

THE ESCORIAL.



character, unrelieved by any brightness or graceful features, oppresses the soul. One longs for color, for music, for a crowd, or even a sacred pageant, to mitigate the stern and severe impression which is felt at the first glance at the Escorial, and which deepens with every look into its immense interiors.

Philip II. built his own character into this structure. He had architects, indeed; but Philip was his own designer, a man of great artistic taste, and a liberal patron of artists, of indomitable will and dense superstition. His morbid devotion was akin to insanity, and the passion for seclusion which haunted him showed the same tendency. He was the proudest among kings, and the most bigoted among devotees; what wonder, then, that he should build a convent for a palace, and make its costliest room a sepulchre? The Escorial was built in fulfilment of a vow made by Philip to his patron saint, St. Lawrence, after the victory of St. Quentin, in August, 1557, and in compliance with the request of Charles V. that Philip would build a mausoleum for him and his descendants. The systematic and austere monarch did nothing hastily or without due order and plan. One can read his reasons for founding the Escorial in a document, written and signed by the monarch, which runs thus, "In acknowledgment of the many and great blessings which it has pleased God to heap on us and continue to us daily, and inasmuch as he has been pleased to direct and guide our deeds and acts to his holy service, and in maintenance and defence of his holy faith and religion, and of justice and peace within our realms; considering

likewise what the emperor and king, my lord and father, in a codicil which he lately made, committed to our care, and charged us with, respecting his tomb, the spot and place where his body, and that of the empress and queen, my lady and mother, should be placed, it being most just and meet that their bodies should be most duly honored with a befitting burial ground . . . and because we have, besides, determined that whenever it may please God to take us away to him, our body should rest in the same place and spot near theirs, . . . for all these reasons we found and erect the Monastery of San Lorenzo el Real, near the town of El Escorial, in the diocese of Toledo," and so on.

The building was begun in 1565, and finished in 1584, at a cost of three and a quarter millions of dollars. It covers a surface of 500,000 feet, is 744 feet long, and 580 wide, divided into 16 courts or quadrangles. There are eight massive towers at the angles, about two hundred feet high, a church in the centre, 320 feet long, 230 feet wide, and 320 high, where the cupola crowns the whole structure. There are 88 fountains, 86 staircases, 15 cloisters, 12,000 doors, 2600 windows, more than half a mile of fresco painting, and miles of corridors and passages. These figures are extremely prosaic, but they give the idea of vastness and massive grandeur even better than the photograph which I brought from the place.

It has been said so often that the architect was obliged to build this structure in the form of a grid-iron, because it was dedicated to St. Laurence, that

most people believe it to be true. Arrogant assertion, or equally arrogant denial, passes current with a majority of mankind, who have neither time nor inclination to investigate. There is no evidence that the architects, either Juan Bautista de Toledo or his successor, Juan de Herrera, ever had any such instructions, or entertained any such idea. Any building in the form of a parallelogram with a portico might be called a gridiron, especially if it had St. Laurence to back it.

The main interest of the Escorial is historical and personal. Its immense Church, in the form of a Greek cross, contains numerous chapels, of which the finest is the High chapel, which is built directly over the tomb of the kings. Philip desired the altar of the chapel to be placed directly above this vaulted tomb, so that mass should be said daily over the bodies of the kings. This altar is made of precious stones, and one slab of jasper forms the top. The whole interior is impressive and elaborate, but its solemnity does not invite to worship. On either side of the high altar are little oratories, low rooms of marble, for the use of royal persons in their attendance upon mass. The one on the left, as you look from the altar, was used by Philip II., and this communicates with the little suite of rooms which he inhabited, and where he died after weeks of agony, in misery and filth. The dreadful details of his illness and death have been given by Siguenza, and commented upon by many historians and biographers.

The choir at the entrance of the Church has two

rows of elegant stalls made out of ebony and cedar and other choice woods, well carved, and its library contains enormous choral books, some of which have leaves of parchment two yards wide, each leaf taking the whole skin of a calf. Some of the books are beautifully illuminated, and bear marks of frequent use. The gem of the choir is a marble crucifix, carved by Benvenuto Cellini, the great Florentine, for the Duke of Tuscany, who gave it to Philip. From the church we descended to the Panteon, the steps and walls of which, as well as the tombs, are of precious marbles. In an octagonal marble chamber are twenty-six sarcophagi, placed one above the other, around the walls, upon each side of the jasper altar. These contain the remains of kings and mothers of kings, the kings on the right and their consorts on the left of the altar. Charles V. occupies an upper sarcophagus, and Philip I. lies in a coffin of gilt bronze in the one below. It is said that Maria Louisa, his wife, scratched her name with a pair of scissors upon her future resting-place. In a separate chamber lie the royal infants and princes, and queens whose sons did not occupy the throne. It is a wonderful sepulchre, whose like is not to be seen elsewhere; but it seemed pagan and repulsive, in spite of the many pious and Christian inscriptions upon the marble tombs. Compared with the catacombs at Rome, whose rude and simply symbols tell of pure and deep piety, or with many a resting-place in Continental or English cathedrales, this Panteon seemed a charnel-house, gloomy and depressing, with nothing to lift the soul out of the dreariness and emptiness

of death. We were glad to climb the polished steps, and follow our guide through the more cheerful and handsomely furnished rooms of the palace, looking at elegant tapestries and fine furniture, and thence into the library, to dissipate the impression. The library is an arched room nearly two hundred feet long and thirty-two feet wide, paved with marble, with carved cases for books, and tables of marble and porphyry for the use of readers. The ceilings are frescoed, and portraits adorn the walls. All the books have their edges turned outwards, which renders it impossible to tell their contents. On each table are some fine illuminated manuscripts, and there are a variety of rare and beautiful works in Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic on exhibition.

As the rain had ceased, we were glad to leave the interior of the monastery and go out upon the platforms and terraces which overlook gardens and orchards and fish-ponds, pleasing features in the midst of melancholy wastes. The distant view was dreary; and, in the village below, the railway buildings were prominent, with their nineteenth century excitements, out of harmony with all the other surroundings. We walked away to the village promenade, now quite deserted, and, sitting down, gazed over the severe landscape, and meditated upon the life of the man who for threescore years stifled all generous emotions, gave up to bigotry and superstition a powerful mind and great opportunities, wasted the resources of his country in worse than useless wars and persecutions, and left this vast and useless pile as a monument and a warning.

XIV

FROM MADRID TO CORDOVA

A NIGHT JOURNEY — LA MANCHA — THE WINDMILLS OF
DON QUIXOTE — SCENERY OF THE SIERRA MORENA —
ANDALUSIA — ENTERING CORDOVA

THE journey from Madrid to Cordova is usually taken in the night, because the express trains run only at that time. For a considerable part of the way, the country is so uninteresting that it is as well to pass over it in darkness as by daylight. The scene at the Madrid railway station was, on a small scale, like that on the departure of an ocean steamer from a New York pier. Friends, with huge bouquets of flowers, thronged the platforms, and laughter and tears accompanied the incessant chattering of the travellers with those who had come to wish them a pleasant journey. There was but one sleeping-carriage, and as all its places were engaged, it was a matter of interest to know who were to be our companions. Two gentlemen, with a quantity of hand luggage, entered the compartment shortly before the train started, and, after establishing themselves, began to converse in Spanish, from which they gradually glided into French. After we had talked some time together, we discovered that our fellow-travellers were Englishmen, who had lived in the United

States, and that we had many mutual friends. They were bound to Ronda, where they had interests in a railroad which is to connect Bobadilla and Algeciras and open some valuable mining properties to the market. A large part of the Spanish mines are superintended by English and American engineers and worked by means of foreign capital. Sometimes the Spanish owners of property throw every hindrance and obstacle in the way of new methods of work or transportation, even as we have seen opposition to steam vessels and railroads in our own country. All progress is by no means improvement, but this is a poor age for the conservative almost anywhere except in Spain.

The railroad crosses the broad plains of La Mancha, celebrated as the scene of Don Quixote's adventures. The windmills still stand and grind the corn on these treeless hills, which seem to roll in swelling outline to the horizon. In the moonlight, as we rode along, we could imagine the mad knight on his raw-boned steed, charging upon these broad-armed foes, and coming to grief, as many do who fight the wind or "beat the air." The night was mild, and flocks of sheep could be seen in the fresh pastures, tended by shepherds. As we went further south, we passed the town of Val de Peñas, which gives name to one of the best of Spanish wines, the common wine of this whole region. It is of a dark, rich color, with more body and sweetness than claret. The people mix it with water, but they rarely drink too much of it. Indeed, in all our travels in Spain, we saw no Spaniards intoxicated; and we often saw them buying

water at the railway stations to drink by itself or mix with wine.

Early in the morning we crossed the Sierra Morena range of mountains. The scenery is wild and grand. This range of mountains divides the valley of the Guadalquivir from that of the Guadiana. The road is a fine specimen of engineering, often climbing along a narrow shelf of rock between precipitous mountains, winding in and out among the most rugged and fantastic cliffs, caverns, and precipices. Onward and upward we climbed, and daylight showed us a far-extending view from the top of the range, over the beautiful Andalusia. Olive groves and orange orchards, and cork-trees, and vineyards, and fields full of poppies and daisies, and multitudes of other brilliant flowers gave color to the landscape. Great aloes with their long spikes guarded the roads, and plantations of roses filled the air with fragrance. The distant country had the delicate grayish blue tint which fills our American atmosphere in August, and on the horizon rose in dim outline the snowy summits of the Sierra Nevada. The change from the red-brown, treeless regions of Aragon and Castile to this earthly paradise of Andalusia was delightful. The towns seemed buried in foliage, the air was full of perfume, the birds were singing, and all nature was beautiful in spring attire. Under such pleasant impressions, in the bright and dewy morning we alighted from the train at a railway station in a garden, where we gathered a handful of roses before the deliberate porter had found our luggage and brought it to the carriage.

We were at Cordova. Outside of the town, along the Alameda, a few men were preparing for a fête by erecting booths and frames for fireworks; and here and there a woman and child might be seen, returning from market with a jar of milk or a few vegetables. But there was a great stillness over all things. We drove through well paved and clean streets, which were very narrow with white houses on each side, to the Fonda Suiza, a good hotel, in whose little courtyard a blindfold donkey goes round and round ten hours each day, turning an Oriental "sakia," or water-wheel, to supply the inn with water. As we passed through the town, we caught many a glimpse through the gateways of a marble *patio*, or central courtyard, with palms and orange-trees and bowers of roses. Around these courtyards there are galleries upon which the rooms open, and over them are drawn, in the heats of summer, brown linen shades, which exclude the powerful rays of the sun. In the centre of many of these courts there are fountains; and the murmur of the water, the hum of insect life, the voice of a bird, and in the evening the music of a guitar are the sounds which chiefly break the stillness of the place. When the infrequent railway trains come to the far-off station, a clattering stage goes through the streets; but few wheeled vehicles disturb the pavements worn by the feet of horses and mules and asses, which do the transportation of man and merchandise upon their backs.

How different is the Cordova of to-day from that place of which history tells us, and which still has some memorials of its greatness! Once this was a

large city, a centre of European civilization, a second Mecca to the Mohammedan, and the rival of Oriental capitals. Here the arts flourished, and hither flocked multitudes of students. The city was great before the Christian era, and when it became the Moorish capital it was unrivalled in its splendor.

It is recorded that, under the Moorish princes in the tenth century, the city and its suburbs contained 300,000 inhabitants, mosques to the number of 600, 800 schools, 50 hospitals, 900 baths, a library of more than half a million of volumes, and an annual revenue of \$30,000,000. In 1235, Ferdinand took the city, and the reign of the Moors was over. Discord and faction had prepared the way for conquest and decline. From the entrance of Ferdinand, the prosperity of Cordova deserted it; the population dwindled from hundreds of thousands to seventy thousand, in the seventeenth century, and it is now said to be less than forty thousand. Even such a number seems like exaggeration to the traveller who walks through the quiet streets, often without meeting a soul, and finds in the market-place only a few hundreds of people at the most important hours of traffic in the early morning, a few beggars basking in the sun, or some dirty children making their way to the ancient mosque.

It is at once a rest and an annoyance for an American to travel in Spain and come to such a city as Cordova. The stillness and solemnity of the place are good for tired nerves and weary brains, which have been excited and worn in the atmosphere and action of American life; but there is also a reaction

from the enforced slowness and moderation which characterize everything here. But it is of no use to fret and fume, to attempt to introduce Chicago manners into Cordova, to criticise customs that have existed for half a thousand years, in the hope of changing them, or to make oneself miserable because Cordova is so dead, when Théophile Gautier said fifty years ago that it was a "bleached and calcined skeleton!"

We will go and see the Roman Bridge and the ruins of the only bath left of the nine hundred in which Cordovans used to wash, and then we will visit the wonderful Mosque.

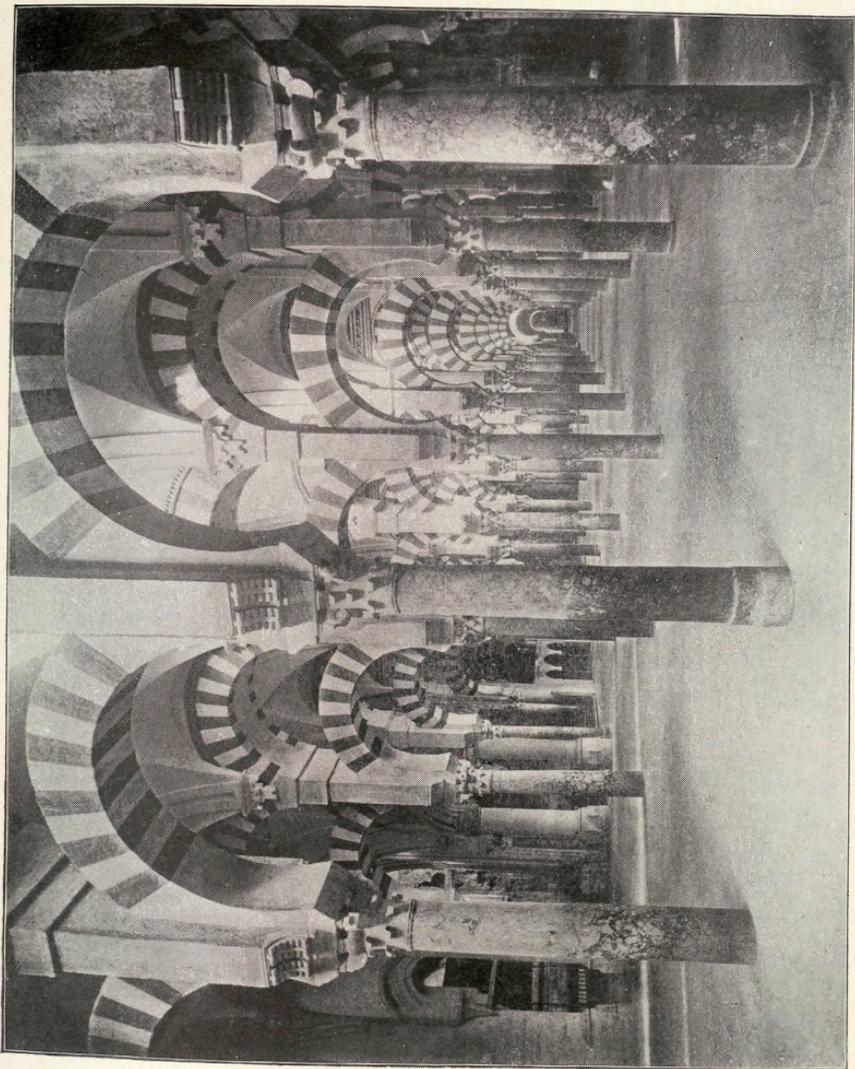
XV

THE MOSQUE OF CORDOVA

MECCA OF THE WEST — A MARBLE FOREST — THE COURT
OF ORANGES — THE HOLY OF HOLIES — AN IVORY
PULPIT

IT matters not whether the traveller come from Madrid or Granada, from Valencia or Seville, the Cathedral or Mosque of Cordova will be a surprise to him. It has been described a hundred times, and pictures and views have made it, in a certain sense, familiar; but its originality and beauty are not fully understood until it is seen. It is recognized as the most perfect specimen of the ecclesiastical architecture of the Moors in Spain and the most complete mosque in Europe. It was designed by Abdurrahman to rival the Mosque of Bagdad, and to become a resort for Mohammedan pilgrims equal to the Kaaba of Mecca.

The caliph drew the plans, consecrated his revenues, and worked himself upon the building. The building was begun in 786, and progressed so rapidly that in ten years it was substantially completed by Hashem, the son of its founder. As first built it consisted of eleven aisles, six hundred and forty-two feet in length and nearly three hundred feet in width. Hashem II. added eight more, which in-



CORDOVA — INTERIOR OF THE MOSQUE.



creased the width to four hundred and sixty-two feet.

We entered the low door, and at once the wonders of the place were before us. Nearly a thousand pillars, supporting horseshoe arches, formed aisles and vistas in every direction. Six hundred and forty-two feet in front of us and more than two hundred on the right hand and on the left did this "forest of pillars," as Gautier called them, rise. The first view was bewildering. It seemed as if one might wander "in endless mazes lost" through the vast building. We were glad to stop and examine one column which, when rubbed, gave forth a sulphurous smell, and to have attention directed to another, which bore marks and indentations which were said to have been made by prisoners of the Inquisition, though it was not quite clear to us how the prisoners and this pillar came together. I have said that there were nearly a thousand columns; to be more exact, there were originally twelve hundred columns. Of these, two hundred, more or less, have been taken away; and there are now eight hundred and fifty, upon which the roof rests, and a large number which have been built into the walls. We saw the rounded parts of some of these, where the plaster and whitewash had been scraped away. These columns are each of one block, and some of them are of rich and rare stone. The majority were probably quarried not far from Cordova, though tradition declares that they were the spoil of Roman temples, Oriental mosques, and other buildings far and near.

A wonderful variety of perspectives is produced by

the intersection of the aisles and the horseshoe arches, which are so curiously interwoven as to make an elaborate and beautiful open-work support to the roof. This roof is but thirty-five feet high; and hence the impression of the vastness of the building is due, not to its grandeur or massiveness, but to its extent and the originality of its construction.

We went again and again to the Mosque and spent hours among its columns, delighting our eyes with new vistas, and fresh effects of sunbeams that slanted through the arches, and shadows that dwelt in the chapels and angles of the sanctuary. The chief entrance is through the *Puerta del Perdon*, Gate of Pardon, the largest and most beautiful of the gateways, and the only one on the northern side which has not been walled up. The walls which enclose the Mosque are from thirty to sixty feet high and six feet thick, and are strengthened by square buttress-towers. Doors plated with bronze and covered with Gothic and Arabic inscriptions close the arch of the *Puerta del Perdon*. They are sometimes open, and we went in and out through the arch; but the usual entrance is through a narrow passage on the right. This gate leads directly into the Court of Oranges, a patio half as large as Madison Square in New York, divided into three parts, with a fountain and a number of orange-trees in each. There are colonnades of marble pillars around this court, and there are always a number of idlers, women and children, and men who ask to be employed as guides, lounging under the orange-trees.

Entering from the north and going straight on, we

came to the choir and the large chapel, which was built within the Mosque in the time of Charles V., from 1521 to 1526. The erection of these made it necessary to remove those portions of the Mosque which occupied the ground, and thus the original beauty of the building was sadly marred. When the monarch, who had given permission to erect these structures, came to Cordova in 1526 and saw the havoc which had been made, he was very indignant, and is said to have exclaimed: "Had I known that the ancient part of the Mosque was to be touched, I would never have allowed it. You have built here what can be built anywhere else, but you have destroyed what was unique in the world."

From the choir we walked onward to the ancient Maksura, said to be the sultan's place of prayer upon Friday, the Mohammedan Sabbath. This is now the chapel Villaviciosa, and is used as a robing-room. In Moorish times, the gold and silver vessels used at the Bairam feast were kept here, with a fine copy of the Koran, so large that it took two men to carry it, so says the historian Edrîsî, who described it in the twelfth century. The original Moorish arches are visible here, but most of the decoration is of a later period.

Beyond the Maksura, southwards, is the Holy of Holies, called Mihrab, a six-sided chapel, about thirteen feet in diameter and thirty feet high. Its archway is studded with mosaics as beautiful as anything in St. Sophia. The walls are of marble, and the roof is a marble shell, carved from a single piece; beneath it runs a beautiful arcade, with little brown