

executed, that the objects excite terror, while the manner raises admiration.

OVER the windows, which are here similar as in the other arcades, the paintings are exceeding fine. In one part are Bezaleel and Aholiab, who constructed the ark of the covenant, the tables, and altars, after the pattern, which God gave to Moses on mount Sinai. On the other are Eliezer and Gershom, the sons of Moses, and Zipporah, his wife, who came with Jethro, her father, from Midian, where he was priest, to congratulate him on his fortune and victories : accordingly they are accompanied by minstrels playing on various instruments ; the whole so agreeably diversified, and the coloring so beautifully varied, as to render it an admirable piece.

IN the front of the cross nave, below the arch, which terminates the ceiling, is another very large window facing the north, and the sides of it being very spacious, the painter has represented, on one, the manna falling in the desert, with the Israelites eagerly gathering it up, as the food with which God fed them, during their wandering in the wilderness : an admirable symbol of the true manna in the eucharist. On the other side of the window is the mighty Samson, not rending the jaws of the lion, which furiously assaulted him, but as passing by that place afterwards, when he saw issuing from the carcase of that ravenous beast, a swarm of bees, which had formed a honey-comb in his mouth : a very extraordinary event, and by St. Austin allegorically applied to the death of Christ, the Saviour of the world, the Lion of Judah, from whom hath proceeded the innumerable multitudes of Christians, with that delicious honey-comb, the memorial of his death, which imparts unto them life eternal.

The

The masterly execution of these histories is such, that they are viewed with the greatest pleasure and admiration by the best judges.

Fourth
painting.

THE last painting, on the left hand of the cross nave, is that signal victory over the Amalekites, the first the Israelites gained, after passing through the Red Sea; and in acknowledgement of which Moses erected an altar to God in the wilderness of Raphidim, attributing to him the honor of his first success; similar to the intent of the founder of this church and altar, who also erected this stately fabric in a desert, and in acknowledgement of the first victory in his reign. Amidst some peaks, projecting above the summit of a mountain, is Moses, kneeling between Aaron and Hur, with his hands lifted up to heaven; while Joshua is at the head of the troops of Israel, spreading carnage among the enemy, both horse and foot, who vigorously sustained his attacks. Aaron and Hur, who are near Moses, bear up his hands; the scripture informing us, that, whilst he held them up in prayer, Israel prevailed, and if he dropt them through weariness, or his ardor slackened, the scale turned on Amalek's side; whereas, by being supported, he held them constantly up without any weariness till sun-set, when the enemy was totally defeated.

ON the upper part of the ceiling, or arcade, is a great part of heaven, with clouds emitting confluences of light towards Moses, as a sign that his prayers had penetrated the heavens, and that to them was owing the illustrious victory then obtained. With the beauties of a delightful country are blended the horrors of a field of battle, which has a most happy effect; indeed, this artist had a singular talent for military representations.

ON

ON the sides, over the windows, stand four of the judges of the people of Israel, most renowned for their exploits, which, under the divine auspices, they performed in defence of their country. On one side is Othniel, and Ehud noted for his dexterity in fighting with both hands. In their dress, countenances, and attitudes, both display that intrepid courage, with which the first subdued Chushan, king of Mesopotamia and Syria; the second, Eglon, king of Moab, and preserved the people in peace many years; in regard to the glory of their achievements, and the rectitude of their judgments, the scripture files them the favors of Israel.

IN the other part are Gideon and Jephthah, both heroes of great reputation. Jephthah is joined with that noble warrior Gideon, his predecessor in the government, to whom heaven was pleased to give him an assurance of the remarkable victory over the haughty Midianites, in the miracle of the dew and the fleece. If we may believe historians, Philip, duke of Burgundy, had an eye to this transaction, and not to the fable of Jason in Colchis, in the institution of the order of the golden fleece, which was in the year of our Lord 1430, and the grand-mastership made hereditary in the kings of Spain, of the most august house of Austria.

IN the front, towards the south, under the arch terminating the ceiling, is another large window, exactly resembling that towards the north, adorned with an apposite scriptural history on each side. If the lamb in Gideon's fleece be a memorial of the valor, it likewise represents the sacramental lamb, who supports and animates his faithful adherents in their progress towards heaven, preserving them from dangers, and strengthening them in temptations: accordingly,

on

on one side of the window is the prophet Elijah, with an angel bringing him bread, by which he was enabled to reach the top of mount Horeb. On the other side is David, receiving the shew-bread from Abimelech; both were persecuted by very powerful adversaries, Elijah by Jezebel, and David by Saul. These and the other histories on this superb ceiling make the greater impression by the excellency of their representations. The greatest judgment is shewn in the looks and gestures of the persons, and the charming perspectives are always viewed with fresh delight and admiration.

LET us now proceed to the four arcades that terminate the collateral naves: one of which is over the great altar of the virgin, the other, that of St. Jerom; of the two lower, one is over the chapel of the doctors of the church, and the other above that of the virgin. These are separated at an equal distance from the principal nave and the cross. Their convexity is of a considerable height, though short of the others before mentioned. On that of the gospel side, and over the principal altar of the virgin, it was thought proper to paint the circumstances of the annunciation; as also the nativity of our Saviour, and the adoration of the magi; which the Spanish monarchs, guided by the star of their devotion, have frequently imitated in this superb chapel. The angels are represented as worshipping him, and the rebellious confined to terrible punishments. The whole is executed with admirable skill, and an enchanting diversity.

First arcade.

On the east side of the arcade is seen the highest mystery, as we are told by St. John, that there appeared another wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and crowned with twelve stars. By the crown of stars is intimated her royal descent,

descent, and the assemblage of all the virtues. The moon under her feet expresses her exemption from the weaknesses of the children of Adam : and she was clothed with the sun, as then pregnant with the true sun of righteousness.

THUS is the most holy Mary placed here in the empyreal heaven, environed with mystical ornaments of incomparable beauty and majesty. To these the artist, with a noble boldness, has added not only the annunciation, but the Holy Ghost, as an effulgent dove, hovering over her, and the eternal father, affectionately looking down upon her, and her son. The whole scene appears amidst lucid clouds ; that it may be said, indeed, to form a heavenly spectacle. On one side is placed Joseph with the blooming branch, as the worthy bridegroom appointed for Mary : on the other, the eastern kings, according to David's prophecy, bringing gifts, and, with all the pomp of eastern majesty, worshipping the divine infant as king of kings. Within the concavity, on the north side, are the good angels, who, on being informed of the mystery of the incarnation, paid him the worship due to his divinity ; and, headed by Michael the archangel, with his sword and shield, in a most graceful attitude, express joy and triumph in their looks and gestures, on account of their victory over the prince of darkness, who refused to pay homage, and even formed designs to place himself on the throne of heaven. Accordingly he is represented in the figure of a seven-headed dragon, falling, together with his adherents, from the clouds, where the battle is represented, into the dark abyss, the place of their eternal torments. Around are several choirs of angels, celebrating this achievement ; some have instruments of music, others lillies and roses in their hands. The beauty of their faces, heightened by

DESCRIPTION OF

devout emotion, as worshipping the Divinity, are inimitably expressed. In the upper part are others, holding the fleuron, from whence hangs a silver lamp, which is not only a very splendid ornament, but has a great affinity with the mystery, whose light came from above. The appearance of these various objects is greatly improved by the masterly disposition of them.

BENEATH, in the four planes of the angles, where the arcade begins, are four of the ten pagan Sybils, to whom many of the ancient fathers, since Theophilus of Antioch, gave the title of prophetesses of the gentiles: such, indeed, was the veneration paid them in the world, that Clemens Alexandrinus affirms, that many thought them sent from heaven. Lactantius says, that St. Paul exhorted the faithful, to read the books of the Sybils; St. Austin even cites several of their prophecies, in which, with astonishing certainty and clearness, they foretold the principal mysteries of the Messiah, and the redemption of mankind.

THE first of the four is the Sybil of Cumana, who prophesied of the divine logos, and of his nativity; this is a very animated figure, and seems proclaiming those stupendous mysteries. The second is the Sybil of Cumæ, who foretold the universal tranquility and affluence, which was to attend the coming of Christ, and nearly in the same words as the prophet Isaiah: accordingly, she is represented as pouring out of a cornucopia, the ancient emblem of plenty. A third is the Persian Sybil, who prophesied of the preaching of John the baptist, and his baptizing in Jordan; this is signified by her pouring water from a shell, with one of her arms lifted up. Both the shell and the water are extremely admired. The fourth is the Lybian

Lybian Sybil, who, among other miracles of Christ, foretold that of the loaves and fishes in the desert, with a perspicuity and precision beyond all doubt; this particular is intimated by a fish and a loaf in her hands. The design and coloring in them all is excellent, and their various dresses, with the groupes of sportive genii, some holding, and others, as it were, turning over the books of their prophecies, make a very entertaining appearance.

ON considering the distribution of the several pieces, and the skill which shines in every part of them, the arcade appears like a canopy, or pavillion, erected for the majesty of the venerable host, and of the reliques already mentioned. It has indeed been remarked, that, within this concave, there are some void spaces which might have been better filled; but if it be considered, that the subject, here represented, is the fall of the angels, and their expulsion from their thrones in heaven; these void spaces are so far from being exceptionable, that they correspond with, and illustrate the history, expressing the great vacancy made in the empyreal heaven at the expulsion of that powerful dragon, who drew after him the third part of the stars. They are therefore no oversight, but, like the rest of the paintings, display the great sagacity of the painter.

THE first proof of it is the very next picture, on the epistle side, over the principal altar, or that of St. Jerom, where the saints are seated on the stately thrones, which the apostate spirits had forfeited. These fill the whole concave of the ceiling, diminishing in the most exact perspective, from the border up to the center: all their faces are expressive of the joy they felt, and are clothed with lucid robes of fine linen, crowns on their heads, and palm branches in their hands.

DESCRIPTION OF

hands. Some, by their attributes, are known to be apostles, or evangelists, the immediate disciples of Christ, and the venerable teachers of the faithful; others, martyrs and confessors of invincible zeal, patriarchs, prophets, popes, doctors, hermits, recluses, and anachorets. The design of this superb piece is to exhibit those persons whose reliques are deposited in the altar, besides innumerable others contained in the reliquaries, collected with great labor and caution, and at an immense charge.

IN the four angles are the four doctors of the church, with this difference, that, instead of St. Jerom himself, is a lion, finely expressed as guarding his library. Above it, is an angel, sounding a trumpet as at the last day, with the thought of which his mind was continually impressed. Beyond this is the faint himself, when young, prostrate before the throne of God, who enjoins the angels to scourge him for the excessive delight he took in reading Cicero, as he himself relates; and which flagellation he concluded to be a proof, that he was beloved by God, as chastising them whom he loves: accordingly, relinquishing all human studies, he gave himself up entirely to expound the scriptures, promote divine knowledge, and confirm the truth and importance of his lectures by a most exemplary sanctity of life; so that he became one of the greatest luminaries of the church. In the reliquary of this altar is kept the faint's head, and the countenance is so expressive of whatever is noble and amiable, that it may be compared to a casket of fine gold, containing treasures of wisdom, and enriched with inestimable gems, the sciences and virtues, for which that faint was so eminent. Though the other faints are painted in the same manner, with their ensigns and attributes, and as if already in possession of the heavenly rewards

due

due to their christian virtues, yet to avoid prolixity, I shall only say, that as St. Laurence, the patron of this edifice, is seen most admirably represented, on the ceiling; so in this altar is his head, crowned with a wreath, and an inscription of gold letters, *CASENT SANCTI LAURENTIS*; a whole thigh, with the skin quite burnt, and marked with the prongs used in turning him on the gridiron; a foot with a burning coal between the toes, which is of more value than the richest carbuncle; an arm, and so many other fragments, that, if joined, they would nearly make an entire body. All these are kept in costly vases, pyramids, and little temples. Even one of the bars of the gridiron, on which the magnanimous martyr lay, is seen here in the hand of a celebrated statue of that saint, made by order of a late monarch of Spain, and, though bigger than life, is of silver, decorated with gold. It is in the habit of a deacon, and weighs eighteen arrobas and a half. On the breast, as a rich gem, depends another relic of this famous Spaniard, being part of one of his shoulders. There also hangs a silver lamp from a fleuron, appearing to be supported by angels, smiling at each other; which, with the beauty of the clouds, and the astonishing glory of some glimpses of heaven, efface the remembrance, or, at least, cool the admiration of the angels, thrones, beatitudes, glories, and vivid colors in the preceding, with which we had been transported.

THE other two vaults, answering to those already described, and occupying the two angles of the church, are filled with a like judicious ^{Third ceiling.} assemblage of grand and pleasing objects; the execution is so masterly, and the colors so beautiful, that the spectator hesitates, which he shall prefer. These paintings exhibit two signal triumphs; the first, which is on the ceiling of the chapel of the doctors, where the
reliques

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reliques of those venerable persons are deposited, represents the triumph of the church militant, in the form of a beautiful lady, clothed with all the ornaments of the pontifical habit, and with a crown on her head, displaying the supreme majesty of those who fill the apostolic chair, their dominion over all earthly potentates; that irresistible power, that unshaken stability, against which the gates of hell never have, nor ever will be able to prevail. In one hand she holds the keys, with which she opens and shuts the gates of paradise, and the book of the holy scriptures; and in the other, a cross with three arms, representing the signal triumphs, sometimes obtained by suffering, and at others, by preaching, that the church has gained over the perfidy of the Jews, the cruelty of the pagans, the subtilty of the heretics, the blindness of the idolaters, and the machinations of schismatics.

THE expression of this piece, the number, propriety, and ornaments of the figures, are all together admirable, and convey great instruction. The virtues are virgins of the most exquisite beauty; the sciences, at present so gloriously flourishing in Spain, are represented in a proper gradation, all of amiable aspects, and a suitable drapery. Faith, with a cross and chalice, leads the van; hope, which animates us in our voyage through the tempestuous sea of this world, rests on an anchor; charity, the bond of perfection; prudence, whose characteristic is perspicuity; prayer, religion, repentance, grief, obedience, and humility, tranquil under abasement; fear, as flying apart from some small flame; gratitude, constancy, abstinence, the gift of tears, with other personified powers and qualities of the mind, are all represented with emblems, equally expressive and beautiful.

IN

IN another part is divinity in her car, with her head touching the heavens, and a scepter in her hand, as queen of the sciences, who are represented as her attendants. The mystic, and the infusive, which, in sweet repose, is visited with illuminations from above; the scholastic expostive, and moral, the several branches of that supreme science, in their looks, attributes, and spirited attitudes, intimate the proper union of theory and practice. At beholding this venerable retinue of the church, the vices are abated, enraged, and overthrown; errors, like darkness, the emblem of them, flying from the true light; heresies and heretics, Arius, Luther, and Calvin, are thrown down, and trampled under foot by the triumphal car.

IN the open part of the car are seen St. Gregory the great, St. Jerom of all the greatest, together with St. Athanasius; and, on the other side, St. Austin, and St. Ambrose, accelerating the motion of the wheels; before them, and employed in the same honorable labor, each pulling at a rope, are St. John, St. Chrysoftome, St. Ildefonfo, St. Hilary, St. Cyprian, St. Leon, St. Anselm, St. Bonaventure, and others, all joining St. Thomas, who, blending together the quintessence of the writings of the holy fathers, with the golden threads of his eloquence, accuracy and judgment, has left us the most valuable works. This magnificent piece takes up the whole concave of the ceiling to its center, where hangs the silver lamp, and where grace is represented in the form of a beautiful virgin, clothed in white, to denote purity. Her hand is held out to a most amiable female figure, issuing from the clouds, intimating the divine goodwill to men; as the effusion of the heavenly gifts is represented by flowers which she drops, while angels, in the most lively postures, intercept some, and form them into wreaths and garlands, in token

of

of their joy at this important triumph, and the renewal of human happiness. The figures in this piece, which are as big as life, are above seventy in number, all dressed in robes, forming a venerable groupe. Some are seated on clouds, so elegantly painted, that they appear to be such in reality; others are in motions, very naturally adapted to the services they are supposed to be engaged in: and amidst such a multitude there is not the least confusion, or impropriety. Let not the number of figures be criticized; for, in triumphs, it is unavoidable. Besides every figure here augments the grandeur of the subject.

Fourth vault. In the other triumph, over the chapels of the holy virgins, with whose reliques this magnificent basilic is also enriched, the number is not less, but the figures still more beautiful and transcendent. It is called the triumph of virgin purity. Here we behold the virgin Mary, empress of heaven and earth; her beauty exceeding what belongs to mortals. Her retinue is composed of all those whom grace enabled, by martyrdom, or voluntary banishment, to preserve their virgin purity. She is represented in an august triumphal car, her silken hair loose, an azure mantle thrown over her snowy vest, and with a scepter in her hand, leading this angelic company to her glorious son.

THE bridegroom, the prince of peace, appears in the form of a white lamb, at the fore part of the car, as on a resplendent throne, holding a slender cross with a banner at the end, and his head affectionately turned towards his virgin mother, inviting her to receive the diadem: accordingly, two angels are flying towards her, bearing an imperial crown. The chariot is moved by holy virgins, as it were, marching in order on both sides, and behind; whilst a troop of others

others before draw the traces, which are the delicate works of their hands. The lamb is attended by a sportive group of winged boys, crowned with garlands, composed of white and red flowers, with palms in their hands, as if finging the new song in the Apocalypse. Divine love, placed at the head, holds together several traces, and is accompanied by angels, flying over him, and discharging, at the virgins, fiery darts of love; but whose deepest wounds are pregnant with the most elevated raptures; whilst other angels, still higher, are showering down roses. One holds, in his hand, a label, in which he says to love, "DUCTORIS SIC TE PRÆVIO." On the top, in the center of the ceiling, where the silver lamp hangs, is vigilance, environed by angels of lovely aspects, and remarkable vivacity in their eyes; in one hand she holds a watch, and in the other a clarion, the sound of which is explained by these words: PRUDENTES VIRGINES APTATE VESTRAS LAMPADES.

CONNOISSEURS very much admire, in this piece, the expression of the efforts of the holy virgins in moving the car. St. Agnes, animated by the sight of the lamb, labors at the first wheel, that she may fly to the embraces of her delight; St. Catharine is represented with the wheel, on which she suffered martyrdom, as if it were to accelerate the motion of the car; St. Cecilia, touching the solemn organ, approaches the spouse with a grateful offering of a pure heart; St. Agueda, together with her heart, offers her breasts, and St. Lucia her eyes. In like manner the car is preceded by another numerous troop of most beautiful virgins, and martyrs, with palms and trophies, exultingly following the banner of St. Ursula, in imitation of the eleven thousand British virgins, who performed such wonders under her conduct.

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WITH these are mingled other virgins of unspotted sanctity, though martyrs only in desire, as St. Teresa, St. Clara, St. Catharine of Sienna, St. Eustachia, St. Rosa, and others, who had not the honor of shedding their blood to increase the beauty of the fruitful field of the church, and for the enjoyment of the most lovely bridegroom. In another troop are those who distinguished their sanctity in the connubial state, as St. Anna, St. Isabel, St. Helena, St. Paula, St. Isabel, queen of Portugal, and others, rejoicing in the glorious recompence of their undefiled marriage.

HERE likewise, but lower down, is another virgin retinue of the blessed Mary, composed of the most celebrated matrons of the old testament, who follow at a distance, and are known by their attributes. In the first compartment is the prophetess Miriam, the sister of Aaron. She is attended by a troop of women with musical instruments, praising God for preserving them from the rage of the Egyptians, by causing the sea to overwhelm them, and bringing them to the land of promise.

In the second division is a very beautiful figure of Deborah, the judge and prophetess of Israel, with a truncheon in one hand, and a book in the other, sitting under a tufted palm-tree, as on her seat of judgment. She, jointly with Barak, the commander of the army, overcame the forces of Jabin, king of Canaan, commanded by Sisera, who, in his flight, was ignominiously slain by the hands of the magnanimous Jael, here represented by the side of Deborah, holding in her hands the hammer, and nail which she drove into the temples of the defeated idolator. On the sides are young women, with musical instruments, celebrating the wonderful event. One of them,
with

with a piece of music in one hand, and beating time with the other, seems rather nature than imitation. The space, between this border and the other, makes a noble appearance, and, to the fair sex, conveys the most sublime instructions, being filled with the following figures. Abisnag, the Shunamite, whom the scripture terms, *PUELLA PULCHRA NIMIS*; Ruth, with a sheaf of corn, saying of herself, *INVENS GRATIAM*; Rebecca, extremely beautiful, with a water-pot, and this motto from the scripture, *INCOGNITA VIRO*; Rachel, with a shepherd's crook, and the scriptural commendation, *DECORA FACIE*; and, next to her, is Susanna, *NON SUSTINUIT INIQUITATEM*; also Abigail, of whom it is said, *BENEDICTUM ELOQUIUM TUUM*. These are selected as the most eminent examples of virginity, decency, constancy, prudence, discretion, humanity, and the other virtues, which the painter has judiciously introduced here, to heighten the dignity of this triumph; where, amidst such a glorious retinue of so many brides of the divine lamb, is seen the queen of virgins, arrayed in superior pomp, and seated in the car of triumphant majesty.

IMMEDIATELY follows the third division, where is seen Esther in a royal dress, but fainting in the arms of her honorable women, when, for her consolation, it was said to her: *NON PRO TE SED PRO OMNIBUS LEX CONSTITUTA EST*; a very apposite inscription, held by a graceful page, and fastened to the royal scepter.

IN the last division is the intrepid Judith, attended by her maid, holding a sword, with the point on the ground, and, at her feet, the head of Holofernes; an action, by which she saved both her country, and herself, and gained universal applause. The women,

joining in the festivity, with musical instruments, are all represented in a most lively manner; which, with the beauty of the figures, the richness of the habits, the gracefulness and spirit of the attitudes, the variegated clouds, and the effulgent glimpses of heaven, seem beyond any successful imitation.

Entrances
into the
choir.

THE artist, after these astonishing pieces, proceeded to two others, at the entrances into the choir of the church, both on the convent and the college side. Through the former, the monks pass to their religious exercises; at which the royal family, during their residence at this august monastery, are pleased to assist at some particular offices of devotion.

THE vaulted ceilings are divided each into four compartments; less indeed than the preceding, in extent and elevation, but, in the excellence of the paintings, may be said to surpass them. In one of the compartments, on the convent side, is David, the author of the psalms, painted in a penitential posture, kneeling, and his hands joined, that his praises, ascending on the wings of true repentance, may be the more acceptable at the divine throne. Near him is the prophet Nathan, pronouncing these words: *DOMINUS TRANSTULIT PECCATUM TUUM, NON MORIERIS*; for God desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should live to serve and adore him. A remarkable document to princes, and indeed to all mankind; but here enforced by the most striking expressions and vivid coloring.

In the second division of this arcade, which faces the former, the subject is likewise king David, repenting of his ambition in numbering the people, and laying on them an unnecessary impost. Near him

is the prophet Gad, offering him, from the supreme Avenger of guilt, the choice of three different punishments; a three years famine; three months war, in which his enemies should prevail, and pursue him from place to place; or a pestilence of three days. Over them is an angel, holding in his hands the emblems of those terrible scourges. David's countenance and attitude express the deepest humiliation, and, at the same time, speak his conviction, that it is better to fall into the hands of God than man.

IN the division, on the right hand, is the same king, but in a state more consonant to his virtues, offering burnt-offerings and peace-offerings on an altar, which he built in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, as a thanksgiving to the divine clemency in causing the pestilence, which had swept such multitudes away, to cease. In the air is the angel, seen by David, Araunah, and others, sheathing the destructive sword; and nothing can be more graceful than his manner of doing it. The beauty of this piece is very much heightened by the flocks and herds designed for the sacrifice. The bullocks seem alive, and, without any reluctance, or compulsion, present themselves to the axe.

IN the fourth, or last division, the royal psalmist is represented striking his harp, his eyes lifted up to heaven, and with such a countenance, that he may well be said to sing with heart and affection; which alone can render our imperfect worship acceptable. On the top, amidst golden clouds, is seen part of the plan, received from God as a model for the temple which his son was to build; whilst some angels, with raptures, point to the place designed for its situation, as if rejoicing, that mankind would have a place for imitating their celestial employment. These pieces are exquisitely
painted,

painted, and perfectly suitable to the place, filling the mind with that awful sense of the Being we worship, which it becomes us to be penetrated with, when we approach his presence.

THE ceiling, on the other side, through which the monks of the college enter the choir, contains four particulars of the wise Solomon in as many compartments. In the first, Zadock, the high-priest, and Nathan, the prophet, are anointing him king in Gihon. In the second, God appears to him in a vision, imparting to him that wisdom, which, with a prudent humility, he had asked preferably to every thing else. Many resplendent beams descend on him, indicating the divine illuminations with which God, the fountain of true light, was pleased to favor him.

IN the third compartment is the famous judgment of the two harlots, who laid claim to the same child, when he ordered it to be divided, that each might have a part; and the real mother, in agony at the king's feet, intreating, that, rather than her poor babe should be put to death, it might be given to her cruel adversary, who had applauded the sentence, and urged the execution of it: an action which induced the king to adjudge the child to her, whose tenderness declared to be the real mother.

IN the fourth and last division, is the visit paid to that celebrated monarch by the queen of Sheba, who, moved by the fame of his wisdom, had determined to prove it by many curious questions; but found it to exceed report. In each of these passages of Solomon, and the preceding of David, the painter may be said to have exhausted all the judgment and skill of his art, whether we consider majesty, elegance,

elegancy, the choice of the colors in the several draperies, or the propriety and comeliness of the persons. From the edges to the central height of the ceiling, there is not a single place, in which the curious eye does not meet with objects, where the coloring, the spirit, and the execution, equally fill the beholder with admiration.

THESE pieces put the finishing hand to the paintings on the arcades of this church, which are no less than ten, and some very spacious, as we have before particularized: yet they, together with the great stair-case, took the painter up only a year and ten months; and from this small period must be deducted the holy days kept by state and church, and some for his private concerns and relaxation. It is indeed surprizing, that such perfection should be joined with such dispatch. The king allowed him two hundred golden crowns per month, for his table, besides many presents to his family, such as became the liberality of so great a monarch. The scaffolding, erected on the occasion, was designed by Joseph del Olmo, surveyor of the royal works. He consulted both strength and delicacy, but without the least impediment to the sacred offices of the church; which gave great satisfaction to the devout prince, who, as this structure owed its origin to the piety of his royal ancestors, so it was his injunction, that the execution of all its improvements should be conducted with the decency due to consecrated places.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the Reliquaries, Number of Reliques, and other valuable
Ornaments.

HAVING treated, so particularly, of the great chapel, the principal part of this august church, the sphere of the undefiled sun of righteousness, the reliquary of heaven, the best pledge, the depository of all the riches of grace and glory, amidst a splendid magnificence, which has no equal; it would be an unpardonable impropriety to pass over in silence those reliquaries, and treasures, which add a dignity to this basilic. But it may not be amiss previously to observe, that, though these sacred edifices are stiled either churches, or basilics; there is great difference between them. Churches, properly speaking, are buildings consecrated solely to the worship of God; and, at the same time, are stately edifices, erected for the preservation and honor of the reliques and images of saints.

THE word, basilic, has an immediate relation to religious worship. Kings palaces being called by that name, as indeed its etymology implies; and, from the very import of the word, according to St. Isidore, it was applied to the churches of God, and of his saints, where they reign with Christ, like kings and princes; if such a comparison be not derogatory to their celestial exaltation. In like manner, the same altar, or stone, is termed altar, and sepulchre; sacrifice being offered to God on it, whilst, at the same time, it contains the reliques of saints. And, on account of its being a sepulchre, it is consecrated and dedicated to a saint, though the altar
itself

itself belongs to God alone. The like may be said of the church, which, as a basilic, is dedicated to saints, as if it were a large shrine, or precious vase, in which their bones, and other remains, are deposited: accordingly, within this structure are kept so many celestial pledges of those real heroes, that reason is perplexed where to begin, or where to conclude the awful enumeration. If the splendor of worship, and the costliness of ornaments, be considered, very few churches can rival this: the like may be said with regard to the number and value of the reliques deposited in it with such veneration and magnificence.

In the fronts of the two second collateral naves, and in the concavities of two large altars, one of our Lady, and the other of St. Jerom, are the reliquaries, the doors of which, towards the church, are painted in the manner of altar-pieces; besides two others, on the opposite side, of acana and caova wood, and through these they are put in and taken out, to be cleaned and ornamented. On entering this august place, when the silk curtains, before the reliquaries are drawn aside, it is as if heaven suddenly opened to the view: innumerable vases, all of gold, or silver, enriched with gems, and inclosed within the finest crystals, or brass of the most exquisite gilding and polish, disposed in rows, gradually rising one above the other, present themselves to the eye. Each of these reliquaries has seven principal ranges, about a yard distant from each other, where these invaluable curiosities stand, disposed in the most proper manner; but as a particular detail would require many large volumes, I shall only mention them in general, not omitting to speak particularly of those which are eminently distinguished by their intrinsic value, and the

superior veneration paid them, either on account of their miraculous power, or the person to whom they belong.

Reliques of
our Saviour.

WE must begin with those of our Saviour, who has left us some of his ineffimable remains. Here we behold a consecrated host of above three hundred years standing, with three bloody spots, the indelible memorials of its having been trampled on by abandoned heretics, in the town of Gorcum in Holland. This host is inclosed in a shrine of silver gilt, above three yards high, consisting of three departments, surprizingly embellished with filligrin work, and an innumerable variety of gems. It was presented, by the emperor, to Charles II. and afterwards removed to the vestry, where the same devout monarch caused a sumptuous chapel to be built, for the reception of it. Here is also a hair of our Saviour's head, or beard, kept within a rich casket. Several parts of his cross are also deposited here, beautifully incased in gold, silver and gems, some in curious crosses; all kept in vases, or caskets, of surprizing beauty and richness, particularly that exposed on Good Friday, which is of remarkable magnitude.

HERE are eleven thorns of the wreath, which pierced the tender temples of the gracious King of glory, whose abasement was our exaltation. Five are within a large chrystal vase, placed on a stand, and other ornaments of gold, and near them is a piece of the cord, which bound his hands, as if resistance was to be expected from him. Two other thorns of his crown are in a small chrystal case, held by two silver angels; and the remaining two, richly incased.

HERE

HERE is one of the vases, which the eastern magi presented to Christ, with gold, frankincense, and myrrh, in token of their homage to him as God, King, and Man. It still contains the very myrrh, offered on that solemn occasion; and is made of a most beautiful species of agate.

HERE is also a piece of one of the nails, which fastened him to the cross; and part of the sponge, which the Romans dipt in vinegar, and put to his mouth, whilst languishing on the cross: the last relief he received amongst mankind. Here are likewise some parts of his garments, and a piece of linen, stained in many places with his blood; some fragments of the pillar, to which he was tied when his brutal revilers scourged him; and of the manger, in which he condescended to be born, in order to die for us. Every piece is kept in costly vases, splendidly adorned.

THE second place is due to his holy mother, of whom also here are some remains. In one reliquary are deposited three or four parts of her apparel; together with a piece of linen, with which she wiped her eyes, at the foot of the cross: besides these, they shew here, with equal joy and reverence, one of her hairs. The vase, in which these precious reliques are kept, is of crystal, with a gold stand, and, besides other ornaments, is supported by two silver angels, in a kneeling posture.

The reliques
of our Lady.

WE shall now proceed to the other reliquaries, beginning with an account of the entire bodies, and, from the most remarkable, descend gradually to those of inferior character; in order to distinguish them, with some perspicuity and distinction, amidst such an innumerable

multitude. The number of entire bodies, in these august repositories, amounts to eleven.

Entire
bodies.

THE first is the body of one of the innocents, born at Bethlehem, of the tribe and lineage of Judah, so small, that probably it had not seen the light above a month, yet has now continued sound and entire above seventeen hundred years; but that power, which hath preserved the tender flesh from the injuries of time, is sufficient for all things. It is kept in a silver chest, inlaid with enamelled flowers, and gold wire, forming beautiful compartments, so that the very vase itself is a curiosity. There is also another of these infants, which wants very little of being entire. The third is St. Mauritius, that intrepid commander of the Thebian legion; he is laid in a costly shrine, composed of silver, chrystal, and brass, enamelled with gold; and, being one of the first with whose presence this church was honored, he has a particular chapel here. The fourth is St. Theodoric or Theodore, a martyr, who is placed in a most beautiful shrine of silver gilt, and the finest chrystal. The fifth is that of Constantius, a saint and martyr, a senator of Triers, who, with others of his illustrious rank, happily ended their lives by a glorious martyrdom, on the twelfth of December, under the persecution of Dioclesian. The sixth is St. Mercurius, who fell under the pagan fury of the tyrannic Decius. The seventh is St. William, duke of Aquitain; the eighth, St. Marinus; the ninth, St. Philip, son of St. Felicitas; the tenth, St. Honoratus; and the eleventh, St. Beatrix: the four last were martyrs.

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THE body of St. Beatrix was sent by pope Innocent X. to her majesty Anna Maria of Auftria, when at Milan, in her journey to be married to Philip IV. and, on her landing in Spain, coming to this palace before she arrived at court, was persuaded, that such a splendid edifice alone became so valuable a relique. It lies in a silver shrine of curious workmanship, with gilded ornaments; the others are preserved in repositories of equal beauty and magnificence.

THE most remarkable reliques, next to the intire bodies, are the heads, being the principal parts of them; and of these, this sacred ^{Heads of} ~~musæum~~ ^{faints.} can boast an uncommon collection: the number of those, which are entire, being no less than three hundred; and among them, within another of silver, is one with a diadem, bearing this inscription: CAPUT SANCTI LAURENTII. But, notwithstanding the external proofs of antiquity, and the inscription, the royal founder imagined it to have belonged to one of the Thebian martyrs of that name, or that it was attributed to the relique to enhance its value. These doubts naturally arose from that prince's sollicitude and precaution in the search after the reliques of his sacred protector. The next is of unquestionable authenticity, that of the brave monarch, St. Hemenegildo, put to death as a martyr by his earthly father; but on whom his father in heaven conferred a crown that fadeth not away. It is preserved in a casket, which the most serene infanta donna Isabel Eugenia Clara presented to her illustrious father Philip II. and proper for such an honorable use. Another bears the title of St. Dionysius, the areopagite, a disciple of St. Paul. The founder indeed was not satisfied of its being authentic; but, however that be, it is, beyond doubt, the head of one of the primitive saints.

HERE

DESCRIPTION OF

HERE is also the head of the holy pope St. Blafius, a martyr; another of one of the innocents, those early flowers of the church; and the head of St. Julian, who is said to have been one of the seventy-two disciples; together with those of St. Fælix, and St. Adoucus, who offered to suffer martyrdom with the former; but his real name being unknown, the above was substituted for it. Here are likewise the beautiful heads of St. Theodoric, St. Dorothy, virgin and martyr, together with that of St. Theophilus, the martyr and illustrious consort of that virgin, by means of a miraculous present she made him.

I shall conclude this detail of the heads with that to which, indeed, the first place is due, I mean the head of St. Jerom, that eminent luminary of the church. This invaluable relique had, from time immemorial, been the boast of the convent of the white Augustine nuns of St. Mary Magdalene, in the city of Cullen, where it was held in the highest reverence. But, at the request of that pious monarch Philip II. it was removed from that convent, with two authoritative certificates of its identity, to enrich this wonderful structure, which, by his munificent piety, had been conferred on the order, which glories in having St. Jerom for its founder. It is placed within a small temple, whose beauty and lustre cannot be too much admired.

ALL the others are partly natural, and partly artificial heads, some of men, others of women, with angelic faces, deposited in splendid reliquaries: those of the men are in the altar of St. Jerom, and those of the virgins, in that of our Lady. Among the latter is a whole jaw, with several teeth, of St. Agnes, virgin and martyr, and other

other parts of the heads of some of the eleven thousand virgins; with above sixty skulls of dauntless martyrs, besides a hundred other sacred remains, which excite reverence in all who are not lost to religion and true heroic virtue.

BESIDES these, the number of arms, or the principal bones of ^{Arms of} faints, is so great as to stagger belief; for it appears from an exact account taken of them, that they exceed six hundred. Of these reliques, that which claims our first notice, is part of one of the arms of St. Laurence, the patron of this wonderful structure, containing the fibres from the elbow to the shoulder. It is incased in an arm of silver, the ancient fashion of which is an indubitable testimony of its being genuine. This respectable piece was brought from Savoy, whither it had been sent by pope Gregory the great.

THERE is another of that most illustrious patron of Spain, St. James, the apostle, which, with a sword in the hand of it, has often struck the moors with a supernatural terror: another, of the apostle St. Bartholemew; another, of St. Mary Magdalene; and another, of one of the innocents, entire with the hand; the favors of heaven being never wanting to those who have hearts to supplicate for them, and such pure hands to receive them.

HERE likewise is seen the arm of that celebrated Spanish martyr St. Vincent, born at Huefca; and one of that excellent virgin Agueda, who, with such singular fortitude, suffered martyrdom; this also is entire with the skin and the hand, and is preserved in an arm of silver. Another, of the seraphic father St. Ambrose, the force of which arm laid at his feet that pious and martial emperor Theodosius; who was also

also a native of Spain. That of St. Barbara; another, of St. Sixtus, a worthy associate of the devout and intrepid St. Laurence; and another, of St. Ivon. Besides these, there are an infinite number which we cannot particularize; but we must not omit to mention, that many of those, which, the multitude of them renders proper to pass over in silence, belonged to the intrepid warriors, who fought under the banners of St. Maurice and St. Ursula.

HERE is also a hand of pope Sixtus, very probably that with which he delivered to St. Laurence the treasures of the church, given to him by the two Philips, father and son; and here, as it were, it repeats that glorious act of judicious munificence. Near it is a finger of that immaculate glory of the Spanish nation, St. Laurence, and another of that venerable matron St. Anne; both placed in shrines of prodigious value.

A long catalogue might be drawn of bones, remains of the breast, neck, ribs, and other parts, which this sacred anatomy-chamber displays, set and kept in rich vases, and some with particular indulgences; particularly St. Alban's rib, which is most splendidly incased, and was the gift of pope Clement to Philip II. together with those sent by the duke of Mantua, and which, on the feast of St. John the baptist, were deposited here with remarkable exultation and solemnity.

A memorable
relique of
St. Laurence.

I cannot, however, take my leave of these remains without mentioning particularly a relique, which was once a part of our Spanish martyr, the patron of this amazing edifice. It is one half of the thigh-bone, and the following miraculous circumstance is related of

it.

it: pope Gregory XIII. judging, that it would be a proper gift to this most splendid chapel, dedicated to that faint, and, at the same time, too valuable to be wholly parted with, ordered it to be sawn afunder, with a saw made on purpose; but, after three several trials, the last made in the presence of the pope himself, not the least notch, or impression, was discernible in it; yet afterwards, without any force, or instrument, it fell of itself into two equal pieces, and even broke in the most solid part: at which the illustrious company unanimously cried out: "The faint is desirous of returning to Spain." This is confirmed by the infallible testimony of his holiness himself. Her majesty, Mary Anne of Austria, also presented the monastery with a relique of the same faint, in a rich casket of enamelled gold.

HERE is also a thigh of the same martyr, with the skin greatly scorched, and the marks of the lacerations, made in the flesh by the prongs used in turning this inflexible champion on the gridiron, during his torture. The reliquary is proportional to its precious contents, being a kind of castle, with two colonnades of curious jasper, and the greatest part of silver gilt, enriched with gems, and some decorations of enamelled gold. This was the first relique of the triumphant St. Laurence, presented to the royal founder of this astonishing structure, and is not only the largest, but also the most valuable. In another reliquary of the same form, and equally valuable, are two bones of St. Orencio, and St. Paciencia, the parents of our illustrious faint.

ANOTHER relique, the possession of which alone must to all appear a transcendent happiness, is a thigh-bone of the apostle St. Paul; the body of that prince of the apostles, being at Rome, the queen of cities.

Relique of
St. Paul.

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HERE

HERE is also a thigh-bone of the bishop St. Martin, with many others, which I shall omit, and only mention the knee of the glorious martyr St. Sebastian, which is entire, with part of the skin; and, being one of the most venerable pieces in this treasury, is kept in a superb crystal vase, enriched with ornaments of gold. With regard to the others of this kind, let it be sufficient to say, that they exceed five hundred, and that many of them belonged to the before mentioned heroic squadrons, and other martyrs, whose zeal was not to be daunted by torments, or death.

Tibias, or
shin-bones
of saints.

THE number of bones, below the knee, is still greater, being above six hundred; but I shall mention only the most remarkable. Those of Justo and Pastor, the holy martyrs of Alcala, which were selected by the same king Philip, when the greatest part of their bodies was translated to their native country. Another bone of the same part, belonging to St. Vincent Ferrer, a native of Valencia; another of one of the holy innocents, together with the foot covered with its skin; another of that magnanimous virgin and martyr, Leocadia, who perished in a dungeon at Toledo; another of the confessor St. Diego de Alcala, with two bones of the same part, from whence continually distills an oleaginous liquor; another of, pope Silvester, deservedly held in great veneration.

To conclude this particular part of the reliques, I shall mention two feet, which are worthy to tread on the stars. One belonged to St. Philip, the apostle; it has on it part of the skin, and shews him to have been a man of a robust make: the other belonged to the invincible St. Laurence, the toes of which are entire, but contracted, and under them is a small coal, which, to devout eyes, surpasses the
radiancy

radiancy of the finest carbuncle. The reliquaries, which contain them, are of the same figure, and deposited in a tabernacle, adorned with columns and friezes of most beautiful workmanship.

BESIDES these, there are above twelve hundred other bones, from the length of six inches and upwards, and still more of smaller dimensions; but the smallest are without number. Therefore, to avoid prolixity, I shall only observe, that there is hardly a faint of which there is not a large relique in this church, except two, St. Joseph, and St. John, the evangelist. Here are even some remains of the prophets, who lived before the christian era, and several large bones of apostles. The remains of St. Andrew alone fill a whole reliquary; besides which there are some reliques, of the two evangelists, St. Mark, and St. Luke.

THE multitude of reliques of confessors, preachers, and holy virgins, is truly amazing; but our wonder will cease, when we consider that they were collected by so devout a monarch, as Philip the second; whose ardent zeal knew no bounds in amassing these precious remains from all parts of the world; especially in rescuing them from the hands of the heretics, and enemies of the catholic church, that, in this basilic, they might enjoy the veneration they deserve, and be arranged in suitable order and magnificence. Such, indeed, is the variety of vases and shrines, the materials and figures so different, that, to enumerate them in a particular description, would require a much larger volume than that in which I propose to contain all the curiosities in this astonishing structure.

The Messina. AT present, the whole number of vases is five hundred and fifteen, and every one of great value; but particular notice is due to the Messina, being a female figure of massy silver, and nearly as big as life, representing the city of that name, holding in her right hand the reliques of St. Placidus and his companions, in a golden tabernacle, weighing an arroba; her crown, necklace, and girdle, are of gold, set with diamonds, and exquisite pearls. This wonderful piece was a present from that city to king Philip the third; a gift, which could not fail of being acceptable to that monarch, and of doing honor to the city.

*Lofty
reliquaries.*

OVER these two altars is a chapel, and at the height of thirty feet, are two other large reliquaries; the outside resembling an organ-loft, gilt and inlaid: but their external appearance is a manifest blemish to the church; for, besides other offences against just architecture, they intercept the eastern light, and thus obscure the naves in that direction. A representation of this being made to his majesty Philip III. whose judgment was equal to his magnificence, he conceived the design of placing over each an altar-piece, which should be answerable to all the other parts of this splendid church. Accordingly, when he began the structure of the pantheon, he made a very large collection of the finest jaspers and marbles; but his death, for a while, suspended the glorious design, till his son, Philip IV. who, with the crown of his predecessors inherited their devotion and magnanimity, completed the pantheon; a work, which, for sculpture and architecture, paintings and richness, a monarch alone could undertake; thus immortalizing his devotion through every admiring age, and endearing himself to God and his saints.

THERE

THERE are likewise a great number of reliques distributed in many parts of the edifice, to secure it from the bolts of the summer-tempests. Some of the reliques, and particularly those of St. Laurence, its patron, were, with all possible solemnity, inclosed in small brass caskets, and placed within the globes on the spires both of the palace and the church. And if the ancients, with the same design, planted laurels on the towers of their public buildings, as a security rather than an ornament, from an opinion, that those trees were not subject to be consumed by lightning, how much securer is this august basilic with laurels of such superior virtue! This truth was wonderfully elucidated at the time of the conflagration, which did great damage, though either in regard to those sacred remains, or the intercession of the owners of them, amidst wrath, was seen the abundance of mercy; for, in the midst of dangers, not a single life was lost: and the greatest part of the edifice, together with an amazing quantity of paintings, ornaments, furniture, and other things of great value, escaped the flames. Nor did this structure long remain in its ruined condition, the devout munificence of Charles II. even when under the tutelage of the most serene queen mother, caused the vast desolation to be repaired, and the whole edifice to shine again in its former lustre; but the short space, in which such magnificent works were completed, astonished the world more than the works themselves.

Reliques of
the towers.