

tured, or too unequal to the task of imparting to others the sensations it raised in me. This last accusation I plead guilty to, for no pen can convey an adequate idea of this view, and few painters ever possessed that richness of touch, and clearness of manner, such a subject would require. The vale of Almenara, on the north, is so delightful, that from any other station it would have engrossed all our attention; but we soon neglected its beauties, and, gliding rapidly over the immense volume of sea stretched out before us to the eastward, where the sunbeams played in full force, we fixed our eyes on the almost boundless plain of Valencia, that lay to the south. It is four leagues in breadth from the sea to the hills, in the widest part, and in length five times that extent, losing itself in a ridge of distant mountains. The yellow green of the mulberry plantations, and the paler hue of the olive-trees, regularly planted in fields of bright green corn; that regularity now and then broken by large plots of dark-coloured algarrobos; villages and convents, thick scattered over this great expanse, with numberless gay slender steeples; the city of Valencia, about twelve miles off, with all its spires: these objects, united, form the most inimitable landscape it is possible to conceive. The day was so clear, the air so pure, as to add infinitely to the charms of the prospect. Hannibal is a great favourite of mine, but I cannot forgive him for having dealt so hardly by so sweet a place: had he
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come upon this hill in such a day as this, the softness of the air, and beauty of the view, would have melted the obduracy of his heart, and opened it to pity and forgiveness.

From hence to Valencia is one perfect garden, so thick of trees, that there is no seeing at any distance on either side. Villages and monasteries every hundred yards, and such crouds of people on the road, as I scarce ever saw but in the neighbourhood of London. All the grounds are divided into small compartments by water-channels, the work of the Moors, who understood the art of watering land in the utmost perfection. The ruinous state these drains are now in, proves the indolence and inferiority of the present proprietors; what little skill they still shew in agriculture is nothing but the traditional remains of the instructions left by their masters in husbandry, the Arabians. Our pleasurable ideas were a little ruffled by the sight of some hundreds of women in the villages, sitting in the sun lousing each other, or their husbands and children. When a young woman condescends to seek for lice in a man's head, it is supposed that the last favours have been granted by the fair one, or at least that he may have them for asking.

Valencia is situated in so dead and woody a flat, that we were in the suburbs before we thought ourselves near it, and, having made half the round of the walls,
came

came to an inn on the Alicant road, as it was late, and we did not choose to be detained at the gates by the customhouse officers.

L E T T E R XIII.

Valencia, December 3, 1775.

OUR first morning here passed very strangely, in a visit to the old intendant of the province, to whom we brought a letter of recommendation from his *confrere* of Catalonia. The old usurer, whose figure resembles that of the bandy-legged apothecary in Hogarth's *Marriage à la mode*, received us very ungraciously, took our letter and flung it on the table, without saying a word to us, or even offering us a seat. Having waited some time, we began to look at each other and laugh. Upon this the intendant looked up, and asked me if we were not Catalans? No, replied I, we are English gentlemen upon our travels. This answer produced a wonderful effect. Oh, oh, you come from a better country; Can I be of any service to you? Bring these gentlemen chairs. Do you choose to take any refreshment?

freshment? said he, pulling off his hat with great reverence, and making us a most profound bow. We asked him for the only thing we stood in need of, a protection against the people of the customhouses, who, though they do not meddle with your baggage, pester you at every gate for something to drink, or buy tobacco with. The intendant's character is very little respected, nor indeed does it deserve the love or esteem of the Valencians, if the traits they relate be true. Many are the stories they tell of his avarice and hardness of heart; but one will suffice to set him in his proper light. Not long ago he was confined to his bed by a severe fit of illness, and positive orders were given, that he should not be disturbed by applications, petitions, or any thing appertaining to his employment. It so happened, that a tradesman who had been taken up for smuggling, and kept in prison for some weeks, was discovered to be perfectly innocent of the crime laid to his charge. One of the magistrates thought, that for so just a cause as that of restoring an honest man to his liberty, and to his distressed and indigent family, whose very existence depended upon his industry, he might venture to break through the injunction of the intendant, and accordingly procured admittance, and presented the proper paper requisite to be signed, before the jailor could deliver up his prisoner. As soon as the old rogue understood the purport of the visit, he flew into a most violent rage, and obstinately refused

refused to sign. Another officer, seeing the door open, took that opportunity of handing up an order for the commitment of a fellow that had been detected in illicit practices. The intendant no sooner read it, than he called for a pen, and set his hand to it with great pleasure, at the same time persisting in his refusal to comply with the first request.

We shall leave Valencia to-morrow, being heartily tired of our quarters. The climate is mild and pleasant, but there is something faintish and enervating in the air. Every thing we eat is insipid, and void of substance; the greens, wine, and meat, seem the artificial forced productions of continual waterings and hot-beds. It puts me in mind of the *Isle frivole* of the Abbé Coyer, where things were so feeble and unsubstantial, that they were little better than the shadows of what they are in other countries. Here a man may labour for an hour at a piece of mutton, and, when he has tired his jaws, find he has been only chewing the *idea* of a dinner. The meat, as soon as cut into, yields abundance of gravy, and may be said to bleed a second time to death, for nothing remains but a mere withered *caput mortuum*, as our servants know by woful experience. Vegetables, with the finest outward shew imaginable, taste of nothing but water. This watery quality seems also to infect the bodies and minds of the Valencians: they are largely built, and personable men, but flabby and inanimate. We have seen no women

men out at work in the fields; but this may proceed from their constant employment within doors, as much as from any remnants of the Moorish jealousy, though the Valencians still retain much of the features and manners of their old Saracen masters. To this day the farmers won't allow their wives to sit at table, but make them stand at their elbow and wait upon them. The Castillians and Catalans hold the Valencians in sovereign contempt, and stigmatize them with many opprobrious appellations, dictated, as we must in charity suppose, by the rancour of national antipathy. The inhabitants of this province are said to have more of the filth, and sullen unpolished manners of the old Spaniards, and to have adopted less of foreign improvements in civilization, than most other parts of Spain. They strut about all day in *redicillas*, or nets, monstrous hats, and dark-brown cloaks, which give the crowd in the streets the appearance of a funeral procession. Scarce any society is kept up amongst them, tho' the salubrity of the climate, and reasons of œconomy, induce several very considerable families to make this city the place of their abode. In some strange way or other they spend very large incomes, without doing themselves the least credit. Their chief expence lies in servants, mules, and equipages; low, obscure amours often consume the best part of their fortunes; and they live in so pitiful a manner, that most

part of them fend out to the wine-vault for a pint of wine to their meals.

This city is large, and almost circular; its lofty walls have towers remaining in one quarter, the rest have been demolished: a fine broad road goes quite round: the two suburbs are considerable. Several large, clumsy bridges cross the bed where the river should run; but either from drought, or from the many bleedings it undergoes above, for the purpose of watering the fields, there is scarce water enough in the *Guadaviar* to wash a handkerchief; but in rainy seasons the floods are very tremendous. The captain-general resides in the suburbs, in an uncouth Gothic palace, at the entrance of the *Alameda*, a long double avenue of poplars, cypresses, and palms, where, on great festivals, the nobility take the air in their coaches. About a mile below is the *Grao*, or port of Valencia, which, properly speaking, is only an open road, the mole having been long ago swept away by some violent storm. The dusty highway from the city hither is the fashionable drive; and, for the accommodation of such as have no carriages of their own, several single-horse chairs wait at all hours at the gates. This vehicle is very uneasy, and open to all weathers; but the horses are excellent, and run along like lightning. The driver sits sideways at your feet, and all the way keeps chattering to the horse,
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and patting him on the buttock. Having occasion one day for a coach to carry us about, the stable-boy of our inn offered his services, and in a quarter of an hour brought to the door a coach and four fine mules, with two postillions and a lacquey, all in flaming liveries; we found out they belonged to a countess, who, like the rest of the nobility, allows her coachman to let out her equipage when she has no occasion for it: it cost us about nine shillings, which no doubt was the perquisite of the servants.

The streets of Valencia are crooked and narrow; not being paved, they are full of dust in dry weather, and in wet knee-deep in mud. The reason alledged for this scandalous neglect, is, that by these means a greater quantity of manure is produced, which, in a plain so full of gardens, is of inestimable value. Various and overpowering are the stinks that rise up in every corner; in which respect, as well as in many others, this country resembles Lombardy.

The houses are filthy, ill built, and ruinous; most of the churches tawdry, and loaded with barbarous ornaments both without and within; the most agreeable architecture I met with, is in the church of the *Escuelas pias*, and of *nuestra Señora de los Desamparados*, both rotundas. In the multitude of sacred edifices, some may be found that excel in particular parts; as, one may please the eye by the just proportions of its dimensions, another



strike by the richness of its marbles and paintings; but in all, the judicious observer will be disgusted with loads of garlands, pyramids, broken pediments, and monstrous cornices; a taste too gothic and trifling for any thing but the front of a mountebank's booth, or a puppet-show in a fair. Some churches have domes, but the greater part tall slender turrets, painted and bedecked with all sorts of pilasters and whimsical devices: every thing is gilt and bedaubed with incredible profusion; the Spaniards understand the gilder's business perfectly, and the purity of their gold, with the dryness of the climate, preserves their work for years in its primitive lustre. The convent of the Franciscan friars has something very grand and pleasing in its double court, which is divided by a light wing, upon an open portico, with fountains playing in each division.

The cathedral is a large gothic pile; its archbishopric one of the best in Spain, said to bring in about forty thousand pounds sterling a year, paid in cash into the hands of two receivers. The revenues of Toledo are much greater, but also more troublesome to collect, and more precarious, as being paid in kind, and requiring a great number of bailiffs and servants. The present archbishop of Valencia, as well as the last one, is the son of a peasant; the ruling passion of both has been convent building: the late prelate built and endowed a magnificent habitation for the Franciscans, the champions of
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the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary; the present archbishop, whose scholastic tenets are diametrically opposed to those of his predecessor, has done as much for the fathers of the *Escuelas pias*.

Priests, nuns, and friars, of every dress and denomination, swarm in this city, where some convents have more than an hundred monks, all richly provided for.

Among the profane buildings, many of which are prettily set off with painted architecture, after the Italian manner, the palaces of *Dofaguas* and *Jura real* deserve the most notice; the former for its statues and fresco paintings, the latter for the elegant simplicity of its front.

The *Lonja*, or exchange, is a very noble gothic hall, built about the latter end of the fifteenth century, with all the beauty and richness that style is susceptible of.

The custom-house, where the intendant and other officers of the revenue are lodged, is a new large edifice in a great square, a very clumsy mass of brick and stone.

This kingdom and city were conquered by the Moors under Abdallah Ciz, and lost by them in 1094, when the famous Cid Ruy dias de Vivar, taking advantage of the confusion and civil war that raged in Valencia, after the murder of Sultan Hiaya, made himself master of the city by storm, at the head of a chosen band of valiant knights. This was the last exploit of that hero,
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so long the terror of the mussulmen. A few years after his death, the king of Castille, finding it too far distant from his other dominions to be conveniently succoured in case of a sudden attack, thought proper to withdraw his troops, and suffer the Moors to repossess themselves of it. It was again taken from them by James the First, king of Arragon, in the year 1238, and for ever united to that crown, the fate of which it has ever since followed through all its various revolutions. In the beginning of the reign of Charles the Fifth, this province was distracted by civil commotions and struggles between the nobility and commons.

Since the last conquest, Valencia has been much enlarged; for the gate through which the Cid made his triumphal entry, is now very near the center of the town.

The number of inhabitants is computed at one hundred thousand; but, to speak more exactly, according to the last authentic enumeration, made in 1768, which allows four persons to each *vecino*, at twenty thousand *vecinos*, or fathers of families; which makes the number to be eighty thousand inhabitants. The population of the whole kingdom of Valencia amounts to one hundred and seventy-nine thousand two hundred and twenty-one *vecinos*, or seven hundred and sixteen thousand eight hundred and eighty-four souls, resident in five hundred and seventy towns and villages. The manufactures of
silk

filk are the cause of a population that may be reckoned considerable, if compared to that of other provinces of Spain. The produce of this article came this year to one million pounds, but one year with another the average quantity is about nine hundred thousand pounds, worth a doubloon a pound in the country. The crop of filk this last season was very abundant. Government has prohibited the exportation of Valencian raw filk, in order to lay in a stock to keep the artificers constantly employed in bad years; for it has happened in some, that half the workmen have been laid idle for want of materials. As they are not so strict about Murcian filk, which is of an inferior quality, I am told that some from Valencia is sent out of Spain under that denomination. The great nurseries of mulberry-plants, in this plain, are produced from seed, obtained by rubbing a rope of *esparto* over heaps of ripe mulberries, and then burying the rope two inches under ground. As the young plants come up, they are drawn and transplanted. The trees, which are all of the white kind, are afterwards set out in rows in the fields, and pruned every second year. In Murcia, only every third year, and in Granada never. The Granadine filk is esteemed the best of all; and the trees are all of the black sort of mulberry.

The fruit exported from Valencia to the north of Europe may be estimated, *communibus annis*, at two millions.