dral, to follow up for a little the steps of the lucky penitent. It will take us at once through some of the most charming scenery of which the old city can boast, and some of its most interesting records. Let us leave the cathedral by the great western door, turning round for a moment to glance at the miserably bald façade, and the poor Renaissance work of most of the exterior. The winding street on the right hand will take us now through the pretty plaza of Alfonso XII., past the old church of San Andrés, with its fine tower and portal, and finally into the great tree-planted space that forms the tip of the strange tongue of rock upon which Segovia is perched.

What magnificent views, north and south, over green valley, rushing water, and outlying brown vega! And yet one hardly stays a moment to enjoy them, for there is something beyond the plaza—beyond even the tongue's tip. For, shutting it in on the west, yet separated from it by a deep natural moat, there rises up the magnificent line of the ancient Alcázar, which bids fair now, thanks to judicious restoration, to be preserved, and something more than just preserved, from the ruin that had fallen upon it.

It is the fashion of writers upon Spain to pass over this typical old Castilian palace—half-palace, half-fortress—with some mere mention of it as a "shell," or "a piece of crumbling wall," evidently never taking the trouble to find out what it really is. Even if it were but a shell, it would be entirely worth visiting; but the

fact is, that there is not only a very complete and very beautiful exterior, but also a rich mine of loveliness and interest within, which will amply repay an hour's poring over. First there is the grandly solid façade, with its quaint, corbelled-out turrets and window canopies; its despising of all uniformity and regularity, and yet, somehow, its perfect harmony of line and proportion; its rugged moat, and delicate lace-like diapering of plaster decoration. Immediately behind, as one crosses the narrow bridge and enters below the keep, is the great two-storied patio, with salas opening out on either side, and, at the far end, the massive principal staircase. The upper portions of the palace were wantonly destroyed by fire thirty years ago, but from the lower apartments one can get an excellent notion of the original plan and proportions of the old castle, and repeople it with the life and images of the past. The Sala del Trono is perhaps the finest room, measuring 105 feet, or thereabouts, by 30, with a delicate *renacimiento* frieze, and, on the patio side, pretty two-light round-headed windows. The lights in the north wall are much blurred and destroyed, but the balconies are there, and from them, as from all the windows upon this side of the castle, the most superb views may be obtained, first over the straight, sheer descent of some 200 feet into the valley, then over the Eresma as it rushes to its meeting with the Clamores, and away across the green belt of trees up to the rocky hillside, and the great plain that stretches away into the blue distance.

Westward of the Sala del Trono lies the Sala de los Reyes, from one of the windows of which the unfortunate little Pedro, Henry II.'s son, whose tomb is in the cathedral cloister, was let fall by his attendant, and dashed to pieces upon the cruel-looking rocks below. Next comes the Sala del Cordon, with its St. Francis' rope, put up—as the attendant will gravely declare—to commemorate the judgment that fell from heaven upon Alonso El Sabio when he was rash enough to entertain unsound views on the subject of the sun revolving round the earth.

And so we may go on through room after room, through the chapel with its remains of delicate groining, up bewildering numbers of staircases and turrets—finally up over the great keep itself—getting from every point most ravishing panoramas of the surrounding country, and coming everywhere upon delicate bits of work, and odd memorials of bygone days. It would be better not to come to Segovia at all, than, coming, to miss its ancient Alcázar.

It is a steepish piece of road from here, passing under the old Puerta Castellana, down into the Eresma valley, but it must not be shirked. Almost at the foot of the hill, taking the road for a few hundred yards westward, we come upon the waters' meet, the junction of the Eresma and Clamores, the noise of which may have been in our ears for some time past. Then, returning eastwards, we may look at some records of our Jewess;—a chapel, where, behind an appalling *reja*, is preserved

and shown the image of the particular Virgin who saved her, the cypress that marks the spot where the leap came to so happy an end, and the great beetling crag that towers above all, and is called to this day—from the horrid following of birds of prey that used to circle around it—'La Peña Grajera.' A few minutes' walk along the road brings us to a cross *carretera* leading up the rocky hill to the left. This we must follow, both for the sake of examining the wonderful old Vera Cruz —a very early thirteenth-century Templar's Church, built by Honorius II. in imitation of the Holy Sepulchre —and of obtaining an imposing view of the grand Alcázar, that frowns down from the crest of the opposite hill.

It is rather a difficult operation getting into La Vera Cruz, but the trouble of bothering the architect of the *ayuntamiento* for the key will be well repaid by a view of the interior. With its curious twelve-sided nave, and inner chamber of two stories—the upper one a chapel, the lower the supposed sepulchre—its fine and consistent Romanesque work, and the clever way in which an ambitious and original idea is treated, this old Templars' sanctuary is a quaint and valuable monument of the devotional spirit, and honest, good workmanship of the early Church.

Of a very different sort is its beautiful neighbour, El Parral, reached by a few minutes' walk across the fields. Time was when this barren hillside was so green and lovely that it gave rise to the saying, "*Las huertas*

del Parral paraiso terrenal." And it seems somehow fitting that, as the great convent that was for so many centuries its glory has been utterly ruined and cast down, this *huerta* should have exchanged its smiling gladness for the sombre garb of mourning and desolation that is now so positively painful to the vision. There is no need to linger in the convent buildings. They are nothing but a collection of blackened and crumbling walls, columns and patios. The church, however—thanks chiefly to the little sisterhood of *Concepcionistas* who have here sought a refuge from the fate that overtook them at Santa Isabel up in the city—has been able to make some stand against the inroads of time and neglect.

And it is veritably lovely. Of the purest Gothic, simple and noble, there is here and there just enough of delicate decoration to relieve without burdening. There are no windows at the west end, and the dimness is rendered all the more impressive by the deep stone vaulting that carries the coro. Then a flood of light is thrown on the crossing, the transept, and apse, by six graceful lancet windows—a particularly happy effect of which the Segovian architects seem to have been very fond, and of which San Estéban presents a notable example.

With all the grievous desolation and ruin that meet the eye at every point, there is something so pure, so sweet, so dignified about this church that he must be hard of soul who can pace its floor unmoved. And

there is a sort of anti-climax. For, far away at the east end, on either side of the high altar, and at first unnoticed, there are what seem to be the spirits of the place, the kneeling figures of Juan, Marqués de Villena, and Maria his wife, beautifully designed, as beautifully wrought, and in rare harmony with their beautiful surroundings. After coming face to face with these one cares for no more detail.

It is a trite enough saying that there is but a step between life and death, and that to-day treads hard upon the heels of yesterday. Turning out of El Parral there is a remarkable exemplification of the substratum of truth which underlies such an assertion. One moment all is desolation, ruin, and sad record, and then in a step we are in the bright Alameda, with its clear rushing stream at our feet, and in the midst of a hive of laughing, chattering workers who form a perfect study of picturesque costume, and busy life. A few moments to look at them, and then the way may be taken along the Alameda, and round by the aqueduct home. Or we may cross the little bridge below the convent, and face the steep ascent opposite, taking a look by the way into the Dominican Santa Cruz—a debased copy of El Parral—and then into the nobler San Estéban, whose fine thirteenth-century tower, with its alternate arcades of round and pointed arches, has been a conspicuous beacon all the way up the valley.

Rich and varied as are the scenery and interest to be found upon the banks of the Eresma, there are

perhaps better things in the southern valley. Leaving the great plaza by the Calle Real, one comes almost immediately upon the church and Franciscan nunnery of Corpus Christi, a converted Jewish synagogue, and showing some remarkably pure Moorish work—horse-shoe arches, elaborate and deep capitals, arabesques in the spandrels, a roof with coupled tie beams, and a cusped arcading, by way of triforium, carried along just below. The plan of the church has been, of course, considerably modified, but the detail is most interesting, as showing the pre-eminent skill of the Moors in the use of material, and particularly in their treatment of plaster, carving it with knife or chisel as if it were pure stone.

Farther along the street, upon the opposite side, a pause must be made before the church of San Martín. It is only the exterior that has to be noticed, for the meddling hand of the moderniser has been at work within, and has left nothing but a couple of old tombs and an excellent record of poor invention. But all along the southern and western façades—to be traced, too, upon the north—runs the most perfect example extant of the open cloistering arrangement which we have seen elsewhere, finer even than that of San Estéban, or of the neighbouring San Millan. Very honest and good thirteenth-century work indeed is this cloister, with an effect heightened rather than spoiled by the great porch that breaks into it on the west. Whatever was the origin of these *corredores*—provision for coolness,

or shelter, or consultation, or a mere whim—there cannot be two opinions as to their fitness and beauty, nor yet as to the excellent work which nearly always characterises them.

Just beyond the grotesque Casa de los Picos, with its curiously-embossed façade, a side path should be taken leading down the hill by the aqueduct. At the foot lies all the particularly squalid portion of Segovia, full, nevertheless, of interesting types and life. From here a sharp turn to the right, and a quarter of an hour's walk, bring us to San Millan, one of the finest Romanesque remains in the Peninsula;—remains, because, while the thirteenth-century exterior is comparatively untouched, the interior has been ruthlessly pulled about, and very nearly spoiled. And then up to the Calvario beyond, and back to the city plaza by the winding elm-planted walk that hugs the hillside, all is beauty and picturesqueness, with grand views of the aqueduct and the far-spreading vega, of the rugged city, and the noble pile that stands out black against the evening sky. We have to pass the east end of the cathedral on our way home, and, if the doors are not yet shut, may do well to pace again the fast-darkening aisles, and get a wonderful notion of the majesty and solemnity which, after all, and under certain favouring circumstances, lie latent in Gothic as in no other work.

VII.

LA GRANJA AND EL ESCORIAL.

A SHARP contrasting everywhere!—Avila to Madrid, Madrid to Segovia, and now Segovia to La Granja, royalty's lightsome holiday residence. At every turn a suddenly-twisted kaleidoscope of scenery, experience, and life.

Not, indeed, that La Granja, in all its spick-and-span mushroomhood, can be called exactly gay, or even bright. The place seems somehow oppressed by the grimness of its two neighbours—Segovia with its records of a quite faded glory, and El Escorial with its yawning niches ready to receive the occupant of the San Ildefonso palace when his brief summer and autumn have fled. And yet it is a lovely spot. Some sketch has already been made of its surroundings—at the foot of the Guadarrama range, with the snowy Peñalara towering above apparently endless sweeps of pine forest. But its own special beauties, its fresh running waters, its leafy avenues, its grass and flowers, are even more grateful to the traveller over the ordinary waste places of Spain.

La Granja—the Grange, or farm—was formerly one of the outlying properties of the monks of El Parral,

and was bought from them by Philip V., who, nothing if not French, spent here untold (and unpaid) sums of money in trying to graft Versailles' lightsomeness upon the most solemnly grand scenery. Naturally, he only succeeded in producing a somewhat ridiculous abortion. Anything less inviting than the pretentious and weak-kneed array of domes and pinnacles which crush down the little palace, with the long avenue of bald outbuilding and ill-kept grass and walk which leads up to it from the highroad, cannot be imagined. Fortunately, however, the worst is got over at the outset. Once past the squalid entrance, and under the walls of the central Colegiata, with the great Casa de los Canonigos on the left, and the palace for distinguished visitors on the right, appearances are more imposing—more befitting royalty. The views all around, too, over mountain, forest, and plain, are so glorious that one incontinently loses sight of all the human builder's meretricious and insignificant handiwork. Then within the house there is neither squalor nor pretentiousness—not even the impotent grandeur which is apt to mark a palace for its own—but simply pleasant homeliness and unostentatious luxury. The finest suites of apartments are those facing the gardens and mountains, the original palace built by Philip V. The northern portions are modern, and irredeemably poor.

It is a delightfully easy visit to pay. There is nothing to be particularly looked out for—or particularly looked at—from the gorgeous chapel with which one

starts, to the little door by which final access is gained to the gardens; but it is very pleasant to stroll along with the garrulous old cicerone, to listen to all his prattlings about the doings of the royal family when it really is a family, and to note everywhere evidences of an actual, warm life. And then, when one's expectations have all been disarmed by a quickly-realised sense of the thorough homeliness of the place, it is especially good to come here and there upon really exquisite bits; —real works of art in the way of hangings and old inlaid furniture, or such perfected scenes of luxury as the little tent-like boudoir with plaited drapery of blue and yellow satin, the bathroom with its marble fountains and cleverly-arranged flower cascade, and the two wonderful salas upon the ground-floor, entirely lined with the richest marbles.

The gardens are very beautiful, though, of course, stiff to the last degree in their unvaried arrangement of straight-ruled walk and avenue, their mathematically-grouped statues and fountains. They are refreshingly well kept too—for Spain—green at all seasons of the year, while, thanks to a certain magnificence of conception, their most grotesque whims hardly ever degenerate into the ridiculous. To understand what can be done in the way of water-decoration, one really ought to make a pilgrimage here when the fountains are playing. It is not so much the unrivalled volume of the delivery that is noteworthy—a volume that seems to increase each moment as one gazes at it—nor yet the immense

height attained to, but rather the infinite delicacy and variety of form and treatment. It is in every sense of the word water-*decoration*, and in some of the finer groups, such as the Baños de Diana and the Fuente de las Ranas, has been carried out with an art beyond all praise.

The histories which linger here are neither great nor creditable, as may be inferred from the significant obtuseness of the attendants when asked awkward questions. They may be summed up as the record of one hundred years of such royal debauchery as the world has never witnessed since the declining days of Rome. The founder, Philip V., whose tomb may be seen in a chapel of the Colegiata, was a weak copy of the Second of his name, and, mistrusting every one around him, became naturally the tool of the designing few—more especially of his ambitious and unscrupulous wife, Elizabeth Farnese. And he was but a type of that Bourbon dynasty which, through all his succession—the infantile Louis, the imbecile Charles IV., the brutal, treacherous, profligate Ferdinand VII., and Francis the incapable—has done pretty nearly everything that princely sinning could do, to widen into one all-engulfing chasm the 'little rift' which had already been made by the mistaken policy of Carlos Quinto and Felipe Segundo.

The elevation of La Granja above the sea—some 3800 feet—together with the vicinity of a great snow range, renders it of course an uninviting winter resort;

but during spring, summer, and autumn it is a very charming spot, and by no means receives the attention it deserves. There is excellent accommodation in the village, the climate is delicious, the rambles over the flat country and the mountains are full of loveliness and interest, while the palace and grounds are certainly more worthy of a careful acquaintanceship than any other Spanish royal demesne.

Than the neighbouring and better known Escorial, for example, which lies about twenty miles over the hills. A place, this, only to be known in order to be hated. Every one visits it, and nine out of ten go away expressing sorrow at having wasted any time upon it. Herein, however, El Escorial shares the fate of many notable spots of the Peninsula. Travellers do not find what they expect—the goodliness of nature or art upon which they seem ever to insist when away from home—and disappointment blinds them to what there really is. The sooner it is understood that the Escorial will only present the ordinary sightseer with one bit of prettiness, and half a dozen pieces of goodliness, the better it will be for all concerned. Then it will have a chance of being estimated at its true worth, and the spirit of the place, its associations, and the strange part it has played in Spanish life and death—especially death—for over three hundred years, will be duly appreciated.

And certainly the grumble at expenditure of time is inexcusable, inasmuch as the visit only entails the loss of a few hours, and no turning out of the beaten track.

It may be made a separate day's excursion from Madrid, or from La Granja; but the simplest plan is to stop at El Escorial station *en route* from the north, and resume the journey to Madrid at 5 P.M. This allows time for breakfast at the well-ordered 'Miranda' hotel, close by the palace-gates; it secures the necessary morning light for the church and pictures, and leaves the afternoon free for a pleasant stroll through the oak coppice, and down to the Casita del Infante—Charles IV.'s toy-house.

Ordering our visit thus, we may be supposed to be entering the palace by about 9.30 to 10 A.M. The first great patio, 'de los Reyes,' may be hurried through. There is nothing admirable in it—not even the rude statues of the kings of Judah which stare down from the façade of the church, and which are recorded to have been all carved out of one block of granite. And immediately behind there comes the grandest thing, the only really grand thing, of the whole palace—the church. It need not be studied for its detail—Herrera had not a notion of detail in church architecture—but it is vast, severe, and solemn. It conveys exactly the idea which English people attach to the word 'temple,' a place wherein the majesty of the Invisible dwarfs everything human.

For a few minutes only will we stand to look around, for at this hour high mass is being celebrated, and we shall have both opportunity and reason presently for pacing the length and breadth of the building. More-

over, this is just the time for seeing Claudio Coello's greatest painting, *La Santa Forma,* in a good light. It forms the retablo in the fine sacristy leading out of the church at the south-east corner, and, as a piece of portraiture, composition, and colouring, is altogether worthy of study, and of Spain's perhaps last great painter. The picture represents Charles II. and his court worshipping a certain holy wafer, which, when trampled under foot by Dutch heretics in the year 1525, forthwith gave evidence of the Divine Presence by bleeding at three rents caused in it. The holy relic itself—the Forma—is kept behind the picture, and is exhibited twice a year to the faithful, the retablo being lowered through the floor. There are many other precious things in this sacristy—the doors on the right and left of the altar, rich in tortoise-shell, bronze and gold, the lovely mirrors over the *armarios,* and some good figures of El Greco's. But the Rizi-Coello painting surpasses all else alike in interest and merit.

Close at hand is the Panteon, the burial-place of nearly all the kings and queens of Spain since the great Carlos Quinto, in whose memory the Escorial was built. It is placed exactly underneath the high altar—so that the celebrant may stand daily over the ashes of the monkish founder, Felipe Segundo—and, through a whim of Philip's son, is absurdly at variance with all else in the palace. A rigidly severe simplicity is the genius of the whole pile, save, forsooth, in this the very house

of death, where everything is ordered by a spirit of foolish and inopportune ostentation. So small it is, too, after one's preconceived notions about it. Just a little octagon, 35 feet in diameter, and the same in height, lined with richly-polished marbles, which are crumbling away with a strange decomposition. The whole available wall-space is occupied by a series of niches, in which stand black sarcophagi, all exactly alike, mostly occupied, but some—those of the ex-Queen Isabella and Don Alfonso—grimly awaiting the living. Only kings and the mothers of kings are admitted to the sacred circle, and for three hundred years the rendezvous has been kept faithfully with but three exceptions. Ferdinand and Isabella—the Reyes Católicos—sleep at their beloved Granada, and the Bourbon Philip V. and his wife lie, as we have seen, at La Granja. It is not a nice spot—desirous as some of its occupants are recorded to have been of spending their leisure hours in it before their final entrance—and yet one cannot help entertaining savage objections to some of the exclusions which Spanish etiquette has ordained. There is the gentle Mercedes, for example, the late queen, who certainly deserved a niche among the honoured dead, one would say, and who must, nevertheless, lie apart, in the great cold church above.

Coming up again from the Panteon, with eyes more accustomed to the darkness and the strange way, we may notice the beautiful jaspers of the staircase, the portrait of a monk who miraculously stopped a

dangerous flow of water beneath the foundations, and the inscription over the portal, "Natura occidit, exaltat Spes." Half-way up, too, there is the sealed door of the horrible Pudridero, wherein are a host of Infantes and unhonoured, barren queen-consorts, and which forms sometimes a temporary resting-place of the bodies destined for interment below.

And now, if the high mass is over, there are some objects of interest to be visited in the church. There is the gorgeous high altar and retablo of Milanese Trezzo, with the kneeling figures of Charles V., Philip II., and their families—reliable portraits, and valuable too from their details of costume. Only three of Philip's wives are here, the despised English Mary being omitted. Charles occupies the post of honour on the gospel side; Philip kneels over the little room, on the south side of the Capilla Mayor, where he died, and into which we may presently look. Not far off, in the north-east corner of the church, there is the small chapel where the ill-fated Mercedes lies under her touchingly simple monument. The plain gold cross at her feet, an offering of the English residents in Madrid, and the fresh wreaths of flowers, bear pleasant testimony to the love borne her by the people. One would have liked to have found her below, in the Panteon, certainly, but then she has been mercifully spared the Pudridero. There is not much else to be seen in the nave, except the very fine figures of saints by Navarrette El Mudo (the Dumb) which decorate the

great columns, and which, as Lopez de Vega said, "spoke for their painter":—

"No quiso el ciel que hablase,
Porque, con mi entendimiento,
Diese mayor sentimíento
A las cosas que pintase;
Y tanta vida les dí
Con el pincel singular,
Que, como no pudé hablar,
Hice que hablasen por mí."

All the rest—frescoes, fittings, and relics—have been overrated.

Not so, however, the coro and ante-coro, placed, as usual, in the west galleries. The view of the church from up here is quite sublime, and there are some fine choral books and choir-furniture to be seen—to say nothing of Luca Giordano's ceiling, very wonderful, and very characteristic of '*Fa-presto*.' The choral books form perhaps the finest collection in the country, 218 in number, most of them dating from the sixteenth century, and exquisitely illuminated. And then, just in the dimmest corner, is the stall where the master builder of the place, the dark-minded Felipe, used to sit daily to hear mass, slipping in unobserved from his cell through the tiny private door close by. We may pass out by this same way to the great library, and *Salas Capitulares*, noticing, just as we turn into the passage, Benvenuto Cellini's celebrated crucifix of white marble. This masterpiece, designed originally for the church of

Santa Maria Novella at Florence, was very highly prized by Cellini, who worked upon it, as he himself writes, "with that careful love which so precious an image merits." In consequence of misunderstandings with the authorities of Santa Maria Novella the artist determined to reserve it for his own tomb, but presently was induced to part with it for the sum of fifteen hundred ducats to the Duke of Tuscany, by whom, twelve years later, it was bestowed upon the art-and-relic-loving Philip II. It is a very delicate piece of workmanship, though somewhat overwrought, and lacking breadth of conception; and it is remarkable, moreover, as having inaugurated the hateful reign of petticoated Christs. For Philip, in an acute fit of prudishness, one day placed his handkerchief over the loins of the figure, failing, we will hope, to appreciate all the ills which he thereby bound upon a too servile humanity.

The Escorial has long since lost its finest pictures, but the three little Salas Capitulares still contain some really good things, much of their effect, however, being spoiled by the conformation of the rooms, and a bad light. There are one or two good Tintorettos, Riberas, and Navarettes, an admirable *Last Supper* of Titian's, and, best of all, a grand Velazquez—*Jacob receiving from his Sons the Coat of his lost Joseph.*

From hence to the library, the last of the half-dozen "goodly" things promised in the Escorial proper. Even the ordinary superficial sight-seer cannot fail to be impressed here, while to the extraordinary traveller—to