But Leon is not a spot to help either one's reverence or enthusiasm. With just a glance, therefore, at the Casa de San Marcos, a wondrous Plateresque masterpiece of the Juan de Badajoz who spoiled the beauty of San Isidoro's church, let us hasten to take the one solitary excursion which the surrounding country affords, and then make our way towards Santiago and the end of our journeyings. We must take the Madrid road—at first the Carretera de Santa Ana—issuing from the south-east corner of the city, cross the river Torio at Castro Puente, and keep straight along the good but terribly dull high road, for seven or eight miles, to Villarente and Villamoros. Hereabouts the scenery is somewhat improved. The villages have a brighter appearance than most of the Leonese *pueblos;* there is greenery—even rushing waters—while the long lines of red-brown hills on the left give just the needed richness of colouring to the landscape. This rising ground must be faced now, at the first cross road after leaving Villamoros, and Leon compassed again by a circuitous route over the hill-slopes and valleys which trend away to the north-east.

It is not exactly a pleasant excursion, and yet is possessed of not a little beauty, and a peculiar interest, in its new types of Spanish scenery and provincial life. Moreover, if Leon city has left within us any care at all for ecclesiological research, there is to be visited here a group of buildings which set forth, with remarkable clearness, the rise and progress of ecclesiastical work

between the tenth—perhaps ninth—and fifteenth centuries. Close by Villamoros, turning down the cross road to the right before beginning the ascent on the left of the high road, there is the twelfth-century Santa Maria de Sandoval, a Cistercian monastery built by one of the Ponce family in 1167. It was an enormously rich foundation at one time, and had large territorial possessions. The originally Romanesque church has been a good deal spoiled by later, Gothic and Classic additions, but can still show not a little fine detail. Another well-known Leon name is written here—that of Don Diego Ramirez de Cifuentes—in the shape of a colossal recumbent statue upon his warriorship's tomb. Then, lying away up among the hills on the other side of the road, there are the churches of Santa Maria de Guadefes, San Miguel de Escalada, and San Pedro de Eslonza, of which San Miguel is by far the finest and best preserved. It is quite Moorish in character, built of mud and bricks, with a portico of twelve horse-shoe arches running along the southern exterior, from the tower to the west front, and with similar arches dividing the nave and side aisles. The capitals boast of some good Byzantine carving, and there is an ajimez window in the eleventh-century tower. The greater part of the edifice dates from the commencement of the ninth century, but there was a still older foundation here, handed over by Alonso III. to some monks who had fled from Moorish persecutions in Córdoba, and who endowed their new home with its present Eastern dress.

When one speaks of building with brick and mud it may appear to stamp the edifices as hopelessly poverty-stricken. But we may often have found, in the far South, how very fine and durable—even artistic—such work may become under skilful hands. And all over this country side, around the hamlets and isolated farm-houses, there may be seen enclosures roughly built up with great solid slabs of mud and pebbles, six feet long by four or five high, and fourteen inches thick, quite admirable in evident serviceableness and in colouring. There is no attempt at anything like formal architecture in the villages, even the churches being, for the most part, mere barns, with an open belfry to which access is gained by a ladder. But there is a most remarkable feature to be met with in some of these, occasionally really ancient, buildings. Running along the southern exterior there is a sort of lean-to shed, with unglazed window openings, and a mud divan placed against the church-wall. This would seem to have been the origin of the open *corredor*, or cloistering, so often noticed in the churches of Castile—at Valladolid, Avila, Segovia, etc.—and there carried out with such beautiful forms and workmanship. If this be so, it is evident that the design of these quaint additions was not to secure coolness, or yet shelter, but rather to provide a kind of meeting-room for the village folk, or perhaps an ecclesiastical court-house.

But oh! the rudeness, and the barrenness, and the pauper-like appearance of all the region! The inhabit-

ants, too, with all their kindness, and touchingly good fellowship, are among the lowest in any scale of civilisation. The contrast between this portion of Leon and the rest of the north-western provinces is most striking and painful—full, too, of significant import for those who have the welfare of the country at heart.

There are three routes from Leon to Santiago—by Orense and Vigo, by Lugo, and by Coruña, taking the coach from any of these points. When the line between Orense and Monforte is completed the first named will be the best road, but as yet one has to leave the main line at the small station of La Rúa Petin, and take to the *correo*, or diligence, for twelve weary hours, in order to join the railway again at Orense. It is to be regretted that this route is so toilsome, for Orense is decidedly an interesting old place, most picturesquely placed upon the Miño river, and with some buildings which well repay a day's study. Still, what is good in the cathedral here—and there is a great deal that is very good—may be seen better at Santiago; Vigo, too, may be conveniently made our final point of departure, and that frightful night's ride from La Rúa is an experience to be avoided, even at some considerable cost.

So is there enough in ancient Lugo to tempt one to make a halt; but the trains and coaches are so timed that a night's lodging is a necessity—and a necessity even worse provided for than at Orense.

Practically, then, there is nothing for it but to go all

the way round by Coruña; and, if the consumption of a little extra time is not a thing at which greatly to fret, there is abundant compensation for the lengthened journey. For the place is gloriously situated upon its vast, landlocked bay, and sloping hills; it is pleasant and cheerful and orderly in all its ways; it is well provided with comfortable hotels, and it possesses, moreover, a stronger historical interest for English travellers — an interest reaching back through five hundred years — than any other bit of the Peninsula. However little inclined one may be to sentimentalise, it would be difficult to look with quite careless regard at the spot from whence the Great Armada set out to win England for the True Faith—and for his Majesty Philip II. Or yet upon the inscription in the Jardin de San Carlos, which marks the last resting-place of "Joannes Moore. Exercitus Britannici Dux."

The scenery along the greater part of this north-western line is very noteworthy, especially between Astorga, the headquarters of the gipsy-like Maragatos—where there are most curious and brilliant costumes to be looked for—and La Rúa Petin. The lovely river Sil keeps the railway company for hours—even where, at San Miguel de Monte Furado, it dives three hundred yards through the solid rock; while, on both sides of the line, there is a grand background of the Leon ramifications of the Asturian Pyrenees, the skirt of that Vierzo district into which we may already have wandered from Oviedo.

One advantage possessed by La Coruña is that of a quick and well-appointed diligence service, in half a dozen different directions. So, upon the Santiago road, the coaches run three times a day each way, accomplishing the journey in something less than six hours. But it is not an interesting ride—until the rim of the basin of hills surrounding the Pilgrim City is reached, and a fine view obtained over the town and its environs.

And Santiago itself is terribly disappointing at a first visit, when one's anticipations of strange and wonderful experiences are as yet keen and shadowy. The place is oddly like a north of England manufacturing town, stone-built and gray, busy and yet dull, with narrow streets leading away up hill and down hill without any apparent sequence, or distinct notion of the direction they intend taking. The ardently desired encounter with a pilgrim of orthodox behaviour and dress may be waited for in vain, and all that odour of special sanctity which ought to envelop the heaven-favoured Campus Stellæ * is shut up within its dark cathedral. When one knows the city, however, and is not always looking for those things which can never more be found, there is within it infinite variety of picturesqueness. Many of the streets, or Rúas, have arcaded side-walks—like the Chester Rows, only upon the level of the roadway, and of much more solid sort—and one of these, the long

* So called from the star which stood over the spot where the body of St. James lay, and revealed its whereabouts to Bishop Teodomiro.

drawn-out Calle del Villar, forms the fashionable lounge of the townsfolk. It is a sight both amusing and edifying to watch the crowds of really well-dressed—or rather over-dressed—*flâneurs*, promenading in and out of these ancient and grim colonnades, which hold memories of such utterly different pilgrims and manners. To see these quaint lanes to perfection, however, one must tread them early in the morning, when there is but an occasional and solitary passer-by—and he *not* dressed quite to his finger-tips—and when the sun lights up the old granite arches, and throws bands of deep shadow upon the dazzling white of the newly-painted façades.

In these early hours, too, and especially upon Sundays and market-days, there are scenes to be met with here to occupy the artist's mind and palette for a very long time. Let us take a stand, for example, on the steps of the tiny church of San Benito, and look out over the oddly-shaped, triangular Plaza de Cervantes, with the crooked half-length figure of the great man himself upon the fluted column in the centre. In the background on the right there is a bit of arcading, with fine Early-pointed arches, and — we may see it even from this distance—well-sculptured capitals. On the left there runs a series of shops, all, apparently, in the same line of business, with red and yellow and dull-gold *sabanas* fluttering in the breeze. Overhead there is a strip of deep blue sky; while all the pavement is occupied by groups of busy, chattering peasantry, making a perfect Babel with their tongues and their wooden clogs,—the

women in sombre, plaitless, woollen skirts, brilliant sashes and kerchiefs, the men in round felt hats, short velveteen jackets, and the whitest of stockings, with a pretty little puffing out of frill at the edge of the dark knickerbocker.

But the glory of Santiago is her cathedral. The history of its foundation is the early history of the place, and has been often told. We have heard already how that St. Iago came first to the north-west of Spain, and journeyed on to Zaragoza before he could find fit company for the Blessed Virgin to dwell amongst. But here we don't hold to that. We are strongly, fiercely, of the opinion that the Apostle preferred Galicia—and in Galicia Santiago—to any other spot. Else, why should he have chosen it for his final resting-place, his body floating here over the ocean ever so many hundred years after death, and because it could abide in no other tomb—no, not even in the holy city of Jerusalem? And not only the world but the Church has accepted the sign of such distinguishing regard on St. Iago's part, by making his shrine the greatest object of pilgrimage the world has seen, save only those of Mecca, Jerusalem and Rome. Even Zaragoza cannot boast of having had a papal bull directed against her, out of sheer jealousy lest Rome's supremacy should be cast down!

And, true to its traditions, the cathedral is pre-eminently — above all the other great cathedrals of the land—the home, and in some sort the goal, of a

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people's devotion. It is so, not only by reason of its own noble and pure self, but through the ordering of its services, its rigid observance of all ceremonies, the reverential attitude of those who are responsible for them, and the faithful hearts of the people themselves. All this is so pleasant to behold, not just upon high days and feasts but every day, and at all hours, that one comes not to heed the conspicuous absence of the most interesting personages in the moving scene, or the evident fact that the old picturesque superstitions are *in extremis*. The life upon the Rúa promenade, or the brilliant Campo de Santa Susana, may appear to one, in a cynical mood, to afford the accustomed commentary upon a church-ridden city and people's professions; but half an hour in the cathedral inclines one presently to believe that, after all, there is some real religion hidden away in a few Spanish souls and out-of-the-way places.

Indeed it is a building to foster at any rate religious *sentiment*. Of no imposing vastness, and yet great from perfection of proportion and well-judged distribution of light and shadows; severe and bold in outline, yet just sufficiently relieved by the most exquisite ornamentation; with no obtrusive straying from a direct purpose through any of the excrescences, the exaggerations, or the style variations which so often overlie noble work, and make it comparatively valueless—thus may we once more sum up, in the last of these great buildings which we shall visit, nearly all those endowments of true Art for which we have looked

throughout our journeying. We miss here the added elegance and delicacy of Toledo, Tarragona, or the Catedrales Viejas of Salamanca and Lérida, but Santiago may nevertheless rank with these among the noblest legacies of the Golden Age of Church architecture.

Both the edifice and its surroundings have been made so well and widely known, that no fresh or completed sketch of them is necessary. The exterior has been a good deal injured by modern ideas of taste, and the Chapter's possession of unlimited wealth. Only two portions retain any very great merit—the lovely façade of the south transept, endowed with a marvellous amount of vigorous Romanesque sculpturing upon its twin portals and windows, and the small 'Iglesia Baja' beneath the western Pórtico de la Gloria. What the exact purpose and origin of this lower church was it is difficult, now, to say, or to discover. From its construction it must have been always a church, and must have formed, too, from the outset, a part of the upper sanctuary. The treatment of this diminutive chapel is beyond praise. The almost insurmountable difficulties attendant upon rendering a crypt—and a crypt necessarily almost filled up with the foundations of the upper church—fit for ritual purposes, are not only triumphantly grappled with, but actually rendered subservient to the securing of fine vistas, and the setting forth of delicate Romanesque enrichment.

The general plan of the interior is the simplest possible form of Latin cross—nave and side aisles, very

deep transepts, and a well-proportioned apsidal Capilla Mayor, round which the side aisles are produced. There is no clerestory, the plain barrel vault of the nave and transepts springing from a narrow cornice running immediately above the semicircular arches which enclose the twin lights of the triforium. The columns consist of very massive piers, with engaged shafts to carry the arches, the transverse vaulting ribs of the nave and the quadripartite vaults of the side aisles. The triforium galleries are continued round the transepts and apse; the arching throughout is of a somewhat stilted Romanesque—round-headed—form, with square soffits, while the capitals are enriched with stiff-leaf and figure decoration.

One other portion, only, calls for any special notice. The whole of the west end is occupied by a porch—the already-mentioned Pórtico de la Gloria—of very remarkable dimensions and position, opening into the side aisles by round arches, and into the nave by a divided square doorway. The whole surface of these portals is covered with the most ambitious and gloriously sculptured representation of the Last Judgment, leading up through an immense range of scene and personage—with an accenting of the principal characters of Old and New Testament, and attending angels—to the figure of our Lord, seated upon the tympanum of the central doorway, and shown as proceeding forth from the Root of Jesse. Of the detail of this work, of its power, grasp of conception, its devotion, or the delicacy and

beauty of the subordinate and merely decorative parts, it is impossible to convey any just idea by description or sketch. Twenty years—from 1168 to 1188—did "Magister Matheus" labour at his great Pórtico; and when he had finished it, he set an effigy of himself upon the inside of the central shaft, turning his back upon his handiwork, and kneeling in humble prayer towards the altar.

Like Master Matteo and his fellow-pilgrims we have come to *El fin del Romaje*. So, as true *romeros*, by the old pilgrim-path of El Padron and its Sacred Mountain, we may take our journey homewards; with Vigo's glorious bay and headlands, and her bright and hospitable self to give us a last pleasant reminiscence of Spanish ways, and a friend's farewell.

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THE END.

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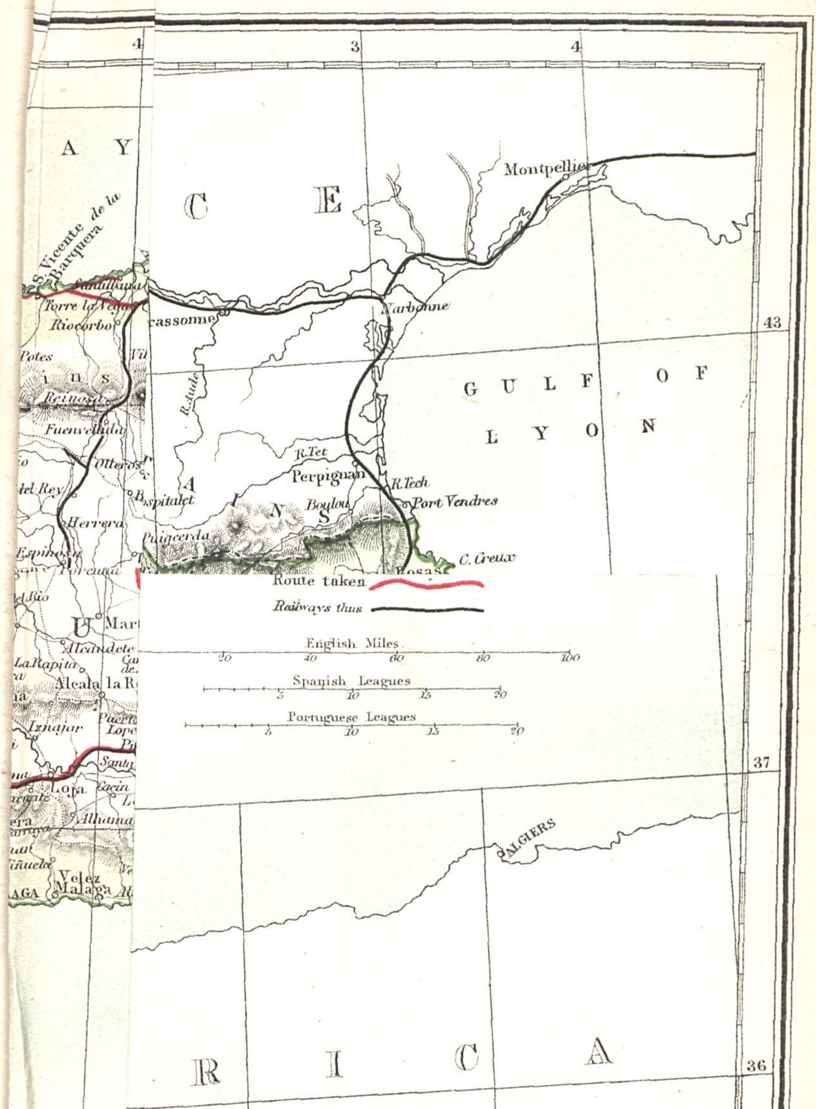

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