Lorenzo del Munt, the mountains about San Miguel del Fay, Tagamanent, and triple Montseny dominating all the rest. Vallvidrera once passed, too,—Vallvidrera, with its picturesque church and fine old paintings hidden away in the lovely ravine below the village—one's immediate surroundings become pleasanter, with soft turf by way of carpet, and great masses of rich and varied colouring of both flower and leaf. The highest point of all, El Tibidabo, lies a short half-hour farther northward ; and here, though they are making grievous havoc among the stretches of arbutus and flowering laurestinus which clothe the slopes towards the Vallés district—clearing them away by the square mile in order to plant vines.—there is still a culmination of beautiful scenery not unworthy of the mountain which the devil selected as a standpoint from whence to show our Lord all the kingdoms of the earth.*

This is not a region to be visited just once, and in sight-seeing fashion, but to be wandered over day after

* Whence its name—' *Tibi-dabo.*'

day, and wherein to note the varying and always beautifying work of the seasons as they are born, live and die. There are successions of rich valleys and hill-slopes throughout all this tossed-up country side where one may bury oneself the day long, finding grateful shade from the summer's sun, or shelter from the chilling winds that blow up from the sea in winter, and no lack of sympathy at any time for one's changing moods. Wondrous fellow-feeling, too, sometimes, and fine studies of humanity, in the rare cottage, farm, or *hosteria*. The Catalan may be rough, may be impatient, may be headstrong—as he is—and especially in these his wilder haunts, but he is splendidly kind, and hospitable, and interesting, when he is taken in the right way, and accorded something of the consideration to which he honestly feels himself entitled by his natural gifts. And his idiom is quite a thing apart from a *patois*. It is a language to itself—one of the old Provençal tongues, and therefore closely allied to some of the dialects of the south of France, the Italian coasts, and inland as far as Milan. Nervous and strong in expression, and full of the sharply-sounding monosyllables which always appear to give such relief and satisfaction to the speaker, it is yet capable of more sweetness than is usually laid to its account, perhaps through its abhorrence of gutturals.

But we must turn away from it all now—must not even go down through the tangled coppice and pine-forest to San Cugat, with its lovely old church, and

silent cloister, or its quaint traditions concerning its martyr-saint Cucufate—but must take our road by the southern slope of Tibidabo, or by the Belén ravine, down to the Bonanova of San Gervasio, or to Gracia, and so home.

And to Montserrat, echoing Cervantes' eulogium upon the fair city we leave behind us:—“*Barcelona, archivo de la cortesía, albergue de los extrangeros, patria de los valientes, correspondencia grata de firmes amistades, y en sitio y belleza única!*”

XVII.

MONTSERRAT TO LÉRIDA.

JUST about a thousand years ago—towards the commencement of the year 880—the righteous soul of Bishop Gondemar of Vich was much troubled by strange reports brought to him from the Jagged Mountain. Some poor shepherds had seen sundry wandering lights appearing and disappearing among the rocks which looked down upon their pasturing grounds, and had heard strains of music which floated down, unearthly in their softness and yet penetration. Now the Jagged Mountain—Mons Serratus as the clerkly folk called it—already bore an uncanny character, from its having been riven at the Crucifixion, and so it was by no means improbable that it should be chosen as the theatre of other and fresh miraculous occurrences. Accompanied by his clergy, the bishop climbed up to the spot indicated by the shepherds, and there, guided in his final searching by a subtle and fragrant smell, he unearthed an image of the Blessed Virgin, one of Saint Luke's masterpieces, which Saint Peter had brought to Barcelona about twenty years after the death of our Lord. This holy image had been hidden

away up here at the time of the Moorish invasion, and now, either tired of a century and a half of entombment, or desirous of becoming once more one of the great fetishes of the earth, had announced its whereabouts in the manner described. When consulted upon the subject the image expressed her warm disapproval of the easeful ways which she foresaw were soon to creep into and enervate the church, refusing to budge from the inclement mountain side when the bishop would have translated her to a spot where she might be more conveniently worshipped. So they had forthwith to build a chapel over her, to which first primitive shrine have been added other chapels and churches, oratories and hermitages, and, finally, a huge Benedictine monastery. So richly endowed is the whole place, and so very sacred a spot, that it would be worth visiting even if there were nothing to be cared for save its superstitions, and the religious associations and ordinances which still bring up here each year some 100,000 of the faithful.

But it is really for its own grand self that Montserrat is to be desired. It is one of the most wonderful, most lovely and most interesting of all Nature's works—a huge gray mass of conglomerate rock, twenty miles, or so, in circumference at the base, and thrown up in sheaves of columns and pinnacles, of all fantastic forms and finish, to a height of close upon 4000 feet. One tremendous rift—that made at the time of the Crucifixion—1000 feet deep, divides the mountain peaks into

two pretty equal series, and herein are placed the great church and monastic buildings. Nor is the scenery all of the bare description that one might imagine, even viewing it from below. The central gorge, and all the larger of the rifts which run down the mountain's slopes at each successive piling up of rocks, are quite green and shady with a rich clothing of ilex, arbutus, box and laurestinus, while every ledge and plateau is made lovely by masses of flowering shrubs and heaths. So sheltered, too, are these nooks and corners, and so laid out to the sun, that one can enjoy almost a summer's warmth in winter, with a wonderfully early insect and flower life.

Montserrat may be compassed by returning from Barcelona along the Tarragona line as far as Martorell, and then making straight across country for the southeastern slope of the mountain. The ascent on this side, however, is very toilsome, and it almost necessitates a night's lodging at Martorell, with many attendant discomforts. The better plan is to take the Zaragoza line as far as Monistrol, and then walk, or drive, up the main road to the monastery. There is fine scenery nearly all the way by this route, especially about Tarrasa, and when the line curves round by Olesa, with the great, silver-gray range of Montserrat in full view.

There is wonderful exhilaration, alike in air and surrounding—an exhilaration so powerful that it will be strange if, at Monistrol village, we do not elect to leave the diligence to lumber away for two and a half

hours up the long road that winds cautiously round the mountain side, and make straight for the monastery, by scaling the rocky face before us. It is rather hard work, but will prove an excellent preparation for all similar toilsome experiences to come, and there will be fresh interest and beguilement at each step.

One need, fortunately, have no eyes for the works of the human architects who have laboured here, as the huge gorge which is to be our home for a day or two is reached. And it is fortunate, too, that the humanity about the place will pay us but scant attention during our stay, unless we have been so ill-advised as to come here at some festival time, or unless we desire to pay court to the gorgeously-apparelled doll which sits enthroned in the dreadfully uninteresting church where-with Philip the Second endowed the shrine. In one way, certainly, the vesper services in this church may be found as "impressive" as they are commonly reported to be, for anything viler in the direction of musical performance—anything more persistently out of tune and into screech—it would be hard to find, even in Spain. But we shall be stowed away in one of the bare suites of pilgrim's apartments, we shall have to fend for ourselves in delightful camping-out fashion—paying only in the way of a gratuity when leaving—while, in the capitally-organised fonda close by, there may be found everything that voracious mountain appetites can reasonably desire.

And then, with the afternoon before us—having left

Barcelona by the early morning train—we may have sufficient sight-seeing just in the corner where we find ourselves, to occupy us until the chill veil of a sudden night falls upon us. First, there is the unexpectedly fine—and so all the more precious—façade of the old, ruined monastery, with its good Romanesque doorway, and its strip of delicate cloistering that stands at right angles to the church of which it formed a part, in the same odd position as the cloister of Santa Ana at Barcelona. Then, beyond the modern ecclesiastical buildings, there is the pretty garden plateau, bright with flowers and endowed with glorious views over the sharply-descending mountain-slope and outlying country. Turning, now, right in the opposite direction, and taking the narrow path which leads round the gorge just below the monastery, we may visit the chapel-cave where the sacred image was first discovered—*La Cueva de la Virgen*—perched up in eyrie-like fashion upon the rock which forms, actually, one side of the building. High on the peak above is the Hermitage of San Martin, not quite so inaccessible as most of the hermitages scattered here and there over the face of the mountain, and repaying a short climb, too, by its grand position and outlook. On the way back we may wind up a zigzag path leading off to the left just before reaching the monastery, and peep into the famous cave of San Guarín, or Garí. It is the merest niche in the rock—little more than a shelf—and here, behind an open iron railing, there may be seen a really lifelike figure of the saint,

lying upon the rock, as he was obliged always to lie, with his wallet, pitcher, and open book before him, and a skull* in his hand.

It is worth while reproducing some of the tales we may here gather up of this wonderful San Garí. He was the guardian appointed by Bishop Gondemar to watch over the shrine of the Virgin, when she was first found here, and he speedily attained to such celebrity as a holy anchorite that he was resorted to as a curer of those who were possessed of evil spirits. The devil, however, laid siege to the poor man, and tempted him into ill-treating and murdering a noble maiden who was confided to his care. Then remorse and repentance came to him, and he fled from the scene of his crimes to Rome, where he sought absolution from the Pope. He received it, but with this penance attached, that he was to return to Montserrat, and there live and die a hermit—as we see him here—never standing upright, never looking up to heaven, and never uttering a word.

But even upon this lower level, and among all these paths and ravines, it is the supreme natural loveliness and grandeur of the spot that constitute its charm. At every turn there are new groupings of rock-masses, riven into a thousand fantastic shapes, now rising sheer into mid-air, like the great solitary needle up which St. Bernard rode on horseback, now overhanging and threatening road and building, like those upon which

* The actual skull of the saint.

the almost inaccessible Ermita del Diablo is perched, and now lying prone, and harmless, as they were guided by the merciful interference of the Virgin when they fell. As the sun goes down on the other side of the mountain these jagged peaks are lit up one after another by an all-glorious radiance and burnishing, which die out into cold gray as the shadows creep up the mountain side and conceal all but the suggestion of rift and rock below. Now the *Angelus* bell tolls from the church, re-echoing from the face of Juan Garí's great tombstone, and we may go in through the evening gloom and chill with a pleasant knowledge that the best of Montserrat yet lies before us, on the morrow, good as all this day has been.

The ascent of the San Gerónimo peak—the highest point of the mountain—may be made easily enough in a couple of hours, but it is so fine that it is well to linger by the way, as much as time and season will allow. The path lies right up the gorge, rugged and steep for the first half-hour, but then, as the ravine widens to its summit, winding pleasantly and easily through a scene almost sylvan in its prettiness, where only the huge boulders that show through the greenery, and the magic circling of glittering, silvered peaks combine with the rare and buoyant atmosphere in reminding us that we are something more than 3000 feet above the plain, and buried in an almost appalling cataclysm of Nature. Before plunging, however, into this hidden away valley, there is a last peep to be taken at the out-



side world, from the gate-like entrance. Standing here, and looking back down the narrow cleft up which we have crept, we may see the monastery far below, crushed in, apparently, between the two opposing masses of rock that tower far above it and cut clear into the strip of deep blue sky overhead. Below the monastery again there is a glimpse of brown *vega*, and then a background of hills in the near and far distance, fading away into the bluish mist that hangs over them.

At the head of the ravine one emerges quite suddenly upon the edge of the mountain—and the San Gerónimo hermitage. It is not quite the summit yet, but this may form an allowable '*Col des Paresseux*' for those whose ambition does not lead them over the stony strip that still separates them from the topmost peak. Now one can form some just conception of the grandeur of Montserrat—of its supreme domination over the surrounding country, and of its own wondrous up-building. The earth seems almost to slip away from under our feet, in bottomless rifts down which, when a stone is flung, it may be heard leaping from rock to rock with a fainter and yet fainter resonance that seems never to be quite arrested; while Cataluña and eastern Aragon lie mapped out before us, with their hill-country, their rivers and villages, and their final belting of the snow-clad Pyrenees.

There is yet one more point of interest before we take our way from Montserrat on towards Lérida and Zaragoza. In the early days of the sixteenth century,

when the monastery was at the height of its power and reputation, there was living in monastic retirement here a famous French Benedictine, by name Jean Chanoine. To him Ignatius Loyola had recourse for spiritual counsel, after that, as we have heard, he had been visited at Loyola by the Blessed Virgin and St. Peter, and had "delivered himself to God," and it was here that he was finally confirmed in the new departure which was destined to have so great an influence in after ages upon the world's ways. In all the zeal of a fresh convert he had formed the resolution, on his journeying hither, to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, but Father Jean wisely dissuaded him from his purpose, and recommended him to seek in solitude, prayer and penance, some Divine sealing of his dedication of self to the service of the church. So he hung up his sword before the shrine of the Virgin, in token of his having renounced for ever a soldier's life—the same sword which may be seen in the Belén church at Barcelona—handed over his horse to the use of the monastery, and set out, in pilgrim's garb, for the Dominican hospital at Manresa.

If the time can be spared we may very well leave the train at Manresa for a few hours. Not, indeed, for the sake of following up San Ignacio's footsteps during the year of his retreat and penance which he passed here, in hospital, convent and *Cueva*. They are obscured, rather than marked out, by the surroundings which a later-day discipleship has elected to bestow

upon them. But the place is a good type of a Catalan provincial town, prosperous in its own purely national ways, and unadulterated by any foreign element. It is picturesque, moreover, in situation and building, and enlivened by brilliant bits of costume and colouring.

From among several remarkable old buildings there is one, the grand church of La Seo, which rises, in several senses of the term, into pre-eminence. It is set upon a rocky projection over the Llobregat, and is one of the most impressive of all the fine fourteenth-century Catalan churches, noble in scale and proportion, and with the same solemn effect of well-managed light and shade and rich stained glass for which Santa Maria del Mar is so notable. The nave is of enormous width, so that the Coro, which is placed in the very centre, leaves a passage-way between its *espaldas* and the aisle columns. The detail is mostly poor—poor even for Catalan unceremonious disregarding of such accessories—and the chief interest attaching to the furniture lies in a most curious and exquisitely-wrought altar-frontal, with nineteen subjects from New Testament history, partly embroidered in coloured silks and gold thread upon linen cloth, and partly painted in with sepia. The devotional expression upon the faces, and the subdued character of the whole design remind one strongly of the early Siena and Florentine schools; while the different styles of work are so delicately executed that it needs a quite careful examination to say where one ends and the other begins.

All along this railway-line between Barcelona and Zaragoza one is tempted to stay, and admire, and remember. Indeed the only satisfactory plan is to take a little covered cart of the country—a *tartana*—and drive from Manresa to Lérída. So may be seen at leisure ancient Cervera, once a busy court residence, whose vast and half-ruined churches, convents and university buildings attest the importance in which the old town was held. Here upon the 5th of March 1469 shrewd Juan II. of Aragon fairly launched the most successful of all his ambitious schemes, by sealing the preliminary marriage-contract between his son and the heiress of the Castilian crown. Fifteen miles westwards, right upon the high road which runs from Martorell and Igualada to Lérída, is the church of Bellpuig, where may be seen one of the half-dozen really magnificent Renaissance tombs of the Peninsula, that of Ramon de Cardona, some time Charles the Fifth's viceroy in Sicily. It is very elaborate, of course, and very Italian, and so not to be compared with the beautifully pure Prince Juan sepulchre at Avila, but its design and position are more suitable to its office than most of the too-enriched and flaunting works of the kind, while its sculptured detail is all that masterly chiselling could desire. The road scenery is fine in itself, with undulating and verdant plains, cork or pine plantations, and the Almenar Sierra rising ever in the background. It is all to be looked at twice, too, because it is the last bit of beauty we shall meet with until we reach the far north-west.

Lérida, the Roman Ilerda, closes the series of these quaint old Catalonian cities, which are so sternly forbidding at first sight and entrance, and then prove so interesting in record, and so generous towards artistic research, that presently—and especially at a second visit—one comes to love to linger in them. It is not so pretty as Manresa, and without those splendid views of the Montserrat range, but there are here, nevertheless, abundant subjects for pen and pencil—in the huge, castle-crowned rock that rises straight up behind the town, and in the picturesque views which one may get from the very windows of the comfortable San Luis fonda, over the humpbacked and broken bridge, the sweep of the Segre river, and the stretch of green Alameda on the other side. Pleasanter still is it to wander in and out of the old buildings, the narrow streets, or arcaded market-place, and to note the odd ways and experiences of a busy and exacting nineteenth-century life fastened upon the inadequate resources of a worn-out home, and enlivening it with the most brilliant and nondescript costumes and most profitable of character studies. Such a spot as this in the south would be half asleep, and, whatever its capabilities and furnishing, they would seem abundant for all the day's requirements. But here the rickety houses that line the streets seem worn away as to their basements, with the friction that the narrowness of the road causes, and to be toppling over to meet their fellows over the way; the pavements have swelled up from excitement, and left the heavier

door-sills a foot or so below them; all sorts of unsuitable vehicles are pressed into service for the carriage of imperiously demanded material; the insufficient sidewalks are simply despised by the wayfarers, who fight for possession of the roadway with its proper occupiers; while the tiny and dark shops have to receive such large stocks that they disgorge portions of it, in the absurdest fashion, upon the pavement outside. And what hubbub and intricate individual arrangings all these things call forth may be imagined.

The inexperienced visitor might easily make here a rather strange mistake, and go away with an unfulfilled mission. Asking for the far-famed cathedral he will probably be directed to a building which is only to be distinguished from some great secular establishment by its gilt cross; and, entering, he will find a vast church indeed, but one that in design and execution, furniture and ritual, is alike beneath either praise or blame. Nevertheless this is the cathedral, and the only cathedral which the Lérída world of to-day cares about, or recognizes. The French, in 1707, turned the grand old church on the summit of the hill into a fortress; and so it has remained ever since, the Spanish Government committing the twofold sin of desecrating one of the noblest sacred edifices in the land, for the purpose of making barracks which are dark, inconvenient and unhealthy.

It is chiefly to see this old cathedral that we have halted at Lérída, and, notwithstanding all that is