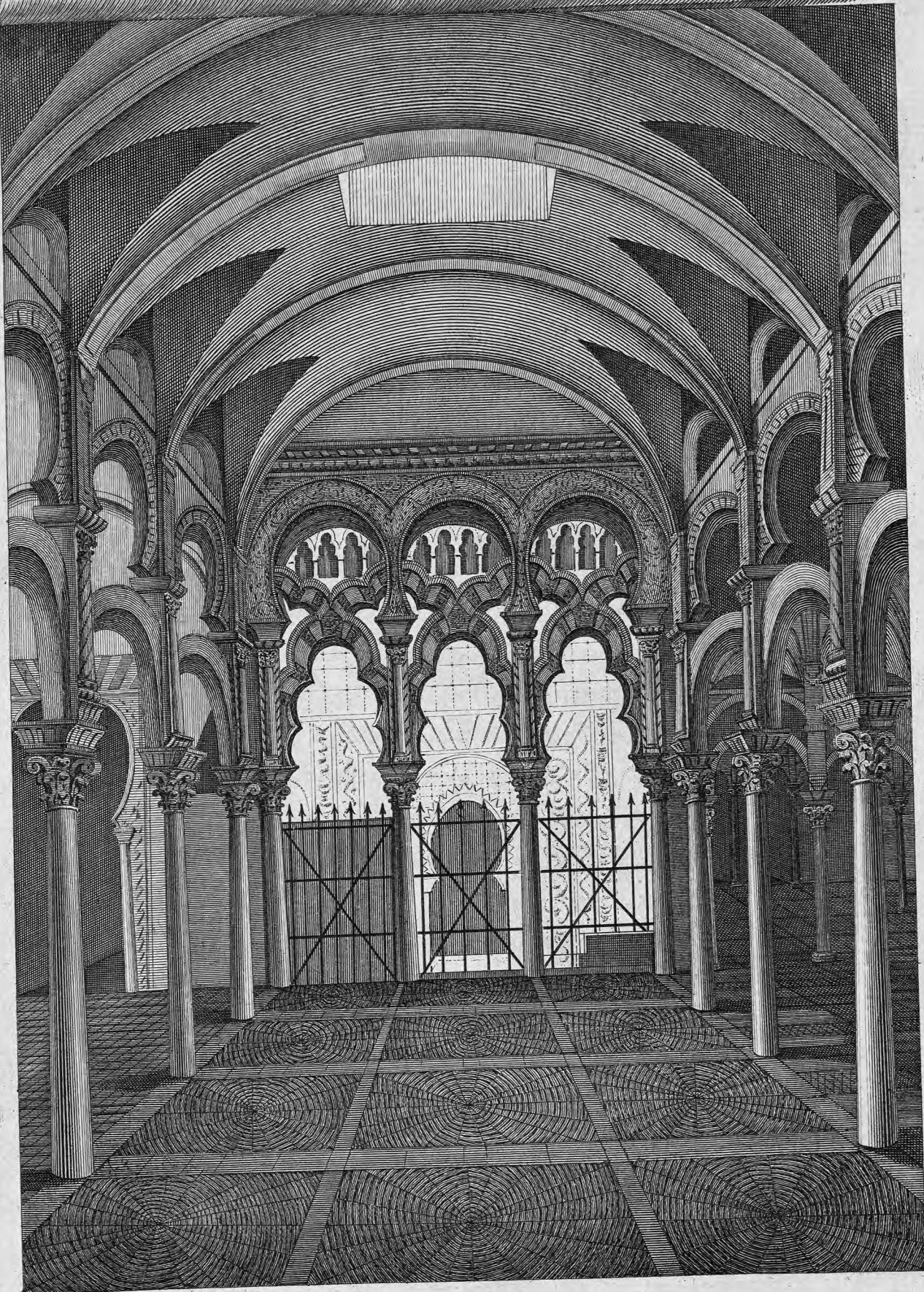


of it faced the great gate, down the principal ile. The ornaments and architecture of this sanctuary, and of the throne of Almanfor, which is in front, at the distance of six intercolumniations from it, are very different from those employed in the other parts. Two ranges of columns that support the screen before this *penetrable*, are about six feet high; the upper ones of red and white marble, the lower of green, with capitals most minutely carved and gilt. The roof of the dark inner sanctuary is said to be of one block of marble, eighteen feet wide: if so, it is not only curious for its size and quality, but also for the ingenuity of the architect, in placing it in so perfect an equilibrium as to remain unshaken so many ages. The manner of casting the arches, grouping the columns, and designing the foliages of this screen and throne, (which is an exact repetition of it) is very heavy, intricate, and barbarous, unlike all the Moorish architecture I saw at Granada. Indeed it is many centuries more ancient than any ornamental work at that place.

The zancarron is now the property of the duke of Alba, who has his family vault under it.

Behind this chapel, and on each side of it, were the lodgings of the dervishes, which now serve for chapter-house, sacristy, and treasury. This church is extremely rich in plate, and has lately added to its store four
ponderous



H.S. del. 1776.

CHAPEL OF THE ALKORAN IN THE MOSQUE OF CORDOVA.

F. Giomignani sc.



ponderous silver candlesticks, very nicely wrought: they were made in Cordova, and cost about eight hundred and fifty pounds sterling apiece.

It is scarce possible to ascertain the exact number of columns in the mosque, as they originally stood, because great changes have been made, many taken away, displaced, or built up in the walls of chapels, and several added when the choir was erected in the center of the whole. Were it in any other church, it would deserve great praise, for the Gothic grandeur of the plan, the loftiness of the dome, the carving of the stalls²⁷, and the elegance and high finishing of the arches and ornaments: but in the middle of the Moorish mosque, it destroys all unity of design, darkens the rest, and renders confused every idea of the original general effect of the building. Many chapels, stuck up in various parts between the pillars, interrupt the enfilade, and block up the passage. The worst of all, is a large chapel of the Virgin, that closes the main ile exactly in the middle; and the throne of Almanzor is now occupied by a poor piece of legendary painting.

I can imagine no *coup-d'œil* more extraordinary than that taken in by the eye, when placed in such spots of the church as afford a clear reach down the iles, at right

²⁷ The stalls were carved after the designs of Cornejo of Seville. It took twelve years to finish the work, and one to put it up.

angles,

angles, uninterrupted by chapels and modern erections. Equally wonderful is the appearance, when you look from the points that give you all the rows of pillars and arches in an oblique line. It is a most puzzling scene of confusion.

Light is admitted by the doors, and several small cupolas; but nevertheless the church is dark and awful: people walking through this chaos of pillars seem to answer the romantic ideas of magic, enchanted knights, or discontented wandering spirits.

In one of the cupolas hangs the tooth of an elephant; which, our guide told us, had formerly belonged to one of those animals, that was particularly useful in carrying stones, and other materials, for building the mosque.

A very extraordinary circumstance attending this church, which we have been thrice eye-witnesses of, is, that when the foundlings given out to parish-nurses die, they are brought into the cathedral, and laid upon a particular altar, that the chaplain may take them away to bury them. I went up to the first I saw, mistaking it for a votive waxen saint, prepared for some ceremony; nor was I undeceived till I touched the poor little creature. The second was laid down while we were there, and had all the symptoms of having been starved to death. There are not less than five hundred children

lost

lost to the population of Cordova every year in this manner, by neglect or ill treatment.

An officer took us out this afternoon to the bishop's country house down the river. The late prelate was very fond of it, and had made it a pleasant, comfortable retreat; but since his death it is become very ruinous. The revenues of the see amount to three thousand five hundred pounds sterling a year. As the bishops cannot devise by will, all they die possessed of escheates to the king.

I wish I could contrive a method of carrying you some of the fine earthen jars, called *buxaros*, which are made in Andalufiá. They are remarkably convenient for water-drinkers, as they are light, smooth, and handy: being not more than half baked, they are very porous, and the outside is kept moist by the water's filtering through: though placed in the sun, the water in the pots remains as cold as ice. The most disagreeable circumstance attending them is, that they emit a smell of earth refreshed by a sudden shower, after a long drought.

I am just informed that our wheel will require another day to be refitted; which is a terrible piece of news indeed this rainy weather; for every day the roads will grow worse and worse, and we are not able to ride about to see the environs. Were there such a thing as

a bookfeller in this once learned city, I would buy Seneca, and try what consolation his philosophy affords in his native country.

L E T T E R XXXVI.

Santa Cruz, April 21, 1776.

I Write this from the Campo de Montiel, not very far from a *Lugar de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme*²³: Have passed over the Sierra Morena, and being now fairly entered into Don Quixote's own country, cannot resist the temptation of beginning a letter, let the end of it be written where it may so happen.

On the 18th we made our departure good from Cordova; but proceeded with fear and trembling, every moment peeping out to examine the state of our wheels, and, at each unmerciful jolt, biting our lips, and drawing up into our respective corners, to prepare for an overturn. Time gave us courage, and the anxiety passing off by degrees, we ventured to look out, and enjoy

²³ The first words in Don Quixote.

the fine vale of the Guadalquivir, which runs between two ridges of hills, covered with hanging woods and olive yards; several clear streams traverse the plain, and fall into the river. The ancient raised road, be it Roman or Moorish, was always most acceptable to us, whenever we got upon it; for it is a fine hard gravel above the level of dirt and water. Every brook had its bridge, but scarce one in twenty now remains.

At the bridge of Alcolea, where we passed to the south of the river, are kept the king's stallions. One or two of them are noble horses; but an Andalusian breeder values a horse for such points in the make, as would deter an English jockey from buying him. The former requires his horse to be forward and bulky in the shoulders, with his forelegs far back under his belly, and the tail set so low, as always to be squeezed close to his hams; he never suffers him to lie down, but keeps him constantly on a clean pavement sloping from the manger, with his forelegs close chained to the ground. You know Cordova has long been famous for its breed of horses, but it seems to be strangely fallen off; very few good looking ones are now to be met with. A gentleman of that city assured us, as indeed we had heard before, that the breed was much neglected, and little care taken to preserve it pure and genuine; the king having given the superintendence

of his stud to a stranger, a foot officer, who perhaps never rode any thing but an ass or a mule in his life. Before this change, the employment was always held by a Cordovese nobleman, who, as well as his friends, piqued himself upon breeding and exhibiting the choicest horses possible; but now in disgust, they have entirely laid aside all thought or taste for that pursuit, and seem quite indifferent about the animals they ride or drive.

For two days we travelled up the river. The country it waters is very rich and beautiful; the plains extending far and near, charmingly streaked with rows of olive-trees; towns and castles near each other along the banks; the northern hills darkened with woods, and all the distant eminences to the south, green with corn: this luxuriance of vegetation and fatness of soil, rendered the roads abominably deep; our baggage was obliged to be carried upon mules half a day to ease the draught of the carriages. The cliffs along the river-side swarmed with flocks of a most elegant water bird, called an *Abejaruxa* or Bee-eater: we shot several of them, and longed much to be able to preserve them in their feathers, or to have time and opportunity to paint them for your inspection, as I am certain the sight of them would give you great pleasure. They are about the size of a blackbird; their back is of a
light

light brown colour, shaded with burnished gold, growing more deep and ardent towards the head, ending in a pale yellow, mixed with a greenish blue about the beak, which is very long, black, sharp, and strait; a black stroke runs from the beak round the eye, which is of a bright scarlet colour; the throat is yellow; the breast, down which runs a narrow black line, is of a fine blue, that becomes lighter along the belly; the upper part of the tail is azure, the under brown; the wings of a brownish yellow, furrounded with a blue stripe, tipped with black.

At Carpio is a Moorish mill or engine, with three huge wheels, which raises water to a great height, and conveys it to enrich a large tract of level. The landscape near it is remarkably pleasing.

At Anduxar we took our leave of the Roman road, and of the river, which however we had now and then a distant peep of from the heights.

Yesterday we entered the Sierra Morena, a chain of mountains that divides Castille from Andalufiá; rendered famous by the wars of the Christians and Mahometans, but perhaps better known by being the scene where the immortal Miguel de Cervantes has placed the most entertaining adventures of his hero. As we were near the eastern extremity, the land, though very high, and commanding a vast prospect to the south,

south, did not in the least resemble a ridge of mountains, such as the Alps, the Pyreneans, or many others. It did not appear much more broken and elevated than many parts of England, which are well inhabited and cultivated.

The journey was very agreeable up the course of the Rio de las Piedras, a clear roaring torrent, tumbling over a bed of rocks, through glens of beautiful woods: the wastes are covered with a profuse variety of flowering shrubs; particularly cistus of many sorts, among which the gum-cistus or rock-rose is the handsomest: they gather manna from it in spring, by beating the bushes with small twigs, to which the viscous substance of the plant adheres. Sumach also grows in great abundance on these hills; it is cut down in August, the leaves, flower, and stalk, are all pounded together, and used in lieu of oak-bark in dressing hides.

We now entered the new Colony of La Carolina, and its dependencies, planted eight years ago by the king, in a very extensive tract of woody mountainous country. The first settlers were Germans; but from eating unwholesome herbs, and drinking too much wine and brandy, above half of them died, and now the inhabitants are the mixture of Germans, French, Savoyards, Catalans, and other Spaniards. The reach of land in cultivation, and full of houses and villages, where