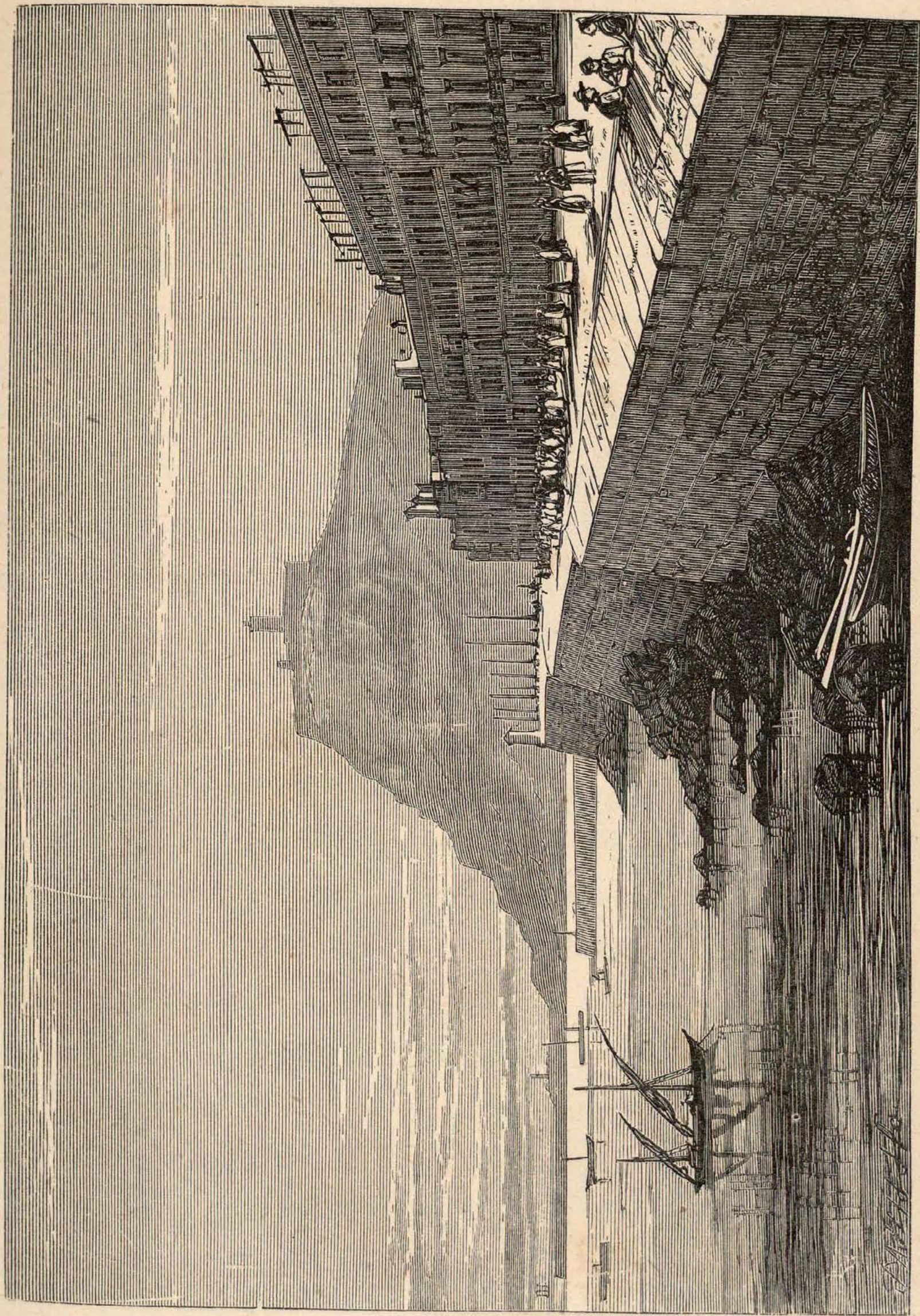


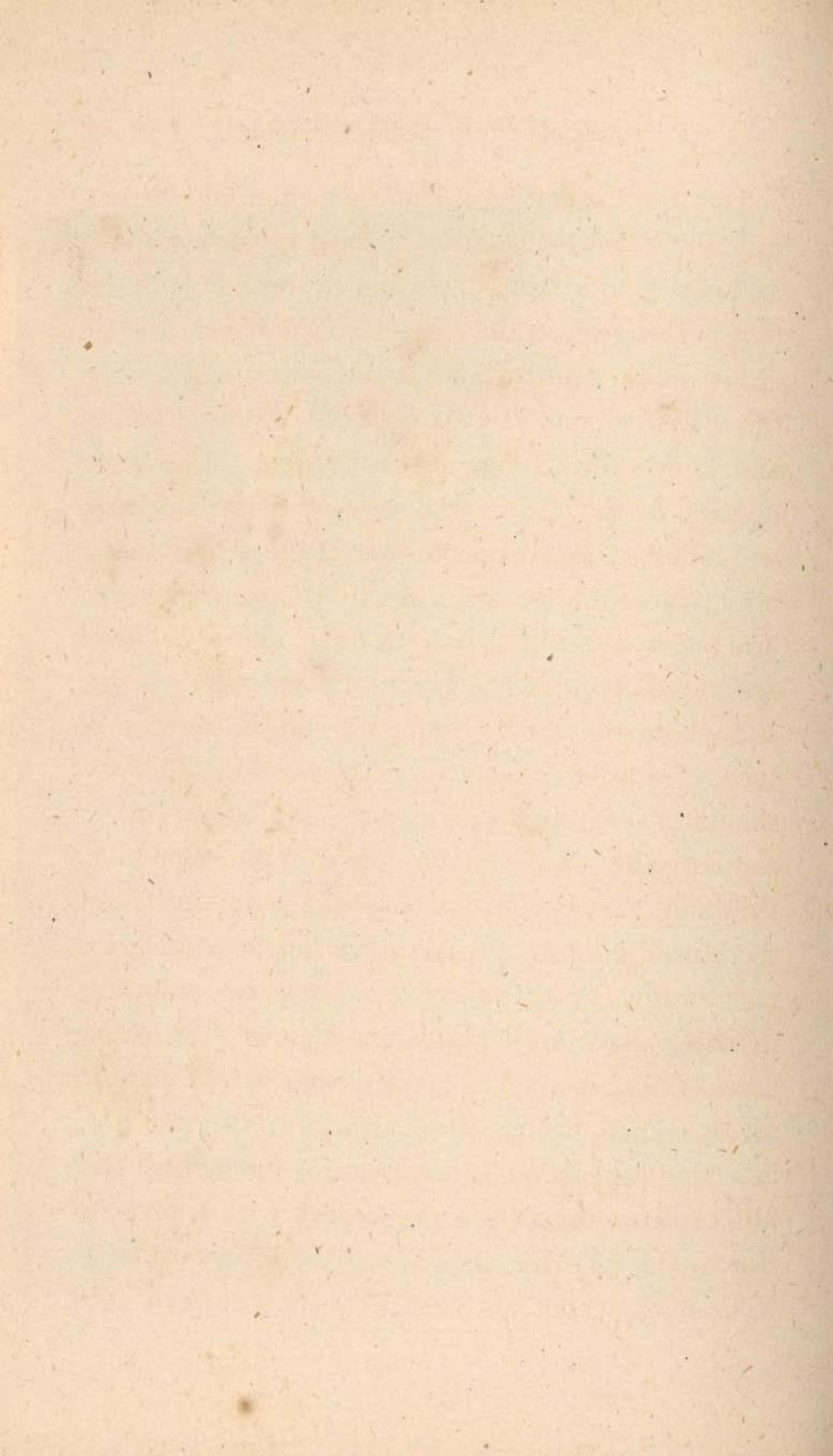
III.

BARCELONA AND GERONA.

FONDA DEL ORIENTE, BARCELONA, *January 14, 1872.*

THE life and animation of Barcelona are charming. As we drove into the town, after leaving the solitudes of Monserrat, it seemed as if the whole of the gay, pleasure-loving population must be in the streets. So crowded were they with people on foot, that a carriage could scarcely pass. The shops, brilliantly lighted, were full of dolls innumerable; for it was the eve of the Befana—every possible phase of dollhood finding its representative, from old men and women down to babies in cradles. The children themselves were rushing about, blowing tin trumpets and whistles, and beating little drums; organs were grinding, guitars were twanging, fans were flashing through the soft air in the fingers of dark-veiled señoras, and over all extended a cloudless, deep-blue heaven, fretted with brilliant stars.





Through the centre of the town runs for nearly a mile the beautiful Rambla, formed by an avenue of arching plane-trees, enclosing a broad walk for foot-passengers, while the carriage-ways are on either side. The Rambla is the centre and axis of life in Barcelona. Here are all the principal hotels, and hence all the best streets diverge. The lower division is the fashionable walk of the aristocracy, and is full of smart people, but at the upper extremity, where the peasants chiefly congregate, is the bird and flower market, where multitudes of canaries are sold daily amid the great bunches of heliotrope, and where the most wonderful mantas are to be seen, of scarlet, blue, and gold, flowing from the shoulders of rough-looking men, who would be content with the common dress of ploughmen in England. At the lower end of the Rambla begins the Muralla del Mar, a delightful terrace, sheltered and sunny, overhanging the port and shipping, though raised high above them, and with views across the still reaches of water to the fortified hill of Montjuich, which rises abruptly from the sea, like Shakespeare's cliff at Dover. To ascend this hill towards sunset is quite a duty with visitors to Barcelona, for from thence, across a foreground of wild aloes, which are here frequently formed into

hedges, the whole white town is seen like a map, lying in its brown, burnt-up plain, surrounded by mountains, the flat tops of the houses giving it a peculiarly eastern appearance, for there are no sloping roofs in Barcelona.

The streets in the heart of the town are thoroughly dull and unpicturesque; and it is after following one of the dingiest of all, bounded by high, drab-coloured walls, that suddenly a wide gothic arch admits one into a vast, arcaded quadrangle, perfectly bathed in light and sunshine. Here huge orange-trees, whose boughs are weighed almost to the ground by their massive bunches of golden fruit, rise amid plantations of tree-like geraniums, and fountains splash gaily in the sunbeams. It is not like one's ideal of a cathedral cloister, yet such it is, and wonderfully interesting is it to watch the ever-varying representations of life here—the solemn canons, with their breviaries, pacing up and down, and toiling through their appointed task of psalm-saying; the polite old beggars, the men in their bright mantas and scarlet barrettas, the women in their blue petticoats and white handkerchiefs over their heads; the children, who shout, and feed the canons' geese with bread—for on the largest of the fountains live

the famous geese which have been kept here from time immemorial to guard the treasures of the cathedral, according to the old Catalonian custom, which makes geese serve, and more efficaciously too, the place of watch-dogs at the country houses. In the centre of the Fontana de las Ocas is a little bronze figure of a knight on a horse, which spouts water from its nostrils, while its tail is indicated by a long jet of silvery spray. This is not St. George, but the brave knight Vilardell, full of good works, who was permitted to kill the famous dragon, but who forgot his humility in the moment of triumph, and exclaimed, "Well done, good sword! Well done, brave arm of Vilardell!" upon which a drop of the dragon's poisonous blood fell upon his arm from the sword which he brandished, and he died. This is the first moral inculcated upon the childish mind of Barcelona, which is intimately familiar with Vilardell, who is again represented, in his combat with the dragon, over an archway in the street leading to the cathedral.

A grand round-headed arch leads from the cloister into the church, begun in 1298, but chiefly built, from designs by Jaques Fabra, in the beginning of the fourteenth century. It is beautiful and solemn beyond description, only faintly

lighted by the rich stained windows at either end, whose coloured lights are almost lost amid the many chapels and tall reed-like pillars. Beneath the altar lies Santa Eulalia, the "well-speaking" virgin, martyred by Dacian in 309, and transferred hither in 878 from Santa Maria del Mar, where she was previously buried, two kings, three queens, and four princesses attending, since which time all Spanish sovereigns, down to Christina and Isabella, have been wont to pass the night in prayer before her shrine. There is another saint here also, Oldagar, invoked in childbirth, who died 1137, and was discovered five hundred years after "quite uncorrupted, except the tip of his nose." His sleeping effigy is raised aloft over the altar of the first chapel on the right of the nave. From beneath the organ hangs a hideous Saracen's head, with gaping mouth, starting eyes, and a vast flowing beard. Such, it is said, were found useful in animating the crusaders. A great deal is written in the various English guidebooks about the peculiar lighting of this cathedral by windows pierced through from the chapels of the nave to the chapels back to back with them, which open upon the cloisters; but if such arrangement ever existed, there is certainly no trace of it now.

Many of the other churches are worth visiting, and are interesting specimens of the peculiar types of architecture to which they belong: San Pablo del Campo and San Pedro de las Puellas, of the very earliest Catalonian, with heavy, low, round-headed arches; Santa Maria del Mar, built 1328—1483, a grand single nave of remarkable simplicity, with enormous octagonal columns; and, most especially, the Colegiata of Santa Ana, of 1146, with a lovely silent Gothic cloister, filled with grand old orange-trees, more beautiful even than those of the cathedral. Here authorised and highly respectable old beggars sit all day long upon chairs, on the chance of a stray cuarto.

“Pardon me, my sister; does not your worship see that I am drawing?” I said to one of them, who had hobbled away from her throne to beg.

“Ah Dios!” she answered. “Blind that I was! worm that I am! so your worship draws. And I—I too am a lover of the arts.”

And ever after we were the best of friends, and as I came to the cloister in the morning I received the friendliest of nods from my art-loving sister, who never dreamt of begging again.

The remains of domestic architecture are scarcely less interesting than the churches, and many of the

older houses retain their graceful patios, with cloistered external staircases, covered with arabesques. In the Casa Consistorial is a fine Gothic hall, in which ancient councils were held; but the gem is the Casa de la Disputacion, where a beautiful external stair leads to the rich chapel of St. George, and a lovely Gothic court, full of orange-trees and flowers. The old palace which contains the archives of the kings of Arragon is also well worth visiting. The Archivio is reached by a staircase, adorned with a statue of Vilardell, and with a fine Moorish ceiling, and contains many thousand splendid manuscript volumes and illuminated missals from suppressed convents, all arranged on low stands, that they may be kept constantly dusted and free from worms,—an arrangement rather to the detriment of their effect as a library.

The climate of Barcelona is delightful. During the ten days of early January which we passed there, we never once experienced the slightest sensation of cold; fires were unthought of, and we sate with windows wide open at eight o'clock in the morning. Quite into the middle of the night the Rambla was filled with gay crowds; ladies enjoying the starlight in their transparent mantillas, without veils or shawls. The sturdy growth of the

lemons, which perish in three degrees of frost, is an evidence of the warmth; as well as the profusion of delicate Australian gum-trees, and the masses of heliotrope still in bloom. This eastern vegetation is greatly assisted by the dryness of the temperature, only sixty-five days on the average being wet in the whole year; so that Barcelona is an admirable winter residence for invalids.

Many pleasant excursions may be made from hence, especially that to the grand ruined abbey of Ripoll, and to San Cugat del Vallis near Serdanola. From the end of the Rambla, a miniature railway carries passengers in a few minutes to Sarria, a village at the foot of the hills, famous for its pepper-trees, which here attain the most enormous size. Hence a deep lane, overhung with huge aloes, leads in half an hour to the desolated monastery of Pedralles, with its graceful tower and fine stained glass. The hillside here is occupied by many villas of rich Barcelonese merchants; but these by no means interfere with the wild grace of the view, especially charming at sunset, when behind the dark monastery, with its solemn tower and cypresses, Barcelona is seen glowing in the golden haze, backed by the deep-blue sea.

Nothing can be more charming than the environs of Barcelona in winter, which may be most pleasantly spent in a villa near Sarria, but in summer the sun beats pitilessly upon its sandy hillsides, and the ground is cracked into a thousand widely opening rifts by its power. Lizards abound here and rejoice in the sunshine, and the dangerous tarantula is not unfrequently met with. Spanish legend tells us that the tarantula was once a foolish and impudent woman who had such a passion for dancing, that she never ceased to dance even when the Divine Master was passing by, but conducted herself with appalling irreverence. Therefore the Saviour rebuked her by converting her into a spider, with a guitar stamped upon its back, and ordained that its bite should cause all those bitten by it to dance, till they fell down fainting and exhausted. Most picturesque is all such Spanish folk-lore, and in no country is it more abundant. Of the serpent it tells, that, after its triumph in the Garden of Eden, it always went erect and swollen with pride, till it met with the Holy Family during their flight into Egypt, and audaciously attempted to bite the Infant Jesus: then St. Joseph indignantly rebuking it, bade it lie down and never rise up again, and ever since it has crawled on the ground.

No one should leave Barcelona without visiting the street of the Plateria, entirely lined with jewellers' shops, filled with ornaments which retain the antique patterns derived from the Moors, or from old Greek designs. The heavy *joyas*, set with amethysts and emeralds, are especially remarkable. There is a small English church at Barcelona—an upper chamber, in a central situation, prettily fitted up.

We had always regretted having been prevented entering Spain from Toulouse, as we should then have seen Perpignan, so remarkable as exhibiting a transitional town, semi-Spanish, semi-French; and St. Elne, which is a most curious link between the early mediæval Spanish and the early mediæval French buildings. On this route we should also have naturally visited Gerona, to which we determined to retrace our steps from Barcelona.

Four hours of railroad, by the inland line which passes the quaint old town of Hostalrich, gave us the strange experience of leaving sunshine and warmth and blooming heliotrope, and within two hours finding ourselves amidst hoar-frost and ice and a nipped, frozen vegetation. At Gerona, however, the sun had conquered winter, and the old town, under the protection of its fortified hill,

gleamed forth with its white balconied houses, topped by the cathedral. We walked from the station to the Fonda España (once Estrella), in itself an interesting house, with beautiful *ajimez* windows—*i.e.* Gothic windows—divided by slender, round pillars, generally of marble; the Arabic name meaning “windows by which the sun enters.” The cathedral, reached by a lofty flight of steps, is not interesting outside; but within, the immense width of its nave gives it a certain grandeur, and is of a size which one scarcely realises, except by comparing the dimensions of this church of a fifth-rate Spanish town with those of our finest English cathedrals; the width of Gerona being seventy-three feet, of Canterbury forty-three, York fifty-two, Westminster thirty-eight. The retablo is of silver,—the cloisters, on low but richly-carved Byzantine pillars, are well worth examination; also the Puerta de los Apostolos, with the statues of the saints all standing inside a porch of immense width. Behind the cathedral a rugged path winds up the hillside beneath the fortifications, and gives perhaps the best view which can be obtained of the town and its towers standing out against the bright green vega, and delicate distance of pink mountains.

Two other churches should be visited—S. Pedro de los Gallegans, a grand specimen of tenth-century Romanesque,—and S. Feliu (Felix), with a beautiful truncated spire, dedicated to the missionary of Augsburg, and remarkable as containing the image of S. Narcissus, a patriotic doll, which, when its country was menaced with invasion, had the power of immediately becoming purulent, and producing innumerable legions of flies, of so poisonous a nature, that in 1285 they stung to death 40,000 Frenchmen and 24,000 horses, and, as late as 1684, demolished an entire French army; prodigies which not unnaturally led the local junta to declare S. Feliu their captain-general in 1808, and to lay the staff of command upon his shrine!

IV.

TARRAGONA AND POBLET.

FONDA DE EUROPA, TARRAGONA, *January 24.*

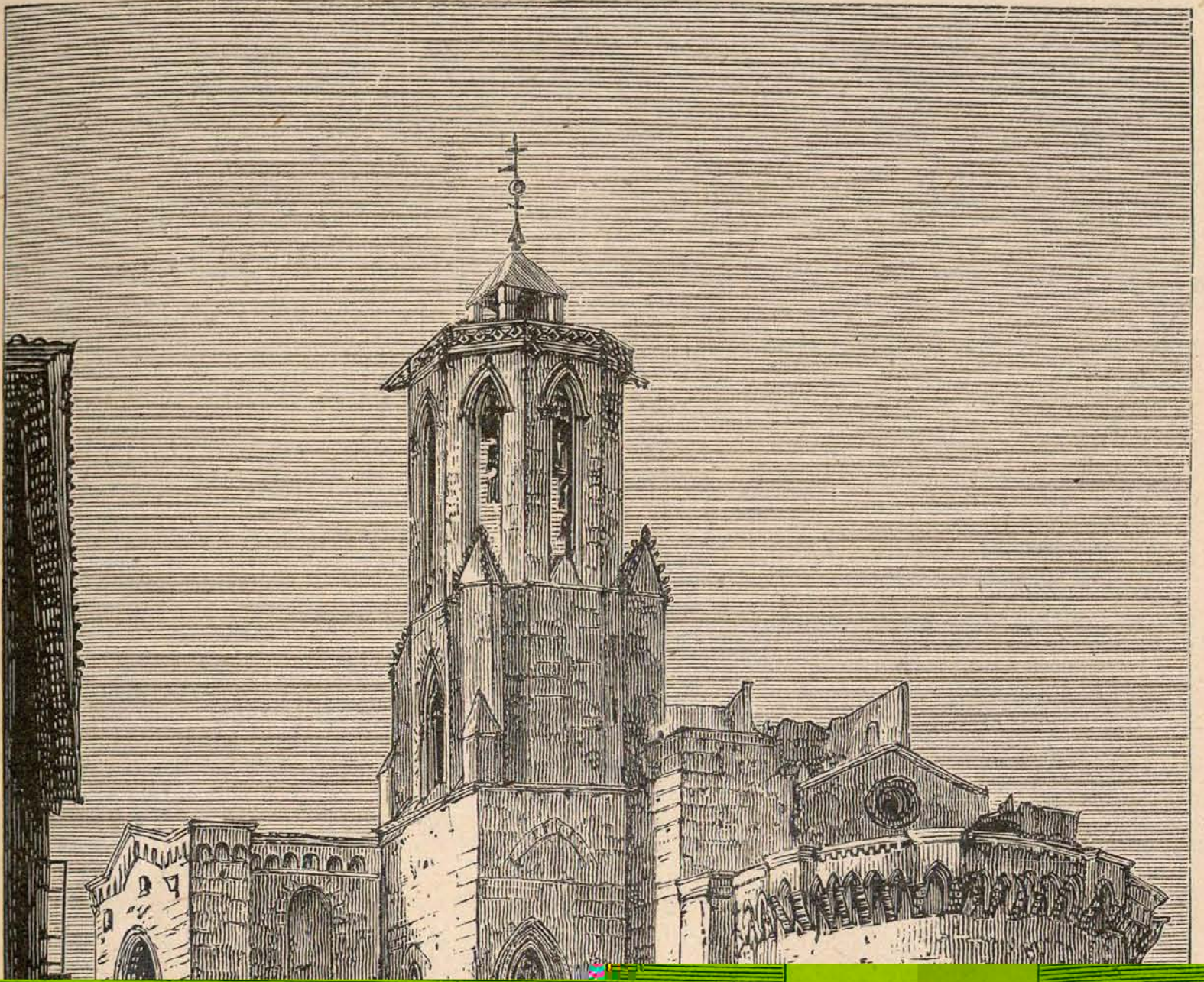
BETWEEN Barcelona and Tarragona we stayed for a few hours at Martorell to sketch the famous bridge, which strides across the gulf of the Llobregat, between the barest, most arid rocks imaginable. The original bridge dates from 535 A.U.C., when it was erected by Hannibal in honour of Hamilcar, and the triumphal gate at its entrance is of this date; but the high pointed arch of the bridge itself is due to the Moors. It is generally called "El Puerta del Diablo," like so many other curious steep old bridges, ascribed to the Devil, in almost every country of Europe. Hence, once more, we looked upon the glorious peaks of Monserrat.

Tarragona is disappointing. So much has been said about it lately, and so much that does not

contain a particle of truth; for instance, a recent agreeable writer describes the wanderer on its ramparts as looking down upon a green plain, studded with noble palms,—whereas the practical mind sees nothing but a stony wilderness, in which not the vestige of a tree, much less of a palm-tree, can be found. The so-called Rambla is a dingy, drab avenue of poor whitewashed houses, between which some meagre plane-trees seem vainly struggling into existence, and where the wretched population, promenading in rags, follow you to beg, even up the staircase of your hotel. Yet even Tarragona can offer much compensation for its evil smells, evil meats, and mendicant neighbours. The cathedral, built 1089 to 1131, is magnificent. The west front rises above a steep flight of steps at the end of the principal street, and, though unfinished, has a grand rose window, and a portal surrounded by statues of saints, and some empty niches, to account for which it is said that one of these holy ones, wearied with his stiff position, comes down from his pedestal every hundred years, and goes his way. Within, all is gloriously in keeping, the grand Romanesque arches being uninjured by paint or whitewash, and their gloom relieved by the lower walls being hung

with faded tapestries, exceedingly effective, bought in London at the sale of church furniture by Henry VIII., and said to have once decorated St. Paul's. Santa Tecla, the tutelar of Tarragona, who heads the peerage of virgin martyrs, has a fine marble chapel. But here, as in so many Spanish churches, the gem of all is the cloister,—a noble arcaded court of varied, round-headed arches, enclosing a most lovely garden, full of summer beauty and sunshine, even in January.

We have walked from Tarragona to the so-called tomb of the Scipios, about three miles distant on the sea-coast. It is a desolate, massive Roman tomb, like many of those on the Appian way, with two mouldering figures discernible on its front, and is well situated in a fragment of ancient forest pines, with an undergrowth of palmito, or dwarf shrubby palm—quite an oasis in this arid, stormy country. Another day we followed the Lerida road for two miles, to a wild, rocky valley, full of palmito, which is crossed by a grand Roman aqueduct with a double tier of arches. The town itself abounds in Roman fragments, and some huge stones are shown as part of the palace of Augustus, who passed the winter here in 26 B.C. But, in spite of these attractions,



travellers, especially invalids, should beware of trusting to the guide-book recommendations of Tarragona, especially that of Murray, who says—“As a winter residence for invalids few places in Europe can equal this, whilst the walks are excellent and varied, and the carriage-drives numerous, leading in various directions through shady pine-woods and oak plantations,” &c. The fact being that the situation of the town, high above the sea, on an isolated hill, is exceedingly exposed; that there are three drives, but no decent carriage wherewith to take them; and that the pine-woods are a fiction, while, as for oaks, there is not one in the country.

The most interesting thing to be attained here is the excursion to Poblet, which no Spanish travellers should on any account be induced to omit.

We took our tickets in the dark, by the 6.20 train, to Montblanch, on the Lerida line, passing on the way Reus, the birthplace of Prim, where the sword of his African campaigns is preserved as a precious relic in the town-hall. At eight we reached Montblanch, and from the crowd of ragged people at the station, disentangled a man who said that he had a tartana at our service, and

followed him to it through the deep mire of the wretched streets. It was the humblest of vehicles—a rude round framework of unplanned open bars, nailed one to the other, and covered with carpet; and with no bottom but ropes knotted together. A headstrong mule was found, which with difficulty could be induced to move, but which, when once it set off, put its head up in the air, and galloped straight forward, regardless of obstacles, sending us violently from side to side of the tartana, as it pitched and jerked over a road which alternated between bare rock and deep sloughs of mud. In vain did the driver beseech us to sit forward; we had no sooner climbed to the front, and seized tight hold of its bars, than a tremendous lurch sent us all rolling backward, with our feet twisted through the open ropes beneath. The driver, however, never ceased to shriek, yelp, and scold at the mule; and though the road grew worse at every bound we made, we got along somehow—till, when the towers of Poblet were rising in view, we could bear it no longer, and, begging to be let out, found we advanced much more quickly on foot.

The sun was just breaking through the clouds, which had obscured the earlier morning, and lit

up the lonely hollow of the hills in which the convent is situated. Venerable olive trees, their trunks gnarled and twisted into myriad strange forms, lined the rugged, rock-hewn way; and behind them stretched ranges of hills; here, rich and glowing with woody vegetation where the sun caught their projecting buttresses,—there, lost in the purple mists of their deep rifts. The approach to a great religious house was indicated, first by a tall stone cross rising on a lofty pedestal, stained with golden lichen and with myrtle and lentisck growing in the hollows of its grey stones; then by a strange group of saintly figures in stone, standing aloft amid a solitary grove of pillars at a crossway, and marking, as we were afterwards told, the afternoon walk of the friars. Hence an avenue, with broken stone seats at intervals on either side, leads up to the convent walls,—a clear, sparkling mountain torrent singing by its side, in a basin overhung with fern and tall water-plants. Then, after skirting the walls for some distance, an ancient gateway admits one to the interior of what, till within a few years ago, was the largest religious house, and one of the largest buildings in Europe.

No remains elsewhere impress the beholder

with the same sense of melancholy as the convent of Poblet. An English ruin, softened and mellowed by time, fading and crumbling by a gentle, gradual decay, can give no idea of it. Here, it is the very abomination of desolation. It is all fresh; it might be all perfect now, but it is the most utterly ruined ruin that can exist. Violence and vengeance are written on every stone. The vast walls, the mighty courts, the endless cloisters, look as if the shock of a terrible earthquake had passed over them. There is no soothing vegetation, no ivy, no flowers, and the very intense beauty and delicacy of the fragments of sculpture which remain in the riven and rifted walls, where they were too high up for the spoiler's hand to reach them, only make stronger contrast with the coarse gaps where the outer coverings of the walls have been violently torn away, and where the marble pillars and beautiful tracery lie dashed to atoms upon the ground.

The convent was founded in 1149 by Ramon Berenguer IV., on the spot where mystic lights had revealed the body of Poblet, a holy hermit, who had taken refuge here during the Moorish occupation. Every succeeding monarch increased its wealth, regarding it, not only in the light of a

famous religious shrine, but as his own future resting-place; for hither, over moor and mountain, all the earlier kings of Arragon were brought to be buried. As the long lines of royal tombs rose thicker on either side of the choir, the living monarchs came hither too, for a retreat of penitence and prayer, and lived for a time the conventual life. And thus, though no sovereign ever actually assumed the cowl at Poblet, several left orders that their effigy should be twice represented on their monuments, once in royal robes, and again in the monastic habit. Five hundred monks of St. Bernard occupied, but did not fill, the magnificent buildings; their domains became almost boundless, their jewelled chalices and gorgeous church furniture could not be reckoned. The library of Poblet became the most famous in Spain, so that it was said that a set of waggons employed for a whole year could not cart away the books. As Poblet became the Westminster Abbey of Spain as regarded its kings and queens, so it gradually also answered to Westminster in becoming the resting-place of all other eminent persons, who were brought hither to mingle theirs with the royal dust. Dukes and grandees of the first class occupied each his niche around the

principal cloister, where their tombs, less injured than anything else, form a most curious and almost perfect epitome of the history of Spanish sepulchral decoration. Marquises and counts, less honoured, had a cemetery assigned them in the strip of ground surrounding the apse; famous warriors were buried in the nave and ante-chapel; and the bishops of Lerida and Tarragona, deserting their own cathedrals, had each their appointed portion of the transept; while the abbots of Poblet, far mightier than bishops, occupied the chapter-house, where numbers of their venerable effigies, typical of dignity and repose, may still be seen, having been hastily covered over at the time of the invasion. Gradually the monks of Poblet became more exclusive; their number was reduced to sixty-six, but into that sacred circle no novice was introduced in whose veins ran other than the purest blood of a Spanish grandee. He who became a monk of Poblet had to prove his pedigree, and the chapter sate in solemn deliberation upon his quarterings. Every monk had his two servants, and rode upon a snow-white mule. The mules of the friars were sought through the whole peninsula at an enormous expense. Within the walls, every variety of trade was represented; no monk

need seek for anything beyond his cloister; the tailors, the shoemakers, the apothecaries, had each their wing or court. Hospitals were raised on one side for sick and ailing pilgrims: on the other rose a palace appropriated to the sovereigns who sought the cure of their souls. The vast produce of the vineyards of the mountainous region which depended upon Poblet, was brought to the great convent wine-presses, and was stowed away in its avenue of wine-vats. "El Priorato" became one of the most reputed wines in the country; the pipes, the presses, and the vats where it was originally prepared, still remain almost entire.

Year by year the power of the convent increased, till, like autocratic sovereigns, the friars of Poblet issued their commands, and the surrounding country had only to hear and obey. He who failed to attend to the summons of their mass-bell, had to answer to the monks for his neglect. Strange rumours began to float of peasants who, entering the convent gates, had never been known to come forth. Gradually the monks became the bugbear of neighbouring children, and threats, which tampered with their names, were whispered by the lace-making mothers in the ears of their naughty little ones. At last came the wars of

Don Carlos. Then political dissensions arose within the mystic circle; half the monks were royalists, half were Carlists, and the latter considering themselves oppressed, and muttering vengeance, whispered abroad tales of secret dungeons and of hidden torture. The public curiosity became excited. Many yet live who remember the scene when the convent doors were broken in by night, and the townsfolk, streaming through court and cloister, reached the room which had been designated, where, against a wall, by which it may still be traced, the dreaded rack was found, and beneath it a dungeon filled with human bones, and with other instruments of torture. Twenty-four hours were insisted upon by the authorities to give the friars a chance of safety: they escaped, but only with their lives. Poblet, beautiful Poblet, was left in all its riches and perfection; nothing was taken away.

Then the avenging torrents streamed up the mountain side and through the open portals. All gave way before them; nothing was spared. "Destroy, destroy!" was the universal outcry. Every weapon of destruction was pressed into service. No fatigue, no labour was evaded. Picture, and shrine, and tomb, and fresco, fell

alike under the destroying hammer; till, wearied with devastation, the frantic mob could work no more, and fire was set to the glorious sacristy, while the inestimable manuscripts of the library, piled heap upon heap, were consumed to ashes.

At the present time the story of that day of destruction is engraved on every wall. At first, you are unprepared. The little decorated chapel of St. George, on the right of the second entrance, is so little injured, that it might be taken for an ordinary ruin; then, passing the gate, one finds the remains of a series of frescoes, which tell the story of the Moorish invasion. Only the figure of one warrior and of the avenging angel are left, the rest is torn away; the lower pillars are gone, but their beautiful capitals, of monks seated amid rich foliage, are left.

Hence one reaches the original front of the convent. On the left is another chapel, windowless and grass-grown, and behind it the remains of the hospital, which is reduced to a mere shell. In front, rise on one side the heavy machicolated towers which once flanked the main entrance, now bricked up,—and on the other, between statues of San Bernardo and San Benito, the entrance of the church. Here, in the ante-

chapel, donkeys have their stalls around the tombs of kings, and the fragments of the royal monuments lie piled one upon another. On the right, in a dark niche, is the Easter Sepulchre, richly wrought in marble: only the figure of the Saviour has been spared; the Virgin and saints, legless, armless, and noseless, stand weeping around. Below, a sleeping archbishop has escaped with less injury.

The Coro retains its portals of lumachella marble, but within it is utterly desolate, though overhead the grand vaulting of the roof, and its supporting columns, are perfectly entire. There is no partition now beyond this, and through the pillared avenue the eye pierces to the high altar, where the splendid retablo of white marble still stands erect, though all its delicate reliefs are shattered to fragments, even the figure of the infant Saviour being torn from the arms of the central Madonna. Here, perhaps, is the climax of the destruction. On either side were the royal tombs; Jaime El Conquistador; Alonzo II.; Ferdinand I. and his two sons, Juan II. and Alonzo V.; Pedro IV. and his three queens; Juan I. and his two, with many princes and princesses of royal blood. The monuments remain, but so altered, so battered

with chisel and hammer, that scarcely a fragment of their beautiful ornaments is intact, and the effigies have entirely disappeared. Caryatides without arms or faces, floating angels wingless and headless, flowers without stems, and leaves without branches, all dust-laden, cracked, and crumbling, scarcely testify to what they have been; and thus it is throughout. From the sacristy blackened with fire, where one portion of the gorgeous Venetian framework still hangs in mockery, one is led to the dormitory of the novices, where the divisions of the cells may be traced, though none are left, and to the refectory, in which the fountain may still be seen, where, in this hot climate, the luxury of iced water always played during dinner in a central marble bason, while, from a stone pulpit, a reader refreshed the souls of the banqueters. The great cloister remains comparatively entire, surrounded with tombs, and enclosing, amid a thicket of roses which have survived the fate of all else, a portico, with a now dry fountain, once of many streams, where the monks in summer afternoons were wont to be regaled with chocolate. This was voluntary chocolate; but another room is shown in which is remembered that obligatory chocolate was served every morning, for fear any

brother should faint during the celebration of mass. Beyond the great cloister, which is of the richest pointed architecture,—every capital varied in fresh varieties of sculpture,—is an earlier cloister, formed by low, narrow, round-headed, thick-set arches of the twelfth century. Above one side of the great cloister, rich in the delicate tracery of its still remaining widows, rises the shell of the palace of Martino El Humilde. Space would not suffice to describe in detail each court with its distinctive features, through which the visitor is led in increasing wonder and distress, to the terrible torture-chamber, which is wisely shown last, as offering the clue and key to the whole. But surely no picture that the world can offer of the sudden destruction of human power can be more appalling than fallen Poblet, beautiful still, but most awful, in the agony of its unexpected destruction!

In the summer, the solitude is broken by a perfect school of young architects, from Italy, Prussia, and America, who come hither to study; but in England Poblet is little known. The time is so short since its destruction, that of the sixty-six monks who occupied the convent at the time, many are still living. At Poblet they wore the white Bernardine habit, and at mass they officiated in

long trains of white ; but the feeling against them is still so bitter, that if one of them reappeared in his former costume he would be immediately assassinated. Each has retired to his family. We asked the guide if none had ever revisited their former home. "Yes," he said, "five of the friars came last summer ; but they could not bear to look. They wept and sobbed the whole time they were here ; it was piteous to see them." From the ruins of their old home must have come back to them with thrilling force, an echo from the hymn of their Founder so often chaunted within its walls :—

"Hortus odoribus affluet omnibus, hic paradusus,
Plenaque gratia, plenaque gaudia, cantica, risus ;
Plena redemptio, plena refectio, gloria plena :
Vi, lue, luctibus aufugientibus, exule poenâ.
Nil ibi debile, nil ibi flebile, nil ibi scissum ;
Res ibi publica pax erit unica, pax in idipsum.
Hic furor, hic mala, schismata, scandala, pax sine pace ;
Pax sine litibus, et sine luctibus in Syon arce."

V.

VALENCIA, ALICANTE, AND ELCHE.

HOTEL PEREGRINO, MURCIA, *February 2.*

WE travelled all night from Tarragona to Valencia, a most fatiguing journey of eleven hours, in a train which rattled and shook beyond description, making sleep quite impossible. We were obliged to console ourselves with the conversation of our fellow-travellers, and many are the pleasant glimpses into the national life and character one may gain at such times. One woman remarked to another how sweetly her baby was smiling in its sleep. "Yes," she said, "it is laughing at the angels, which it only can see." "I have such a buzzing in my ears," said an old woman to another. "It is the sound of a leaf," she answered, "falling from the Tree of Life."

Day broke in time to show us the first vision of tall palms, with their feathery foliage rising black

against one of Tennyson's "daffodil skies," which above, still deep blue, was filled with stars. A truly southern mob greeted our arrival, shrieking out the merits of the opposition hotels, and trying to appropriate us and our packages by force. Woe betide the traveller who on such occasions has not chosen his resting-place; but its name had made us already decide upon the Fonda del Cid, which well deserves recommendation, and was, in fact, the first thoroughly comfortable hotel we had met with in Spain. Opposite the windows rises the tall semi-Moorish tower of the Miguelete, built by Juan Franck, 1381—1418, which, with the magnificent gate called Puerta de Serranos (1349), and the Gothic Lonja, or town-hall (1482), are almost the only ancient buildings of importance which remain in Valencia, where, unlike other Spanish towns, a perfect warfare against the antiquities has been carried on for some years past, the ajimez windows having been almost all modernised, and the whole of the grand old walls having been pulled down after King Amadeo's visit in 1871, "in order to give employment to the poor" (!), though the condition of the streets is disgraceful, and the roads are left in such a state of neglect as to be utterly impassable; the principal one, leading to

El Grao, the port of Valencia, being like a ploughed field, with the furrows a yard deep. For some unaccountable reason the avenue of fine old trees which lined this road, was demolished at at the same time as the walls. The most interesting historical fragment in the town was pulled down by its idiotic authorities in 1865, and its site is now only marked by an inscription on a wall. This was the tower Albufat, upon which the cross was first hoisted when the Cid took Valencia from the Moors, after a twenty years' siege, in 1094, with the famous gate adjoining, the Puerta del Cid, by which he entered the town. From hence, in the moment of triumph, he sent back a command that the enemy should be permitted to bury their dead, and when the Moorish chieftain, touched by the unexpected clemency, sent two beautiful slaves for his acceptance, replied that to him, for whom the welcome of his own Ximena was waiting, no other charms could offer any attraction. Here, his first act was to take Ximena with her daughters, Sol and Elvira, to the top of the tower, and bid them look down upon the glories of the Huerta, the garden of Spain, which his perseverance at length had conquered. Here, in 1099, he lay upon his death-bed, surrounded by all his beloved ones,

even his famous war-steed, Bavioca, being brought into the chamber, and "standing there like a lamb" to gaze upon his dying master. From this gate also once more the Cid rode forth upon Bavioca, upright in death, his corpse arrayed in full armour, with the face uncovered and his white beard falling down over his breastplate, supported by Gil Diaz and the Bishop Geronimo, and followed by the faithful Ximena and his warriors; a sight so awful that the Moors—who, regaining courage at the news of his death, had again encamped against the town—fled in terror, leaving the strange funeral procession to carry out the chieftain's last wish that he should be laid in S. Pedro de Cerdeña, and abandoning so great a booty to the Christians that, in the words of the old ballad, the Cid, even after death, won such riches from the heathen that "the poorest became rich."

No breath from these heroic days now blows upon Valencia, which is a very concentration of dulness, stagnation, and ugliness; its cathedral, chiefly Corinthian, is poor and featureless; none of the churches are fine; the dusty gardens of Alameda and Glorieta are ill-kept and rubbishy, and the handsome bridges, even in January, cross

only a dry bed, without the smallest streamlet of water. In the market many picturesque costumes, however, may be seen and admired; swarthy labourers of the Huerta, with sandals, linen drawers, velvet jackets, flowing mantas of scarlet and blue, and their heads bound tight with a gaily-covered handkerchief, knotted behind, with the ends hanging down; women of the lower classes, in bright handkerchiefs also over their black hair, and of the upper classes, invariably in the mantilla, which is so much the rule here, that English ladies who do not wear them are followed, much as an Indian in feathers would be in Regent Street, and those of our party who went to see Ribera's pictures at the Colegio Patriarca, were forcibly ejected from the church for venturing to enter it in bonnets.

We stayed till Friday afternoon, in order to be present at the morning ceremonies of that day in the chapel of Corpus Christi in this college. At ten A.M. the congregation, all in black, take their places near the high-altar, which on ordinary occasions is surmounted by a Last Supper of Ribera; around this many tapers are burning, but the rest of the naturally gloomy church is additionally darkened. In front of the altar the

priests kneel in silence, while the penitential psalms are sung by a hidden choir. Then, as the *Miserere* swells in thrilling notes through the gloom, the picture over the altar descends by an invisible machinery, and violet curtains are seen within. Gradually, as the chant proceeds, one veil after another is withdrawn; lilac, grey, black, till, when the imagination is fully aroused, appears, deeply recessed and dimly shewn by a quivering torchlight, the figure of the dying Saviour upon the Cross, only the bent head fully lighted up into a vividness of reality; the rest of the figure rather expressed than seen. The whole service is most impressive and touching, and can scarcely be witnessed without emotion. The last veil is only drawn for a few minutes, and as it is closed again, and the people rise from their knees, the joyful notes of the organ, accompanied by a chorus of voices, tell of the Resurrection and a new life.

The painters of Valencia form a separate school of their own, and are largely represented in their native town. The most remarkable were Juanes (1523—1597), who answers in Spain to Raphael; Francisco di Ribalta (1551—1628), who is compared with Domenichino; Josef Ribera or Spagnuololetto (1588—1666); Espinoza (1600—1680); and Orrente

(1560—1644), who is chiefly remarkable as a painter of cattle. The confiscated convent of El Carmen is now the Museo, and contains, amid a vast amount of trash, some pictures of Ribera and Ribalta, powerful, but chiefly of the black-agony school, excruciating representations of ecstasies, St. Francis, Santa Teresa, &c. One specimen of Ribalta, however, rises far above the rest, "The Nailing to the Cross," in which the Saviour, seated upon the slightly-inclined cross, on which He is being fastened, looks up to heaven in rapt contemplation, while one of the thieves, standing near, with his hands bound, watches with intense interest the preparations of the cross to which He is to be fixed. In striking contrast to these subjects, dark both in conception and execution, are some lovely works of Juanes, especially the Saviour instituting the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is quite sublime in its touching solemnity of expression, and the picture called "La Purisima," painted, after long fasting and prayer, to represent the Virgin as she was described by the Jesuit, Martino de Alvaro, as having appeared to him in a vision. Still more beautiful works of Juanes may be seen over two altars in the Church of St. Nicolas, which contains a perfect

gallery of this flower of Spanish painters, its masterpiece being a *Cenacolo* of matchless beauty. Our Saviour is standing in awful beauty and solemnity, and is about to administer the sacramental wafer, which He raises in one hand, while the other rests upon the beloved St. John, who bends beneath Him in ecstatic adoration; the other disciples lean breathlessly forward; in the foreground is the dark figure of Judas with his money-bag.

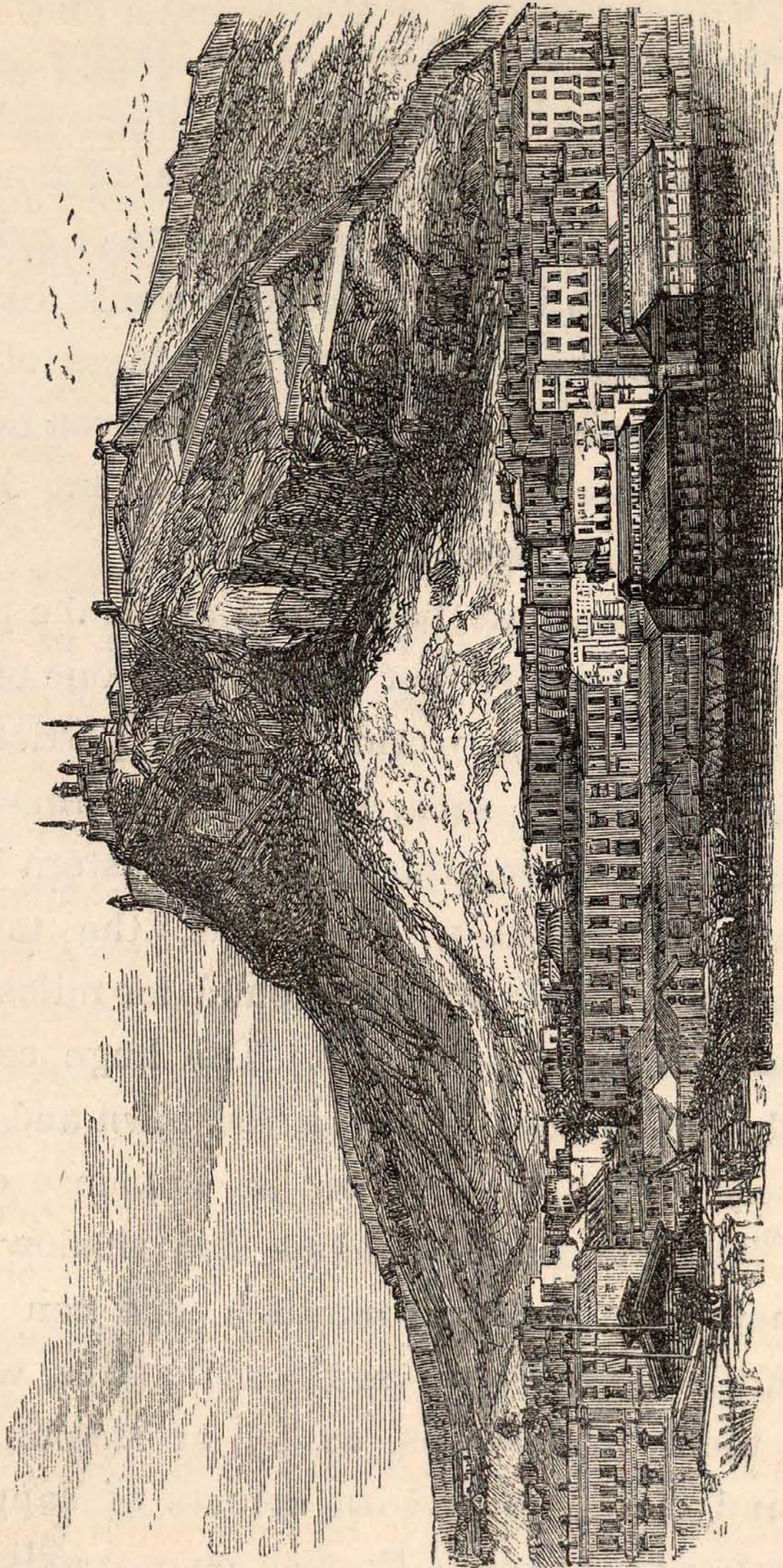
All around Valencia lies the Huerta, the most fertile district in Europe, and in the highest state of cultivation. Here lucerne is mown fifteen times in one year, and the rest of the crops are in proportion. Peas (January 20) were already in pod, and other vegetables in perfection. But the miasma from the stagnant waters—the whole course of the river being diverted for purposes of artificial irrigation—is unwholesome, and combined with the frequent sirocco, fresh from African deserts, renders the climate very depressing. We delighted to escape for one day by the railway to the more exhilarating air of Saguntum,—the old, well-known Roman name being that marked on our railway tickets, though the place is generally known in modern times as Murviedro. It

is a wild and interesting place, a huge rock crowned with the remains of a Moorish castle, and clothed with prickly pear, and, on one of its sides, grand remains of a Roman theatre. While we were drawing, the simple, hospitable people crowded round us, full of eager questions as to England and other places of which they knew nothing, and peeled for us the delicious juicy cactus fruit. "Saguntum," they said, "was, next to Rome, the most important place in the world, and their Parróquia ranked only next to St. Peter's, on which account it had been decided that if the Holy Father should leave Rome, Saguntum was to be his residence. The Moors, who lived before the Romans, were the founders of Saguntum, and the ruined theatre was their Plaza de Toros."

We broke the long land journey to Alicante by sleeping at Jativa, which is just beyond the bounds of a lovely garden about ten miles' wide, which separates the Huerta from the stony deserts of inland Spain. Here the boughs of the orange-trees swept the carriage windows as we passed, and the vibrations of the train shook off showers of the over-ripe golden fruit. Groves of palms, often gathered around solitary, desolate *cartujas*, bent and rustled in the breeze. Jativa itself is full

of fountains—a perfect city of clear rushing waters—and its bright little Alameda is fragrant with fruit and flowers. Behind the town, the mountain-side is full of hermitages and chapels, built amid groves of old carouba-trees and thickets of prickly pear. Altogether, it is a place one would like to linger in; but the extreme wretchedness of the inn drove us across the dismal plains, seven hours, to Alicante, where there is an excellent hotel (Bossio), one of the best in Spain.

This is, however, the best thing about the place—this and the climate—for Alicante is one of the driest places in the world. Not a particle of vegetation is to be seen, except the palm-trees on its Alameda. Everything has an Eastern look. The flat-roofed houses, the roads, the tawny, desolate plains which stretch around for miles and miles, are alike dust-coloured. The huge castle-crowned mass which overhangs the town and port is scarcely a rock, it is rather an immense dust-heap. Yet, even here, sunshine and shadow can work their ever-changing miracles, and can send great purple shadows across the mountains, which change their drab steeps, as by an enchanter's wand, and clothe them with colours of sapphire and amethyst. A small English colony exists at



CASTLE OF ALICANTE.

Alicante, with a consul, a chaplain, and a pleasant, hospitable little society. They told us that if we stayed long, we should learn to delight in the place, and even to think it beautiful; but to us it appeared so miserably abject and squalid, we could not believe it possible.

The drive from Alicante to Elche was our first experience of a Spanish diligence. We thought its discomforts greatly exaggerated, as the speed is far greater in proportion than that of the railway, without the trial to one's patience of perpetual unnecessary pottering at the small stations, which occur every five minutes. On the outside, the fresh air blowing over the vast plains was delightful, and the old Arragonese coachman in his quaintly decorated velveteen suit, with a large sombrero, vied in civilities with the Valencian *mayoral*. "To the right; to the left; go on, you creatures; Ave Maria Purisima, more to the left, you first one; go along with God, you outsider;" thus they talk to their horses, in a loud, stormy voice. There is very little guidance used, literally no driving at all; the horses hear and obey, or if the leader takes advantage of his distance, far beyond the reach of whip, to become wilful, stones are thrown at his tail, from a little hillock pre-

pared all ready on the coach-box, — the object of which, on setting out, had greatly puzzled us.

After two hours' drive, a serrated line of palms rose upon the horizon, and soon we entered their forests. Far in the air, sometimes sixty feet high, rose the beautiful fans, with their enormous pendent bunches of dates, the golden fruit hanging from stems of so gorgeous an orange, that no mere description of colour can give the faintest idea of their effect when they are lighted up by the sun, and backed by a deep blue sky, as we first saw them. Their variety also is most beautiful: some of the older trees growing perfectly straight, others bending in the most picturesque attitudes, some buttressed up with little stone walls, and beside them younger palms rising in full youthful vigour, tens upon tens of thousands, for miles around.

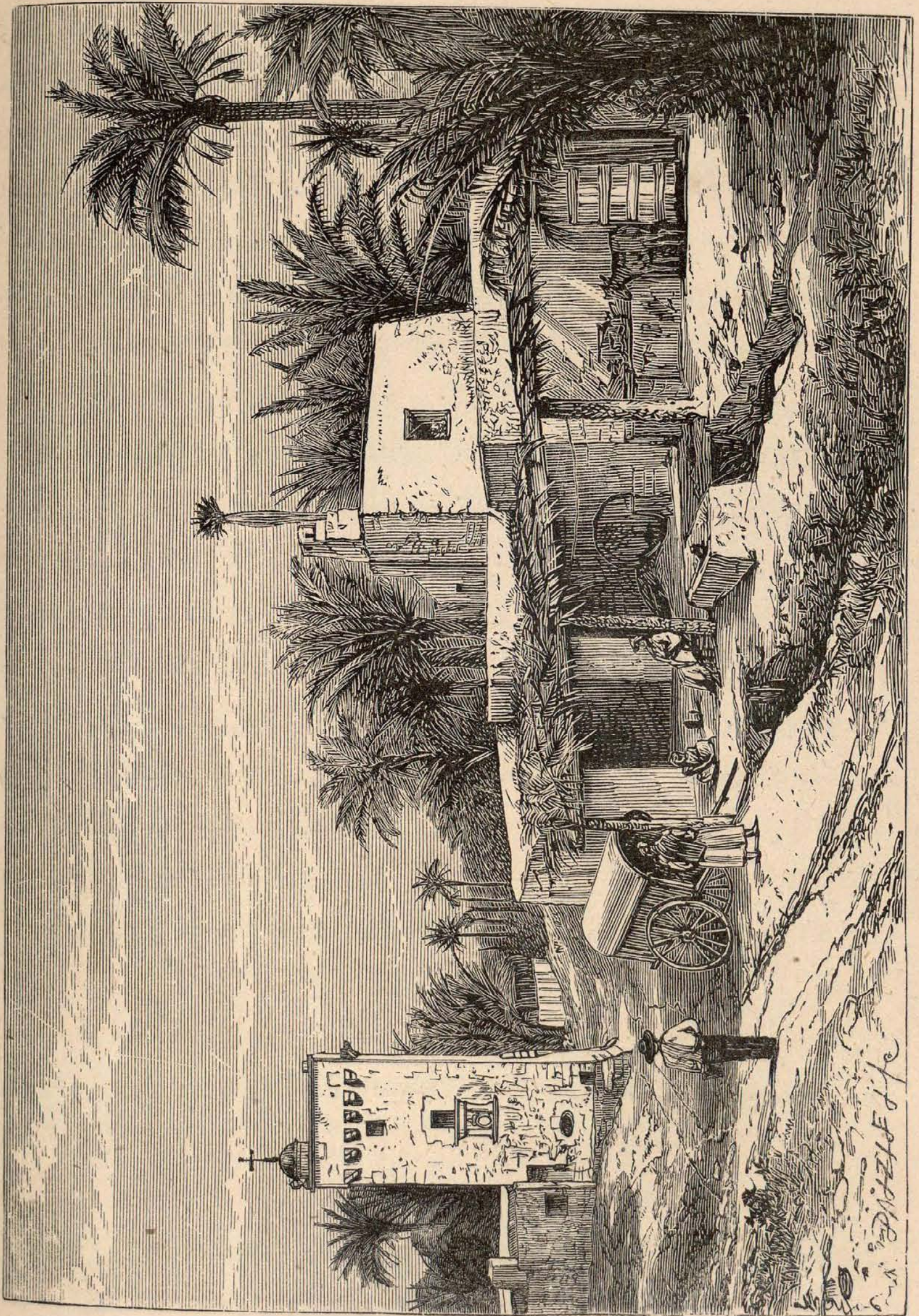
Only the female trees bear fruit, and this only when they are impregnated with dust from the males, which is consequently done artificially. The male palms are often tied up and blanched to be cut for the Palm-Sunday festivals, and they are also sold to be stuck up in balconies as a protection against lightning, being considered quite as efficacious, and being certainly much cheaper, than

an iron conductor. £2,000 worth are sold annually in Elche for this purpose, and £14,000 worth of dates. The latter were being gathered during our visit (January) by the clever little *hortelanos* who climb the branchless trunk like cats, a rope being passed round it and their waists, upon which they rest their whole weight in a horizontal position, lowering their baskets when filled, and raising them again by a pulley. The defective palm-leaves are sent to the manufactories and used as cigarettes. By the road-side, before every cottage-door, are quantities of dates in baskets, no one watching them; any passer-by can eat as many as he likes, fill his pockets, and leave his halfpenny in payment. It is generally left, for where Spaniards are trusted they scarcely ever abuse a trust. When we walked in the groves the hospitable peasants were only too anxious to load us with branches of the best fruit, and would accept no payment at all.

We spent three days in Elche, which, though the Roman *Illica*, is completely Moorish in character. There is a humble but decent *posada*. Ever-increasing was our delight in the enchanting walks; sometimes through the thick groves of magnificent date-palms, where all is richness and

splendour of colour ; sometimes in the deep brown ravine of the dried-up Vinalapo, which reminded us of the Valley of Jehoshaphat,—Elche, entirely Moorish, rising above like Jerusalem, with its flat-roofed houses, old walls, and crowning mosque ; sometimes by the banks of little streams bordered with prickly pear and pomegranates ; and sometimes out upon the desolate gravelly plain beyond all these, which assumes a wonderful colour towards sunset, and where the extreme clearness of the air makes the most distant objects, even to the violet mountains on the horizon, appear supernaturally distinct.

It is across a mere track in this plain that you set forth in the Murcia diligence, a track so ill-defined, so broken by large stones and even rocks, that an overturn seems inevitable every minute. Sometimes you reach the brink of an abandoned stone-quarry ; further progress seems impossible, but the mayoral shouts and cracks his whip, down go the leaders by the merest semblance of a road, the lumbering diligence tumbles after, and at the bottom the horses just shake themselves and scramble on again not a bit the worse. But the road improves as it reaches Orihuela, an old cathedral city, where all the handsome girls were



W. W. P. H. F. J. C.

AT ELCHE.

walking about with fresh roses stuck jauntily behind their ears, and where the country is so excessively fertile that an old proverb says, whether it rains or not, corn will grow in Orihuela—"Llueva or no llueva, trigo in Orihuela." Merrily, with jangling bells, we drove on through the starlight to Murcia (Hotel Peregrino), a pleasant place with an interesting Gothic cathedral, and one of the most especially Moorish places in Spain, said, from the stagnation of its long existence, to be the only place Adam would recognise if he returned to earth.

Here we have heard the bell ringing through the streets and the people joining in singing the Rosario de la Aurora, so called because it is sung at dawn for the benefit of the souls in purgatory. This is a verse of it:—

"En el Cielo se reza un Rosario
 Todas las mañanas al amanecer,
 Santiago lleva el estandarte,
 San Pedro la luz, la cruz San Miguel.
 Pues vamos allá,
 Que no hay cosa mas santa y mas dulce
 Que el Santo Rosario que se vá á rezar."

In Murcia we take leave of the eastern coast (for Cartagena is not worth visiting), with much grati-

tude for the enjoyment it has afforded us. No one who has not seen it can imagine the changes of scene it offers, the pictures it enables one to store up in one's mental gallery. The climate is delicious, not the burning sun by day with the cold frosty nights of a Roman winter, which send you to shiver in the evenings over a hopeless wood fire, but the clear equable bracing warmth of a fine early English September. Since the New Year to the present date (Feb. 2), we have had no rain. But what has most surprised us has been the exceeding facility of travelling and the charm of the treatment we have met with. We have quite laid aside now all thought of the mistrust which is a necessary habit in Italy. The fixed prices of the different hotels, which include board as well as lodging, prevent all trouble and preclude all notion of bargaining; and, whether in a first-rate fonda or a humble posada, you are received and treated, not as mere customers, but like honoured and welcome guests at a country house; and, being so treated, you learn to behave as such. The master of the house is your friend, who considers himself as your equal, and invariably expects to be shaken hands with on taking leave; the waiters and chamber-men (there are scarcely ever any female servants in Spanish hotels) are

also your friends, but at a more respectful distance. Cheating and extortion seem incompatible with the Spanish character. Even the poorest peasant who has shown us our way, and who has walked a considerable distance to do so, has invariably refused to receive anything for his services; yet all are most willing and anxious to help strangers. The same liberal spirit seems to breathe through everything, and was equally shown at our little posada at Elche—equivalent to a small English public-house—where a number of maimed, blind, and halt collected daily to receive the broken viands from the table-d'hôte, which the mistress distributed to them, and in the delicate blacksmith's wife opposite, who keeps two lamps burning nightly at her own expense, before the little shrine of "Our Lady of the Unprotected" in her balcony. The temporal works of mercy—to give bread to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty, to take care of the sick, to visit the captives, and to bury the dead, these are the common duties which none shrink from.

As I write, a handsome dark-eyed brown boy in rags, who looks as if he had stepped out of one of Murillo's pictures, is leaning against the opposite wall in the moonlight, watching a shrine of the Virgin. It is a picture typical of Spain, ruined

and superstitious, but still most beautiful—and so is the cry of the watchman which is ringing through the silent air, “Ave Maria Santissima, it is a quarter to twelve o’clock.”

VI.

CORDOVA.

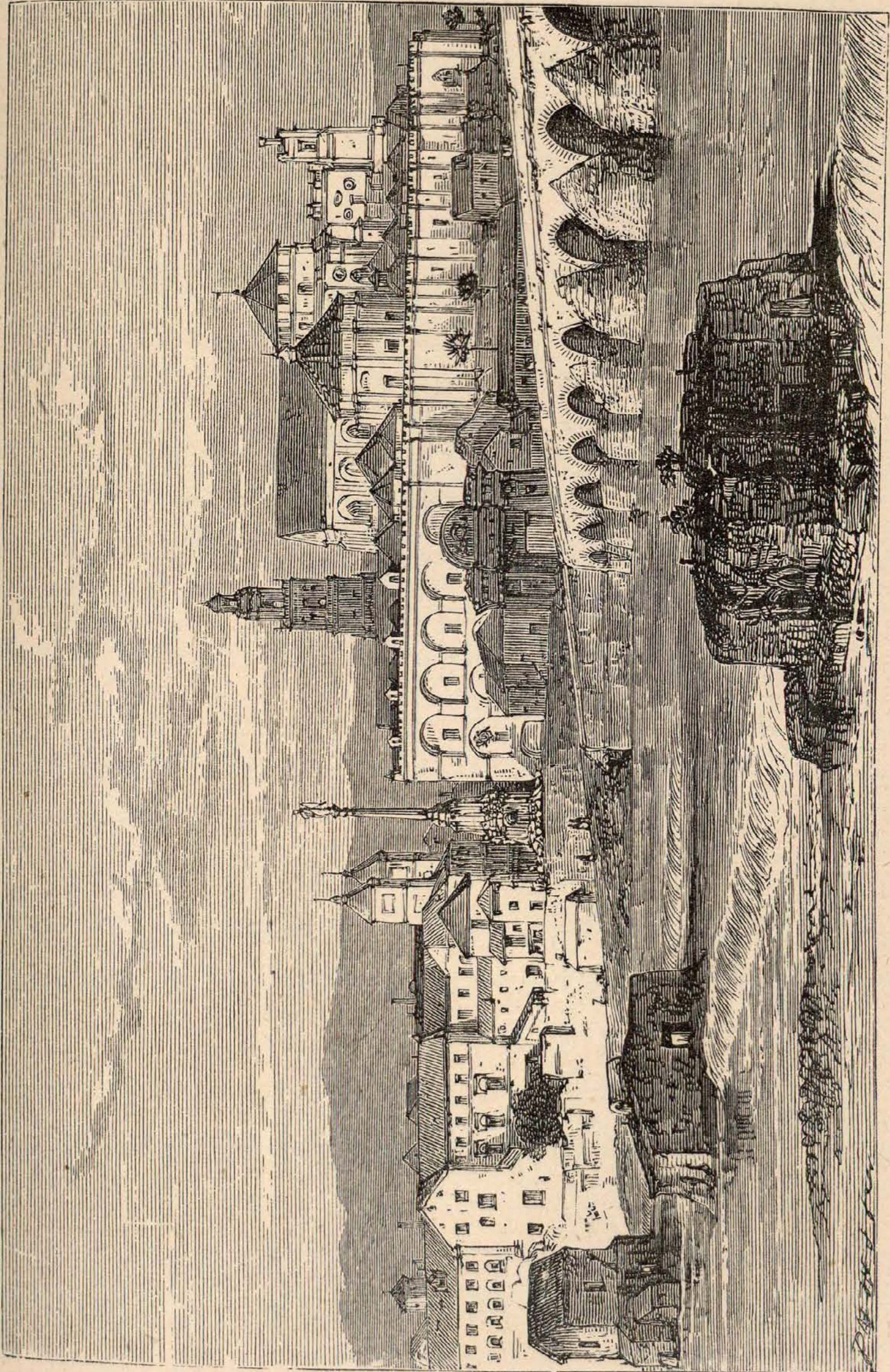
FONDA RIZZI, CORDOVA, *February 8, 1872.*

IT is a tremendous railway journey of twenty-two hours from Murcia to Cordova, with many disagreeable changes at miserably ordered stations, and no decent stopping place on the way. At Albacete, picturesquely-dressed men step into the carriage out of the midnight darkness, hung all round with knives with inlaid handles, and the daggers which are so indispensable to the costume of the *majo* or peasant dandy, and which are generally worn sticking out of the breeches-pocket. They are frequently adorned with mottoes, generally indicative of the savage service for which they are intended—the object of a Spanish knife being “to chip bread and kill a man.” An immense number of people are employed in their manufacture at Albacete, which is bombastically

called the Sheffield of Spain, and they are always sold at the station.

In the morning the train plodded—for a Spanish train never hurries—through La Mancha, the Don Quixote country, still almost as wild and uncultivated as in the days when the famous knight rode over its dull and desolate plains. Towards mid-day these were exchanged for green fields, and low hills clothed with cork trees, till at length the welcome towers of Cordova appeared, and an omnibus conveyed us along a bright Alameda garden, and then through the narrow streets, in which it often touches the houses on either side, till it could proceed no further, and disgorged its contents at the mouth of a street too narrow for any but foot passengers, leading to the Hôtel Rizzi.

The narrow streets, or rather alleys, so well adapted to give a shade in summer, when the heat here is almost insupportable, are an unaltered relic of the Moorish dominion, under which Cordova was the successful rival of Bagdad and Damascus. Utterly devoid of picturesqueness, they have a more thoroughly African appearance than those of any other town in Spain. One threads one's way between interminable whitewashed walls, their scanty windows guarded by heavy iron bars,



CORDOVA.

over a pebbly pavement so rough that it is like the bed of a torrent, littered with straw from the burdens of innumerable donkeys. There are no shops apparent, no animation whatever, nor any sign of life in the houses, and the few silent figures you pass are only miserable beggars wrapped in their mantas, generally lying on steps in the sun, almost too inert to extend their hands for charity, an occasional veiled lady gliding by to mass, or a majo, who goes swiftly along, erect upon his tall mule. Cordova is like a city of the dead; yet it looks modern and fresh, for every mark of antiquity is effaced by the coating of whitewash which clothes everything, and which makes the building of a thousand years ago undistinguishable from that of yesterday.

The little life which remains all seems to converge to the mosque, the one centre of interest in the town, the magnet which still attracts travellers to this whited sepulchre from all parts of the world. Here, in the magnificent court of oranges, troops of children play, a spectacle for a perfect regiment of beggars, who sun themselves all day long on the low stone seats around its walls, while crowds of strong able-bodied men stand here for hours gossiping and playing at cards—for at Cordova Spanish idle-

ness reaches its climax. If a man wants a few pesetas he earns them; but when he has earned them he does not work again till they are spent, and as a Cordovan can live luxuriously on an orange, a piece of dried fish, and an air on the guitar, plenty of time is left to *flaneur* and amuse themselves. And for this what spot can be more delightful than the grand old court, surrounded by flame-shaped battlements, entered by rich Moorish gateways, and where the fountain erected by Abdur-r-rahman in 945 still sends forth its volume of crystal waters beneath huge orange-trees planted some three hundred years ago, and above which feathery palms and tall cypresses shoot up into the clear air?

Oftentimes a group of the loiterers forms round one who is singing in a loud shrill voice, not very suitable for the consecrated precincts of a cathedral, some such snatches as this:—

“Los calzones del padre
De Catalina
Tienen cincuenta varas
Sin la pretina;”

or,—

“Mi marido se murió
Dios en el cielo le tenga;
Y le tenga tan tenido
Que nunca por acá vuelva;”

or, with a quaint look towards the stranger,—

“Los enemigos del alma
Todos dicen que son tres.
Y yo digo que son cuatro
Desde que conozco á usted.”

From the court you step with bewilderment into a roofed-in forest of pillars, where you may truly lose your way amid the thousand still remaining columns (there were twelve hundred once) of varied colour, thickness, and material, which divide the building into twenty-nine naves one way and nineteen the other. Into the midst of all a cathedral was engrafted in 1547, for which many of the columns were destroyed, permission having been extorted by the canons from Charles V., who was unaware of the mischief they were doing, but who bitterly reproved them when he visited their work for having thus injured what was unique in the world. A tiny chapel, with a roof like a shell, formed from a single block of marble, is ornamented outside with mosaics sent from Constantinople by the Emperor Romanus II., the finest in the world. This is the Ceca, where the Alcoran was kept, as in a Holy of Holies; and at the opposite chapel of the Maksurah, also a beautiful remnant of Moorish times, though its pavement of pure

silver has disappeared, the kalif performed his *chotha* or public prayer, at the Mihrab, a window looking towards the shrine. Just outside their sacred Ceca now stands, as if in mockery, the tomb of the Conde de Oropesa, who defended Cordova against the Moors in 1368. The only other especial object of interest shown is a scratch of the Crucifixion on a wall, attributed to the nails of a Christian captive; but the mosque may be visited in all hours and all lights with increasing wonder and delight.

Close below the mosque flows the broad Guadalquivir, here crossed by a fine old bridge, at the entrance of which is one of the most beautiful artistic compositions in Cordova, where a huge brown gateway forms the background for the gaudy groups of country people, who wait with their mules, while their burdens are being examined at the barrier. It is a most animated scene, the mules kicking, struggling, and crowding on one another, the drivers gesticulating, shouting, and singing. Close by, the picturesque ruins of some Moorish mills, with open horse-shoe arches, stride out into the water. Behind, on a tall pillar, stands the statue of St. Raphael, the archangel, the protector of Cordova, an office which he swore to under-

take, when he appeared to the Cordovan priest Andrès Roëlas, on the 7th of May, 1578, in the words which we may still read beneath his column.

“Yo te juro por Jesu Cristo crucificado
Que soy Rafaël angel, á quien Dios tiene puesto
Por guarda de esta ciudad.”

An excursion should be made from Cordova to the picturesquely situated hermitages of the Sierra-Morena, a small Thebaid, about four miles distant, which may be accomplished on mules. There, or near where the hermitages now stand, was once situated the most magnificent of the Moorish buildings of Cordova, the city-like palace of Azzahra, built by the Khalif Annasir in honour of his wife, who begged that he would build a city for her which should be called by her name. It was begun A.D. 936, and was constructed by architects from Bagdad and Constantinople, 10,000 men, 2,400 mules, and 100 camels, being employed in the work. The palace contained 4,312 pillars of different kinds of precious marble; its hall called the Khalafat, had eight doors overlaid with gold and encrusted with precious stones, hung in arches of ebony and ivory; in the hall called Almunis was a great fountain brought from Constantinople, decorated with many figures of animals made

of pure gold adorned with precious stones, with the water streaming from their mouths. When the palace was completed it was universally allowed that the whole land of Islam contained nothing to compare to it, that it passed the powers of language to describe. During the twenty-five years in which Annasir inhabited it, the annual expense was 300,000 dinars, and the number of its servants was 13,750 males, and 6,314 females, besides 3,750 Schlavonians. The miracles of art at Azzahra were totally destroyed in 1009; even the exact site of the palace is unknown, but the surrounding country still retains traces of the beautiful gardens of fruit trees by which it was surrounded by its founder. The ride to the hermitages is a lonely one, brigands are not absolutely unknown, and some little dread may be experienced at the sight of armed figures approaching down the narrow wooded paths. Generally, however, you are passed with the friendly Spanish salutation: "Dios guarde à usted!" "Va usted con Dios, caballero!" "God guard you, God be with you, sir."

VII.

SEVILLE.

FONDA EUROPA, SEVILLE, *February 21, 1872.*

A PLEASANT railway journey of four hours brought us from Cordova to Seville. Long before reaching it, the famous Giralda tower appeared above the green corn plains, divided by hedges of aloes, and as the railway runs close under the town, between it and the Guadalquiver, all the principal buildings are seen before you arrive at the station. The tiresome and useless delay of the local custom-house, which worries travellers at the entrance of almost all the large Spanish towns, made it nearly dark when we reached the Fonda Europa, a thoroughly national hotel, with a court of oranges and a fountain, but exceedingly gloomy. Here, as elsewhere, we have often amused ourselves by thinking what a false idea people must entertain of places who only read

of them in books. It is so easy to give a glowing picture of that which is dismal enough in reality, and from those who see the original the impression of the picture vanishes for ever. Thus O'Shea's really excellent guide-book, quite the best, we think, practically, though Ford—the original, unadulterated Ford—should on no account be left behind, writes of Valencia :—"The sultana of the Mediterranean cities, robed in the loose and sparkling white of her straggling houses, lies softly embosomed amid high palms and deep-green oranges, with her feet lazily bathing in the blue waves of the sea. The magic Huerta which surrounds her is but a large orchard," &c. How delightful an impression of dust-laden, wind-stricken dead-alive Valencia, three miles from the sea, with its three or four unhealthy palms, and its surrounding marshes and nursery gardens, which Murray further glorifies by describing their mud huts (*quintas*) as "pearls set in emeralds!" Even the truest picture is often misleading; for in writing from Seville I might say with perfect truth that I look down from my window through marble colonnades, bathed and glittering in the bright moonlight, perfumed with the scent of ancient orange and citron trees, which bend, fruit-laden,

over a richly-sculptured fountain, while many birds of strange plumage flit amid their boughs, and golden fish float beneath the waters. Yet I should only be describing an ordinary Sevillian house, in which the bird-fancying landlord has clipped the wings of a number of hawks and owls, who live amid his orange-trees, and frighten his inmates by unexpectedly hopping in through their bedroom windows.

From the deathlike stillness of Cordova it is a strange transition to the animation and bustle of the central part of Seville, with its brilliant shops and crowded streets, in which you would think that the whole population amused themselves all day long. Of all the inhabitants of Spain, the Sevillians have the greatest reputation for liveliness of character and enjoyment of all the pleasures which the world can afford them. The past and the future seem to have no part in their existence; the present is everything. The churches here are deserted by comparison with those of other towns; the theatres and promenades are crowded. When we arrived the whole population was throwing itself rapturously into the delights of the carnival. The streets were filled every evening with masquers in every description

of ridiculous dress, from Chinese mandarins and Indians in feathers to old English ladies with poke bonnets, reticule, and spectacles, and old English gentlemen with high collars, tail coats, and umbrellas, very admirably imitated. Reverence to the Church also was little evinced in the number of would-be nuns, mumbling over their breviaries, while their eyes, sparkling through their masques, sought a new object for a joke; and even the Pope himself had his representative, dragged woefully along by a horrible green devil with a long tail, which he lashed in glee over each contortion of the wretched potentate. In the carriages were many lovely little children of the nobles, beautifully dressed in blue, green, and yellow satin, à la Louis XIV., with their hair powdered, the little boys of three and four years old having silk stockings and buckles in their shoes. "Me conoces" resounded on all sides in the shrill voice of disguise which is universally adopted. All classes mingled together, and amused one another; yet at such times the high breeding and courtesy of every rank of Spaniard never deserts them, and no coarseness or breach of decorum can be discovered. At the same time, the unusual collision into which all persons are thrown is often produc-

