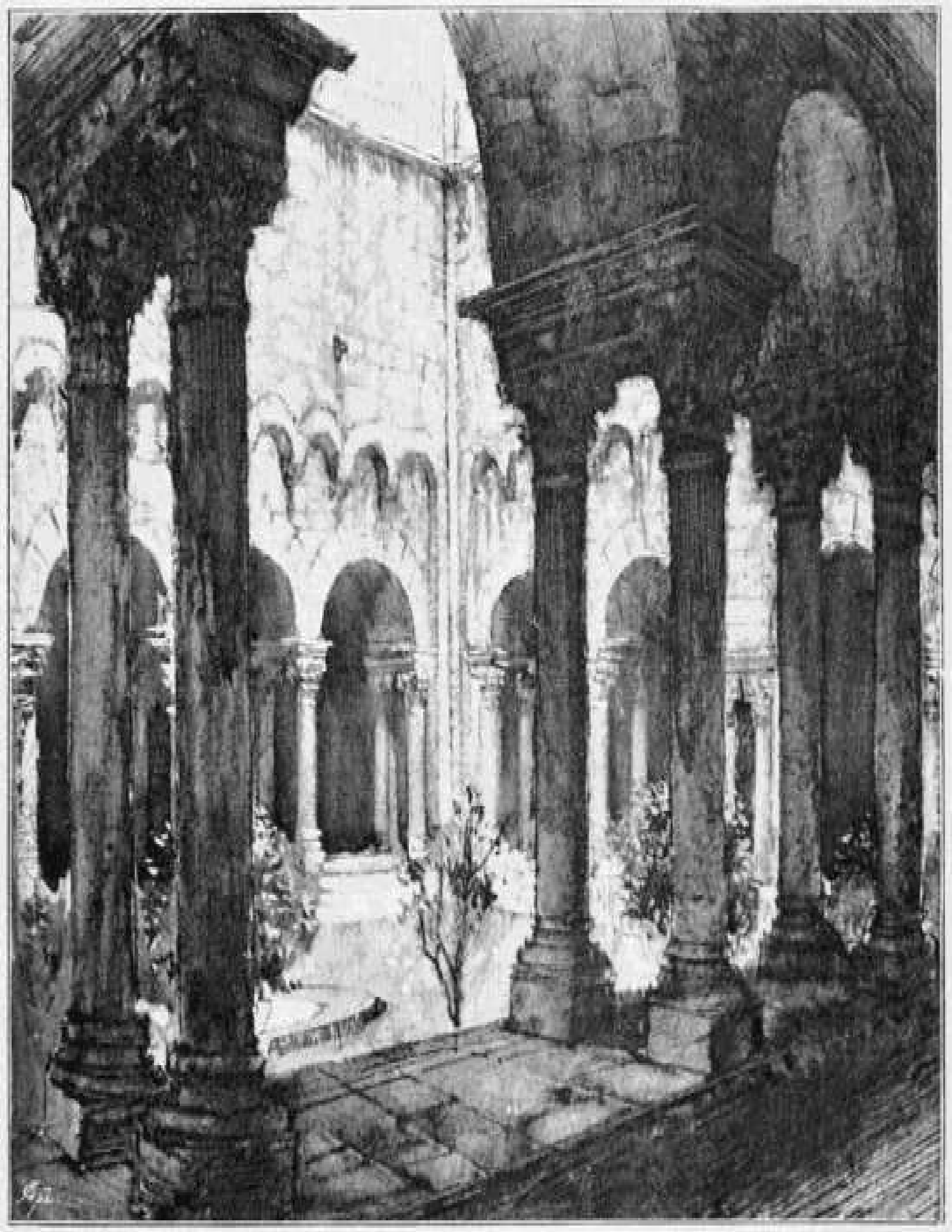

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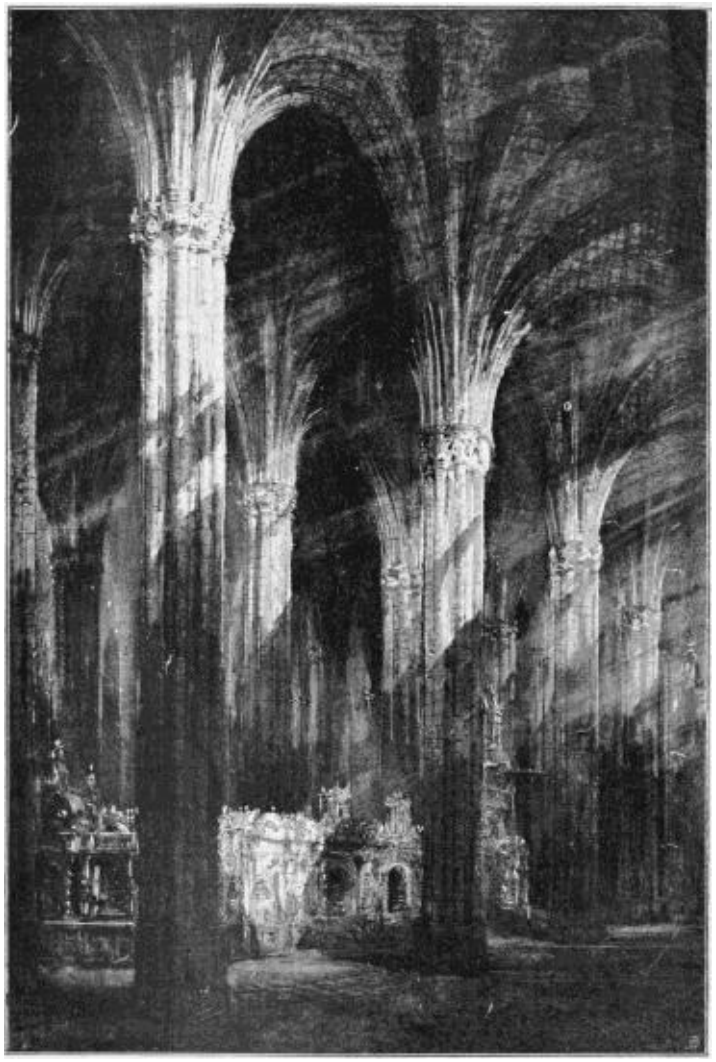


INTERIOR OF ZARAGOZA CATHEDRAL.

GLORIES OF SPAIN

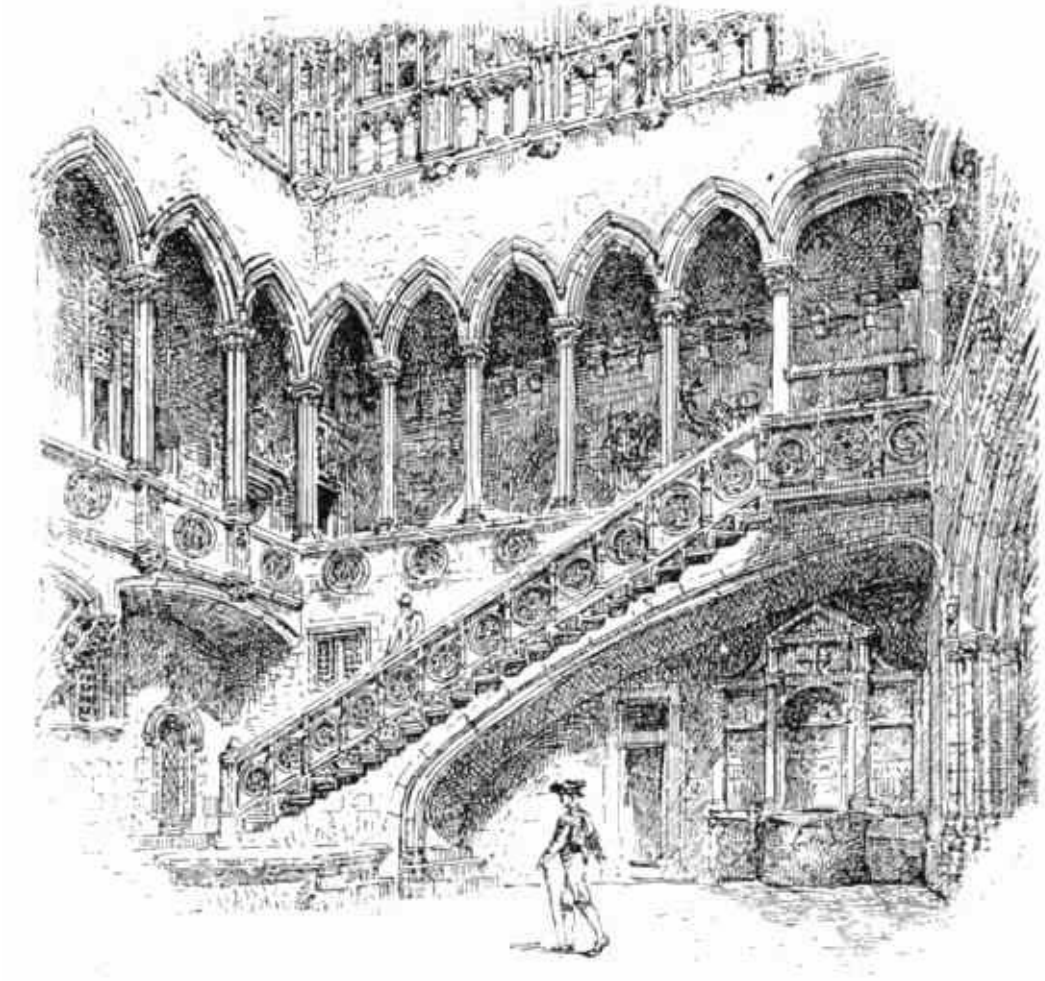
BY

CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S.,

AUTHOR OF

"LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," "IN THE VALLEY OF THE RHONE,"

ETC., ETC.



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Know ye the land of the cedar and vine,
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine;
Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppress'd with perfume,
Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gúl[A] in her bloom;
Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
And the voice of the nightingale never is mute;
Where the tints of the earth, and the hues of the sky,
In colour though varied, in beauty may vie,
And the purple of ocean is deepest in dye;
Where the virgins are soft as the roses they twine,
And all, save the spirit of man, is divine?

BYRON.

GLORIES OF SPAIN.

CHAPTER I.

AT THE GARE D'ORLÉANS.

On Calais quay—At the Custom-house—A lady of the past—Ungallant examiner—Better to reign than serve—Paris—Vanity Fair—Sowing and reaping—Laughing through life—At the Hôtel Chatham—A pleasant picture—In maiden meditation—M. Pascal is wise in his generation—The secrets of the Seine—Notre Dame—Ile St. Louis—A mediæval atmosphere—Victor Hugo—Ghosts of the Hôtel Lambert—H. C. again—His little comedy—M. the Inspector—Outraged ladies—"En voiture, messieurs!"—Mystery not cleared—The Orléanais—La Vendée—Garden of France—A dilemma—Polite Chef de Gare—Crossing the Garonne—Land of corn and wine.

THE Channel waters were calm and placid as the blue sky above them. Though late autumn the temperature was that of mid-summer. At Calais every one landed as jauntily as though they had just gone through the pleasure of a short yachting trip. As usual there were all sorts and conditions of men and women, and again the curious, the grotesque, the impossible predominated. They streamed across the new quay in a disordered procession, struggling with all that amount of hand-baggage which gets into everyone's way but their own, as they hurry forward to secure for themselves the best seats and most comfortable corners.

The Custom-house was over. One ancient lady who stood near us was politely demanded by the examiner if she had cigars, tobacco or brandy to declare. Her flaxen wig seemed to stand on end as she asked if they mistook her for a New Woman: Quaker-like answering one question with another. The examiner received her query *au pied de la lettre*, and earnestly looked at the lady, who, in spite of flaxen wig, rouge, pencilled brows, was of the Past. All his intelligence in his eyes, he replied: "About the same age as the century, I should say, madame;" then marked her packages and turned to the next in waiting. Had those two found themselves alone together, judging from the lady's expression there would have been terrible paragraphs in the next day's papers. As it was she entered one of the waiting trains and we saw her no more. Evidently she had been a beauty in her day, and it is hard to serve where one has reigned.

So we steamed on to the gay capital, in her day almost to the modern world what Rome was to the ancient. And if not altogether that now, who has she to thank but herself? Nations like people must reap as they sow. Yet, whirling through the broad thoroughfares, we felt she still holds her own. Nowhere such floods of light, turning night into day, making one blink like owls in the sunshine. Nowhere shops so resplendent that a Jew's ransom would not purchase them. Nowhere such a Vanity Fair crowded with a light-hearted people, who dance through the world to the tune of *Away with Melancholy!* Passing from the Gare du Nord, the brilliant boulevards were full of life and movement.

Our coachman turned into the Rue Daunou and brought up at the Hôtel Chatham: quiet, comfortable, but like all Parisian hotels terribly in want of air. The manager received us with as much attention as though we had arrived for six months instead of a couple of hours, in order to fortify ourselves for the night journey southwards.

The salle-à-manger opened its hospitable doors, disclosing a number of small tables, snow-white cloths, sparkling glass and silver; a pleasant vision. Richly dressed ladies, blazing with jewels, fanned themselves with lazy grace. In a quiet corner sat two quiet people, evidently mother and daughter, since the one must have been twenty years ago what the other was now. They were English, as one saw and heard, for we were at the next table. No other country could produce that fair specimen of girlhood; no other country own that lovely face, gentle voice, refined tones: charms of inheritance, destined one day to translate some happy swain to fields Elysian, where the sands of life are golden and run swiftly.

Then came up our cunning *maître-d'hôtel*, portly and commanding, deigned to glance at the wine card we held, and went in for a little diplomacy.

"A bottle of your excellent '87 St. Julien, M. Pascal;" knowing the wine of old.

"Ah, if monsieur only knew, the Château d'Irrac is superior."

"Is it possible?" incredulous but yielding. "Then let it be Château d'Irrac."

And presently we realised that the '87 St. Julien was growing low in the cellar, whilst many bins of Château d'Irrac cried out to be consumed. We sent for the great man and confided our suspicions, adding, "You cannot compare the two wines." "Monsieur donc knows the St. Julien? Ah," with a keener glance, "I had not remarked. I ask a thousand pardons of monsieur. After all, it is a matter of taste. The Château d'Irrac is much appreciated—especially by the English. Monsieur will allow me to change the wine?"

Amende honorable, but not accepted; and the Château d'Irrac remained.

Presently we entered upon our longer drive to the Gare d'Orléans. Paris had put up her shutters and toned down her illuminations. Shops were closed, lights were out, Vanity Fair had disappeared.

The streets grew more and more empty. Our driver found his way to the river and went down the quays, where on summer evenings lovers of old books spend hours examining long rows of stalls, on which sooner or later every known and unknown literary treasure makes its appearance. Perhaps he was a man who liked the tragic side of life—and where is it more suggested than on the banks of the Seine? Night after night its turbid waters close over the heads of the rashly despairing. The ghastly Morgue is weighted with secrets. Every bridge is surrounded by an atmosphere of sighs. One last look upon the world, the sky, the quiet stars, then the fatal plunge into the silent waters, and another soul has risked the unknown.

Once more in the darkness uprose the outlines of Notre Dame in all the beauty of Gothic refinement; all the delicate lacework and flying buttresses subdued and dreamlike under the night sky.

Who can look upon this architectural wonder without thinking of those historical, twelfth-century days when the first stone was laid, and it slowly rose to perfection? All the centuries that have since rolled on, changing and destroying much of its charm? The perils it went through and did not altogether escape in those terrible days of '93 when, condemned, it was saved by a miracle? That Age of Reason, which drove half the excitable Frenchmen of Paris stark staring mad.

How can we haunt these precincts without thinking of their high priest Victor Hugo, who loved them as

Scott and Burns loved their wholesomer banks and braes? Everywhere uprises a vision of the old grey-headed man as we remember him, with pale heavy face, grave earnest manner, deep thoughtful eyes, and on the surface, so little that was light, excitable and French; for ever pondering upon the mysteries of life, human suffering and endurance, broken destinies. His face looks at you from every dark and vacant window in the neighbouring Ile St. Louis. The shadows of Notre Dame fall upon its mediæval roofs; the dark waters of the river wash their foundations, and sometimes flood them also. If they could only whisper their secrets of human sin and suffering, that great army of martyrs who have died, not in defence of the good but in consequence of the evil, the world would surely dissolve and disappear. Many a time has he stood contemplating these problems, planning the destinies of his characters, from the windows of the Hôtel Lambert. Its painted ceilings recall the days of Lebrun, and up and down the old staircases and deserted corridors one hears the cynical laugh of Voltaire and the tripping footsteps of Madame de Châtet.

We left this delightful and romantic atmosphere behind us as our driver pursued his way down the right bank of the Seine.

Another world, inhabited by another people. Darkness reigned; lamps were few and far between; the roar of the great city sounded afar off, and amidst that roar dwelt all the rank and fashion, wealth and intrigue, that turn the heaven-sent manna to ashes of the Dead Sea fruit. Presently he crossed a bridge and there was a flash of lamps upon the dark waters below. The Seine was pursuing her relentless course, carrying her burden of sorrows to the far-off sea, burying them in the ocean of eternity, recording them in the books of heaven.

A few moments more, and at the Gare d'Orléans we dismissed our man with his *pourboire*. We were in good time, and had the place almost to ourselves. "Le train n'est pas encore fait, monsieur," said a polite official. "Ah! there it comes. You will not be over-crowded to-night, I imagine."

Good hearing, for a night journey in a full train without a reserved carriage means martyrdom. We marked our seats, then walked up and down the lighted platform. It was nearly ten o'clock and passengers were arriving.

Presently, missing H. C., we turned and saw him at the lower end of the train examining the last carriage. What did it mean? Evidently mischief of some sort. The hundred-and-one occasions rose up before us in which we had saved him from ladies with matrimony on the brain, from intrigues, from his susceptible self. Only a year ago there had been that narrow escape in the Madrid hotel with the siren who had married the Russian count. He saw us coming, turned and met us with laughter. What now?

"Come and see," placing his arm in ours. "But don't interfere with the liberty of the subject. I will not be controlled. You shall no longer find me weak and yielding as in other years."

All this went in at one ear and out at the other, as the saying runs. Silence is the best reply to incipient rebellion.

At the last carriage the mystery was solved. In one compartment sat two lovely ladies, waiting the departure of the train to draw down the blinds and settle themselves for the night. H. C. silently pointed to the label, which said: *Pour Fumeurs*. Fortune seemed to favour his humour for we had seldom seen the announcement on a French carriage. Then he went on to the next compartment. Three young men had entered and were laughing, talking, blowing clouds of smoke. This was labelled *Pour Dames Seules*. H. C. had quietly changed the iron labels and turned the world upside down. The inmates were in blissful ignorance of the frightful thing that had happened.

"We had no time for the theatre to-night, yet I had a mind for a little comedy," said H. C. "Now we have it on the spot, and without paying. I had such trouble to ram the plaques into the grooves that they will never come out again. Here comes the inspector—evidently not to be trifled with; exactly the man for the occasion. Now for it."

We trembled as the great man approached, each particular hair standing on end, the pallor of death on our cheek. Appearances would have condemned us. H. C., on the other hand, looked innocence itself.

Suddenly the inspector gave a start, exactly reproduced in us; on his part, astonishment and indignation; on ours, nervous terror. Then the door of the compartment was thrown open and the scene began. The inspector's powerful bass voice made itself felt and heard.

"Gentlemen," in his deepest diapason, "what is the meaning of this? How dare you enter a compartment reserved *For Ladies Only*, fill it with vile smoke, and treat with contempt the rules of our organisation department? For this, gentlemen," waxing wrath and perhaps overstating his case, "I could fine and summons you—and believe I should be justified in handing you over to the *Police Correctionnelle*. Your act is infamous—and no doubt designed."

Instead of pouring oil upon troubled waters, the young men were combative and defiant.

"Qu'est-ce que vous nous chantez là?" said one. "Surely, my dear inspector, your sight is failing—time rolls on, you know; or you cannot read; or you have dined too well. But if you have your senses about you and examine the plaque closely, you will see that it states: *For Smokers*. And we are smokers. My compliments to you, Monsieur the famous Inspector. Like Dumas, we are here and we remain."

"Very good," said H. C. innocently looking on. "As a scene at the Vaudeville it would bring down the house and make the fortune of the piece. You ought to be grateful for this little distraction, but you don't look it. All was done so easily and develops so naturally."

The inspector listened whilst this fuel was being added to the fire of his wrath. "We will see about that," he said. "Come out this instant and read for yourself." He grasped the arm of the young man. As he was strong and the youth weak, the result was that Dumas' famous saying fell to the ground and he with it. In a moment he stood upon the platform and read the fatal notice.

"But it is conjuring, it is a miracle!" he cried. "I can assure you, Monsieur the Inspector, that before entering I read the label with my own eyes—we all did. Anatole—de Verriers—I appeal to you for confirmation. It positively stated *For Smokers*. No, oh no, I am certain of it—and I have *not* dined too well," laughing in spite of himself. "For Ladies only! It is too good a joke. I assure you we want a quiet night's rest; we don't want to be disturbed by the gentle snoring of the fair sex. An enemy hath done this. Tenez, Monsieur the Inspector," going to the next carriage and reading the label: "look at that. There are the innocent conspirators calmly seated in the compartment. The ladies themselves have done this. I was wrong in saying it was an enemy, for are we not all friends of the lovelier sex? But take my word for it, they are the culprits. Remark how unconscious they look; one sees it is too natural to be real—it is assumed. Poor ladies! They are nervous, perhaps, and want a safeguard about them during the perilous night journey. Or it may be that they even like smoking. After all, it is an innocent little ruse on their part to attain a very harmless end."

"Innocent, sir! harmless!" cried the outraged and perplexed inspector. "We will see!"

He approached the compartment, threw wide the door, addressed the ladies severely, as became his

office, but tempered with respect and admiration, as became a man.

"How is this, ladies?" to the startled women. "Allow me to inform you that it is not *convenable* for members of your sex to deliberately compose themselves for the night in a compartment labelled *For Smokers*."

"What!" cried the ladies in a breath. "*For Smokers? Quel horreur!* Monsieur the Inspector, you must be mad, or you have dined too well—*l'un ou l'autre*. *For Smokers!* Why, we are horrified at smoke. It makes me cough, it makes my companion sneeze, it gets into our hair, it ruins our complexion. Monsieur the Inspector," shaking out their ruffled plumage, "this is an infamous accusation. We feel ourselves insulted. We shall appeal to the Chef de Gare. You had better at once say that we have done this thing ourselves, whilst the culprits are no doubt those three young men who are laughing behind your back. You have attacked our reputation and we will pursue the matter. When we entered this compartment it was labelled *For Ladies Only*, and if you will examine the plaque with sober senses you will find it still reads *For Ladies Only*."

"Mesdames," returned the bewildered inspector, "I will trouble you to alight and read for yourselves. No one shall accuse me of dining too well with impunity; and no one, not even such charming women as yourselves, shall exact an apology for an offence never committed."

Apparently there was nothing else for it. The ladies gracefully alighted, assisted by the gallant but uncompromising inspector, and the fatal words stared them in the face.

"But it is conjuring, it is a miracle!" they cried breathlessly, just as the young men had cried. "An enemy hath done this, Monsieur the Inspector, and the enemy is represented by those three young men who doubtless look upon it as a *petite plaisanterie*. But if there is law in the land they shall suffer for it. It is nothing more or less than an outrage to our feelings. In the meantime, Monsieur the Inspector, not to delay the train, have the kindness to change back the labels to their right positions, and put those three young men under the surveillance of the guard."

"If it is the last word we ever speak we are guiltless in this matter," protested the young men. "Mephistopheles is no doubt on the platform in disguise"—here we felt a nudge from H. C. and a whispered "Complimentary!"—"but we beg to say that we are not Fausts, and we have no reason to suppose these ladies are Marguerites."

The outraged ladies were absolutely speechless with anger; twice they opened their mouths but no sound would come. And as the train was now about to start, there was nothing for it but to re-enter their compartment. The young men did likewise. The doors were closed. The inspector tried to remove the offending labels. They would not budge. He brought all his strength to bear upon them, but they were fixed as the stars in their course. If Mephistopheles had been at work, he had done his work well. The plaques might have been soldered in their sockets. The inspector was guilty of language not quite parliamentary. He felt mystified, baffled; the whole thing was inexplicable.

There came a cry down the platform: "En voiture, messieurs!" Our own carriage was some way off; we went up and entered, hiring pillows for the night. Final doors were slammed; the train moved off. And the ladies were in a compartment labelled *For Smokers*, and the three young men had to themselves the carriage *Pour Dames Seules*. They must have been laughing immoderately, for the inspector shook his fist as they slowly rolled away; and the shake said as plainly as though we had heard the words: "There go the culprits! Ah, *scélérats!* If I only had you now in my grasp!" The young men must have interpreted the action in like manner, for the window was suddenly put down and three hands waved him a derisive

farewell.

We rolled away in the darkness. The lights of Paris grew faint and dreamy, then went out. All the old familiar landmarks were invisible, and when we crossed the Seine not a star was reflected in its deep dark waters.

As the night went on we passed through the glorious country of the Orléanais, washed by the waters of the historical and romantic Loire. Who that has gone down its broad winding course can forget the charms of its ancient towns? The halo surrounding Orléans, the pure accents of Tours, the architectural wonders of Loches—home of the Plantagenets—its towers and churches visible even under the stars; and beyond Nantes, the gentle splendours of La Vendée. Porters in the darkness of night shouted "Orléans!" and we felt in the very garden of France, where nature is so bountiful that the labour of man is hardly needed to bring forth the fruits of the earth. In these sunny provinces dwell the happiest, most light-hearted of her sons. The earth abundantly furnishes their daily bread and wine. It comes without trouble and is eaten without care.

Night and darkness rolled away. We approached Bordeaux. Last year, at this same hour, about this same time, we had found it enveloped in mist, had made the acquaintance of Monsieur le Comte San Salvador de la Veronnière, and wondered how his small body bore the weight of its majestic name. But the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb and the back is fitted to the burden. This time there was no comte and no mist. We had watched the dawn break and a glorious sunrise turn fleecy clouds into flaming swords. The earth awoke and the lovely woods and forests, with their wealth of fern and bracken, were touched with rosy glowing light as the sun shot above the horizon.

Just before reaching Bordeaux we made a discovery. A secret impulse urged us to examine our luggage-ticket, and we were electrified at finding it registered to Irun instead of Portbou. Steaming into the crazy old station, we found out the station-master, and explained the difficulty. He was politeness itself, and once more we could not help contrasting the courtesy of the French officials with the less agreeable manners of the Spanish.

"This would have been serious," said M. le Chef. "I am glad you found it out in time. After Bordeaux it would have been too late. You and your luggage would have gone your separate ways."

Then calling a porter, he handed him the ticket, bade him search the luggage-vans and bring away the numbers indicated.

"A little against the rules," said the Chef smiling; "but life is full of inevitable exceptions, and because we stick to too much red tape, and will not recognise the need of exceptions, half life's worries occur."

Evidently our Chef was a philosopher, and fortunately a man of common-sense.

Presently up came the porter. His search had been successful. The luggage was re-registered for Portbou, and we had the satisfaction of thanking M. le Chef for sparing us an awkward dilemma. "Monsieur," he replied, with a finished French bow, "it is a pleasure to be of use, and I am always at your disposition."

The train left the station and crossed the lordly Garonne. Nothing in the way of river could look more majestic, with all the light of the sky and all the blue of the heavens reflected on its broad surface. Once more we were dazzled by the rich splendour of the autumn tints, glories of colour. In the vineyards the deep purple leaves still lingered upon the branches. White farmhouses, with their green shutters, red-tiled

roofs, strings of yellow Indian maize, heaps of pumpkins and cantaloupe melons, stood out in striking contrast with the landscape. Many a vine-laden porch threw its lights and shades upon walls and pavement. Many a field was picturesque with ploughing-oxen. A hardy son of the South guided the furrow, and a woman with red or blue handkerchief tied round the head, followed, sowing the seed. One only wanted twilight and the angelus bell to complete the scene's devotion.

All this we had found a year ago. Nothing was altered—it seemed as yesterday. But now we were changing our direction, and going east instead of westward. Last year Irun and St. Sebastian; now Gerona and Barcelona the bright and pleasant, for ever associated with Majorca the beautiful and beloved.

CHAPTER II.

A NARBONNE HOSTESS.

Carcassonne—In feudal times—Simon de Montfort—Canal du Midi—L'Âge d'or et le Grand Monarque—A modern Golden Fleece—One of earth's fair scenes—Choice of evils—M. le Chef yields—Narbonne—A woman of parts—The course of true love runs smooth—*Diner de contrat*—Honey *versus* the *lune de miel*—Madame's philosophy—*L'Allée des Soupirs*—An unfinished cathedral—At the gloaming hour—Mystery and devotion—The Hôtel de Ville—A domestic drama—High festival and champagne—The next morning—H. C. repentant—Madame at her post—Ambrosial breakfast—"Il faut payer pour ses plaisirs"—Dramatic exit—Perpignan—Home of the kings of Majorca—Elne—"Adieu, ma chère France!"—Over the frontier—Gerona—Crowded platform—What H. C. thought—Unpoetical incident—From the sublime to the ridiculous.

THE hours went on and the sun declined, and we looked upon the wonderful old city of Carcassonne.

Rising out of the plain the great limestone rock was crowned by this fortress of the Middle Ages, its walls and round towers clearly outlined against the blue sky. These enclose a dead world given up to the poor and struggling. Its steep, narrow streets have no longer the faintest echo of military glories. The inner walls date back to the Visigothic kings; the foundations of some of the towers are Roman, but nothing of the outer walls seems later than the twelfth century. Here in 1210 the army of crusaders under Simon de Montfort laid siege, the cruel Abbot of Citeaux most determined of the enemy. The massacre at Béziers had just taken place, de Montfort foremost in eagerness to shed blood. Some had escaped to this little City of Refuge, amongst them the brave Vicomte de Béziers: one of those men of whom the world has seen not a few, saving lives at the cost of their own. The little fortress unable to hold out was taken, and again the massacre was terrible, Béziers himself dying in prison after great suffering.

A hundred and fifty years later it more successfully resisted the Black Prince, who, after scattering terror right and left in the plains of Languedoc, found that he had to retire from these walls baffled and mortified. To-day they still stand, the most perfect mediæval monument in France.

The new town lies in the plain, quietly industrious as the old is silent and dead, modern and commonplace as the other is ancient and romantic. Trees overshadow the boulevards, costly fountains plash through the hot days and nights of summer, running streams make the air musical and reflect the sapphire skies.

On one side runs the great Canal du Midi, Canal des deux Mers, as it is called, uniting the

Mediterranean with the Atlantic. Two hundred and fifty years ago it was one of the finest engineering works in the world, and perhaps would never have been finished but for the encouragement of le Grand Monarque, prime mover in that *âge d'or* when the literary firmament was studded with such stars of the first order as Molière, Corneille, Lafontaine, Bossuet, Fénélon, Pascal, and last, not least, Madame de Sevigné. There came a crowd of splendours, a succession of startling events, into that lengthened reign, our own Marlborough taking his part in such decisive battles as Blenheim and Malplaquet.

This Canal du Midi, reflecting the outlines of Carcassonne, added much to the trade of Southern France. If that has declined amidst the world's chances and changes, its numerous barges plying to and fro with sails set to the evening breeze and the setting sun, still form one of earth's most rare and beautiful scenes, full of calm repose. Corn and wine and oil are their freights; rich Argosies commanded by many a modern Jason, carrying many a Golden Fleece to the fair and flourishing towns that lie in its path between the tideless shores of the Levant and the restless waters of Biscay.

On the other side of the town runs the River Aude, also reflecting the ancient outlines of Carcassonne in waters less placid than those of the great Canal. This takes its way through a fertile valley given up to vines and olives, fig-trees and pomegranates; and here flock crowds of invalids to the mineral baths and waters, penances due to indiscretions of the table or sins of their forefathers.

Our train rolled over both these waterways on its journey towards Narbonne.

By this time we had realised that we had been misinformed as to the hour we should reach Gerona, our first resting-place, adding one more record to the chapter of small accidents. At Narbonne we had the good fortune to find a Chef de Gare civil and obliging as he of Bordeaux, who declared it impossible to reach Gerona that day as there was no railway communication. We should have to spend the night at Portbou, the Spanish frontier, where our quarters would be wretched, and all our sweet turn to bitter against those who had misled us.

We decided at once. "Better remain where there is a good inn, than go on to the miseries of Portbou, Monsieur le Chef."

"That is clear," he replied. "Here you will be comfortable—and on French ground," laughing: "a virtue in my eyes, and I hope in yours also."

We willingly agreed. "But our luggage? It is registered to Portbou."

He looked grave. "That is unfortunate; it must go on to Portbou. I cannot give it to you. It is against all rules, and I greatly regret it."

"Yet we cannot do without it. If you send it on to Portbou, we cannot remain behind. Have you the heart to consign us to that *chambre de tortures?*"

He paused a moment, revolving the momentous situation. "No," he laughed at length, "I cannot do that, and for once will make an exception in your favour. Advienne que pourra, you shall have your luggage."

Then in the kindest way he personally superintended the matter, delayed the train until the luggage was found, and carried out sundry forms necessary for the next day's journey.

We discovered very little in Narbonne to repay our change of plans, but the hotel was comfortable and the energetic landlady a character worth studying. Grass never grew under her feet. She seemed gifted with ubiquity, and startled one by her rapid movements. A capable woman, who made her little world

work with a will, wound them up and set them going. If the machinery flagged, she at once applied the master-key of her energy, and the wheels went on again.

To-day she was on her mettle, as she informed us, having a large wedding dinner on hand. "To-night was the *diner de contrat*, to-morrow the *diner de noce*. A hundred and fifty people would sit down to it, and she expected great conviviality."

Nor was she disappointed, if the noise we heard later on was any sign of festive enjoyment. Loud laughter, applause, healths pledged, good wishes bestowed—all indicated the state of the assembled guests.

Madame had taken us into the banquet-room to prove that she was capable of decorating her table very effectively. Glass and silver glittered under the rays of light; flowers perfumed the air; orange-trees stood in corners, fruit and flowers mingled their delights. We asked for whom all this extensive preparation.

"The daughter of an innkeeper, with a magnificent dowry, was marrying one of the most popular doctors of the place. But it was really a mariage d'amour, not merely de convenance. Les mariés were both delightful. One hardly knew which to congratulate the most. In short, it was one of those rare events in life when the social sky is without a cloud."

Madame was almost poetical in her enthusiasm. But she was no less practical, and it was wonderful how everything went smoothly under her guidance.

"Narbonne, famous for its honey." We seemed to remember this as one of our geography lines in days gone by. "But where was the honey?" we asked during the course of our own dinner, which madame was quite equal to in spite of the greater ceremony on hand.

"You may well ask," placing upon the table a choice bottle of the vin-du-pays, which she saw unsealed and uncorked by one of her officials who had just been wound up again and was flying about the room like a firework. "You may well ask, monsieur. No house so badly supplied with coals as the charbonnier, and in Narbonne we see little of our own honey. Like the fish in a seaport, it is all sent away, and you will find more of it in Paris than here. But I will try to unearth a jar from my stores."

Apparently the quest was unsuccessful, for no honey appeared. Or it may be that in contemplating the *lune de miel* in the garlanded banqueting-room the more material article was lost sight of. With one hundred and fifty people on her brain, no wonder if small matters were forgotten. And yet madame seemed of those who forget nothing, her faculties embracing both wide organisation and minute detail. A thin, wiry woman, with a quick walk and a light step, dark eyes that nothing escaped, yet without tyranny or sharpness of manner. Only once did we hear her rebuking one of her waiters for the sin of procrastination.

"Leave nothing till to-morrow that can be done to-day," she wound up with, "or you will soon find the world ahead and you left behind in the race. Those are the people that come to poverty and have only themselves to thank for it. That, monsieur," turning to us who waited a direction, "is the reason we cannot very much help what are called the poor. Some great failing brings them to that condition—laziness, stupidity or vice, and your aid will never give them energy, wisdom or virtue."

Then the direction we asked for was bestowed, and the erring waiter ordered to show us the way to the cathedral.

In the town we found very little that was not ordinary and common-place. It is ancient, its streets are

badly paved and tortuous, and it possesses scarcely anything in the way of picturesque outlines, nothing in the way of Roman remains. Yet it flourished as far back as the fifth century B.C., and in the first century was in the hands of the Romans, great in theatres, baths, temples, and triumphal arches. Of these not a vestige has survived.

It was one of the great ports of the Mediterranean, which flowed up to its foundations, but has gradually receded some eight miles. From one of the great towers of the Hôtel de Ville you may trace the outlines of the Cevennes and Pyrenees on the one side, on the other watch the broad blue waters shimmering in the sunshine, more beautiful than a dream in their deep sapphire; you may count the white-winged boats sailing lazily to and fro upon its flashing surface; and on still, dark nights, when the stars are large and brilliant, watch the lights of fishing fleets clustered together, and hear upon the shore the gentle plash of this tideless sea.

On such summer nights the *Allée des Soupirs* is the favourite walk of the people. Whence its sad, romantic name? Has it seen many sorrows? Do ghosts of the past haunt it with long-drawn sighs? Has it had more than its share of Abelards and Héloïses, Romeos and Juliets? Has some sorrowful Atala been borne under its branches to a desert grave, some Dante mourned here his lost Beatrice, some Petrarch his Laura?

We knew not, and turning from it climbed the ill-paved streets towards the Cathedral—a Cathedral no longer, for Narbonne, once an Archbishopric, has been shorn of ecclesiastical dignity.

As far as it went, we found it a fine, interesting, but unfinished Gothic building of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Little beyond the choir exists—a splendid fragment, but a fragment only. It might have been one of the world's wonders.

We entered for the second time in the gloaming, when its great height was lost in shadows. A few lights about the church and on the altar deepened the mystery. A few kneeling figures motionless at their devotions added their quiet pathos to the scene. From the end of the choir it had the effect of a vast church infinitely impressive. An immense nave with aisles and pillars and vaulted roofs might stretch behind us. Such was the intention of the architect, but his plans were not carried out. In reality there was nothing. Within a few feet came the narrow outer passage and the dead wall of the west front; but in the darkness all this was not realised. We only saw the splendid choir, vast height, graceful outlines, groined roof, pointed arches, and slender pillars, steeped in the mystery and shadow of a dim religious light by the few candles gleaming here and there like faint stars in the night. Some of the painted glass was beautiful, as we had seen earlier in the day, and much of the sixteenth century flamboyant tracery was very good. There were many fine tombs and statues.

The Gothic Hôtel de Ville close by is partly modern. A portion of it formed the ancient Archbishop's Palace, and some of this remains, more especially the old towers. The courtyard has a few interesting outlines, and the staircase leading to the museum is of broad, massive marble. Up and down these stairs and corridors was once wont to pass the proud footstep of a primate, with head erect under the cardinal's red hat, whilst the rustle of silken robes, white and scarlet, whispered of greatness and vanity. It now shines by the light of other days. All its pomp and pride has vanished; dead, silent and deserted, its glory has been transferred to Toulouse, now the Archbishop's See.

We discovered the ancient dame who keeps the keys of the Museum. She dwells in almost an underground room of the building, a distant wing in the garden, where in days gone by the Archbishop paced and meditated in the seclusion of impenetrable walls. Looking upwards nothing would arrest the

eye but the far-off serene sky and unfinished fragment of the Cathedral. It is still a grey, venerable pile, this wing, silent and empty.

But in the quiet little lodge of the custodian hearts still beat to the tune of life's small dramas. A slight altercation was going on. The dame was laying down the law to a young man, evidently her son. What the transgression we could not tell. Possibly debt, and he had come to draw upon the hard-earned savings in the chimney-corner: a sort of mental and moral earthquake to the frugal mother-mind. Perhaps he was announcing his marriage with one who would make him a bad wife. Or he had grown tired of his narrow world, and pleaded to cross the seas and begin life on a new soil. Whatever it might be, he departed looking very much as if he too had his burden to bear. In passing he saluted, and said, "Bonjour, messieurs," and his looks were comely and his voice was pleasant. He had the air of a sailor, and possibly was a fisherman from the little port eight miles off. When he had disappeared beyond the trees, the old mother, who must also have been comely in her day, took the keys and led the way up the broad marble staircase to the Museum. The shades of evening were gathering, and our visit would almost have been lost labour had there been anything else to do. It was too dark to judge fairly, but amidst a great amount of rubbish we thought we discovered a few good old pictures.

Long after the sun had set and the afterglow had faded, we went back to the hotel and madame's hospitable attentions.

She was determined we should not suffer from the demands of the banquet. The whole corridor was now lined with orange trees, whose sheeny green leaves stood out in strong contrast with some strings of red peppers she had artistically festooned against the walls; so that from the entrance to the dining-room the procession would walk through an avenue of peace and plenty. The effect was charming. Nothing could be more beautiful than the luscious perfumed blossoms, richer than the deep foliage, more picturesque than the scented golden fruit hanging gracefully from the branches. As night went on, the sounds of merriment grew louder. Champagne could not run like water without leading to noisy if not brilliant wit. A hundred and fifty sons and daughters of sunny Southern France might be trusted to make the most of their opportunity.

We left them to their rites when by-and-by the clock struck ten, lights began to burn dim, and we realised that a sleepless night in the train is more or less trying. Bidding madame *le bonsoir*, who flashed to and fro like lightning, yet was neither hurried nor flurried, she politely returned us *la bonne nuit*; adding, with a certain dry humour, that after all she was glad marriages were not an everyday occurrence —at any rate from her hotel. If profitable, they were fatiguing.

Next morning we rose before dawn. The man came in, lighted our candles, and said it was time to rise. We thought we had slept five minutes; the unconscious hours had passed too quickly. Overnight we had settled to take an early train, and devote a few hours to Perpignan; hours of enforced waiting on our way to Gerona. After an amount of rapping and calling that might have roused the dead, H. C. had risen, lighted his own candles, and protested by going back to bed and to slumber. Fortunately the man went up to his room half an hour after, and seeing the state of affairs upset the fire-irons, knocked down a couple of chairs, and opened the window with a rattle.

"Are those wedding people still at it?" murmured H. C., in his dreams. "It must be past midnight." Then consciousness dawned upon him and the full measure of his iniquity; and presently he came down to a late breakfast, subdued and repentant.

Early as it was, madame was at her post, brisk and wide-awake as though yesterday had been nothing

but a very ordinary fête-day. It was that uncomfortable hour when the early morning light creeps in, and candles and gas-lamps show pale and unearthly. The room looked chilly and forsaken; that last-night aspect that is always so ghostlike and unfamiliar. A white mist hung over the outer world.

Then the most comforting thing on earth made its triumphant entry—a brimming teapot; and with the addition of tea tabloids a fine brew of the cup which cheers sent our mental barometer to fair weather. We were even admitted to the internal economy of the establishment. In came the baker with a basket of steaming rolls giving out a delicious odour of bread fresh from the oven; and with new-churned butter—the last we tasted for many a long day—we made an ambrosial breakfast. In a few minutes, madame cloaked and bonneted, came up to wish us bon voyage, with a hope that we should again visit Narbonne. Nothing is certain in this world or we should have told her it was a very forlorn hope.

"I have to go to market," she said, "and the sooner I am there the better my choice of provisions. To-day, too, I have my *diner de noce*, and must be back early. *Vraiment, c'est une charge!* Ah! they amused themselves last night! What headaches to-day, je parie, in spite of the excellence of the wines. *Enfin! Il faut payer pour ses plaisirs*."

"But, madame, you are perpetual motion. You go to bed late—if you go to bed at all, which we begin to doubt—and rise up early. This morning you look as fresh as a rose. Have you the gift of eternal youth?"

Madame was not above a compliment, and smiled her pleasure. "Quant il y a de la bonne volonté—" she laughed. "There is the whole secret. And now, au revoir, messieurs. Bon voyage. Portez vous bien. My best wishes go with you."

"Au revoir, on one condition, madame. That the next time we come you present us without fail with a pot of Narbonne honey."

Madame uttered a cry, fell back a pace or two, struck her forehead reproachfully, and disappeared like a flash into the street. Up rattled the omnibus, absorbing ourselves and our traps. Narbonne was of the past.

A short journey landed us at an early hour at Perpignan. We had passed nothing very interesting on the road, for just here the sunny South seems to have stayed her bountiful hand. The low bare outlines of the rocky Corbières were traced, and great stretches of heath where bees gathered the famous honey we were not permitted to enjoy. Here and there were immense salt lakes, giving the country a flooded appearance, bringing fever to the neighbourhood. Once, years ago, passing these endless lake districts in the night, weird, solemn, mysterious, we wondered what they could be. One saw nothing but a world under water, reflecting the stars; occasionally the black outline of some small boat with the flash of a low-lying lamp streaming over its surface. And presently, this morning, there was the blue Mediterranean to make up for all other shortcomings.

Then Perpignan. This time we separated from our old-man-of-the-sea; the baggage went on to Portbou to await our afternoon arrival.

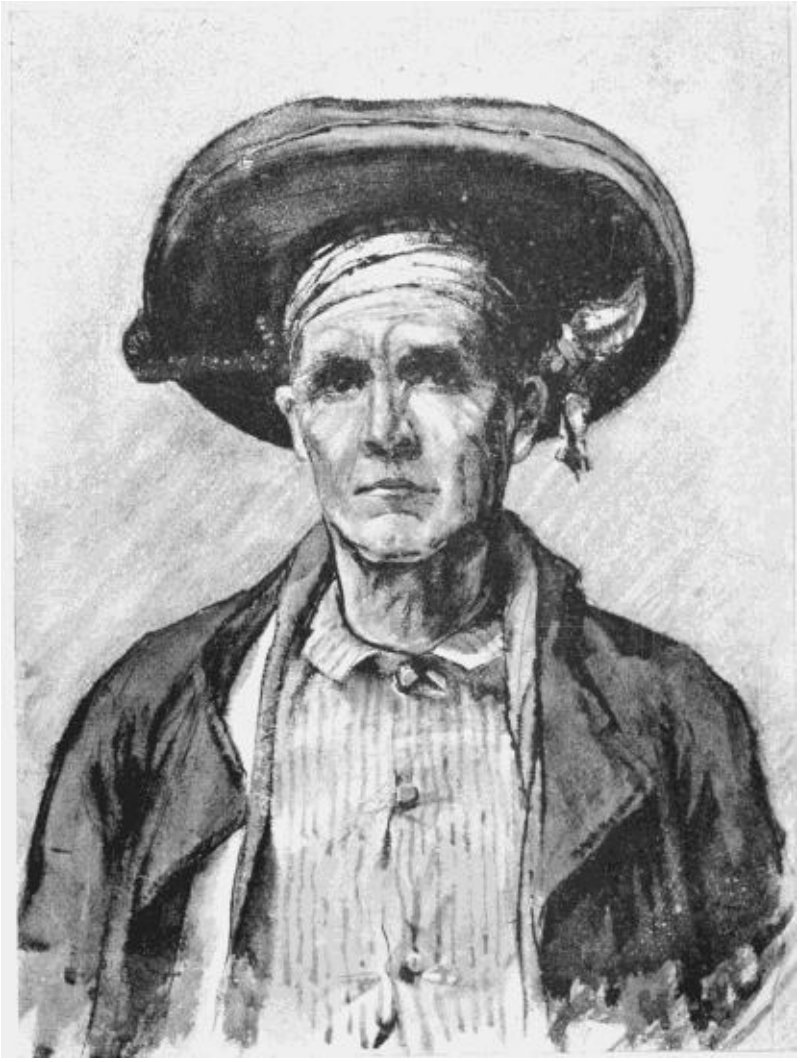
We felt we ought to know Perpignan, and with affection, for it was once the residence of the kings of Majorca. But that was seven hundred years ago, and it has gone through many changes at the hands of many masters. For centuries it belonged to Spain, and still looks more Spanish than French. Only in the middle of the seventeenth century was it finally annexed to France by Richelieu. In summer its narrow streets are covered with awnings, many of its buildings are moresque, and its houses have the iron and wooden courts and balconies so common to Spain. Some of its thoroughfares are picturesque and

arcaded, and every now and then you come upon an assemblage of wonderful roofs with their red tiles, gorgeous creepers, and enormous vines; but they are the exception. It is strongly fortified, and some of the old gateways are interesting. In days gone by these fortifications were needed, for Perpignan was the great point of defence in the Eastern Pyrenees between Spain and France. The Cathedral is chiefly famous for the immense span of its vault. In this it resembles Majorca, but is infinitely less beautiful. Though larger, Perpignan seemed still more quiet and dead than Narbonne. We soon exhausted its merits, and the hour for departure found us ready. At the moment we were in the great courtyard of the inn watching the chef in white cap and apron at a small table on the opposite side, enjoying his dessert and hour of repose, to which coffee and cognac formed the conclusion. For that hour he was a gentleman of leisure and had earned his ease.

There was no time to visit Elne with its old Romanesque Cathedral and cloisters worth a king's ransom; and keen was the regret as we passed it in the train, and noticed its decayed aspect and wonderful outlines rising above the town like a rare twelfth-century vision. Here Hannibal encamped on his way to Rome. Here came Constantine and named it Elena in memory of his mother. Here the Emperor Constantine was assassinated by order of Maxentius. Here came the Moors in the eighth century, the Normans in the eleventh, the kings of France in the thirteenth, fifteenth, and seventeenth centuries; all more or less destructive in their changes.

And now it remains a small dead town; grass grows in its streets, where eternal silence reigns. Passing away, we noted how its clear outlines stood out against the blue sky of the South, whilst beyond it stretched the sapphire waters of the Levant.

The train hurried on, and at Cerbère we bade farewell to pleasant France: a language that rings music in our ears; a people for whom we have a sincere affection. In the space of a few yards we seemed to pass from one country and people and tongue to another. At Cerbère nothing but French was heard. A few minutes afterwards, at Portbou, we spoke in French to one of the officials, who listened to the end, shook his head, and gruffly said "No entendo." We had entered Spain—land of slow trains, abrupt officials, many discomforts, but of romance and beauty. Once more we thought fate was to be against us. As inevitably as the slippers turned up in the Eastern story, so it seemed that our luggage was destined to be the *bête noire* of our wanderings.



PEDRO.

"You wish to go to Gerona," said the station-master; "but your ticket only states Barcelona. If you break your journey at Gerona, your luggage must go on to the farther town."

Again we protested—and again conquered. "For once I yield and make you an exception," said the chef; "but you will have trouble at Gerona." All this had taken time, and the train moved off as we entered.

At eight o'clock we reached Gerona, and even in the darkness could see its wonderful outlines; its countless reflections in the river that rolled below. The station was in an uproar. Crowds of people, young men and old, surged to and fro. Deafening shouts arose. What was the matter, and what could it mean? We gave a shrewd guess. Conscripts were going off, and all this crowd and noise was a farewell ovation, in which the conscripts joined uproariously. On the platform we almost fell against two stalwart old men, who stood conspicuously above the multitude. Each had evidently come to see a son off. One was especially a typical Catalonian, with strongly marked features, broad-brimmed hat, and picturesque costume. His friend called him Pedro. They had probably grown up and grown old together, and life, youth and the heritage of the world were being handed on to the boys—who no doubt troubled themselves very little about the matter.

We made way into the luggage-room. "Ah!" cried the porter, looking at our tickets. "This is incorrect and cannot be passed." And he turned to the superintendent.

"Diablo!" cried the latter impatiently. "Do you think I can be troubled with luggage on such a night as this? Take it where the gentlemen desire you! Maldicion!"

Saved once more. As we walked outside through the crowd, a deafening cheer went up.

"What can it mean?" said H. C. "Have they discovered that I am a poet, and all this is a little delicate attention on their part? If so, I must say they are appreciative. Perhaps my volume of Lyrics, dedicated to my aunt, Lady Maria, has been translated into Spanish, and has—ahem!—found more popularity here than at home. Ah!—Oh!"

The exclamation was caused by a sudden tearing away of the omnibus we had entered, whereby H. C. found himself sprawling in a most unpoetical attitude. Picking himself up as carefully as if he had been made of delicate china suffering from a few compound fractures, he rubbed his bruised knees sympathetically, and quietly asked if we had brought a supply of Elliman's embrocation.

So quickly one passes from poetry to prose, from the sublime to the ridiculous.

CHAPTER III.

BLACK COFFEE—AND A CONFESSION.

Continued uproar—H. C. disillusioned—A dark night—Not like another Cæsar—More crowds—A demon scene—Fair time—Glorious days of the past—In marble halls and labyrinthine passages—Our excellent host—His substantial partner—Contented minds—Picturesque court—Songless nightingales—Conscription—H. C.'s modesty—Our host appreciative but personal—Bears the torch of genius—A mistake—Below the salt—Host's fair daughters—Catalonian women—The Silent Enigma—Remarkable priest—Good intentions—Lecture on black coffee—Confessions—Benjamin's portions—A gifted nature.

OUR omnibus rattled off, with the result described. The crowd still cheered; a prolonged and mighty strain. As we went on this grew fainter by degrees, yet did not cease. H. C. collected his thoughts and looked about him. In the dim glimmer of the omnibus lamp we saw shades of doubt and disappointment in his face.

"I begin to think this ovation was not for me after all," he said. "They would hardly go on shouting insanely when we are out of sight and hearing. The people would have accompanied us; taken the horses out of the omnibus; drawn us up to the inn, where I should have arrived like another Cæsar. My volume of Lyrics is worth this recognition if they have rendered all the fire and spirit of its theme, beauty of language, charm of rhythm and rhyme. Above all, my dedication to Lady Maria, a masterpiece of English composition and delicate flattery. I begin to think there must be some other cause for this demonstration. And if it is not a poetical reception, I should call it a disgraceful riot."

He paused for breath. We were now going up-hill, and even the horses found it a tug-of-war. "The people would have had some trouble in dragging you up here," we remarked, as the animals toiled slowly onwards.

"Enthusiasm will carry you through anything," said H. C. "If I assisted at a demonstration I would help to drag a coach up the Matterhorn, and succeed or perish in the attempt. But these people evidently have some other object in view—organising a raid on the train, proclaiming a republic, or something equally barbarous. What a very dark night!"

We looked out. The stars had disappeared. The sky was overcast and threatening. Our horses struggled on and soon entered the town. Crossing the bridge over the river we noticed everywhere an unusual crowd of people, flaring lamps and torches, a sea of upturned faces thrown into lights and shadows that looked weird and demon-like, an undercurrent of voices, a perpetual movement.

What could it all mean? We expected to find Gerona, in spite of its 20,000 inhabitants, almost a dead city, full of traces of the past, oblivious of the present; a city of outlines, echoes and visions of the Middle Ages. We looked down the tree-lined boulevard and felt the very word a desecration of the buried centuries. The broad thoroughfare ran beside the river, and the trees followed each other in quick succession. Without and within their shadows a long double row of booths held sway, whose flaming torches turned night into day, paradise into pandemonium.

A great fair possessed the town, thronged with sightseers of all ages and every stage of emotion. We lamented our fate in visiting Gerona at such a time, but in the end it interfered very little either with our comfort or impressions. It had its own quarters and kept to them.

The omnibus passed into narrower thoroughfares, without any trace of fair, sign or sound of excitement or flaming torches. All was delightfully dead as the most advanced antiquarian could desire when we drew up at the *Fondu de los Italianos*.

Most of the hotels in the smaller towns of Spain have little to do with the ground floor of the building, often nothing but a cold, unlighted, deserted passage, sometimes leading to a stable yard. No one receives you, and you have to find your own way upstairs. When there is a choice of staircases you probably take the wrong one. On this occasion we had only one course before us—broad white marble stairs that bore witness to a very different destiny in days gone by, the pomp and splendour of life, the glory of the world. At the head of this sumptuous staircase our host met us with a polite bow and welcome; and throughout Spain we never met landlord more intelligent and well-informed, more agreeable and anxiously civil. We were puzzled as to his nationality. He did not look Catalonian, or Spanish of any sort, spoke excellent French, yet was decidedly not a Frenchman. When the mystery was solved we found him an Italian. A man ruling very differently from our energetic hostess at Narbonne, who, full of electricity herself, seemed to have the power of galvanising every one else into perpetual motion.

Our Gerona host was quiet and passive, as though all day long he had nothing to do but rest on his oars and take life easily. He never hastened his walk beyond a certain measure or raised his voice above a gentle tone. Yet, like well-oiled works, he kept the complicated machinery in order. There was no friction and no noise, but everything came up to time. He was last in bed at night, first up in the morning. A tall, thin, dark man, with an expression of face in which there was no trace of impatient fretting at life. If wealth had not come to him (we knew not how that was), evil days had passed him by. He had learned the secret of contentment, and was a man of peace. Yet he had brought up a large family of sons and daughters, and could not have escaped care and responsibility. They now took their part in the *ménage*, but it was evident that without the father nothing would hold together for an hour.

The youngest son, a tall, presentable young fellow, had been partly educated at Tours and spoke very good French. His ambition now was to spend two years in England to perfect himself in the language, which he was good enough to consider difficult and barbarous. "French," he plaintively observed, "is pronounced very much as it is spelt; so are Spanish and Italian; I have them all at my finger-ends. But English has done its best to confound all foreigners. It is worse than Russian or Chinese."

This he related the next day as we went about the town, for we had accepted his polite offer to guide us;

and very intelligent and painstaking he proved himself.

Our host's wife was fat, broad and buxom as the husband was the opposite. When her homely face beamed upon her guests from behind the counter of her little bureau, she looked the picture of an amiable Dutch vrouw. Nothing less than a Frank Hals could have done her justice. Her lines seemed to have been cast in pleasant places, and her days also had been without shadow of evil.

It was also evident that our host was cheerfully disposed. His walls were all painted with landscapes, and if rainbow-colours predominated, he reasoned that they were more enlivening than grey skies and dark shadows. Even the walls of his garden-court had not escaped: a court put to many uses, level with the first floor, bounded on one side by the kitchen, on the other by the dining-room, at right angles with each other. A picturesque court with a slightly Italian atmosphere about it, due perhaps to the sunny landscapes. Orange and small eucalyptus trees stood about in large tubs. The far end was roofed, and the fine red tiles slanted downwards. Over these grew a large abundant vine bearing rich clusters of grapes in due season. Under the eaves were hung cages with captive nightingales and thrushes that looked anything but unhappy prisoners.

"In the spring they sing gloriously," said our host, who, evidently full of tender mercies as of cheerfulness, gazed affectionately at his birds. "I hang them outside our front windows sometimes, and night and day the street echoes with the nightingales' song. You may close your eyes and fancy yourself in the heart of a wood. I have often done so, and dreamed I was in my Italian home, listening to the birds on the one hand, the murmur of the Mediterranean on the other. That is one reason why I love and keep them. They bring back lost echoes, and make me feel young again."

Pigeons and doves strutted about the yard, and were evidently considered very nearly as sacred as those of St. Mark's, for they were as fearless as if the days of the millennium had come at last.

But on the first evening of our arrival we had yet to learn the many virtues of our host. We only saw in broad outlines that we were in good hands.

THE BOULEVARD: GERONA.

"Not having telegraphed, you are fortunate to find accommodation, sirs," he said, as he lighted candles and marshalled us to his best rooms. "Last year at the fair we were full to overflowing—not an available hole or corner to spare. This year we are comparatively empty, simply because the town corporation have not organised the usual fêtes, which bring us visitors from all parts of the country. Nevertheless we may be full to-morrow."

"It is an annual fair, then?"

"Very much so, and one of the most celebrated in Spain. This is the first night, to-morrow the first day. That and the next day are comparatively quiet; the day after comes the horse and cattle fair, and the whole town is crowded with a rough, noisy set of people. You would hardly think them agreeable."

"In that case our visit to Gerona must terminate within forty-eight hours. The train which brought us to-night shall take us on to Barcelona."

"Where you have it more civilised but will not be more welcome," said our polite host, still leading the way.

The corridors were paved with stone, the ceilings were lofty. Turning into a narrower passage to the right, we looked into the yard, where our famous omnibus reposed; the horses had been taken out and were marching up to their stable. This passage led to a salon, out of which one of our bedrooms opened; our host had given us of his best. Placing one of the candles down and lighting others, he turned to see that everything was in order. We opened the window and looked out to the main street—long, narrow, almost

in darkness. Electric lamps here and there gave little light. "Why so?" we asked the landlord.

"Because we get our motive force from the river; and just now the river is almost dry," he replied. "So they have to work with a machine, and the machine is not strong enough to light the whole town. That is why I don't have it in the hotel. One day we should have illumination, the next total darkness. Better go on in the old way."

"There was quite a riot at the station," we remarked; "we were told it had to do with conscription. At one time we thought they were going to storm the omnibus."

"You were well-informed," said the landlord; "it is the conscription. Fathers, brothers and cousins have assembled to see the poor fellows depart. Generally speaking they all turn up again after a time, like bad money; but on this occasion who knows? Raw recruits as they are, many may get drafted off to Cuba, with small chance of ever seeing their native land again. Luckily they are more full of excitement at the change of life and scene than of regret at leaving home. The noise, as you say, might be that of a riot; without exception, the Spanish are the noisiest people in the world, but it means nothing. It is the froth of champagne, and when it subsides there is good wine beneath."

"Are the people of Gerona poetical?" asked H. C., rather anxiously.

"Poetical, sir?" with a puzzled expression. "Do you mean to ask if they write poetry, like Dante and Shakespeare? You do them too much honour."

"No, one could hardly expect that of them. But do they read and appreciate the poetry of others? There was a moment when I thought that crowd at the station was an ovation in honour of——"

H. C. paused and lowered his eyes modestly. Our intelligent landlord at once divined his meaning. We invariably found that he guessed things by intuition; two words of explanation with him went as far as twenty with others.

"Ah, I understand. You, sir, are a poet, and at first thought this riotous assemblage an ovation in your honour. I fear I must undeceive you—though you probably have already undeceived yourself. I hope it was not a bitter awakening. Still, I am enchanted to make the acquaintance of an English poet. I once saw and spoke to Mr. Browning in Italy. He did not look to me at all poetical. One pictures a poet with pale face, dreamy eyes, flowing locks, and abstracted manner. Mr. Browning was the opposite of all this. Now you, sir, with that beautiful regard and far-away expression looking into nothingness——"

H. C. bowed his acknowledgments; our host though flattering was growing a little personal.

"You have lost your poet-laureate," he continued; "and another has not been appointed. I read the newspapers and know the leading events of every country; for though I live out of the world, I must know everything that is going on there. Perhaps, sir, you are to be the new poet-laureate?"

"Not at present," said H. C., flushing deeply as a vision of future greatness rose up before him. "I hope to be so in time. At present I am rather young to bear the weight of the laurel wreath, which seldom adorns the unwrinkled brow."

"There is rhythm in your prose," said the landlord in quiet appreciation. "Truth will out. But, sir, though a poet, you are mortal; at least I conclude so, in spite of your diaphanous form and spiritual regard; and I bethink me that time flies in talking, and we shall have dinner ready before we can turn round. In England, being a poet, you probably feast upon butterflies' wings and the bloom of peaches; but——"

"On the contrary," cried H. C. hastily; "I have an excellent appetite and love substantial dishes. Crystallised violets and the bloom of peaches I leave to my aunt, Lady Maria. Like George III. my favourite repast is boiled mutton and apple dumplings; and like the king I have never been able to understand how the apples get inside the pastry. That does not affect their flavour. So we will, if you please, make ready for dinner. Do you patronise the French or Spanish cuisine? Oh, I am indifferent. It is a mere matter of butter versus oil, and both are good."

Then they went off in a procession of two, the landlord carrying the flambeau. "We will look upon it as the torch of genius," said the latter, "and I am proud to bear it. But methinks, sir, it should be in your hands." After this we heard only receding footsteps.

The scene presently changed to the dining-room. At first we had made for the wrong room devoted to the humbler folk indoors and out. Here, too, the landlord and his own people took their meals; and once or twice, casting a glance in passing, it was a pleasure to see how madame's broad buxom face and capacious form was doing justice to the good things on the festive board. Her husband and children did not take after her; they were all very much after Pharaoh's lean kine: she could have sheltered them all under her ample wing.

We were rather horrified on entering. A few curious looking people, very much *sans gêne*, sat at a table in a state of disorder. Even H. C.'s capacious appetite would have fled at the aspect of things. From a door beyond opening to the kitchen came sounds of fizzing and frying and savoury fumes. The chef and his imps were flitting about excitedly.

We were beginning to think that after all our lines had fallen in strange places, when the landlord appeared at the door, pounced upon us, and marshalled us off the premises.

"That is not for you, sir," he said. "We are obliged to have two rooms. A certain number will neither pay fair prices nor heed good manners, and these we place below the salt, as I have read in some of your English books. I put up with them because it would not answer me to have three rooms. And then we have our meals when nobody else has theirs, and waiting and running to and fro is over for the moment. To keep an hotel is indeed no sinecure."

Saying this, he led the way to a large and unobjectionable room, its walls adorned with the sunny landscapes already described. If perspective and colouring were eccentric, why, we had only to think that variety was charming, as H. C. observed, and defects became virtues. The room was well illuminated with gas, whatever might be going on in the streets; to no tenebrous repast were we invited. The linen was snow-white. Our host's daughters waited quietly and silently, with a certain grace of manner: dark-eyed, good-looking young women, with something both Italian and Spanish about them, whereby we imagined the buxom lady-mother was probably Catalonian.

Throughout Catalonia we observed that the women after a certain age—by no means old age—grow inordinately stout. Time after time a little whipper-snapper, lean, shrivelled and short would enter a dining-room followed by an enormous spouse, who came crushing down upon him like a Himalaya mountain upon a sand-hill. They would take their seat at a table, the lady with a great deal of difficult arranging, and the little husband would gaze up at the huge wife with adoration in his eyes, as proudly as if she had been the Venus de Milo come to life with all her arms and legs about her and a fair proportion of garments. The back is fitted to the burden, but here the order of things was reversed—the wife's broad shoulders must needs bear the weight of life.

There were no stout ladies in the dining-room to-night. At different parts of the long table sat some eight

or ten people of various nations. Opposite us were two Englishmen separated by a Spaniard. They were of one party, yet never spoke a word from the time they entered to the time they left. Occasionally they glared at each other on passing a dish or the wine of the country, which was supplied *ad libitum*. What the entente cordiale or bone of contention we never discovered; every meal they kept to their silent programme, until it became almost oppressive. Once or twice we thought they were perhaps monks of La Trappe in disguise, but gave up the idea as far-fetched. The Englishmen, at any rate, judging by expression, were certainly not devoted to fasting and penance. They were young, and the world held attractions not at all in harmony with solitary cells and the midnight mass. We never solved the Silent Enigma, as H. C. called them.

Not far off sat a priest, who no doubt had himself helped to celebrate many a midnight mass, perhaps both in and out of a monastery. He was the most interesting character at table, tall, distinguished looking, with flowing white hair, a singularly handsome face and magnificent head. The system of serving was different from most hotels. Dishes were not handed round, but every person or party had placed before them their own dish, of which each took as much or as little as they pleased. Whether the priest was father confessor to the ladies of the inn, or whether they merely had a very proper respect for his cloth, we knew not, but he invariably came in for a Benjamin's portion, and sent most of it away untasted.

Also it was evident that he could sit in judgment on others. The next day at luncheon he took his seat next to us. We were suffering from headache, which has made life more or less a burden. Severe diseases require strong remedies. We ate dry bread, and drank sundry cups of black coffee mixed with brandy; the latter half a century old and almost as mild as milk, its healing properties sovereign. The priest, we say, sat next, and we almost resented his not leaving the breathing interval of a chair between us, where empty chairs were abundant. The Silent Enigma at the lower end of the table were quite a long way off. At our second cup, the priest looked anxious; at our third, reproachful; at our fourth and last, contained himself no longer. Yet the four cups were only equal to two ordinary black-coffee cups.

Possibly the priest thought age conferred privilege. He was also probably impulsive, and like all similar people often said and did the wrong thing. But he was evidently actuated by a pure spirit of philanthropy, which would set the world to rights if it could accomplish the impossible. Looking earnestly at us, he spoke, and then we found he was a Frenchman.

"Monsieur," he said in his own tongue, "that is a most insidious beverage, fatal to digestion, destructive to the nerves. If I see any one repeating the dose, at the risk of being thought indiscreet, I cannot avoid speaking. When I count up to the fourth cup, I feel they are in jeopardy. And shall I tell you why?—I speak from experience. I once myself was nearly overcome by the fatal basilisk, only that in my case it was strong waters without coffee more often than with it. For a time it was a question which should conquer, the tempter or the better nature. Then came a period in which I was wretched and miserable, yielding and fighting alternately. Finally, I made a greater effort, and vowed that if strength were given me to overcome, I would dedicate my life to the Church. Soon after that I fell ill; sick almost unto death. Weeks and months passed and I recovered to find the temptation vanished; hating the very sight of brandy, with coffee or without. Mindful of my vow—I was a young man at the time—I took steps to enter the Church; and here I am. And now, sir, forgive me for saying so much about myself, and for preaching a little sermon taken from real life, though time and place are perhaps not quite fitted to the occasion."

We forgave him on the spot. His intentions were excellent, his sympathies keen; two admirable qualities. We assured him that strong waters were no temptation, held no charm; yet twice four cups had been taken if needed.

The good priest shook his head doubtfully.

"A dangerous remedy, monsieur. But, now, I am interested in you. I like the amiable manner in which you have received my little homily. Many would take fire and proudly tell me to mind my own business. You arouse my sympathies and invite my confidence. Let me confess that I placed myself here to enter into conversation. Mine has been a singular life, both since I entered the Church and before it: full of lessons. If before retiring to-night you should have an hour to spare and will give it me, I will relate to you passages in a very eventful career. You will say it contains many marvels. However late, it will not be too late for me. I never retire to bed before three in the morning, and am always broad awake at seven. Four hours' sleep in the twenty-four is all nature ever accords me. I have reason to believe that I shall be offered the next vacant See in the Church: I could place my finger upon the very spot: and my wakeful nights will enable me to do much work. Let me hope that wisdom and judgment may be accorded. But what am I doing?" drawing himself up. "Talking as though I had known you for a lifetime; giving you my confidence, betraying my secrets! What power are you exercising? What does it mean? Sir, you must be a hypnotist, and I have fallen into your meshes. Yet, no; I feel I am not mesmerised, and you are to be trusted. Yes, I repeat that if you will give me an hour this evening, though it be the dead of night, I will confide strange experiences to your ear that until now have been locked within my own bosom. And why not? My life is my own; I have a right to withhold or disclose what pleases me."

The words of the priest made us almost uncomfortable. We aspired to no undue influence over any one, much less a stranger. Confidences are not always desirable; but then we reflected that confidences need not be confessions. The experiences even of a simple life must always be of use, how much more those of an active man of the world—thoughtful, observing, retentive and philosophical.

There was something unusually attractive about our priest. He possessed great refinement of face; a profile that reminded us of the fine outlines of Père Hyacinthe as we had many a time watched him in a Paris pulpit preaching with so much earnestness, fire and conviction, raising a crusade against the errors and shams both within and without the Church. When our present neighbour was a bishop, would he too uphold the good and condemn the evil?

We looked closely and thought Nature had not been unmindful of her power. As already stated, his long flowing hair was white; the head was splendidly developed; there was a ring and richness in the subdued voice that would reach the farthest corners of Notre Dame. We asked ourselves the question but could not answer it. The future holds her own secrets and makes no confidences. But strangely interested in Père Delormais—to make a slight but sufficient change in his name—we promised him an hour, two hours if he would, and even found ourselves awaiting the interview with curiosity and impatience. And this was the result of black coffee and brandy.

But all this took place on the second day. On the first night of our arrival we had needed neither one nor the other. The priest sat on the opposite side of the table, and we noticed nothing about him but his distinguished appearance and Benjamin's portions. Yet he evidently had been closely studying us. The Silent Enigma had occupied a little of our attention and wonder, but this soon passed away. The remainder of the scattered guests called for no remark whatever.

CHAPTER IV.

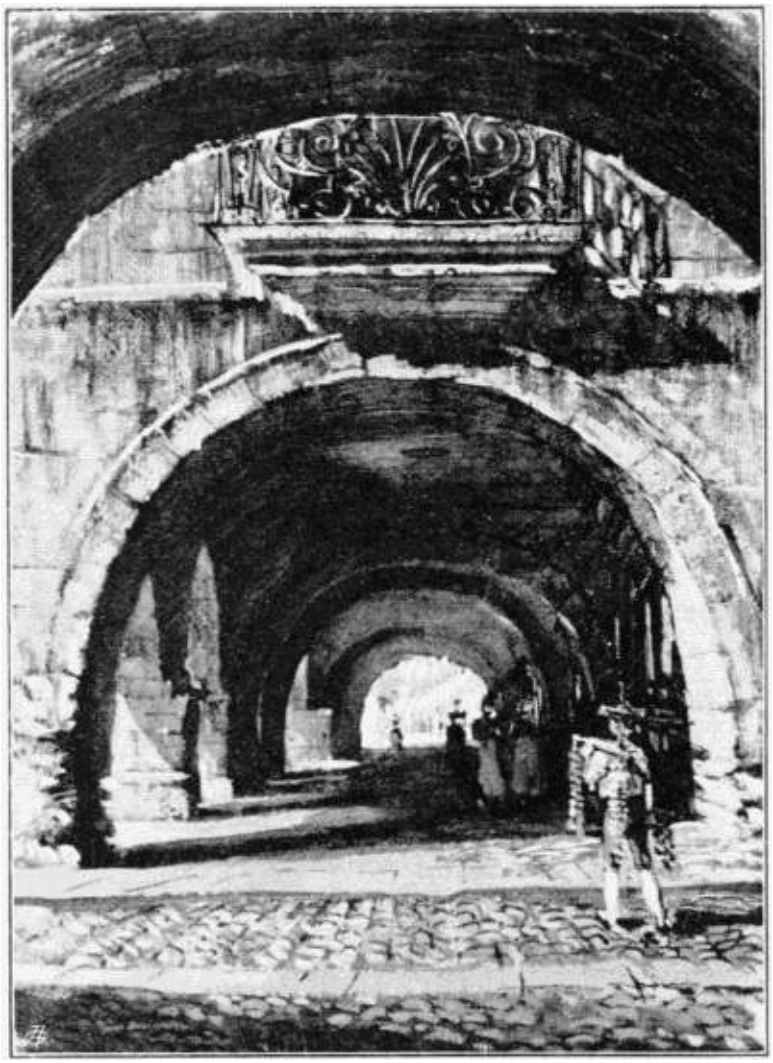
A NIGHT VISION.

Wrong turnings—H. C.'s gifts and graces—Out at night—The arcades of Gerona—At the fair—Ancient outlines—Demons at work—In the dry bed of the river—Roasting chestnuts—Medieval outlines—In the vortex—Clairvoyantes and lion-tamers—Clown's despair—Deserted streets—Vision of the night—Haunted staircase—Dark and dangerous—A small grievance—The reeds by the river—Cry of the watchmen—Hare and hounds—Fair Rosamund—Jacob's ladder—New rendering to old proverbs—Cathedral by night—H. C. oblivious—Scent fails—Return to earth—Romantic story—Last of a long line—*El Sereno!*—The witching hour—H. C. unserenaded—Next morning—Grey skies—A false prophet—Magic picture—Cathedral by day—Mediæval dreams.

DINNER ended we went to our rooms preparatory to investigating the town. These rooms were only reached through a labyrinth of passages, and to the last hour we were always taking wrong turnings. H. C. had the organ of locality as well as the gift of rhyme, and we often had to summon him from some distant chamber to the rescue; vainly remarking that it was a little hard all the talents should have fallen to his share. He would condescendingly reply that we must be thankful for small mercies; adding with great modesty that all his talents and graces, far beyond our ken, were counterbalanced by a feeling of tremendous responsibility.

We left the hotel with all our curiosity awakened. It was very dark. No stars were shining; a small aneroid indicated rain. Where we came to openings in the streets, the sky above was lighted with a lurid glare, reflection of the countless torches in the fair. Our own street was in comparative darkness.

Sauntering down whither fate would lead us, we came to some splendid arcades, deep, massive and solemn. Few towns in Spain possess such arcades as Gerona; so exceedingly picturesque and substantially built that time may mellow but hardly destroy them. To-night they were not quite impenetrable; a little of the glare from the sky or the fair—the latter unseen but near at hand—seemed to faintly light their obscurity and add mystery to the finely-arched outlines. They were deserted, not a creature was visible, the shops were closed. There is no time like night and darkness for solemn outlines and impressions.



ARCADES: GERONA.

A few steps farther on and we suddenly burst upon the full glory of the fair. Not the glory of the sun or moon, but of smoking torchlights and lurid flames carried hither and thither by the wind. We traced them far as the eye could reach. The houses, with their quaint outlines and iron balconies shadowed by the waving trees, stood out vividly. A double stream of people sauntered to and fro, treading upon each other's heels. At one booth a Dutch auction was going on—great attraction of the evening.

VIEW OF GERONA FROM THE STONE BRIDGE.

We stood on the bridge and looked quite far down upon the bed of the river. As our host had said, the water was very low. The stream had narrowed and half the bed was dry. Here and there huge fires were burning and flaming, and men danced round them, looking like demons as the flames now and then burst forth and lighted up their grim faces. They were roasting chestnuts, and as each batch was finished it was carried up to the fair to be quickly devoured by the boys and girls to-night supreme. Every dog has its day, and it was their turn to reign. They must make the most of it. To-morrow the garlands would fade. When the clock struck twelve Cinderella went back to her rags and chimney-corner. Black Monday always comes. Every stall displayed nothing but toys, from juvenile knives to slice off finger-ends to seductive-looking purses that were a mortifying reflection upon empty pockets.

As we stood on the bridge all this light and glare outlined the wonderful houses that rise up straight from the river so that its waters wash their foundations—and at very high tides come in at the ground-floor windows, a visitor more free than welcome. The occurrence is rare, but has been known. We could just trace the marvellous outlines; their strangely picturesque, old-world look: and we waited with patience for the morning and the splendours it should reveal.

Plunging boldly into the crowd, we were swallowed up in the vortex. It was rather bewildering. All the people seemed to do was to walk up and down in an endless stream, eat chestnuts and blow penny trumpets. To-night, at any rate, the stalls were almost neglected. Possibly they had not had time to digest the glamour, and to-morrow the harvest would come.

At the end of the long thoroughfare lights and stalls and crowd were left behind. We reached a quaint corner which cunningly led to another bridge. This we crossed and soon found ourselves in the wide market square and a different scene. Here the shows had taken up their abode, and every effort was being made to excite an unresponsive crowd. It was the usual thing. The learned pig, the two-headed lady, the gentleman who drew portraits with his feet, the clairvoyante who told fortunes and promised wealth and marriage, the lion-tamer who put his head into the lion's mouth, the enchanting ballet, where ladies and gentlemen pirouetted and made love in dumb motions: these attractions were faithfully described and freely offered to the dazzled multitude. In vain a clown tried to be facetious, shouted himself hoarse, and blew a trumpet until his face grew dark. Bells rang and drums beat—the crowd did not respond.

We left them to it, not tempted by the unseen. Our day for shows and illusions was over. This was not what we had expected of Gerona the beautiful and ancient. If we felt a slight grievance, who could wonder?

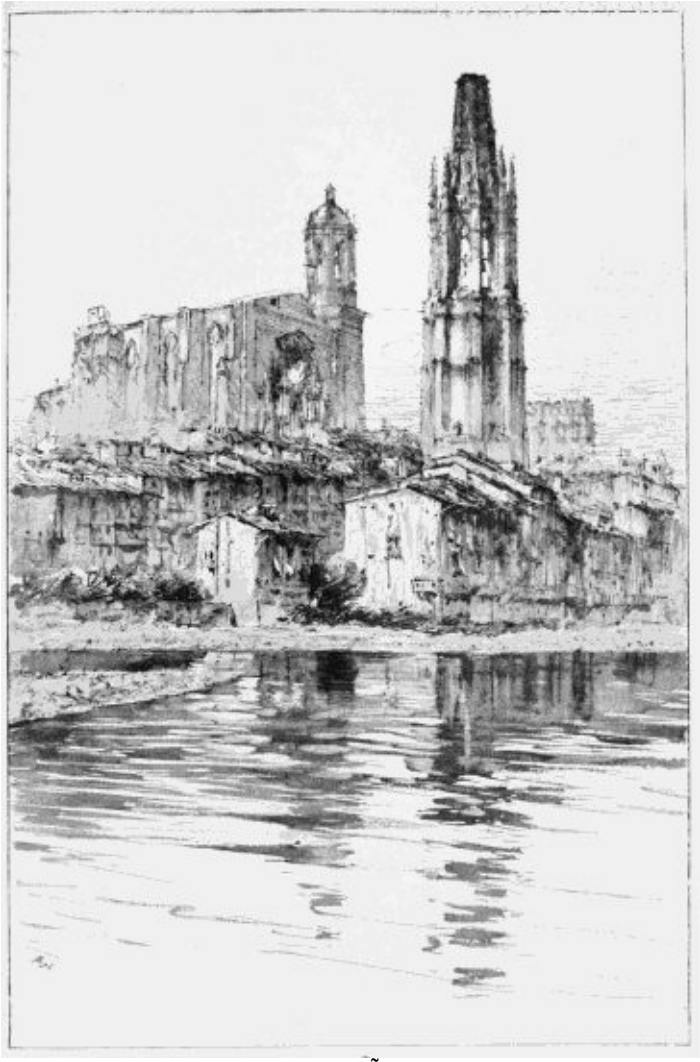
Presently we found ourselves in the darkness of night at the edge of the river. There was more water here, no dry bed visible. Away to the left, as far as one could gather, stretched the open country. Tall trees, sombre and mysterious, waved and rustled behind us. Evidently this was one of the public parks or promenades that exist just outside so many Spanish towns, refuges from the mid-day sun and evening glare; Elysian fields for those disembodied souls who pace to and fro to the music of love's young dream; vows of eternal fidelity more or less writ in sand.

The water looked cold and calm and tranquil. Rushes grew by the side and the wind whispered through them. Pan was playing his pipes. Lights twinkled from the windows of many a house down by the river. A lurid glow still hung in the sky, and beneath it, in front of us to the right, we traced the marvellous outlines of the town. Above all, crowning the heights, stretching heavenwards like mighty monsters, uprose the towers of the cathedral and other churches. Almost unearthly was the scene in its gloom and grandeur of mystery. Far down on the dry bed of the river the chestnut-roasters danced like demons about their holocausts. No clown need cry the virtues of their wares; the demand was equal to the supply, and both

were unlimited.

We hardly knew how we found our way here or found it back again. Instinct guides one on these occasions and seldom fails as it failed in the midnight streets of Toledo. But a conjuror would be lost in those narrow wynds, which all resemble each other and are without plan or sequence.

To-night it was plainer sailing. Afar off we heard the clown bidding people to his feast of good things. Like the siren in stormy weather it told us which way to steer, what to avoid. We passed well on the outskirts of the gaping crowd and found ourselves on the bridge: the dark bridge, with the river flowing beneath, the houses rising in a great impenetrable mass, and the distant chestnut-roasters at their demon work.



BANKS OF THE OÑAR: GERONA.

The evening was growing old; a neighbouring church clock struck ten. This served to change the current of one's thoughts, which had simply drifted with the scene before us.

"Let us go to the cathedral," said H. C. "We shall then have two impressions instead of one. I always like to see an important building first at night. Next morning's view is so different that it becomes a revelation."

This was true enough; but how find our way to the cathedral and back again to the hotel? We had no desire to repeat that Toledo adventure. The story of the Babes in the Wood is only amusing to those who listen.

"Evidently a very different town from Toledo," replied H. C. "We have only to climb the height to reach

the cathedral. Let us play Hare and Hounds. I will drop pieces of paper by way of scent. Or like Hop o' my Thumb scatter stones on the road."

"Wouldn't a silken thread be more poetical?"

"True; but," with a profound sigh, "there is no Fair Rosamund at the end of it. Here we can only worship the antique. Rosamund was not antique."

"But this has one great virtue; it can never disappoint or play you false. And, rare merit, its charms increase with age."

Again he sighed deeply. He had had many disappointments, but then he deserved them. Butterflies flit from flower to flower, until by-and-by they alight on a nettle and it stings: a little allegory always lost upon H. C. The gift of knowing themselves is still denied to mortals.

We left the bridge and found ourselves once more in the quaint octagonal corner; in front of us a narrow turning; a long flight of steps apparently without end; a Jacob's Ladder.

"Leading to Paradise," said H. C. "Let us take it."

"Would you be admitted with all those broken vows upon your conscience?"

The Oracle was silent. With a bold plunge we commenced the ascent: a rugged climb with dead walls about us; twistings and turnings and crooked ways and rough uneven steps; a veritable pilgrimage.

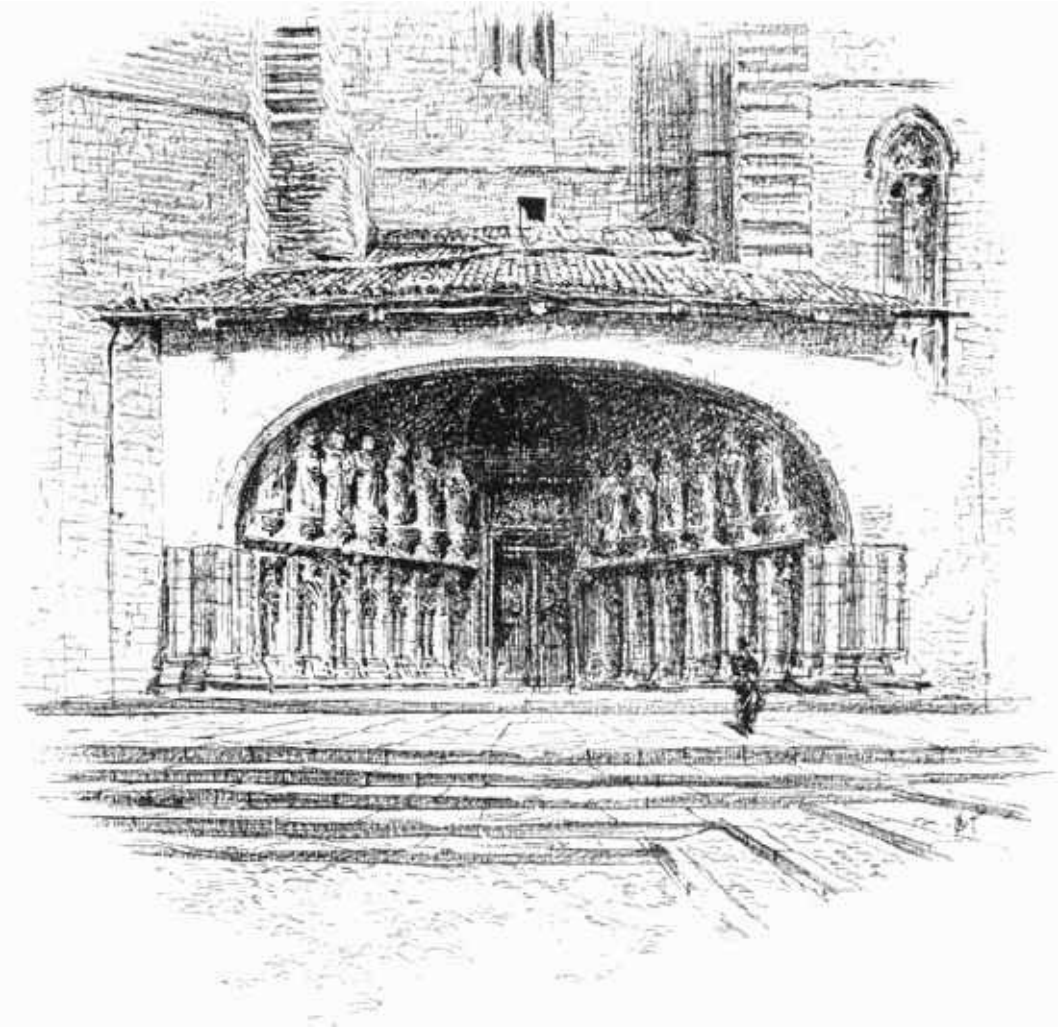
"Patience," said H. C. "Everything comes to him who climbs. I like to vary our proverbs; the old forms grow hackneyed."

As he spoke, we came upon a hidden turning to the left; short, straight, and evidently full of purpose. We took it without doubting and soon found ourselves in the open square, bound on one side by the cathedral with the Bishop's palace at right angles.

On this occasion no majestic outlines rewarded us. Only for its interior is the cathedral famous. All doors were locked and barred. We knocked for admission. These wonderful buildings should be open at night as well as by day, and some of their finest effects are lost by this tyrannical custom. But we knocked in vain; ghostly echoes answered us. Ghosts pass through doors; we never heard that the most accommodating ghost ever opened them to mortals. It was the great south doorway at which we appealed —the Apostles' Doorway—and in the darkness we could just trace its fine deeply-recessed arch. Above the cathedral rose its one solitary pagan tower, shadowy and unreal against the night sky.

A broad, magnificent, apparently endless flight of steps such as few cathedrals possess faced the west front. To-night we could see nothing beyond of the town and river, the great stretch of country and far-off Pyrenees we knew must be there. All this must wait for the morning. Nor should we have to wait long, for night and the moments were flying. The glare had died out of the sky; shows and booths had put out their lights; the crowd had gone home. Gerona might now truly be likened to a dead city.

No sound disturbed the stillness but the cry of the watchmen in different parts of the town. One proclaimed the time and weather and another took up the tale; sometimes a discordant duet rose upon the air. We heard it all distinctly from our citadel above the world.



APOSTLES' DOORWAY, CATHEDRAL: GERONA.

As we looked, one of them passed in slow contemplation at the foot of the long flight of steps—steps nearly as broad as the cathedral itself. His staff struck the ground, his light flashed shadows upon the houses. The effect was weird. Heavy footsteps echoed right and left through the narrow streets, in fitting accompaniment to his monotonous chant. We had long grown familiar with these old watchmen, who come laden with an atmosphere of the past. They are in harmony with these towns of ancient outlines, suggesting days when perhaps the faintest glimmer of an oil lamp only made darkness more hideous; days when their office was no sinecure as now, but one of danger and responsibility.

The cathedral clock struck eleven, and when the last faint vibration had died upon the air we turned to go. It seemed a great many hours since we had risen in the darkness of the Narbonne misty morning, H. C. had been reawakened with a sort of volcanic eruption, and madame, wishing us bon voyage over our tea and hot rolls, had disappeared like a flash into the mist to put the final touches to her *diner de noce*.

"Now for Hare and Hounds, H. C. Lead the way."

"By the beard of Mahomet! I forgot all about it and have put none down."

"So the scent has failed?"

Remorse made him silent for a moment. Then he tried to turn the tables.

"After all, it was your fault. Your saying what you did about the silken thread and Fair Rosamund, set me thinking what a romantic adventure it would be if it could only come true. Naturally everything else went out of my mind."

"We must make the best of it, H. C., and get back to the hotel as we can. Suppose we vary the route. These steps look inviting; we will take them. All roads lead to Rome."

We went down the interminable flight, turned and looked back. A vision of a church in the clouds and a pagan tower that went out of sight. We had returned to earth, and not far off the old watchman was still awaking shadows and echoes in the narrow street. We could not do better than follow, and presently found ourselves in our quaint little octagonal corner. All was well.

The long thoroughfare, so crowded lately, was now forsaken. Stalls were shut down, lights were out. It was like a deserted banqueting-hall. The chestnut sellers had left their pans and baskets, but left them empty. From the bed of the river the dancing demons had departed, and the smoke of their incense still ascended from dying embers. Next came the old arcades, darker, lonelier, more mysterious than ever. These we knew faced our street, and turning our backs upon them we found ourselves in a few moments at the hotel.

Only a couple of old watchmen broke the solitude, meeting at their boundaries. They stood on the pavement in close converse and we wondered if they were hatching mischief; then they threw their light upon us and no doubt returned the compliment. We disappeared within the great doorway and left them to their reflections.

Up the broad staircase, the white marble glistening in the rays of the one electric lamp that still lighted up the courtyard. We thought of the sumptuous crowd that had passed up and down in the centuries gone by; fair dames in rustling silks and gay cavaliers with clanking swords; all the grandeur and gorgeousness of that once ducal palace. The staircase seemed haunted with ghosts and shadows, the murmur of voices, echo of laughter, weeping of tears.

And now, dim and vapoury, a brilliant pair appeared in tender proximity to each other. His arm encircled her waist, her fair white hand rested with fond appropriation upon his doublet. The love-look in her eyes was only equalled by the fervour and constancy of his. Yet sadness predominated, for it was a farewell interview. She was the last daughter of the ducal house, last of her race. They were betrothed and the course of true love had run smooth. But now he was bidden fight for his country and would depart at daybreak.

He never lived to return, but died on the battlefield. Within his gloved hand was found a golden tress tightly clasped, and next his heart a small miniature of his beautiful betrothed. Both were buried with him. She soon faded and declined, and found him again in a Land where wars and partings are unknown. House and name became extinct. As we thought of this, suddenly the staircase seemed full of sighs, lights grew dim.

We passed on and found the hotel empty and deserted. Every one had gone to bed and left the long gloomy corridors to silence and the ghosts. We lighted candles and H. C. led the way through the labyrinth to our rooms. Windows were open and the two old watchmen below were just where we had left them, apparently still gazing at the doorway through which we had disappeared.

"El sereno!" cried he. "Call your hours and guard the city. Enemies lurk in secret corners."

They looked up and wished us good night. We were not marauders after all. So they separated with easy conscience, and from opposite ends of the street we heard them announce the time and weather.

It was hardly necessary, for another watchman rang out with iron tongue. Midnight slowly tolled over

the town from all the churches. Impossible to believe an hour had passed since we stood at the top of that vast flight of steps overlooking the darkness. How had we sauntered back? Where had the moments flown? One grows absorbed in these night visions, dark shadows and outlines, and time passes unconsciously. We counted the strokes, listened to the vibrations, and then H. C. went off to his own regions. The watchmen were all very well in their way, but for his part an open window and a love serenade—such as we had been favoured with in Toledo—had greater charms. To-night passionate appeals and the melody of the lute were sought in vain. Every window was closed and dark. We also said good-night to the sleeping world.

The next morning rose in due course, but not with promise. Heavy rain had fallen during the night, lowering clouds foretold more. Just now, however, they had proclaimed a truce.

We went out and felt that the grey sky was in harmony with the grey tones of the town. Nevertheless Spain essentially needs sunshine to bring out all its colouring and brilliancy. Under dark clouds it falls for the most part flat and dead, its finest effects lost.

"The rainy season has begun," said H. C. "We are in for a spell of wet weather. Generally it comes in September. This year it has obligingly put it off until November. My usual ill-luck."

"I fear it is so," said José our host's son, who, as we have said, volunteered to pilot us about the town and show forth its hidden wonders—delighted to air his French and give us Spanish lessons. "We have a weather-wise prophet who never was known to go wrong; a great meteorologist. He has just written to the papers to say we are to have a month's deluge."

A cheerful beginning. As it proved, they were all mistaken, but at the moment the skies seemed to confirm the tale. All the same we would not lose hope, which has brought many a sinking ship into harbour. So we put on a cheerful countenance, bid them take heart of grace and their umbrellas.

It would be invidious to enter, at the end of a chapter, upon the wonders of the town which met us at every step and turning; but we must record one experience before concluding. Let us close our eyes, take flight upwards and alight at the head of that vast stone staircase with our backs to the cathedral.

We see this morning what last night was veiled in darkness. The town lies chiefly to our left. We overlook a sea of red and grey roofs. To our right are the old walls with their gateways, round bastions and irregular outlines. Near to us is a church-tower, graceful, octagonal, excellent in design; but the upper part of its spire is gone and we can only imagine its once perfect beauty.

Low down beyond the town lies the river, winding through a picturesque country. We can even see the reeds and rushes that border its banks, but cannot hear their murmur as we did last night. If Pan still pipes it is to the pixies.

In the distance the Pyrenees are sleeping in graceful, long-drawn undulations. Nothing can be lovelier than their outlines. Some are snow-capped and stand out pure and white against the grey skies. A magic picture and we long to see it under sunshine. No wonder if Pan is silent.

We turn to the cathedral. No need to knock this morning. The great west doors are unlocked and we enter.

The first thing to strike us is an intense obscurity; a dim religious light deeper than we remember to have seen in any other sacred building. But to-day the grey skies have something to answer for in this matter. As the sight grows accustomed to the gloom, the next thing we notice is the vastness and splendour

of the nave in which we stand: a single span seventy-three feet broad. No other church in Christendom can boast of such a nave. Light comes in from windows high up, filled in with rich stained glass. The tone of the walls and pillars is perfect, never having been touched with brush or knife; a rich subdued claret delighting the senses. Those great men of the Middle Ages made no mistakes. Nothing was admitted to disturb their love of harmony and proportion. They built wonders for the glory of their country and for all time: knew and recognised one thing only—the charm of perfection. Where they failed, their efforts were crippled; they were told to make bricks without straw.

Without waiting at this moment to examine the church more closely, we pass through a great doorway on the left and find ourselves in the cloisters.

Here too is a marvellous vision. Few cloisters in the world compare with them. The four sides are unequal, but this almost heightens their attraction. They have been little interfered with and are almost in their original state. The simple round arches rest on coupled pillars of marble, slender and graceful. The capitals are extremely rich, elaborate and delicate in their carving. Here Romanesque art seems to have been introduced into Spain through France. The cathedrals of Catalonia are of exceeding beauty and appear to have laid the foundation of mediæval Spanish art. This also, though they would deny it, is due to French influence—happily at that time at its best and purest.

In this wonderful cloister we lost ourselves in dreams of the Middle Ages, days which have glorified the earth, and appear almost as necessary to us as light and air. In the centre was an ancient well, without which no cloister seems perfect. Shrubs and trees embowered it, and the fresh green stood out in contrast with creamy walls and Romanesque arches.

At the end of the north passage we passed through an open porch to a view extensive and magnificent. A steep rugged descent led to the town. Below us was the ancient Benedictine church of San Pedro, with its Norman doorway and cloisters scarcely less wonderful than those we had just visited. Near it was a smaller, equally ancient church, now desecrated and turned into a carpenter's shop. We will pay it a visit by-and-by and make acquaintance with its sturdy owner, who passes his days and does his work under the very shadow of sanctity. Beyond all, on the brow of the hill outside the walls, we trace the ruins of the great castle and citadel that so nobly stood the siege of Gerona, until the twin spectres famine and disease stalked in hand in hand and conquered the brave defenders.

We gazed long upon all these historical landmarks, pointed out and explained by our guide-companion. Then turning back through the cloisters again found ourselves lost in visions of the past as we fell once more under the magic influence of the vast space and dim religious light of Gerona's splendid cathedral.

CHAPTER V.

GERONA THE BEAUTIFUL.

A Gerona señora—Grace and charm—Lord of creation—Morning greeting—Arcades and ancient houses—Conscription—Gerona a discovery—Streets of steps—Ancient eaves and rare ironwork—Old-world corner—Desecrated church—Gothic cloisters—Ghosts of the past—Visions of to-day—Soldiers interested—"Happy as kings"—Lingerings—Colonel seeks explanation—No lover of antiquity—More conscription—Dramatic scene—Pedro to the rescue—Mother and son—Sad story—Strong and merciful—Pedro grateful—Restricted interests—Colonel becomes impenetrable again.

LAST night we had found much to admire, though in the darkness the charms were only half seen. This morning on opening our window clouds hung low and threatening; yet the grey tone over all was in such singular harmony with the ancient city that we hardly regretted the gloomy skies.

Immediately opposite our casement was a small draper's shop presided over by an industrious feminine genius. She was up betimes and worked as though she had taken to heart all the proverbs of Solomon. A short, dark woman of the true Spanish type, bright, active, and not above all manner of work, for she swept her pavement diligently and arranged her wares; doing all with a certain natural grace that was not without its charm.

We thought her a young widow struggling for existence, but when all the work was done and everything was comfortably arranged, a husband appeared upon the scene; evidently a lord of creation who looked upon women, and especially wives, as born to labour. It was their portion under the sun. She had no doubt grown used to this state of things and accepted it as part of life's penances.

"I hope you have slept well," we heard her say with the slightest tinge of sarcasm—the street was so narrow as to bring them almost within half-a-dozen yards of us. "I have been up these two hours, whilst you were serenely unconscious," veiling her head in a graceful mantilla. "Yet you hardly seem refreshed," as he yawned lazily.

"*Cara mia*, you are an admirable woman and the best of wives. I admit that without your aid life would go hardly with me. But to you work is a pleasure, and I would not deprive you of it for the world."

A FRAGMENT OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF GERONA.

By this time the mantilla was adjusted and the dark little woman swept good-temperedly out of the shop. The prettiest of small feet tripped on to the pavement. She looked up, saw us gazing in her direction, and her smile disclosed the whitest of teeth.

"Ah, señor, you have heard our conjugal Good-morning. It is always the same. Fate has been hard upon us women. The weaker vessel, we get terribly imposed upon by our masters. Now I go to church to pray for a blessing upon my work and reformation to my lord. Not that he is bad or unkind or tyrannical, as husbands go—only incorrigibly lazy. Oh, you know it is true, Stefano."

Upon which the little lady—she was quite lady-like in spite of swept pavement and hard work—made us a court-curtsey, flourished a farewell to her *caro sposo*, and passed swiftly and gracefully down the street. It is said that only Spanish women know how to walk, and there is some truth in the proverb.

Rain had fallen heavily during the night, as the watchmen reported through the small hours. It had ceased—with a promise of more to come. Remembering the proverb we took umbrellas. H. C. shouldered his and put on his military manner. The town indeed, quiet as it was, seemed full of a military atmosphere, for conscription was still going on and we presently came upon the official scene.

We had gone out without our amiable guide to wander at will and let chance take us whither it would. In the light of day the arcades seemed deeper, more massive, more picturesque even than last night. Standing on the bridge we looked down upon the dry bed of the river far below. The altars of the chestnut-roasters were cold and dead; the demons absent. But even at that moment there came down a small band of them to rake out fires and prepare for action.

The ancient houses on either side make this view from the bridge one of the most remarkable in the world. These rose straight from the river-bed, and where water still ran their outlines were reflected: houses looking old enough to date from the days of the deluge: a huge mass once white, now yellow, brown and black with weather and age. All the windows seemed to have been taken out, resulting in that curious air of unglazed wreck and ruin so often seen in warm latitudes. Countless balconies adorned with flowers and coloured draperies hung over the water. Above all rose the outlines of the cathedral and other churches in the background with striking effect. The distant view was closed in by the winding river, where the houses on both sides appeared to join hands. Just beyond this we had stood last night listening to the rustling of the reeds, lost in the scene so vividly reflected by the lurid glare of the torches.

STREET IN GERONA.

People were gradually waking up and opening their stalls. All down the long thoroughfare were more ancient and massive arcades, hardly noticed last night in the restless crowd. In this country *par excellence* of arcades we had never seen such as these.

"Gerona is a discovery," said H. C. for the twentieth time. "The view from this bridge is something to dream about. Yet one longs for sunshine and lights and shadows. Remarkable as the scene is, it is a study in grey. We want contrast."

But the town had more wonders in reserve, when presently our host's son joined us and pointed out the hidden treasures of the narrow tortuous streets. Houses with gabled ends, tiled roofs and windows ornamented with magnificent wrought ironwork; the true tone of antiquity over all—as yet unspoilt. Gerona, in its dying prosperity, has, like Segovia, escaped the ravages of the restorer. Its substantial mansions are firm and steadfast as in the far gone Middle Ages.

The irregularities of the place add to its charm. Built on rising ground, the streets are a pilgrimage of rough, uneven, picturesque steps. From these, narrow openings lead into many a *cul-de-sac* crowded with ancient outlines that are nothing less than artistic dreams.

We soon came to one of these ascending streets with its endless flight. Far up, it was crowned by a church with a solitary square tower and a Renaissance west front. Houses on either side had wonderful ironwork windows; we cannot help reverting to this special feature; and many a gothic casement was rich in the remains of refined tracery and ornamented balconies; whilst from the deep overhanging eaves quaint waterspouts here and there craned their long necks like gargoyles of some ancient cathedral.

Reaching the church and turning to the right down a narrow passage between high dead walls we found ourselves in an excited scene: no less than the building given up to the rites of conscription. The spot and its surroundings was one of the most picturesque in Gerona. A long, broad flight of steps led up to an ancient church now desecrated and turned into barracks. Groups of young soldiers were clustered together and sentinels paced to and fro. To the left, facing the long flight, low ancient houses wonderful in tone and construction were decorated with wrought ironwork windows, some of them almost Moorish in design, the upper floors terminating in round open arcades and tiled roofs with projecting eaves; one of those old-world bits only to be seen in these mediæval towns of Spain.

We climbed the steps and braved the sentinel, feeling there must or ought to be hidden cloisters attached to this old church of which nothing remained but the west front. But we were not to pass unchallenged. An inner sentry came up and asked our business. Hearing that we wished to see the cloisters, he beckoned to a further sentry who evidently belonged to the colonel or commandant of the regiment. Permission was soon brought, and pointing out the way, we were left to our own devices.

Instinct had not failed us. In a few moments we were standing in the midst of large lovely old cloisters with Gothic arcades resting on slender coupled marble columns. Above these rose a gallery of round arcades supported by single pillars with carved capitals, the arches, wider and more open than the pointed arches beneath them, presenting a fine contrast. A deep archway reached by some half-dozen steps led through the palace to the east end of the cathedral and the town walls beyond. In the square in front of palace and cathedral was an ancient and beautiful well. Above these again a slanting tiled roof fitly crowned the scene.

Here in days gone by monks and priests had paced the silent corridors. A sacred atmosphere in which the world had no part hung over all. Father-confessors listened to the secret struggles of young novices who hoped to leave the vanities and temptations of life outside the walls of their cells, only to find that in this state of probation conflict can never cease. So confessions were made and penances exacted, and soft footsteps and pale faces haunted those quiet cloisters. Large dark eyes—larger and darker for the sunk cheeks—gazed upwards at the sky that canopied the quadrangle with such divine peace, vainly seeking a clue to the mysteries of existence.

To-day all was changed. The cloisters were still militant, but in quite another way. All the ancient serenity and repose had departed and the beauty of outline alone remained. Soldiers and recruits in every stage of undress went about in restless activity.

ENTRANCE TO MILITARY CLOISTERS: GERONA.

In the upper gallery some were making or mending clothes, others drawing from the well in what was once the cloister garden. It was still ornamented with its fine old ironwork. Monks and priests once looked down and saw pale, cowled faces reflected in the calm water; and perhaps as they drew it to the surface there came a vision of another well in a far-off land and a certain woman of Samaria. No such vision troubled the five or six closely-cropped soldiers, whose reflected images below had nothing saintly, troubled or questioning about them. These rough specimens of an undersized, undisciplined army were out of all harmony with the ancient outlines that nothing could deprive of their beauty and refinement.

We felt the charm and incongruity of it all. The men crowded within a few yards of us, delighted at being taken by the small camera, interested at finding themselves reflected on the object glass, unhappy that we could not there and then present each with a photograph duly printed and mounted. Such a machine surely performed miracles.

"You all look very happy," H. C. remarked, for more carelessly contented faces were never seen—a mixture of types good and bad.

"As happy as kings," they answered. "We eat, drink and sleep well. Clothes and lodging are found us and we never have any fighting to do. We should like a little more money for tobacco—but one can't have everything."

Finally, we stayed so long answering questions, satisfying curiosity, lingering over the beauty of the cloisters, that the colonel himself appeared upon the scene in full uniform, sword and all. No lover of

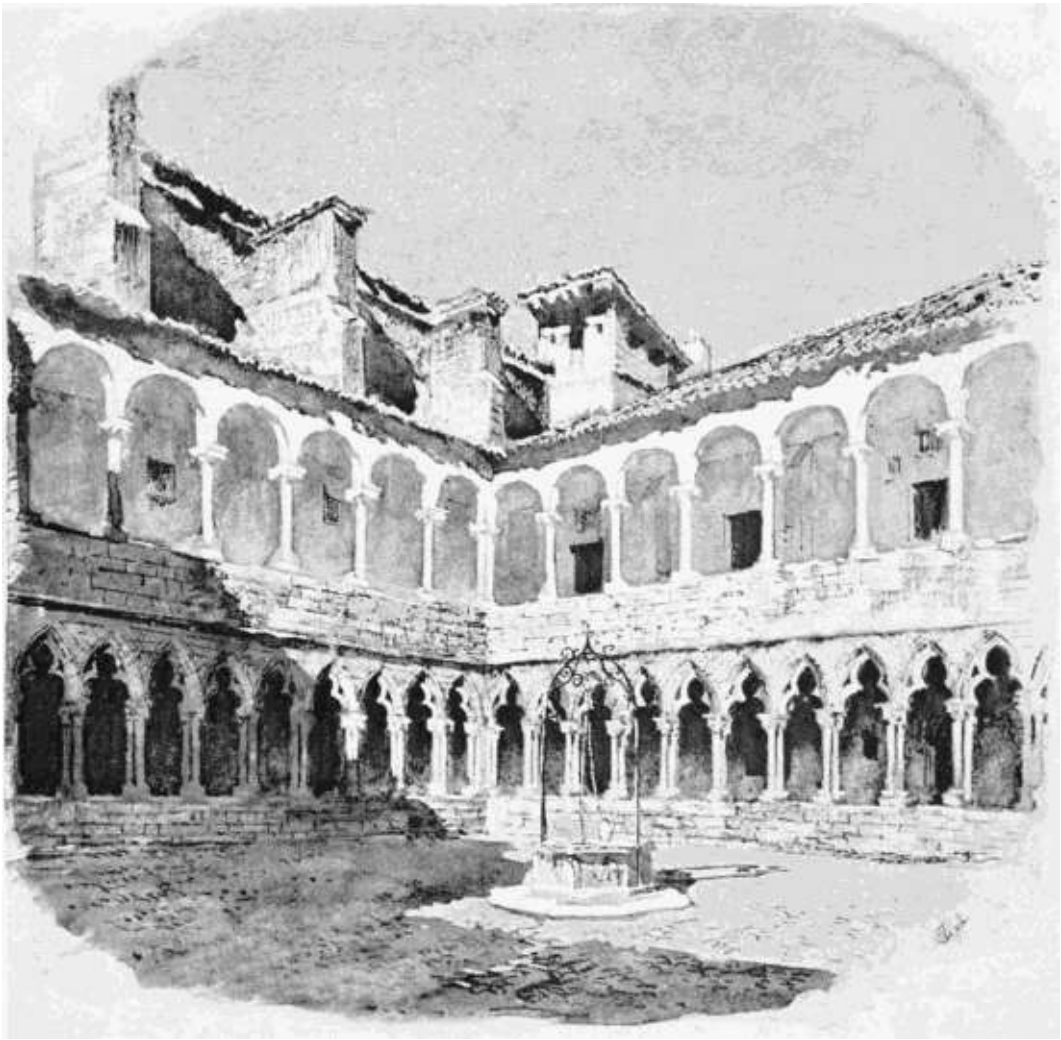
architecture, he could not understand how any one bestowed a second glance on these old outlines. Were we trying to worm military secrets out of the men with the intention of starting another Peninsular war? The worthy colonel who had so freely given us permission to enter was now anxious for an explanation. Pointing out the charm and merit of the cloisters—the pity they should have transposed the order of things and turned pruning-hooks into swords—he declared he could not agree with us.

"I discover no great beauty in these old corridors," he said, "and would infinitely rather see them filled with brave soldiers than with a parcel of effeminate monks and priests."

We argued the fitness of things—a time and place for everything.

"If there were once more a siege of Gerona I would turn our very churches into barracks," laughed our colonel, clanking his sword and looking fierce as a fire-eater. "And who knows? As far as I am a prophet we are not anywhere near the days of the millennium. There are more signs of universal war than of eternal peace."

We had left the cloisters and were standing almost within touch of the west front of what had been the church. The colonel caught our "mild regretful gaze," laughed and clanked his sword again.



MILITARY CLOISTERS: GERONA.

"What will you?" he said. "After all, I would not have been the one to do it myself; but finding it done, I use it without prickings of conscience. See," pointing to the crowd below, "we must have room for our recruits. Poor Spain is not England. Our resources are limited. Yet you, sirs, monarchs of the world notwithstanding, had your days of desecration under Cromwell. Opportunity given, and all evil is possible as well as all good."

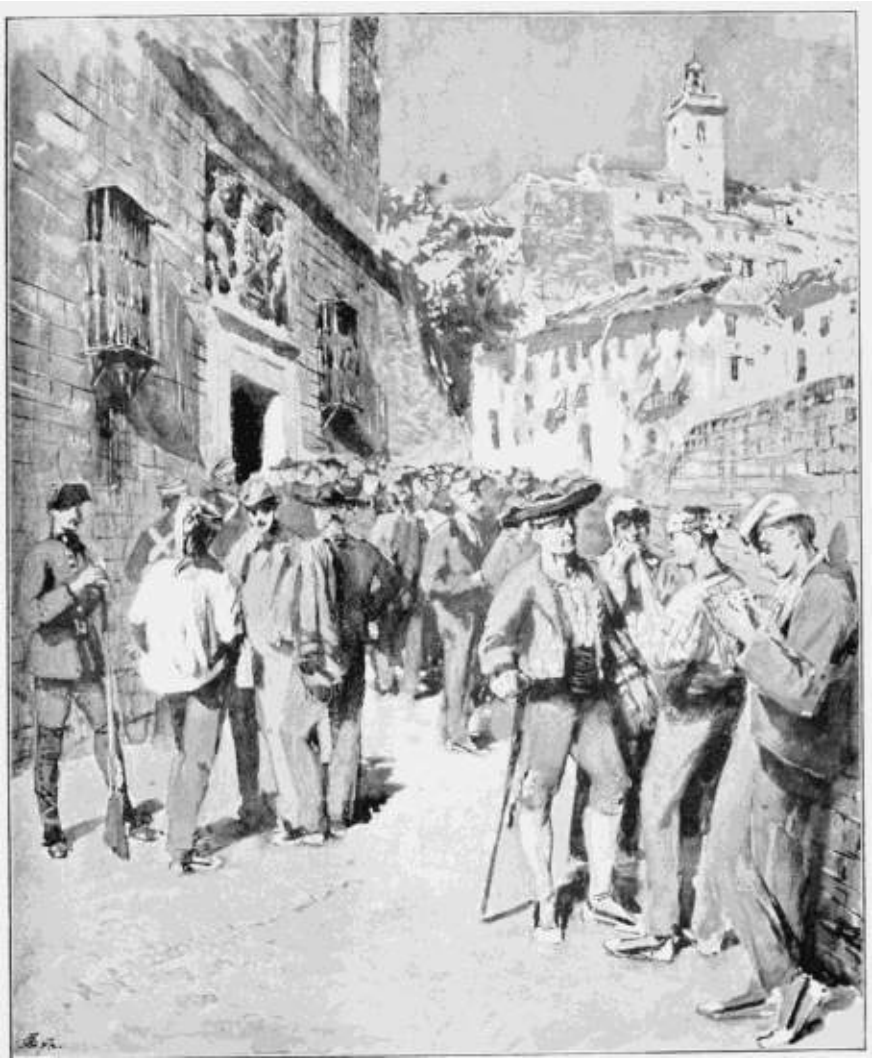
The crowd alluded to was full of dramatic interest. The very walls of the great grey building seemed pregnant with the chances of fate; the wide doorway greedy to swallow up the youth of the country. Young men disappeared within to the human lottery with anxious faces or reckless humour. Free agents this morning, to-night perhaps bound down to servitude: a willing bondage to some, to others worse than a death-blow.

Perhaps the chief interest centred in the crowd of elders—parents and friends waiting for the verdict—many a face full of that patient endurance so terrible to look upon. Mothers with the sickness of hope deferred, to whom the very shadow of war was a nightmare; fathers wondering if the boy who had now become companion and part bread-winner, was about to be thrown into the whirl of barrack life with its manifold temptations. They had passed that way in their own youth and knew that only the strong are firm. Stalwart amongst the crowd we recognised Pedro, our last night's platform acquaintance.

"Why, Pedro," said the colonel—we were standing just a little above the people—"what brings you here to-day? Surely you have made your offering to the country and your boy is now at Tarragona?"

"True, colonel," returned this veteran, firm as an oak tree. "My boy has left me; I saw him off last night and you might have heard the noise going on up here; half the town was at the station. I have no fears for him. He knows good from evil and has strong principles. I gave him my blessing and please Heaven he will return when the years are over. But my heart aches for these poor women who are weak when their emotions are in question. So I thought I would come and console them a bit, and tell them that military discipline after all is a very fine thing—the best thing that could happen to them if they only do their duty. You agree, colonel?"

"Of course I do," returned the colonel sharply. "There is no training like it. It makes men of boys if they have only an inch of wood in them that will bear carving."



WAITING FOR THE VERDICT.

We had noticed one pale woman close to the doorway, drooping and woe-begone. She seemed superior to those about her, and over her head, half draping her face, was the graceful mantilla. At that moment a youth appeared, a handsome, manly image of his mother—the resemblance was at once evident; his thread-bare clothes proving him scantily endowed with worldly goods. As he advanced a serious expression and hesitating manner betrayed his fate. No need to ask the question, and with a cry that was half sob, wholly despair, the mother threw her arms about her boy's neck as though life could hold no further ill for her. At such a moment reticence was thrown to the winds. What to her the lookers-on? Were they not all fellow-sufferers?

"A sad story," said our colonel, whose eyes glistened. "They were amongst the most prosperous people in Gerona, when the husband died and left them almost in poverty. Her eldest son turned scapegrace and this boy was her last hope. No doubt she feels that fate is hard upon her. Pedro," to the old man who looked on compassionately, "tell her it will all come right in the end. Stay; quietly whisper to her to come to my office to-morrow morning at ten and ask for me. I will promise to keep a special eye upon that boy of hers. He is of finer mould and deserves a better fate than many. I will see that he has it."

Pedro looked his gratitude, thought there was only one colonel in the world, and he stood before him. To be strong and merciful is to win hearts.

"There is more interest for me in this little crowd than in all your ecclesiastical outlines," said the colonel. "I never saw a building that I did not tire of in a week, but my work and my men interest me more year by year. I feel I have something to live for."

He was small and wiry, this colonel, with piercing dark eyes and a mouth of which a fierce moustache could not conceal the kindliness. One wished him a finer body of men than these recruits, too many of whom were of the lowest type and had not, to use his own metaphor, even the inch of wood that would bear carving.

"That need not greatly trouble you," he said. "It is surprising how many are the exceptions. After all, it is a survival of the fittest. But I see you are interested in humanity just as much as I am," noting how we followed every movement and expression of this pathetic little crowd. "So far your resources are wider than mine, for when on the subject of old buildings you are as absorbed as in front of this little drama. My interests are more restricted. Well then, if you like to come to my office to-morrow morning at ten you shall have more food for your sympathies. We will interview that poor woman together and see how far we can minister consolation to the widow and fatherless."

This was not one's idea of severe military discipline, but we could not help admiring a nature that after years of experience and repeated discouragements—in spite of what he had said—still possessed so warm a heart, so much of human faith. No doubt he had shown a little of his true self on the spur of the moment, influenced by the above incidents. All his kindliness of feeling was kept well out of sight of others. The next instant he had passed beyond the sentry and was holding forth in tones hard as the Pyramids, cold as the Sphinx.

CHAPTER VI.

ANSELMO THE PRIEST.

Beauties of age—Apostles' Doorway—How the old bishops kept out of temptation—Interior of cathedral—Its vast nave—Days of Charlemagne—And of the Moors—A giant dwarfed—Rare choir—Surly priest—And a more kindly—Our showman—Dazzling treasures—Father Anselmo—Romantic story—Heaven or the world?—Doubts—The gentle Rosalie decides—Sister Anastasia—Told in the sacristy—A heart-confession—Anselmo's mysticism—Heresy—Charms of antiquity—Scene of his triumph—Celestial vision—Church of San Pedro—Pagan interior—Rare cloisters—Desecrated church—Singular scene—Chiaroscuro—Miguel the carpenter—His opinions—Daily life a religion—Anselmo improves his opportunity—"A reflected light"—Ruined citadel—War of Succession—Alvarez and Marshall—Gerona in decadence—A revelation—Dreamland—Midday vision.

THE colonel disappeared, and we went our way through narrow, tortuous, deserted wynds until we found ourselves in the quaint cathedral square.

Here again we were surrounded by the beauties of antiquity. Before us was the south front of the cathedral with its deeply-arched Apostles' Doorway at which we had knocked in vain last night. At right angles, its grey walls of exactly the same tone as the cathedral, was the Bishop's Palace, its picturesque windows guarded by ancient ironwork. Why so carefully secured? Had the mediæval bishops feared a reversal of things—serenades from fair dames yielding to the charm of forbidden fruit? Or mistrusting their own strength had wisely put temptation out of reach? Ancient walls are discreet and disclose nothing.

The outer gloom was intensified when we passed within the cathedral. After a time pillars and arches and outlines grew more or less visible, a shadowy distinctness full of mystery, appealing to the senses.

The vast nave is the widest Gothic vault in existence and on entering strikes one with astonishment. So bold was the architect's design considered that it created consternation in the minds of Bishop, Dean and Chapter then ruling. Council after council was summoned and opinions were taken from the great architects of foreign countries. Finally a jury of twelve men was appointed who gave their verdict in favour of Boffy, and the nave was erected.

This was in the year 1416. There had existed a cathedral on this very spot since the eighth century and the days of Charlemagne. Like so many of those early cathedrals it was pulled down and rebuilt; and sometimes it happened that the new was no improvement on the old. This was not the case with Gerona. The cathedral was rebuilt in 1016, but the nave was reserved for Boffy and his genius four hundred years later. That early cathedral was turned into a mosque when the Moors took Gerona, but they allowed Catholic services to be held in the Church of San Filiu, close at hand, now shorn of part of its spire. In 1015 the Moors were expelled and the old cathedral was reinstated.

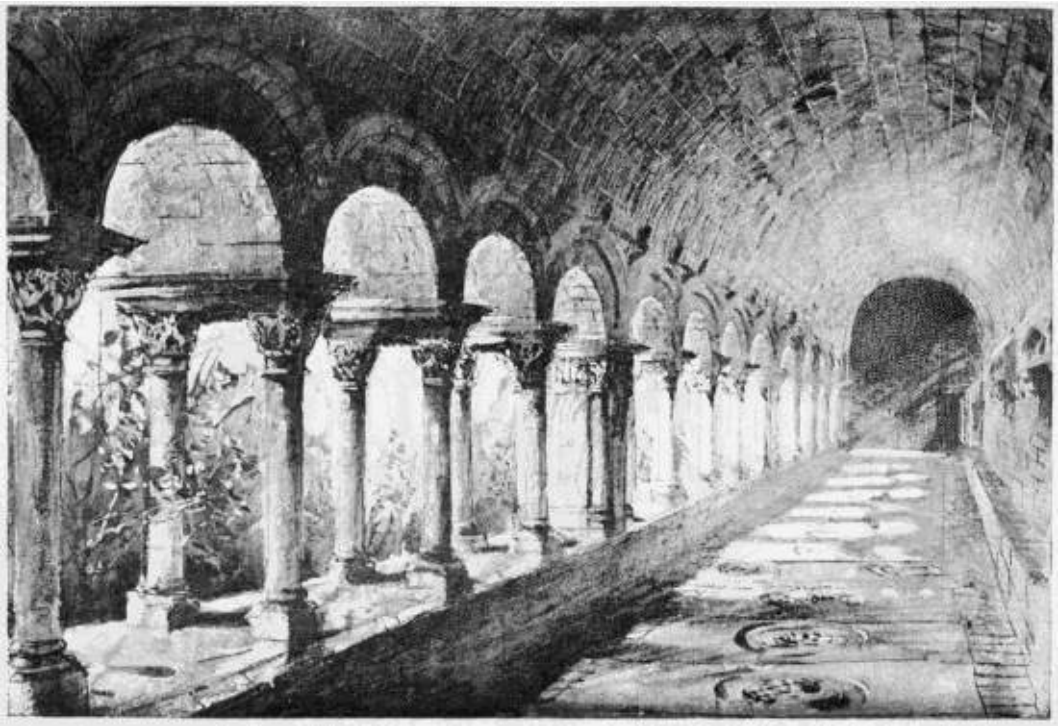
The nave has the fault of being too short, and Boffy could not fail to see that it wants in proportion. Either space or funds failed him, and the giant had to be dwarfed. Still it remains gigantic with a clear width of seventy-three feet. Toulouse, next in width, has sixty-three feet; Westminster Abbey only thirty-eight feet. For the effect of contrast the smaller choir and aisles throw up the proportions of the vast vault. Over all is its wonderful tone; whilst the obscure light brings out the pointed arches of choir and chapels and the slender fluted pillars in softened outlines.

The choir has a magnificent retablo and baldachino of wood and silver: a rare work of art dating back to the year 1320: so promising that we wished to see the treasures of the sacristy. It was the duty of a certain priest to show them. The priests take the office in turn. To-day he whose turn it was proved unamiable. "He would not show them; had other things to do; we must come another day," hurriedly buttoning his heavy black cloak as he spoke; an ill-favoured example of his race, short, swarthy, unshaven. We explained that our hours were limited. Without further parley he marched rapidly down the aisle, cloak flying, hobnailed shoes waking desecrating echoes.

Then another and kindlier priest came up; altogether a different and more refined specimen of humanity. He would gladly show us the treasures if we would wait whilst he sought the keys. With these he soon returned and thought he had been long. "I am sorry to keep you," he said, "but they were not in their place. Now let me turn showman and do the honours."

Leading the way into the large sacristy he unlocked a cupboard and took out a key. With this he opened a drawer and took out another key. The treasure was well guarded. Finally he swung back great doors and our eyes were dazzled as he lighted a beautiful old lamp whose rays flashed upon gemmed and jewelled crooks and crosses, enamelled plates and chalice, a wealth of gold and silver ornaments, many dating back to the twelfth century. Some of the crosses were magnificent in design and execution, some had strange and interesting histories. Then he showed us rare and wonderful needlework rich in gold thread and coloured silks, also dating back seven or eight hundred years. He explained everything in a quaint fashion of his own, then took us through a series of rooms each having its special attraction. Amongst the pictures were one or two of rare merit and a very early period.

These rooms and their treasures were well worth the little trouble it had cost to see them. Moreover we were brought into contact with an amiable ecclesiastic full of refinement and romance.



CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS: GERONA.

"It is a pleasure to show them to you," he said, when we thanked him. "I love all these things amongst which my life has been spent, for I hardly recall the time when I was not attached to the cathedral. As a child I was an acolyte, and remember the delight with which I used to turn the wheel at the altar and listen to its silver chiming. I was never happy but in church, attending on the priests, filling every office permitted to a boy. From the age of ten I determined to be a priest myself and never lost sight of that hope—though I once hesitated. But I was poor, and don't know whether it would have come to pass unaided by one of our canons who was rich and good; educated and half adopted me, and dying four years ago left me a sufficient portion of his wealth. I almost think of myself as one of those romances which only occasionally happen in life. But there was a moment"—he smiled almost sadly—"when I was sorely tempted to abandon religion for the world."

"For what reason?" we asked, for he paused. Evidently he wished the question, and there was something so interesting about him that we were willing to linger and listen.

"A very ordinary reason. I daresay you can guess, for it was the old, old story: nothing less than love. I had not yet taken religious vows and was free to choose. Should it be earth or heaven? Few perhaps have been more completely enthralled than I. Walking and sleeping my thoughts were filled with the gentle Rosalie. She was beautiful and I thought her perfect. Outward grace witnessed to her inward purity of soul.

"To make my conflict harder, she returned all my affection. It was perhaps singular that her life too had been destined to the cloister, as mine to the Church. For one whole year we both struggled, miserable and unsettled. Every fresh meeting only seemed to strengthen our attachment. An excellent opening in the world presented itself—might we take this as an indication that Heaven favoured our desires? It was a sore strait and perhaps we should not have done wrong to yield. During the daylight hours it seemed so. But night after night I awoke with one verse ringing in my ears: 'He that having put his hand to the plough looketh back, is not fit for the Kingdom of Heaven.' In my excited, almost diseased imagination, the text seemed to stand out in the darkness in letters of fire. I tossed and turned upon my troubled bed. Drops of anguish would break upon my brow. On the one hand bliss that seemed infinite; surrounded by all the false colouring and attraction of forbidden fruit. On the other the sure service of Heaven—a higher, nobler

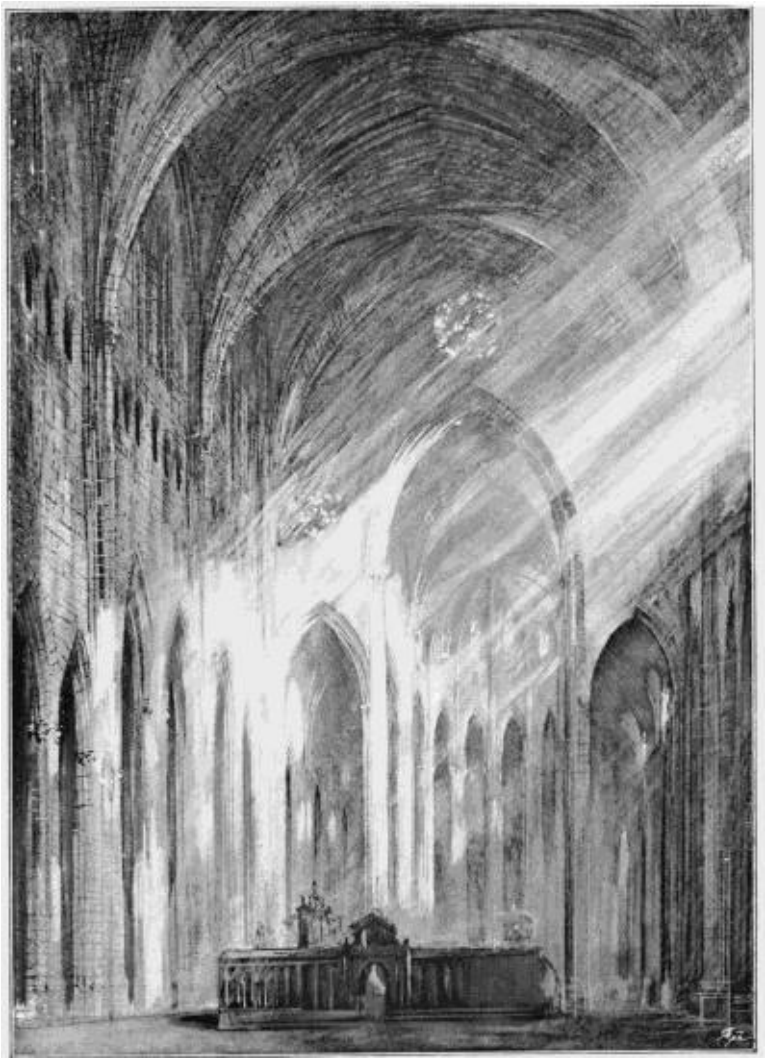
destiny without doubt.

"I grew pale and emaciated under my heart-fever. If left to my own decision I know not how it would have ended: perhaps in yielding. My gentle Rosalie proved the stronger vessel.

"One morning—shall I ever forget it?—the sun was shining, the skies were blue, birds and flowers were at their best and brightest, song and perfume filled the air, I received a letter in the beloved handwriting. Before opening it I felt that it held our fate and knew its contents. The soul is never mistaken in such crises.

"'Anselmo, my beloved,' it said, 'my choice is made and I trust you not to render my difficult task impossible. Last night in a dream my mother visited me; so real her presence that I feel we have held communion together. Her face was full of a divine love and pity, and O so sad and sympathising. Suddenly she pointed and I saw two roads before me. On each I recognised myself. On the one broad road you walked with me hand in hand. We were both bowed and broken and foot-sore. We seemed unhappy, full of care and sorrow. Romance and sunshine? They had fled with the long past years. Nothing was left but to lay down our burden and die.

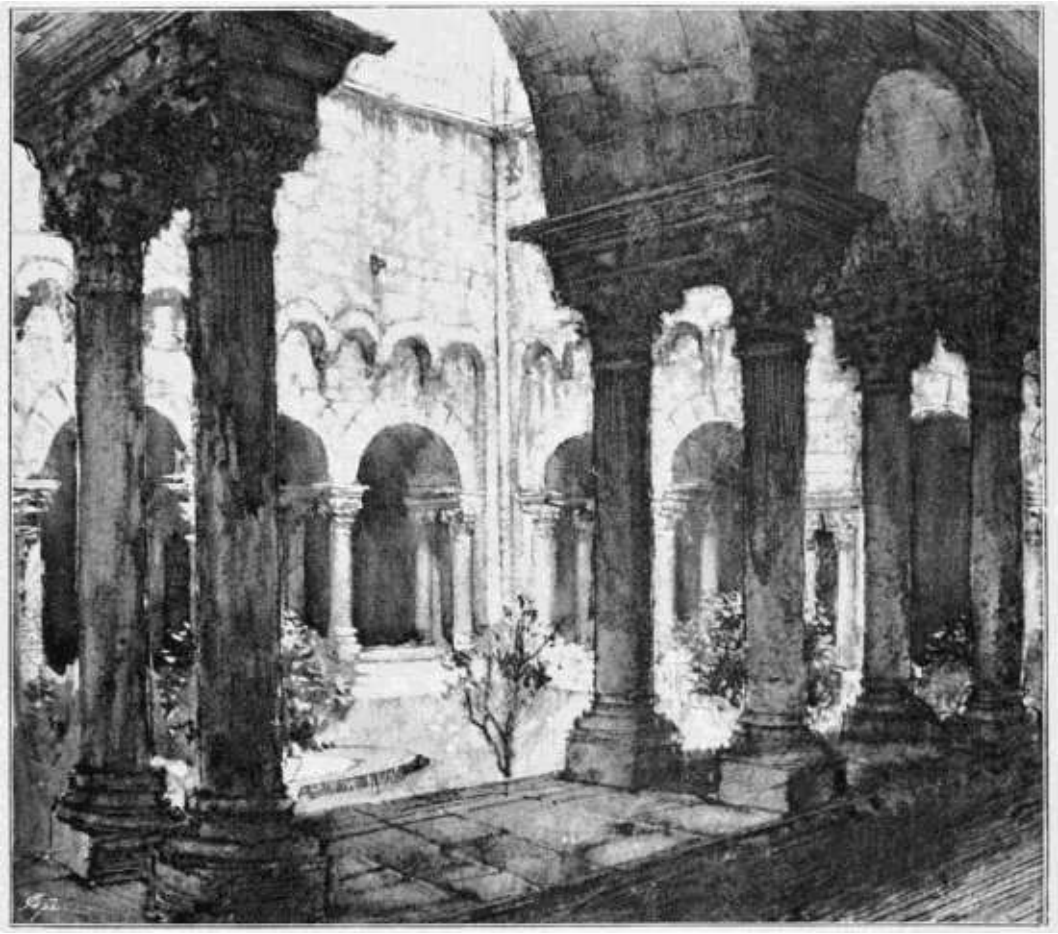
"'On the other road I walked alone, but I was strong, upheld by unseen support. The way was long, yet my footsteps never wearied. I wore the dress of a Sister of Mercy. At the far, far end, bathed in divine light, a glorified being yet yourself, you beckoned and seemed to await me. Beyond you there was a faint vision of Paradise—I knew you had passed to the higher life. Then my mother turned and spoke. Her voice still rings in my ears. "My child, in the world you should have tribulation such as you are not fitted to bear. Your path lies heavenward." Then she pointed upwards, seemed gradually to fade away, and I awoke. I felt it an indication accorded me, and rising, on my knees dedicated afresh my life to Heaven if it would deign to receive me. Beloved, you will help me; you will lighten my task. Though never united on earth, none the less do we belong to each other; none the less shall spend eternity together.'



INTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL: GERONA.

"Even now," continued the priest, returning to his own narrative, his voice somewhat agitated: "even now I cannot always think quite calmly of that morning. I sat amidst the birds and flowers, spell-bound, heart-broken. The serene skies and laughing sunshine seemed to mock at my calamity. Earthly dreams were over. Never for a moment did I question Rosalie's decision or seek to turn it aside. I prayed for strength, and it was sent me. She became a Sister of Mercy, I a priest. So our lives are passing, dedicated to Heaven. Not for us the feverish joys of earth, but quiet streams undisturbed by worldly cares."

"And Rosalie? She still lives?"



CLOISTER OF SAN PEDRO: GERONA.

"Yes, and in Gerona. Her new name is Sister Anastasia. We meet sometimes in the silent streets; sometimes at the bedside of the sick and dying; occasionally at the house of a friend. I believe that we are as devoted to each other as in the days of our youth, but it is love purified and refined, containing a thousand-fold more of real happiness than our first passionate ecstasy. If we are to believe her vision, I shall be the first to enter the dark passage and cross to the light beyond. It may yet be half a lifetime—who knows? I am only thirty-seven, Rosalie thirty-five—but whenever the summons comes for her, I feel that I shall be awaiting her on the divine shores."

We were seated in a room beyond the sacristy where silence and solitude reigned amidst the evidences of the past centuries on walls and crucifix and ancient Bibles—a delightful room in which to receive such a confession. A halo of romance surrounded our priestly guide; his pale, refined face glowed with a light from which, as he said, all earthly dross was purified. And yet he was evidently very human; sympathies and affections were not straitened; his interests in Gerona and its people were keenly alive. It was the kindliness of his nature had caused him to take compassion upon us when his more surly fellow-labourer in the vineyard had turned a deaf ear to our request.

But our golden moments were passing; we could not linger for ever in old-world sacristies listening to heart-confessions. Treasures were locked up, keys placed in their hiding-places; we went back into the church and the closing of the great sacristy door echoed through the silent aisles. More beautiful and impressive seemed the wonderful interior each time we entered; a vision of arches and rare columns and exquisite windows wonderfully solemn and sacred. In darkened corners and gloomy recesses, in shadows lost in the high and vaulted roof, we fancied guardian angels lurked unseen, bringing rest for the heavy-laden, pardon for the sinner, strength for those who faint by the way.

"I have often felt it," said our companion, reading our thoughts by some secret influence; "and have stood here many and many an hour, utterly alone, lost in meditation. At times mysticism seems to take me

captive. Visions come to me, unsought, not desired; the church is full of a shining celestial choir; I hear music inaudible to earthly ears; the rustle of angels' wings surrounds me. These visions or experiences—call them what you will—have generally occurred after long fastings, when the spirit probably is less restrained by mortal bonds. But underlying all my days and action, an intangible incentive for good, I feel the influence of Rosalie. You see I am still mortal and the earthly must mix with the heavenly. Nor would I wish it otherwise as long as I have to minister to mortals, or how could I sympathise with the sin and sorrow and suffering around me? Even our Lord had to become human, that being in all things tempted like as we are, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

APOSTLES' DOORWAY AND BISHOP'S PALACE: GERONA.

We were walking down the broad nave. Anselmo had thrown on his long cloak, which added grace and dignity to his tall slender figure. His pale face shone out in the surrounding gloom like a saintly influence. What strange charm was about this man? In the course of a few moments we felt we had known him for years. He was singularly lovable and attractive. Underlying all his gentleness was an undercurrent of strength; an evident self-reliance, yet the reliance of one who leans on a higher support than his own. Here was one worthy of enduring friendship had our lines not been thrown far apart. As it was he too would disappear out of our life and we should see his face no more. But his memory would remain.

At the west doorway we turned and looked upon the splendid vision: the magnificent nave with its slender pillars and lofty roof, the distant choir with aisles and arches visible and invisible in the dim religious light that threw upon all its sense of mystery. Above all the wonderful tone.

"For five and twenty years I have looked upon this scene, and its influence upon me is as strong as ever," said the priest. "Here I have found that peace which passeth all understanding. How many a time

have I let myself in with my key, and in these solitary aisles withdrawn from the world to hold communion with the unseen. Here strength has come to fight life's battles. Here I have composed many a sermon, here silently confessed my sins to the Almighty and obtained pardon. Breathe not the heresy, but confession to man brings me no rest. I have to go to the great Fountain Head, trusting in the one Atonement and one Mediator. Nothing else gives me consolation."

We crossed to the doorway of the cloisters. Anselmo, unwilling to leave us, crossed also. We were too glad of his companionship to wish it otherwise. He added much to the spell of our surroundings; a central figure from which all interest radiated. It was passing from the gloom of the interior to the broad light of day subdued by the grey clouds that hid the sunshine.

The cloisters reposed in all the charm of antiquity. For eight hundred years Time had rolled over them with all its subtle influence. There they stood, an irregular quadrangle, the simple, beautiful round arches resting on coupled shafts, whose carved capitals were so singularly elaborate and delicate. Seldom had the attraction of Romanesque architecture been more evident.

CHURCH OF SAN PEDRO: GERONA.

"I love them," said the priest. "How often have I paced these silent corridors until the very stones seem worn with my footsteps. And they witnessed the most painful scene, the last great struggle of my life—but my triumph also. For here I bade my earthly farewell to Rosalie; on this very spot on which we stand renounced all human hopes and claims upon her and gave her into Heaven's keeping. Here I placed her treasured letter next my heart, where it still reposes; where it will lie when that heart has ceased to beat and this frame has returned to the dust from which it was taken."

We passed through the little north doorway to the outer world. Far away the snow-capped Pyrenees rose heavenwards like a celestial vision. In the plain the silvery river ran its winding course listening to the love-songs of the reeds and rushes. Near us was the lovely octagon tower, shorn of its spire. Without the ancient walls we traced the remains of the citadel; and within them the yet more ancient churches of San Pedro and its desecrated companion.

"Let us go down to them," said Anselmo: "examine the wonderful little cloisters and make the acquaintance of Miguel the carpenter. He seems to care little that where now is heard the fret of saw and swish of plane, once rose voices of priests at worship and faint whispers of the confessional."

It was a rough descent, but a singularly interesting scene. We found ourselves in narrow streets with ancient houses whose windows were guarded by splendid ironwork. Last night the watchmen had paced and cried the hour, awakening the echoes, summoning the silent shadows with their lanterns. To-day there was no sense of mystery about streets and houses; daylight loves to disillusion. We had to content ourselves with quaint gables and old-world outlines. Behind us was one of the ancient gateways strong and massive, leading directly into the precincts of the cathedral. Framed through its archway we saw a portion of the vast flight of steps crowned by the uninteresting west front. It was one of the very best, most old-world bits of Gerona, and within a small circle were antiquities and outlines that would have furnished an artist with work for half his days.

Upon all this we turned our backs as we went towards San Pedro. Here everything is in opposition to the cathedral; the exterior of this Benedictine church is its glory. Rounding a corner we are in full view of the beautiful west Norman doorway with its delicately wrought carving and fern-leaf capitals. Above the doorway is a very effective cornice and above that an admirable rose window: altogether a rare example of the Italian Romanesque. The whole church is very striking, with its fine octagonal tower and Norman apses built into the old town walls. Just beyond the tower a gateway leads to the citadel and open country beyond. A church existed here as early as the tenth century—possibly earlier; the present church dates from the beginning of the twelfth, when it was given to the Benedictine Convent of Santa Maria by the Bishop of Carcassonne.

We passed through the lovely old doorway to the uninteresting interior: a nave and isles with rude arches and piers plain and square. There was something cold and pagan about the general effect, exaggerated no doubt by contrast with the cathedral we had just left. Anselmo was not insensible to the influence.

"If I were Vicar of San Pedro, half the delight of my days would vanish," he said. "Instead of living in a refined, almost celestial atmosphere, existence would be a daily protest against paganism. Let us pass to the cloisters."

Here indeed the scene changed. Smaller than those of the cathedral, they were almost as beautiful and effective though more ruined and more restored.

"Not time but wanton mischief has been at work here," said Anselmo. "The work of destruction was due to the French in the Peninsular War. Which of Spain's treasures did they leave untouched?"

Nevertheless a great part of their beauty remained. The passages were full of collected fragments; old tombs, broken pillars, carved capitals and ancient crosses: a museum of antiquities: and the Norman arches resting upon their marble shafts were a wonderful setting to the whole. Above them, all round the cloisters, a series of small blind Norman arcades rested upon delicately carved corbels—charming and unusual detail.

DOORWAY OF SAN PEDRO: GERONA.

Within a few yards of San Pedro was a still more ancient and interesting church with a most picturesque interior; yet a church no longer, for it has been turned into workshops. A low octagonal tower crowns a red-tiled roof with slightly overhanging eaves. Beneath the eaves repose small blind arcades, and here and there in the lower hall other arcades are gradually crumbling away. The wonderful roof is rounded and broken into sections to suit the plan of the building. Ancient eyelets admit faint rays of light, and a fine rounded arch points to what was once the principal doorway.

The interior is domed, vaulted and massive, black with age. Small, it seems to carry one back to the days when Christians were few and worshipped in secret. Now fitted as a carpenter's shop, it is full of the sound of hammer and plane. In one corner, men are melting glue and heating irons at a huge fireplace. The floor is uneven and below the level of the road. Light enters with difficulty. An obscure, suggestive scene worthy of Rembrandt, who would have revelled in this combination of mysterious gloom and human occupation.

The master, a stalwart Spaniard, bade us enter and gave us welcome. He was probably a man who did not trouble himself about religion, but his reverence and admiration, even affection for Father Anselmo were evident.

"You honour me with your presence and bring back a sacred atmosphere to this desecrated building," he said to the priest. "Not every day will you come upon such a scene. Yet there is a certain fitness in it after all. Was not Joseph a carpenter? and did not our Saviour work in the carpenter's shop? So that, as it seems to me, it has become noble above all other callings. And so, if this church must be turned to secular use, we have chosen for the best. To me there is no sense of desecration. You have San Pedro and the

cathedral for worship, and there is room and to spare in both."

"I fear you seldom add to the number of worshippers," said Anselmo, with the mildest of rebukes. "Yet, Miguel, how often have I said there is good in you—an apprehension of the beauty of a religious life—if only you would not allow it to run to seed."

"Father," returned Miguel good-humouredly—it was curious to hear an older man thus address a younger—"all in good time. I conceive that I am living a fair life, working hard, treating my wife well, looking after my children. But somehow I can't go to confession—what have I to confess, in the name of wonder?—and I never feel a bit the better for Mass, high or low. So I just make a religion of daily life, and by-and-by, when I am old, I will try to find benefit in your set forms and ceremonies."

Anselmo shook his head. We knew how closely he sympathised with at least one part of Miguel's objections, though he could not tell him so. He only looked a vain remonstrance, which Miguel received with the good-natured smile that seemed a part of himself.

"Last Sunday," said Anselmo, placing his hand on Miguel's shoulder, "I took for my text those words which are some of the most solemn, most hopeless, most full of warning in the whole Bible: *'And the door was shut.'* There, Miguel, is a sermon in a nutshell. Bear it in mind and ponder over it. Your door is still open; so is mine; but who can be sure of the morrow? Forgive me," turning to us; "I did not come here for this, but Miguel and I are old friends and understand each other. As continual dropping will wear away a stone, so I seldom neglect to put in a word when we meet, though to-day I might for your sake have refrained. It will tell in the end," nodding to Miguel, "for he has a conscience and I will not let it rest. And what a building in which to preach a sermon!" looking upwards and around. "These blackened vaults, those massive time-defying walls, this earthy, uneven floor—everything suggests a pagan rather than Christian past. If anything could heighten the effect it is those weird workers at the fire with faces lighted up by tongues of flame. All seems a remnant of barbarism. But it is a wonderful spot, and I come again and again and every time it reads a fresh lesson to the soul. The whole place seems full of ghostly shadows. And it is perfect, as you see; transepts, a chancel and apses; nothing wanting. And so, Miguel, you who so to say dwell in the odour of sanctity, on ground once consecrated, within walls once devoted to the service of Heaven, should be influenced by your surroundings and become a shining light."

"Then I fear it will never be anything but a reflected light," laughed Miguel, "and that proceeding from your revered and beloved person. I shall be content if only the shadow of Elijah's mantle touches me in falling."

We left the wonderful little building so crowded with interest past and present. Miguel professed to feel honoured by our visit, and placing himself in attitude outside his door intimated that he should like to be taken with our instantaneous camera. This was done and the result promised in due time. We left him standing there—a tall, strong, magnificent specimen of his race, with hair turning grey and rugged features full of a certain power.

DESECRATED CHURCH: GERONA.

"That man has in him the making of a hero," said Anselmo, as we passed through the gateway in the old wall. "In a different station of life he would have been a master of the world. But I always feel that the lives and destinies of such men, missed here, will be carried on to perfection in another state of existence. Great powers were never meant to be lost. Here he is the acorn, there he will become the full-grown tree bearing fruit."

We were climbing towards the ruined citadel and at last found ourselves within the once formidable fortress. Much remained to show the strength of what had been, but its immense area was now given up to silence and weeds.

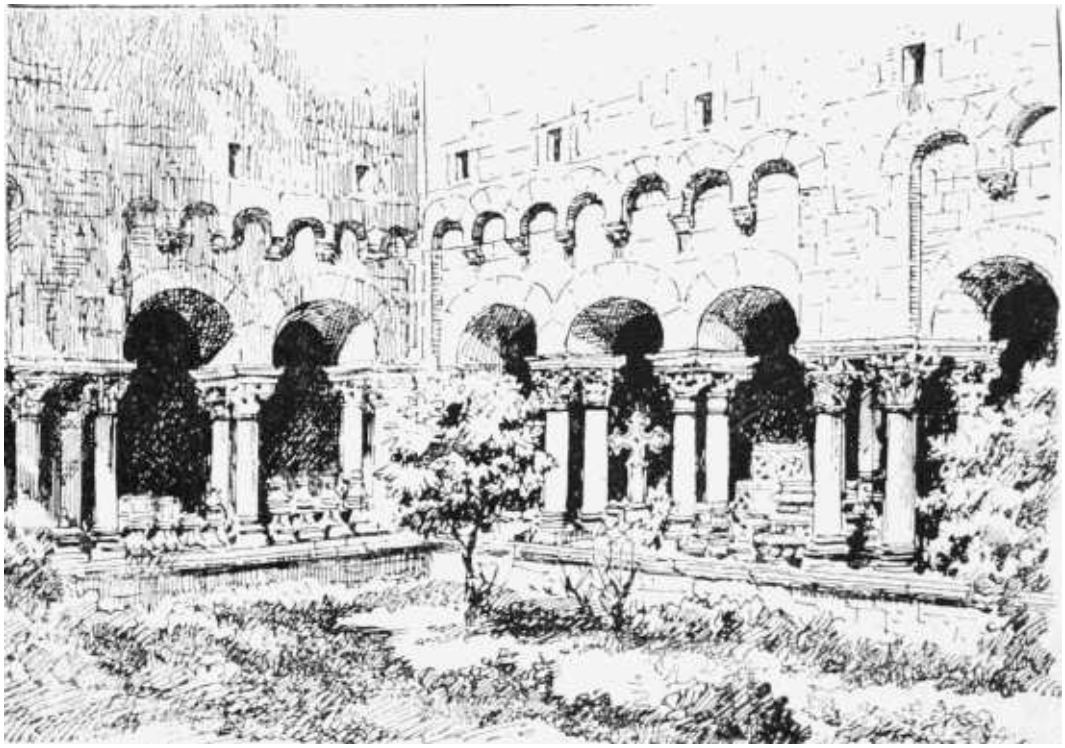
"It is full of a sad atmosphere and melancholy recollections," said Anselmo. "One goes back in spirit to the terrible days of the past. First that War of Succession, when Gerona with two thousand men manfully but hopelessly resisted Philip V. with an army five times as great. Again in 1808, with three hundred men, chiefly English, she repulsed Duhesme with his six thousand warriors. In 1809 the French besieged her with thirty-five thousand men. Alvarez, who was then Governor—you will have observed his house in the cathedral square—was terribly handicapped. He had little food and scarcely any ammunition, but was one of the bravest and wisest men of Spain. The siege was long and fierce, the suffering great. We were much helped by the English, but your gallant Colonel Marshall was killed in the breaches. It is said that Alvarez wept at his death, declaring he had lost his right hand. In such straits was the town that even the women enrolled themselves into a company dedicated to Santa Barbara. The enemy failed to take the city; never was resistance more manful and determined. Many of the besieging generals gave up in angry impatience and went off.

"But at last two new enemies arose—famine and disease—inseparable spectres. Before these Gerona could not stand. Everything depended on Alvarez, and he fell a prey to fever. A successor was appointed whose first and last act was to capitulate. The siege had lasted nearly eight months, and the French lost fifteen thousand men. So," looking around, "we are on classic ground, sacred to courage, consecrated by human suffering, watered with streams of human blood. Gerona has never recovered. She has steadily declined and still declines.

OUTSIDE THE WALLS: GERONA.

Nevertheless, she is and ever will be Gerona the brave and beautiful."

Anselmo had not exaggerated. Gerona was indeed a revelation. It is not a Segovia, for there is only one Segovia in the world; but, little known or visited, it is yet one of Spain's most picturesque and interesting towns. Nature and art have combined to make it so—the art of the Middle Ages, not of to-day. A modern element exists, but the new and the old, the hideous and the beautiful are so well divided by the river, that you may wander through the ancient streets undisturbed by the nineteenth century and fancy yourself in dreamland.



We had mounted to the highest point of the ruins and seated ourselves on the embankment. Fragments of the old citadel lay about in all directions; crumbling walls, desolated chambers, dark entrances leading to underground vaults. Over all grew tall sad weeds, so suggestive of vanished hands and departed glory. It was a romantic scene, and as we sat and pondered, citadel and plains seemed suddenly filled with a vast army; the ground trembled with the tramp of horsemen, march of troops. In imagination we saw the dead and dying, the bold resistance to human foes, the falling away before a foe that was not human. The air was full of the shout of warriors, flash of swords, roar of cannon. Then the vision passed away, leaving nothing but the empty deserted scene before us. The grass on which we sat was covered with flowers, and wild thyme scented the air with its pungent fragrance. A little below, stretching far round, were the old town walls, grey and massive.

The ground in front broke into a ravine, disclosing fresh outlines of towers, walls and ancient houses. San Pedro was conspicuous, and just beyond it the short octagon of the desecrated church. In its rich sheltered slope grew a luxuriant garden, with hanging shrubs and weeping trees and many fruits of the earth. To-day, it was a scene of peace and plenty; wars and rumours of wars might never have been or be again. Above all, within the ancient walls rose the outlines of the cathedral overlooking the whole town and vast surrounding country as though in perpetual benediction. Beside us sat Father Anselmo, his pale refined face and clear-cut features full of the beauty of holiness.

Suddenly the great cathedral bell struck out the twelve strokes of mid-day, and we listened in silence as the last faint vibrations seemed to die away amidst the distant Pyrenees.

"It is my summons," said the priest. "I would fain linger with you, but duty calls me elsewhere. I cannot say farewell. Let us again meet to-morrow."

We promised; then looking steadily at him saw a wave of emotion pass over his expressive face. Following his intent gaze, our eyes rested upon a slight, graceful figure in the dress of a *Religieuse*, flitting silently through the small square beside the desecrated church. Miguel, who stood at his door, bowed as to a saint.

"Sister Anastasia," said Anselmo, his eyes having already betrayed the fact. "She is bound on some errand of mercy. May Heaven have her in its holy keeping!"

CHAPTER VII.

A DAY OF ENCOUNTERS.

"Can a prophet come out of Galilee?"—The unexpected happens—under the probe—Wise reservation—Born to command—Contrasts—Nothing new under the sun—The señora prepares for the fair—Grievance not very deep seated—Bewitching appearance—Señora dramatic—Ernesto—Marriage a lottery—Every cloud its silver lining—Gerona *en fête*—Delormais' mission—Deceptive appearances—Evils of conscription—Ernesto's ambition—Les beaux jours de la vie—Rosalie—A fair picture—Strange similarity—Heavenwards—Anastasia or Rosalie—Her dreams and visions—Modern Paul and Virginia—Eternal possession—A Gerona saint—The better part—More heresy—Fénélon—One creed, one worship—Not peace but a sword—Not dead to the world—Angel of mercy—H. C. mistaken—Earthly idyll.

THAT same afternoon the people had recovered from their glamour. The fair was in full swing, Gerona festive. It was a general holiday and work was suspended. The shops were open, but no one attempted to make purchases. Even our industrious little lady with the idle husband gave up hoping for customers and turned to pleasure. And she took her pleasure as she did her work, with a great amount of earnestness.

Luncheon had long been over. Black coffee and headache were of the past. The Silent Enigma had gone their way. Mutely they had risen, taken their hats, and marched out in a procession of three. Delormais had duly administered his homily; and after so strangely opening his heart had gone into the town to prosecute his mission. Whether an inspection of the numerous convents, a private embassy from the Pope, or some other weighty matter only to be entrusted to a man of tact and judgment, he did not say.

Before separating we had asked him if his object in visiting Gerona were ecclesiastical or domestic, concerned himself or his office.

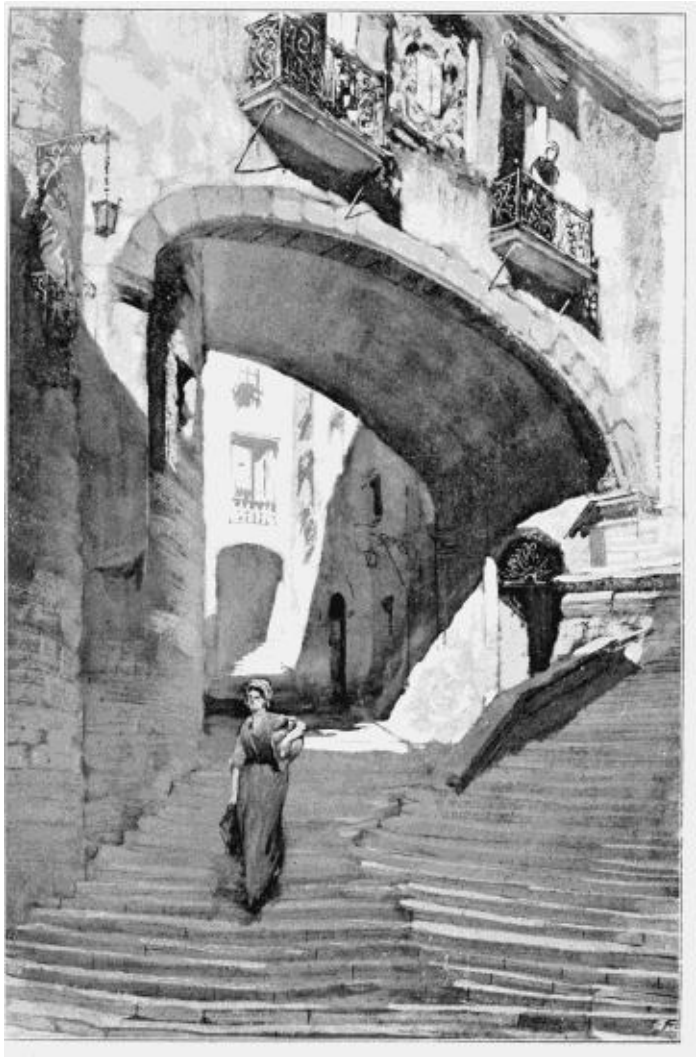
"Your question is very natural, but on that point I must be silent," he returned. "My mission—I may tell you so much—is delicate and momentous. It is secret, but the secret is not mine, and can no more be disclosed than a secret of the confessional. Just now when I promised to relate to you a part of my life I was offering you of my own. No one has a right to stay me. My experiences injure none. I might publish them to-morrow and disturb no one's slumbers. But at the present moment I may call myself an ambassador—though not in bondage like St. Paul—and every act I do and every word I utter need be consecrated by prayer and reflection."

"Who would have supposed anything so weighty within this little town?" we remarked. "Before arriving we looked upon it as a deserted village, the ends of the earth. From the train Gerona appears in the last stage of misery and destitution."

"Can a prophet come out of Galilee?" quoth the priest. "The unexpected happens. I have long learned not to judge beforehand; above all not to be prejudiced by appearances. Rags may conceal the noblest heart, and a silken doublet cover the bosom of a Judas. Confess," laughing, "that when I took my seat next to you just now you voted me intrusive; said to yourself: 'Why does this old man usurp my elbow room, with ten vacant chairs lower down? He is troublesome. I will chill him with a proud disdain.' And now all is changed and you ask me to sit next you at dinner. Is it not so?"

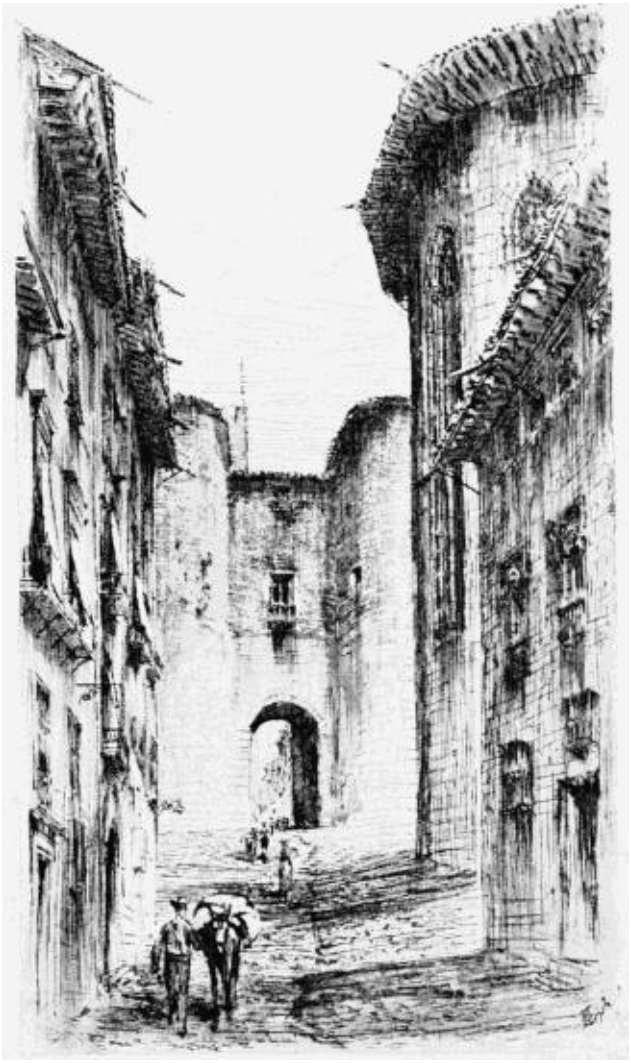
So near the truth, indeed, that one felt as though under the searching X-rays. "Suffering is misanthropical," we replied. "Not physical but heart pain brings out the sympathies. So it is dangerous to ask a favour of a man tortured by gout—or headache."

"All which really means that I knew you better than you know yourself," returned Père Delormais, in his rich, round tones. "That is only a general experience. And now I go my way. If all be well, we meet again at dinner. Ah! I never speak without that reservation. How many times have I seen the evening appointment cancelled by death at noon."



STREET IN GERONA.

He left the room; a tall, stately figure with hair white as snow; a man full of life and energy, evidently born to command and fill the high places of earth: a power for good or evil as he should be well or ill-directed. A very different nature from Anselmo, whom we had left at mid-day. The one ruling the destinies of men; the other content to follow in the Divine footsteps of humility and love; satisfied with a limited horizon; doing good by precept and example but asking no wider sphere than his little world. Yet in his way capable of influencing human hearts; of stirring up enthusiasm in a great crusade if only the torch of ambition inflamed his zeal. Very different the method and influence of the two men, though each had the same end in view. But in the many phases of human nature some must be led, others driven. One will hear the still, small voice, another needs the burning bush; James was the Son of Thunder, Barnabas of Consolation. As in the days of old, so now.



STREET IN GERONA.

We too went our way down the broad marble staircase of the ancient palace, but with no secret or delicate mission to perform like Delormais. We had followed rather closely, but up and down the street not a vestige of him remained. Whether he had gone right or left we knew not. The place was deserted. Looking upwards nothing was visible but outlines of the rare old houses. Here and there a gabled roof and dormer window; many a wrought-iron balcony; many a Gothic casement rich in tracery and decoration; many a lower window protected by a strong iron grille, despair of serenaders, consolation of parents, paradise of artists.

It was now that we saw our industrious and amiable señora preparing for the fair. Again the mantilla was being gracefully arranged. The lady—very properly—had evidently no idea of neglecting the good looks nature had bestowed upon her.

"Ah, señor," as we stopped with a polite greeting, "for a whole week this fair is the upsetting and devastation of the town. It comes with all its shows and shoutings; distracts our attention; we may as well close the shutters for all the business that is done; finally it walks off with all our spare money. And who is a bit the better for it?"

But madame's grievance was evidently not very deep-seated, for she laughed as she adjusted the folds of her mantilla more becomingly, and looking across at a mirror could only confess herself satisfied with her bewitching appearance.

Near her stood a good-looking boy of some fourteen years, who evidently just then thought the attractions of the fair far more important than his mother's adorning. He was impatient to be gone.

"Calm yourself, my treasure," she remonstrated. "The day is yet young. Chestnuts will not all be roasted, nor brazen trumpets all sold. These are eternal and inexhaustible, like the snows of the Sierra. Oh! youth, youth, with all its capacities!" she dramatically added. "Ah, señor, you will think me very old, when you see me the mother of this great boy!"

We gallantly protested she was under a delusion: he must be her brother.

"My son, señor, my son. I married at sixteen, when I was almost such a child as he, and I really do feel more like his sister than his mother. *Ahimé!* If I had only waited a few years longer I might have chosen more wisely; perhaps have found a husband to keep me instead of my keeping him. Marriage is a lottery."

We suggested that every cloud has its silver lining.

"True, señor. And after all if I did not draw the highest number, neither did I fall upon the lowest. This dear youth too is a consolation. He is fond of swords and trumpets, but never shall be a soldier. I have long had the money put by for a substitute in case he should be unlucky. For that matter, Heaven has prospered my industry and in a humble way we are at ease."

This recalled the scene witnessed in the earlier hours of the morning and the appointment half made with the colonel for the morrow.

"Evidently you do not approve of conscription, madame, which to-day seems to be running hand-in-hand with the revels of the fair."

"I see that conscription is a necessary evil," returned madame, "for without it we should not get soldiers; but you will never persuade me any good can come of it. That my son here, who has been carefully brought up, should suddenly be thrown under the influence of the worst and vilest of mankind—no, it is impossible to avoid disaster. So, Ernesto, never fix your affections on a military life, for it can never be, never shall be. I would sooner make you a priest, though I haven't the least ambition that way either."

To do the boy justice, he seemed quite ready to yield, laughed at the idea of priesthood, and if fond of swords and trumpets, his military ardour went no further. If one might judge, a civil life would be his choice, and possibly a successful one, for he seemed to inherit his mother's energy with her dark eyes and brilliant colouring. But for the moment the fair and the fair only was the object of his desires. This was in accordance with the fitness of things. He was at the age which comes once only, with swift wings, when life has no alloy and happiness lies in gratifying the moods and fancies of the moment.

"Now I am ready," said the mother, evidently very happy herself. "Ah, señor, you are too good," as we slipped a substantial coin into the boy's hand and bade him buy his mother a fairing and himself chestnuts and ambitions. "But after all, the pleasure of conferring happiness is the most exquisite in the world. There is nothing like it. So perhaps I should envy, not chide you."

They went off together, the boy taking his mother's arm with that confidential affection and good understanding so often seen abroad. To him the world was still a paradise, and his mother at the head of all good angels. *Les beaux jours de la vie*—short-lived, but eternally remembered. So, parents, indulge your children but do not spoil them. The one is quite possible without the other.

It was to be a day of encounters. We followed our happy pair down the deserted street, admiring the graceful walk of the mother, the boy's tall, straight, well-knit form and light footstep. As they disappeared round the corner leading to the noisy scene of action, a quiet figure issued from beneath the wonderful

arcades and approached in our direction. She was dressed as a Sister of Mercy and seemed to glide along with noiseless movements.

"Rosalie," we breathed, turning to H. C. for confirmation.

"Without doubt," he replied. "There could not be two Rosalies in one town."

"Or in one world."

On the impulse of the moment we went up and, bareheaded, spoke to her; felt we knew her—had known her long. Anselmo's vivid confession had taken the place of time and custom.

Yes, it was Rosalie. A more beautiful face was seldom seen, never a more holy; all the refinement and repose of Anselmo's added to an infinite feminine grace and softness. They were even strangely alike, as though the same impulse in their lives, a constant dwelling upon each other, their fervent, though purified, affection had created a similarity of feature and expression. Hers was the face of one whose life is turned steadily heavenwards, to whom occasionally, whether waking or sleeping, a momentary glimpse of unseen glories is vouchsafed, one whose daily work on earth is that of a ministering spirit. As far as it is possible or permitted here, Rosalie bore the evidence of a perfect and unalloyed life that had never looked back or attempted to serve two masters. Perhaps she might have become a mystic, but the serious and practical nature of her work kept her mind in a healthy groove, free from introspection. She was walking her lonely pilgrimage along the narrow road of her dream with firm, unflinching steps. The end, far off though it might yet be for Anselmo and for her, could not be doubted.

"*Ma sœur*, you are Anastasia, devoted to good works; and once were Rosalie devoted to Anselmo," we said, without waiting to choose our words. "There could not be another Rosalie in Gerona, as there could not be another Anastasia."

"Nay," she returned, "I am Rosalie still, and still devoted to Anselmo. There is no past tense for our affection, señor, which sweetens my days and makes me brave in life's battles."

She seemed neither surprised nor startled by our sudden address. Calm self-possession never for a moment forsook her, though in our rashness we might have been probing a half-healed wound or rousing long dormant emotions.

But it was far otherwise. Naturally as Anselmo had told us his story she replied to our greeting. They were a wonderful pair, these two. United, their careers would have been very different, but never otherwise than pure and holy. As we spoke to her a slight colour mounted to her pale, lovely face, a light came into her eyes, a sweet smile parted the lips. She looked almost childlike in her innocence, utter absence of self-consciousness.

"Yes, I was Rosalie," she repeated; "and I am Rosalie still, though my life compels me to adopt a new name. But I ever think of myself as Rosalie, and in my dreams am Rosalie of the days gone by. Sometimes my mother visits me in those dreams and calls me Rosalie. If we retain our names in the next world I shall be Rosalie once more. Señor, you have been with Anselmo and he has told you our story—or how could you know?"

"It is true. We have been with Anselmo, were with him this morning and parted at mid-day. As the clock struck twelve we stood on the ruined citadel and saw you cross the square of San Pedro."

"Ah, señor, I saw you also, for I recognised Anselmo. He is never within many yards of me but seen or

unseen I know it. Some spiritual instinct never fails to tell me he is near."

"You are both remarkable. Your love and constancy ought to be placed side by side with the histories of Paul and Virginia, Abelard and Héloïse. Yet you are distinct and different from these, as you are above them."

"Señor, if we only knew, there are thousands of histories in the world similar to our own, but they are never heard of. Shakespeare records a Juliet, Chateaubriand an Atala, and they become immortal; but what of the numberless heroines who have had no writer to send them down to posterity? Depend upon it they are as the sand of the sea. And is it so much to give up for Heaven? We possess each other still, Anselmo and I; and the possession is for ever. You think it strange to hear a Sister of Mercy talking of love in this calm and passionless way," she smiled. "You imagine me cold and severe. You do not believe that I have feelings deep as the sea, wide as eternity. It is true that my love for Anselmo is only the love we should all bear towards each other; but for him it is supreme and exalted above all words. In my dreams he comes to me as an angel of light bidding me be of good courage; in my waking hours he is my best and truest friend, my hero and my king. Is not this better than all the passionate vows which rarely survive one's early youth, and too often die under the strain of life's daily work? For me, Anselmo is still surrounded by all the romance of our first youth. He is a sort of earthly shekinah, a pillar of fire guiding me onwards."

"And you never regret the choice you have made? the companionship you have given up? the right of calling Anselmo husband? the sacrifice of motherhood, which is said to be sweetest of all earthly ties to woman?"

CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS: GERONA.

"Regret?" she softly murmured. "A hundred times since it happened conviction has been vouchsafed to me in my dreams, strengthening my faith, showing the wisdom of my choice. Every day of my life I thank Heaven for the power it gave me. Had I married Anselmo, he would have become my religion; my heart's best affection given to him, Heaven would have come second. I know and feel it. And we know Who has said: 'He that loveth father and mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me.' Yet that would have been my case in the earlier years; and in the later—who can tell?—perhaps what I have described."

"Impossible, for Anselmo is worthy of all love, and could never change. One rarely meets any one like him. He seems little less than saint."

"He is very saintly," replied Rosalie, with almost a look of ecstasy. "I frequently meet the priesthood in the sick-room, at the bedside of the dying. The difference in the ministrations is wonderful. The very entrance of Anselmo brings consolation, seems to sanctify the chamber. Sometimes it is almost as though an angel spoke."

If she at all exaggerated, who could wonder? She saw and heard and judged everything through her own nature; and to the sick and sorrowing no doubt came herself as a rainbow of hope.

"You have done wisely and chosen the better part," we said. "Your life in consequence is peaceful and happy."

"It could not be more so," answered Rosalie. "I have my earthly shekinah to lighten my path. My heart is so much in my work that if I lived for a century I should never weary of it. What higher mission or greater privilege could there be? I am constantly at the bedside of the sick, assisting the last moments of the dying, helping to restore others to health. The love they give me is unbounded. My existence is made up of love. I feel I have many in the other world who pray for me, perhaps watch over my daily life."

"But are they not in purgatory?" For of course Rosalie was a Roman Catholic.

"I do not believe in purgatory," she murmured in subdued tones. "I have seen many die who cannot possibly be going to torment. If there be a transition state, it is one of bliss and holiness, where the soul, in gratitude to God for His mercies, grows and expands until it becomes fit for the heaven of heavens."

"But this is perplexing. Here are two devout Romanists who reject the very first conditions of their faith. Anselmo believes not in confession, you reject purgatory. Of course we agree with you, but then we are Protestants."

"Hush!" murmured Rosalie. "The very walls of Gerona have ears. We can only act up to our convictions, and where they disagree with the Church keep differences to ourselves. What Anselmo believes, I believe. It is wonderful how we think alike in all great matters. This morning I had the privilege of a long conversation with Père Delormais, who is staying for a week here. There, indeed, is a broad-minded Churchman who ought to be Pope of Rome. He would favour Protestants as much as Roman Catholics—and scandalise the narrow-minded community. In that he reminds me of the Abbé Fénélon, who is so earnest and devout. Do you know his 'Spiritual Letters,' señor?"

"It is one of our favourite books, Rosalie. Those who read and follow Fénélon will hardly go wrong. We have always felt he was a Protestant at heart."

"A follower of Christ at heart," returned Rosalie, "without distinction of forms and ceremonies. To him if the heart was right, the rest mattered little. He cared not whether a soul worshipped within or without the Church of Rome. Would that all errors could be swept away and we were all Protestants and

Catholics, united in one creed and ritual, even as we worship the one true God and believe in the all-sufficient Saviour."

"That day is far distant. We must wait the millennium, Rosalie. Until then it is not to be peace but a sword. The bitterest persecutors are those who fight for what they call Religion."

"'A man's foes shall be they of his own household,'" quoted Rosalie. "That applies equally to the 'Household of Faith.' There is the prophecy. I suppose we must not look for a Church Triumphant until the Church Militant has ceased. But I must go my way. Señor, I rejoice that you spoke to me. I am glad to know you. Whether the acquaintance be of hours or years, you are evidently Anselmo's friends, therefore mine. Do not think my heart closed to all human interests because I wear a religious garb and go through life as Sister Anastasia, ministering to the sick and dying. On the contrary, I take pleasure in all the worldly concerns of my friends. I like to hear of their being married and given in marriage. Nothing delights me more than the sight of a happy home and devoted family. And I like to hear of all the changes, improvements, inventions that are turning the world upside down and revolutionising the lives of men. If you are staying in Gerona we shall meet again. I am constantly flitting to and fro. My life is a great privilege, as I have said. You will keep a corner in your heart for me and for Anselmo; one niche for both. Adieu, señor. Adieu."

She glided away rapidly with her quiet graceful motion; an angel of mercy, we thought, if earth ever held one.

"Never, never should I have had strength to give her up," said H. C., following her with all his susceptible nature in his eyes. "This morning I admired Anselmo, now I feel quite angry with him."

"You do wrong and are mistaken. It was her choosing, not his. He behaved nobly. They have found their vocation. Both are happy, and we cannot doubt it is Heaven's ordering. There is no shadow in their lives; remember how rare that is. You know Mrs. Plarr's lines:

'There are twin Genii both strong and mighty,
Under their guidance mankind retain,
Never divided where one can enter,
Ever the other doth entrance gain;
And the name of the lovely one is Pleasure,
And the name of the loathly one is Pain.'

For them the genii have separated. Their life has no pain. Think of Rosalie's vision. Had they married it might have been all sorrow and suffering. No, best as it is. Their story is an idyll too perfect for this world. They have had their romance, and have kept it."

CHAPTER VIII.

MOTHER AND SON.

Demons at work—In the crowd—Ernesto and his mother—Roasted chestnuts—Instrument of torture—New school of anatomy—Rhine-stones or diamonds?—Happy mother—Honest confession—Danger of edged tools—Cayenne lozenges for the monkeys—Joseph—Early compliments—Ernesto pleads in vain—Down by the river—Music of the reeds—Rich prospect—Faust—Singers of the world—Joseph takes tickets—Gerona keeps late hours—Its little great world—Between the acts—Successful evening—In the dark night—On the bridge—Silence and solitude—Astral bodies—Joseph turns Job's comforter—Magnetism—Delormais psychological—Alone in the streets—Saluting the Church militant—Haunted staircase again—Sighs and rustlings—H. C. retires—"Drink to me only with thine eyes"—Delormais' challenge—Leads the way—Illumination—Coffee equipage—"Only the truth is painful"—Lost in reverie.

WE were facing the wonderful arcades which still seemed haunted by Rosalie's shadow, so vivid the impression she left behind her. It was one of the most striking bits of Gerona the beautiful, with its massive masonry and deep recesses requiring sunlight to relieve their mysterious gloom.

In a few moments we stood once more on the bridge, looking upon the remarkable scene. The demons were in full work down in the dry bed of the river; their altars threw out tongues of flame as wood, coal and braise mingled their elements, and the air seemed full of the scent of roasted chestnuts.

Those marvellous houses stood on either side with their old-world outlines and weather-beaten stains. Above them rose the towers of Gerona's churches, sharply cutting the grey sky. To our right, the boulevard stretched far down, with its waving, rustling trees. All the shows were in full operation; streams of people went to and fro; the booths were making a fortune; the Dutch auction was giving away its wares—if the auctioneer might be relied on.

We joined the crowd and presently felt a tug at our elbow. It was Ernesto with radiant face, his hands full of chestnuts freely offered and accepted. We found it easy to persuade ourselves the indigestible horrors were excellent.

"Ernesto, you are taking liberties," said his mother, as the boy took our arm to confide his purchases. A Rhine-stone brooch for the mother, which Mrs. Malaprop would have declared quite an object of bigotry and virtue; a wonderful knife for himself, full of sharp blades and secret springs. A purse capable of holding gold, and a pocket-book that would soon become dropsical with a boy's treasures. Finally, from the innermost recess of a trousers' pocket, he produced for an instant—a catapult; to be held a profound secret from the mother.

"It keeps her awake at night," he confided; "and when she does get to sleep she dreams of smashed windows and murdered cats. Now I never smash windows, though I do go for the cats when I have a chance. It does them no harm. If I hit them, you hear a thud like a sound from a drum—the cats are not over-fed in these parts—but instead of tumbling down dead, which would be exciting, they rush off like mad."

"Perhaps they die afterwards, Ernesto, of fractured liver or broken heart."

This was at once negatived.

"Oh no, cats haven't livers and hearts like human beings. Their insides are nothing but india-rubber. You can't kill a cat. If one fell from the top of San Filiu, it would get up, shake its paws and run away."

We noted this revelation, intending to bring it before the Faculty on our return to England, which evidently still gropes in Egyptian darkness. The catapult was restored to safe depths, and before long no doubt many a domestic tabby would be missing; there would be widowed cats and orphaned kittens in many a household.

Then Ernesto, drawing us under an arcade out of the throng of the fair, insisted upon fastening his mother's mantilla with the new brooch that we might all admire the flashing stones.

"I believe they have made a mistake, and these are real diamonds," he cried excitedly, kissing his mother and duly admiring the effect. "And I haven't spent half my pocket-money yet."

"Thanks to you, señor," said the happy mother. "I was his first thought. He bought me the brooch before he would look at a knife or chestnut. It shall be kept amongst my treasures."

She was evidently almost as happy and light-hearted as the boy, her eyes flashing with proud affection. No great care haunted her life in spite of her conjugal good-morning.

"Confess that your lot is favoured," we said, "and you would not change your lazy husband even if you had the chance. Confess you adore him and are to be envied."

"Well, señor, you are not my father-confessor," she laughed, "but I will confess to you all the same. I admit I would rather bear the ills I have than fly to those of which I know nothing," unconsciously quoting Shakespeare.

"Then the conjugal good-morning must be a little sweetened. It is dangerous to play with edged tools."

Again she laughed, a laugh free from anxiety.

"We understand each other, señor. If I received him too amiably he would not appear upon the scene till twelve o'clock. Not that I really mind; but it is a bad example for Ernesto. The boy, however, takes after me. Never will grass grow under his feet."

Ernesto was impatient to be off; he must certainly act up to the proverb to-day.

"Now for the shows," cried the lad. "We are losing too much time here. I smell roasted chestnuts, but their flavour is better. We must cross the iron bridge to get to the shows. I want to hear the lions growl, and administer cayenne lozenges to the monkeys. It is great fun to see them. You must often have done the same, señor?"

We virtuously disowned the impeachment. But he was full of harmless mischief, after the manner of boys healthy in mind and body; free and open in his thoughts and ways.

A few minutes and we found ourselves in the market-place listening to the clown who had used superhuman exertions last night, still apparently in excellent health and spirits. Night was the great harvest-time, but even now his labours were receiving fair success. The people had got over their first glamour and were responding.

"There is José, your landlord's son, señor, looking to right and left," said madame, in the interval between two terrific trumpet blasts. "Probably searching for you. Ah! he sees us."

The tall, slight young man was making his way through the few remaining stalls in the market. These sold nothing but fruit and were altogether neglected. Gerona did not shine in that department.

"I have been looking for you everywhere," said our young host as he came up, bowing politely after the fashion of his country. "I thought, señor, you might want me to pilot you about the town; but you are in the hands of a fairer guide, and I am not needed."

Joseph had evidently not pursued his studies at Tours for nothing, and was beginning early to turn compliments.

"On the contrary, we shall be glad of your company," we replied. "Ernesto and his mother are going in to hear the lions roar and administer delicacies to the monkeys. And having no ambition to shake in our shoes or be taken up for cruelty to animals, we would rather explore the antiquities of Gerona under your care. So you appear at the right moment."

"Ah, señor, do come in," pleaded Ernesto. "I should enjoy it so much more. And you would shriek with delight when you saw the antics of the monkeys eating cayenne——"

"Ernesto, you are incorrigible," we interrupted, laughing. "We decline the risk; and whilst detesting monkeys, we have a conscience. Yours evidently has still to be awakened. But you may come and tell us your experiences at the hotel later on—that is if you are still at large."

So the boy, taking his mother's arm, boldly mounted the steps, and with a final happy nod, and flourishing a small packet of cayenne lozenges, he disappeared beyond the curtain. How the lions would roar or the monkeys receive the indignity remained to be seen. Ernesto was not wanting in purpose and might be trusted to do his best.

We left the shows and the crowd for a moment, went round to the banks of the river, and listened to the whispering reeds and rushes. What repose; what a contrast to the glare and glitter and crowding of the fair. Not a soul visible excepting the ferryman a little way up-stream, waiting dejectedly in his boat for custom that would not come. The rustling reeds harmonised musically with the quiet flow of the water as it rippled and plashed on its way to the sea. To the left the plain spread far and wide—a rich, productive country with much fair beauty about it. Where we stood the river was broad and reflected the magic outlines of the town, faint and subdued under the grey skies. Above the music of the rushes we could hear the distant hum of the pleasure-seekers, where everything was life and movement.

Presently passing the theatre, we saw "Faust" announced for that evening. An operatic company had arrived from Barcelona. Wonders would never cease. In this dull town, decaying remnant of Spain, there was an Opera-house, and the tempter was to play off his wiles on beautiful Margaret. What would the performance resemble?

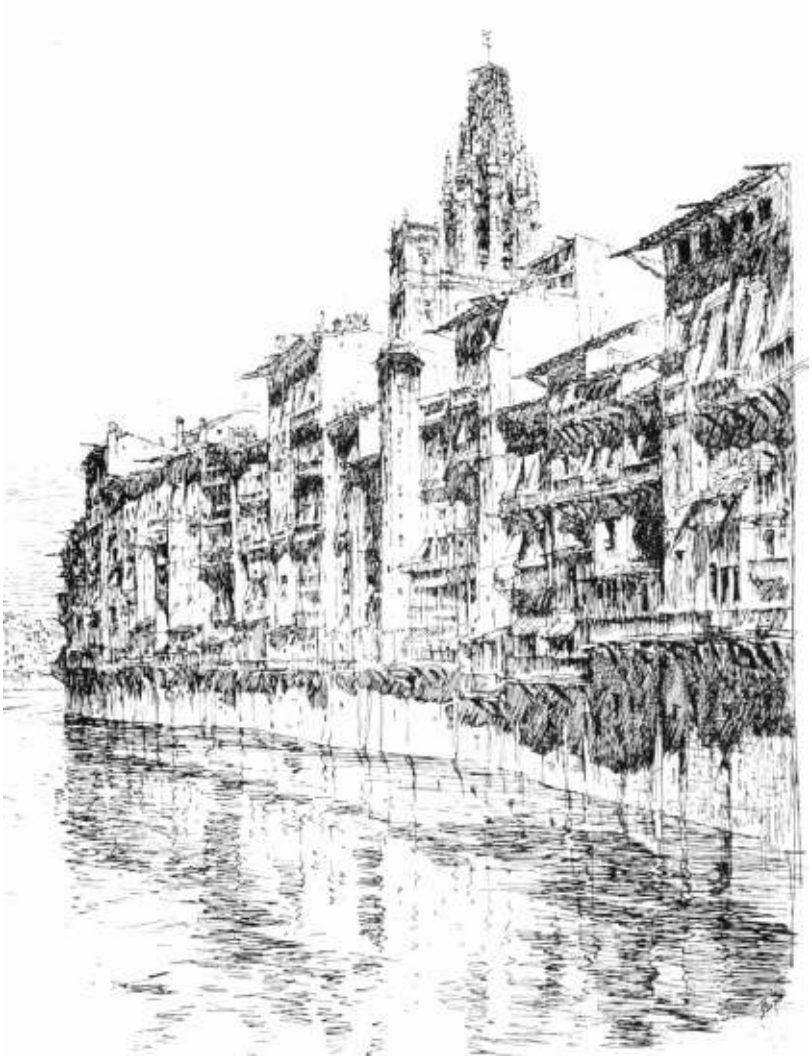
"Quite a large house," said Joseph, "and a very fine one; the players are often excellent."

Of course he judged from his own experience, which had never gone beyond Tours; never dreamed of the great voices of the world. Who indeed could dream of Titiens, never having heard of her? Or of Ilma di Murska?—those stars in the world of song: not to mention Grisi and Malibran the incomparable, of the far-gone days. Still, he spoke with enthusiasm, and we felt we must hear this Faust and Marguerite.

"Take three tickets for to-night, José, and you shall point out all the *élite* of Gerona; the great, the good, the beautiful."

Joseph needed no second bidding. Diving through the doorway to the office he returned with three excellent stalls. The performance was to be fashionably late. Everything in the way of entertainment is late in Spain, and especially in Gerona. At night the streets are soon deserted, but people do not go to bed. They sit up in their own homes, amusing themselves.

"It is announced for half-past eight," said Joseph, "but seldom begins before nine."



OLD HOUSES ON THE RIVER: GERONA.

Accordingly before eight-thirty we found ourselves in our seats waiting the lifting of the curtain. The house was nearly empty, though it was within five minutes of the appointed hour. Not a sign of any orchestra. We feared a cold reception and a dead failure.

"Not at all," said Joseph. "It is always the same. Before nine o'clock the house will be full, with hardly an empty seat anywhere."

So it proved. About twenty minutes to nine the orchestra streamed in and took their places, laughed, talked and made jokes, as if the audience—now quickly appearing—had been so many cabbage-stalks. In various parts of the house there were notices forbidding smoking; but the musicians lighted their abominable pipes and cigars without ceremony, and soon ruined the atmosphere. We wondered how this would affect the singers, and when they came on they coughed, sneezed, and looked reproachful.

It was a large, well-appointed house, of excellent proportions. Half the town might surely find room here. Curtains and all such elements disturbing to the voice were conspicuous by their absence. Before nine o'clock every seat was filled, as Joseph had foretold.

Between the acts we were able to survey the little world of Gerona. Many clearly thought themselves members of a great world. Humility was not their leading virtue. From the construction of the house, every one was very much in evidence, and from our places in the front stalls we saw and heard perfectly. "Monarchs of all we survey," said H. C. after a long stare in all directions. "No, I don't quite mean that; it would be slightly embarrassing. I mean that we survey everything as though we were monarchs. It comes to the same."

Every species of temperament was represented; the solemn and sober, excited and flirting, prude and profligate. Extremes met. Some of the ladies made play with their eyes and fans, were full of small gestures and rippling laughter. Many were dressed "in shimmer of satin and pearls," their white arms and necks very décolletés. Thus we had both a play and an opera. It was quite as amusing to study the audience between the acts, as to watch the drama upon the stage. Ladies were admitted to the stalls, and the house looked more civilised in consequence. Many of the men in this polite Spain sat with their hats on until the curtain drew up. Altogether the house presented a very lively appearance.

"Who would have thought it!" said H. C. "The place overflows with wealth and rank. These people might be dukes and duchesses—and look the character much more than many of our 'Coronets and Norman blood.' Yet as we passed Gerona in the train it seemed nothing but an encampment for beggars. Beggars? Let me apologise. Beggars would want something more recherché. In these days that flourishing profession dines at eight o'clock and sleeps on down."

In the foyer, between one of the acts, we came into closer contact with this aristocratic crowd.

It was a very large long room, gorgeously fitted up; great mirrors giving back full-length reflections. Few ladies honoured it with their presence, but a crowd of short, dark, handsome Spaniards went to and fro, smoking cigarettes, wildly gesticulating about Margaret, abusing the unfortunate Siebel, openly passing their opinions upon the ladies of the audience. Mixing freely amongst them we heard many an amusing remark upon people we were able to identify on returning to our seats. At the end of the third act we began to feel like old habitués. A week in Gerona and we should be familiar with every one's history.

"A happy thought, coming here to-night," said H. C. "I am now quite at home amongst these people, and should like to call upon some of them to-morrow. That exquisite creature, for instance, with the lovely eyes, perfect features, and complexion of a blush rose. I believe—yes, I am sure—look—she is gazing at me with a very sweet expression!"

He was growing excited. We grasped his arm with a certain magnetic touch which recalled him to himself. Keepers have this influence on their patients.

"Look at the old woman next to her," he went on indignantly. "Can she be the mother of that lovely girl? She ought to blush for herself. Her dress-bodice ends at the waist. And behind her fan she is actually ogling a toothless old wretch who has just sat down near her."

Here, fortunately, the curtain went up, and H. C.'s emotions passed into another channel.

STREET IN GERONA.

The performance had equalled our modest expectations. One must not be too critical. If Faust was contemptible and Siebel impossible, Margaret and Mephistopheles saved all from failure. She was pretty and refined, with a certain touching pathos that appealed to her hearers. She sang with grace, too, but her voice was made for nothing larger than a drawing-room, and when the orchestra crashed out the dramatic parts, we had to imagine a great deal.

Siebel was the great stumbling-block and burlesque; her singing and acting so excruciating that when the audience ought to have melted to tears they laughed aloud. When Valentine died she clasped her hands, not in despair but admiration of the fine performance, looked at the audience as much as to say, "Would you not like him to get up and die again?" and when his body was carried off, skipped after it, as though assisting at some May-day frolic.

Faust was beneath criticism, and one felt angry with Margaret for falling in love with him. In reality she must have hated him. Mephistopheles, on the contrary, was admirable, and would have done honour to Her Majesty's in the days of Titiens and Trebelli.

The "Old Men's Chorus" was crowning triumph of the performance. Three decrepit objects came forward and quavered through their song. When it was ended the audience insisted upon having it all over again, whilst they kept up a running accompaniment of laughter, in which the old men joined as they retreated into the background.

Altogether it was a successful evening. Every one left in good humour, and many were charmed.

We went out into the night, glad to exchange the atmosphere. It looked doubly dark after the brilliancy of the house. Every light was out, every house buried in profound slumber. We turned to the bridge, and stood there until all the playgoers had streamed homewards, and silence and solitude reigned. Once more the chestnut-roasters had departed and their sacrificial altars were cold and dead. Down the boulevard not a creature was visible. Stalls and booths were closed, torches extinguished. The leaves of the trees gently rustled and murmured in the night wind. We almost felt as though we still saw Ernesto and his mother walking up and down in close companionship. It must have been their astral bodies. Both no doubt were slumbering, and perhaps the same vision haunted their dreams; broken windows and four-footed victims—seen from different points of view.

In the firmament a great change had taken place. The clouds had rolled away; not a vapour large as a man's hand remained to be seen; stars shone clear and brilliant; the Great Bear ploughed his untiring way, and Orion, dipping westward, was closely followed by his faithful Sirius. All seemed to promise fair weather.

"What do you think of it, Joseph? Is your weatherwise astronomer for once proving a false prophet?"

"It looks like it," replied Joseph, gazing north and south. "No man is infallible," philosophically. "But our prophet has never been wrong yet, and I expect you will find the skies weeping in the morning."

"You are a Job's comforter, and ought to be called Bildad the Shuhite. Was not he the worst of the three, and would have the last word?"

Joseph shook his head. He was not acquainted with the Book of Job.

"I am jealous for the honour of my prophet," he laughed.

Standing on the bridge, we could see the dark flowing water beneath—a narrow shallow stream here, which reflected the flashing stars. The houses were steeped in gloom, all their quaint, old-world aspect hidden away. The night was growing apace, and it suddenly occurred to us that we had made a half-engagement with Delormais to hear passages from his life. Would he hold us to it? Or would reflection have brought a change of plans and an early pillow?

Surely there is a mental or psychological magnetism about people, neither realised nor understood, never sufficiently taken into account. As the thought flashed over us, a tall dark form in long cloak and round hat, full of dignity and power, turned the corner and approached the bridge. It was the priest.

"I knew it!" he cried in that sonorous voice which was like a deep and mellow diapason. "An unseen influence guided me to the bridge. You told me you were going to the opera. I felt that when it was over you would come here star-gazing and lose yourselves in this wonderful scene. And here, had I not sought you out, you would have remained another hour, forgetting the engagement to which I hold you."

"Nay, at this very moment recollection came to us," we returned. "We were wondering whether for once you had changed your mind and sought an early repose."

"My approach influenced you," said Delormais: "work of the magnetic power constantly passing to and fro between kindred spirits, as real as it is little estimated. No one believed in it more firmly than Goethe, who in spite of his contradictory life was in close touch with the supernatural. And amongst my own people, how many have declared the reality of this mysterious link between the material and spiritual. Even sceptical Voltaire admitted some invisible influence he could not analyse. Sceptical? Will you persuade me a man with so terrible a death-bed was ever sceptic at heart? It is impossible. But how could

you think I should change my mind and forget my engagement? Uncertainty plays no part either in your character or mine. Let us to our rooms. There you will lend me your ears, and I will brew you black coffee to refresh you after your evening's dissipation. And if you like you shall bring your century-old flask, and I will not read you a homily. Or was it only the contents of the flask that was a century old?"

The hotel was at hand. We four alone possessed the street and awoke the silent echoes. Always excepting the ubiquitous old watchmen, who seemed to spend half their time in gazing at the great doorway, flashing weird lights and shadows with their lanterns. These they now turned upon us, but recognising the ecclesiastical figure, quickly lowered their lights, turned the spears of their staffs to the ground, and gave a military salute.

"As a member of the Church Militant such a greeting is perhaps not out of place," he laughed. "No general on this earth ever fought more valiantly than I to gain battles—but the weapons are wide as the issues. They fight for an earthly, I for a heavenly kingdom."

He spoke a few words to the watchmen; bade them be strong and of good courage; and we fancied—we were not quite certain—that he glided a small token of good-will into their hands.

Then we crossed the road, entered the courtyard, and passed up the broad marble staircase.

It was the hour for ghosts and shadows and unearthly sounds. Again we thought of the rich and rare crowd that had passed up and down in sacques and swords in the centuries gone by; every one of whom had long been a ghost and shadow in its turn. Again we saw clearly as in a vision that last happy pair who had separated—he to find death on the battlefield, she to rejoin him in the Land o' the Leal. Distinctly we heard the rustle of the gown, the fervency of their last embrace, the sighs that came in quick succession. So easily imagination runs away with us.

We were awakened to realities by José, who, heavy-eyed and dreamy, was politely wishing us good-night, hardly wakeful enough to reach his room.

"I will follow his example," said H. C. "The air of Gerona conduces to slumber. I verily believe you never sleep. To-morrow I shall hear that the good father's confessions terminated with the breakfast hour. Ah! I shall miss the black coffee—but I have a flask of my own, though its contents have nothing to do with the centuries."

Then Delormais turned to us, his eyes full of kindly solicitude.

"Are you equal to a vigil? Is it not too bad, after your hard day's work—pleasure is often labour—to ask you to give an old man an hour or two from your well-earned slumbers? Do you not also find the air of Gerona conducive to sleep? I warn you that at the first sign of drooping eyelid I dismiss the assembly."

"A challenge! Never was sleep less desired. Though the breakfast hour finds us here, as H. C. foretells, there shall be no want of attention. But do not forget the black coffee!"

We heard H. C.'s receding echoes through the labyrinthine passages; the closing of a door; then a voice gently elevated in song, utterly oblivious of small hours and unconscious neighbours. "Drink to me only with thine eyes, and I will pledge with mine," it warbled; "leave but a kiss within the cup, and I'll ne'er ask for wine."

Here recollection seemed to come to the voice; an open window looking on to a passage was softly closed, and all was silent. H. C. was evidently thinking of the charming face he had seen at the opera, all

the more lovely and modest contrasted with the shameless old woman at its side.

Delormais led the way through the corridors. His light threw weird shadows around. A distant clock struck the hour of one. The hush in the house was ghostly. The very walls seemed pregnant with the secrets of the past. They had listened to mighty dramas political and domestic; heard love-vows made only to be broken; absorbed the laughter of joy and the tears of sorrow. All this they now appeared to be giving out as we went between them, treading quietly on marble pavement sacred to the memory of the dead.

We entered Delormais' sitting-room. At once he turned up two lamps, and lighting some half-dozen candles produced an illumination.

"One of my weaknesses," he said. "I love to take night walks and lose myself in thought under the dark starlit skies, but that is quite another thing. In my room I must have brilliancy."

"When you are a bishop you will so indulge this weakness that your palace will be called a Shining Light, its lord a Beacon of the Church."

A peculiar smile passed over the face of Delormais. We did not understand it at the moment, but knew its meaning later on.

Then he brought forward the coffee equipage, for which, if truth must be told, though slumber was never farther from us, we were grateful.

"I had it all prepared by our amiable host, and I have my own spirit-lamp, without which I never travel," said the priest. "There are times when I visit the most uncivilised, hope-forgotten places, and if I had not a few accessories with me, should fare badly."

The water soon boiled, an aromatic fragrance spread through the room; the clear black coffee was poured into white porcelain cups.

"But where is the supplement? I do not see the century-old flask," said Delormais.

"That is sacred to headache—or the charm would go; there are other fixed rules besides the Persian laws."

"I am glad to hear it. Then after all my little homily this morning was not needed. That is why you took it so amiably. Only the truth is painful."

He placed for us a comfortably cushioned armchair near the table, and one for himself. Our coffee equipage was between us, the steaming incense rising. A shaded lamp threw its rays upon the white china and crimson cloth, gently illumined the intellectual and refined face of Delormais. We could note every play of the striking features, every flash of the large dark eyes.

A sudden stillness came over him; he seemed lost in profound thought, his eyes took a deep, dreamy, far-away look. They were gazing into the past, and saw a crowd of events and people who had lived and moved and had their being, but were now invisible to all but the mental vision. The hands—firm, white, well-shaped and made for intellectual work—were spread out and met at the tips of the long slender fingers. The legs were crossed, bringing into prominence a shapely foot and ankle set off by a thin well-fitting shoe. In all matters of personal appointment Delormais was refined and fastidious.

For some minutes he appeared thus absorbed in mental retrospect. The man of life and energy had

suddenly changed to contemplation. Apparently he had forgotten our presence, and the silence of the room was profound. One almost heard the rising of the incense from the coffee-cups, as it curled upwards in fantastic forms and devices, and died out. We were motionless as himself. Not ours to break the silence, though it grew strained. We had come to listen, and waited until the spirit moved him. Nor had we to wait long. He roused himself from his reverie; the dreamy light passed out of his eyes; his spirit seemed to come back to earth as he turned to us with a penetrating, kindly gaze.

CHAPTER IX.

DELORMAIS.

Magnetism—Past life—Impulsive nature—First impressions—Perfumed airs—A gentle spirit—Haunted groves—Blue waters of the Levant—Great devotion—A rose-blossom—Back to the angels—Special providence—Fair Provence—Charmed days—Excursions—Isles of Greece—Ossa and Pelion—City of the violet crown—Spinning-jennies have something to answer for—Olympus—Ægina—Groves of the Sacred Plain—Narrow escapes—Pleasures of home-coming—Rainbow atmosphere—Orange and lemon groves—The nightingales—Impressionable childhood—Fresh plans—The Abbé Rivière—Rare faculty—Domestic chaplain—Debt of gratitude—Treasure-house of strength—Given to hospitality—First great sorrow—Passing away—Resolve to travel—"I can no more"—The old Adam dies hard—Chance decides.

DELORMAIS roused himself to the present as one who awakes from a dream. Those large dark eyes seemed capable of every expression; could flash with intellect, melt with fervent love or grow earnest with condemnation; sparkle with wit, or suffuse with sympathy and pathos. In Delormais susceptibilities and intellect seemed equally balanced.

"I have been reviewing my life," he began. "And I am asking myself why we are here seated together as old familiar friends. How it is that to you, a comparative stranger, I have promised to speak of the past, open my heart, disclose secrets unknown to the world? It must be that you deal in magnetism. Or that we were born in the same mystic sphere, or under the same conjunction of stars; and that for the third time in my life I discover one who is altogether sympathetic to me; to whom I feel I can speak as to my other self. Nor is it necessary that this feeling should be shared by you in an equal degree. Enough that you are not antagonistic; even approach me with a friendly liking. I, many years your senior, am the dominant power. You follow where I lead. But a truce to metaphysics; searchings into spiritual conditions we cannot altogether fathom; wandering into realms withholden from mortal vision. Let us leave the unseen and uncertain, and turn altogether to the present world."

We made no reply. Our sympathy was strongly awakened in this singular man. Here was a nature rare as it was powerful; distinguished by all the finest and noblest qualities vouchsafed to mankind. But we wished him to take his own way, utter his own thoughts, not disturbed by remark or turned aside by suggestion.

He rose for a moment, replenished the cups, and went on with his narrative.

"I have not asked you to join me to-night to read you a lesson," he continued. "In reviewing my past life, I find it full of incident and action. But it has none of those startling dramas and strange coincidences, none of those high achievements or fatal mistakes, which occasionally make biographies a solemn

warning to some or a pillar of fire to others. I have brought you here simply for the pleasure of spending an evening with you. If I beguiled you at this late hour under any other impression I am guilty of false pretences. But late though it be it is still evening to me, to whom all hours are alike. For a whole week at a time I have slept an hour in the twenty-four in my arm-chair, and found this sufficient rest. We give too much time to sleep. Like everything else it is a habit. The day will come soon enough for the folding of the hands. At any time I can turn night into day, and feel no sense of fatigue or loss of power. Nature never takes her revenge by turning day into night. I cannot remember the time when the daylight hours caught me napping.

"So then, for the pleasure of your company, and that we may become better acquainted, I have persuaded you to join me; not that I have much to tell you that can be useful or instructive. And yet it is said that the record of every life is a lesson. But all this you do not require. I was presumptuous enough at mid-day to read you a homily of which black coffee was the text and strong waters were the application. It was done partly from the impulsiveness of my nature which has carried me into a thousand-and-one unpremeditated scenes and circumstances; partly that my heart warmed towards you and I thought it a surer introduction to a better acquaintance than the usual topic of the weather. Throughout my life of more than sixty years, from the day I was able to observe and reflect I have been a student of human nature. You see even my rashness did not mislead me. I was not rebuked. On the contrary, your heart immediately responded to the singular and presuming old man."

He called himself old, but in reality, though six decades had rolled over his head, he was still in full force and vigour of life.

He paused a moment. The deep musical voice echoed through the room in subdued cadences. There was nothing harsh or loud in its tones. Delormais was too well-bred, too much a man of the world and student of human nature, as he had said, not to know the charm and value of modulation.

He paused, but we the patient listener: Saul sitting at the feet of Gamaliel: made no reply.

"Nevertheless, if I cannot instruct, I think I can interest you," continued Delormais, breaking the momentary silence. "My life has been singular and eventful. I will rapidly sketch some of its passages: a mere outline. To go through it circumstantially, in detail, would prolong the narrative to days and weeks. To write the life chapter by chapter, incident by incident, would fill many volumes.

"I have a good memory and it carries me back to the earliest scenes of childhood: scenes full of fairy visions and sweet remembrances. Orange-groves and lemon-groves, olive-yards and vineyards, orchards where grew all the luscious fruits of the earth, gardens filled with its choicest flowers, these are my first impressions. I breathed an air for ever perfumed.

"These realms were inhabited by beings fitted for paradise. My mother's lovely and gentle face haunted the groves; my father's voice filled the house with music and energy. He was a man born to command, but ruled by charm, not by power: expressed a wish rather than gave an order. Most lovable of husbands and most indulgent of fathers, we, who were to him as the breath of his nostrils, worshipped him. I was his constant companion. Day after day, when just old enough to run by his side, he would sail about with me in his white-winged boat, on the blue waters of the Levant. On the terrace in front of the château my mother would sit and watch us, an open book before her to which only half her thoughts were given and nothing of her heart. That followed the little craft skimming to and fro in the sunshine.

"Or in a larger yacht, we would take longer voyages; but if my mother were not with us these absences were rare, three days their limit. I was the idol of the sailors, just as my father was their king, who could

do no wrong.

"All my days and surroundings were coloured by this gentle, dark-eyed mother of exquisite loveliness and delicate refinement, whose only failing was too great a devotion to her husband and boy. I was an only surviving child, and for that reason doubly precious to my parents. A little daughter had first been born to them; a child, I have heard, the very counterpart of her mother—frail, delicate, and too good for earth; her soul too pure and her face too fair. At the age of three, when she was budding into loveliest rose-blossom, she went back to the angels.

"There never was any fear of that sort for me. From the first I was strong and sturdy, escaping even the ordinary ailments of childhood. So far I saved my parents all anxiety. Their only care was to check my high and venturesome spirit, which now would cause me to be fished up from the bottom of shallow waters; and now would bring me down to earth with a broken olive-bough that possibly had borne fruit for centuries and might have done so for ages yet to come. I never came to harm. A special providence watched over me—I record it with all reverence.

"As the bird flies my home was not so very far from here, though it was in France, not Spain. We lived in one of the loveliest spots of fair Provence, where indeed the earth brought forth abundantly all her fruits and flowers.

"My mother had offended her family by her marriage, yet in no sense of the word was my father her inferior. But she was of noble birth and he was not, though a patrician. He was a gentleman in all his thoughts and deeds, a great landed proprietor, a man of vast intellectual culture and refinement. The *mésalliance* her people chose to see in the matter existed only in their worldly minds and wicked ambitions. For to marry my father she had refused the Duke of G., an empty-headed *bon vivant*, with nothing but his title and wealth to recommend him. For fifteen years my mother's life was happy as life on earth can be. The day came when her people acknowledged the wisdom of her choice, the hollowness of theirs. But one circumstance in her father I have always thought condoned all his obstinacy. He finally yielded to her wishes. Without this the marriage would have been impossible. When he saw that her very existence depended upon it, he at length dismissed the duke and gave his consent—reluctantly, with a bad grace it must be admitted, but it was done. The duke married elsewhere. Wild, unprincipled, unstable as water, he entangled himself in all sorts of intrigues, gambled, and finally fell into embarrassment. Not until then was my father really and truly received without reservation as a son of the family—a position to which he was in every possible way entitled.

"Those were charmed and charming days of childhood and youth. It has been said that when the early years are specially happy, the after-life is the opposite. I cannot say that this has been my experience, though, as you will see, the hand of sorrow has sometimes been heavy upon me.

"My father was wealthy. He spent much time in his library, where my mother might almost always be found, her seat near to him. By stretching forth his hand he could occasionally clasp hers, as though to assure her that his heart still beat for her alone. In all my father's intellectual pursuits she was thoroughly at home—no study was too deep or abstruse for her comprehension.

"Now and then she would accompany us in our yacht, and it was delightful to witness the reverence and devotion of the crew on those occasions—men who remained with us year after year, nor ever thought of change. I believe that every one of them would have laid down his life for her. She never liked the sea; the least rising of wind or ruffling of water alarmed her. When she accompanied us our excursions would be lengthened. We explored the islands of the Mediterranean, visited friends in some of the more distant

towns on the seaboard. How well I remember a longer absence than usual, when we made acquaintance with all the Greek isles, and explored the fair city of the violet crown. Who that has approached those classic shores can forget the first sight of Ossa and Pelion—scene of the battle between the gods and Titans—though Homer reverses possibilities in placing Pelion upon Ossa! Who can forget his first impression of the rocky gorge and valley between Ossa and Olympus! All is now in a state of sad but picturesque ruin and poverty, but in days gone by industries flourished here—a happy and contented people. The spinning-jennies of England have a little to answer for in this.

"To my mother's classic mind, all ancient history appealed with a special charm. The shores of Greece, like our own, were washed by the blue waters of the Mediterranean. There too the hills, in all their exquisite form, stood out in a bright clear atmosphere. We journeyed leisurely from the frontier to the Piræus; visited the islands of the Peloponnesus, with all their ancient and romantic interest; rested ourselves at the Monastery of Daphne, and from the summit of the pass gazed upon that wonderful view of Athens. Together we ascended Mount Olympus and pictured ourselves amongst the gods of the ancient mythology. We admired its richly-wooded slopes, where the endless mulberry trees put forth their spreading foliage, and visited the Monastery of St. Dionysius, which lies in that wonderful Olympian amphitheatre—one of the grandest scenes in nature.

"All Athens opened its doors to us. They could not greet too warmly or *fête* too highly my mother's beauty and grace, my father's rare gifts of heart and mind.

"But our happiest hours were spent alone. Together we studied the wonders of the capital, and grew familiar with the Byzantine churches. We passed days upon lovely Ægina where blow the purest of Heaven's pure winds. We stood almost in awe before the wonderful ruins of the Doric Temple of Zeus, Ægina's glory, whose columns have stood the test of 2,500 years. What can be lovelier than the view from the summit of that rugged hill crowned by its imperishable monument? I remember as though it were yesterday my first glimpse of Helicon and Parnassus, as we sailed through the Gulf of Corinth; the walk through the olive-groves of the Sacred Plain, where, turn which way you will, the eye rests on historic ground. In the fair city we thought of Paul as he preached to the Athenians under the shadow of the Parthenon. We haunted the Acropolis with its barren rocks and fragments of past glories. From the charmed heights we gazed upon the sapphire sea ever flashing in brilliant sunshine. In the distance, faint and hazy and dreamlike, were ever the sleeping mountains, Ægina and Argolis protecting the magic ranges. Sometimes we penetrated too far inland, and more than once my father's adventurous spirit had nearly brought us within the grasp of the lawless, a condition of things that would have been the death of my mother, and for which he would never have forgiven himself.

"But all the pleasure of our wanderings never equalled the charm of our home-coming. There was our life and our delight. There we were truly happy. Looking back, I see that it was an ideal existence: a condition Heaven never permits to remain too long unbroken, or we might forget that this is not our abiding city.

"My father filled his leisure moments by cultivating vineyards, which in those days were very successful, and in the form of wine returned rich revenues. We lived in a rainbow atmosphere, and, if you know Provence—as doubtless you do—you will also know that this is no mere figure of speech. The airs of heaven were ever balmy. In those days one never heard of cold and snow and frost on the Riviera. We have since approached some degrees nearer to the North Pole. Little need for others to go off in search of it and bring it to us. At that time we lived in perpetual summer. The sapphire waters of the Mediterranean for ever flashed and flowed upon the white sands of the shores that belonged to us. It seems to me now that the skies were always blue and the sun ever shone. Olive-yards and vineyards, I have said,

surrounded us. Orange and lemon-groves sent forth an exquisite perfume only known to those who live amongst them. An amphitheatre of hills rose about us; the lovely Maritime Alps with all their graceful undulations, all their rich foliage. Birds flashed in the sunshine. In the balmy nights of May the nightingales never ceased their song.

"I must have been an impressionable child, with all my strong, sturdy health, inheriting something of my mother's romantic nature. It is certain that the memory of those early days has never faded, but has been the background and colouring of all my after life. Even now in thought I often go back to them. There are times when I am a little undecided how to act. I ask myself how my father or mother would have acted under the circumstances, and in their clear, sensible tones seem to hear the reply.

"Up to the age of seven they were my sole instructors. Then fresh plans were formed. A precocious child, it was felt that I ought to enter upon more serious studies than they had leisure to direct.

"A tutor was found; the Abbé Rivière; a man of large mind and solid attainments; a profound thinker. To this he added the simple nature of a child. The marvel was that he condescended to become tutor and companion to a lad of seven. We soon found that his ambition was to have leisure for the writing of metaphysical works. His present appointment gave him his heart's desire. He had no parish or people to look after. With less singleness of purpose and more worldliness, he might have risen to any position in the church. No better companion for a boy could have been found, and he possessed the rare faculty of imparting knowledge. His mind could unbend, and he adapted his conversation to his hearers. No mere bookworm was he, dry, tedious and incomprehensible. My studies were a delight. I knew afterwards that one of the joys of his life was to watch day by day the unfolding of his pupil's mind. Thus he took the keenest interest in his work, and considered his days doubly blessed. I have heard him say that the offer of the triple crown could not have tempted him to change his life.

"He did not live in the château, but in a small house on the estate. It was supposed that here he would feel himself more his own master, free to order, to come and go as he would, whilst every comfort was secured to him. My father was the most generous of men, full of thoughtful consideration for all in any way dependent upon him. From the highest to the lowest, none were passed over. He soon discovered the Abbé's true character; the high purpose that actuated his life; and became devoted to him. My father's mind was quite equal to the Abbé's, though he had not spent his life in metaphysical studies. Still, he sympathised with his pursuits, and read his works in MS. Now he agreed with the writer and now differed. His clear, correct vision many a time won over the Abbé to his opinion.

"The Abbé became, so to say, our domestic chaplain. As often as he could be persuaded, he made a fourth at the dinner-table, and said grace in his quiet, refined tones. And he needed far less persuasion on these occasions than when the château was filled with guests. He was always an acquisition. A man of deep and varied thought, possessing the gift, not always given to great men, of putting his thoughts into words. An earnest, fluent talker, who could unstring his bow and throw a charm even over ordinary topics. This was far more apparent, far more exercised when we were alone and he was sure of the sympathy of his hearers, than when others were present. If he only spoke of the passing clouds, the ripening fruit, or the flashing sea, his rare mind would clothe his ideas in a form peculiarly his own, and especially attractive.

"I often think Providence helped my father in his selection. When indeed does Providence *not* direct the paths of its children? Without doubt I owe the Abbé a deep debt of gratitude. He did much to shape and consolidate my character. I was his pupil in all those important years when the seeds are being sown to bear fruit in the after life. From the age of seven to nineteen, I was seldom absent from him. Occasionally

he would join in our yachting excursions. Then, unbending, throwing work to the winds, he became the most delightful of companions. In spite of his more than fifty years and his long white hair, he could be almost child-like in his ways. His was one of those simple and rare natures that never grow old.

"Rightly or wrongly, my parents elected to keep me at home. I was their all in life; they would have me under their own roof. And why not? My future was assured. I should be wealthy. It was not necessary to go out into the world to learn to fight my way, as it is called. In the matter of education I certainly did not suffer. Experience of the world came soon enough.

"So our quiet and charming life went on. Looking back, I would not change one single circumstance of those early days. They are a treasure-house on which I still draw for strength and guidance.

"We were by no means isolated. My father was given to hospitality and delighted in receiving his friends. We mixed freely with the few families of our own rank in the neighbourhood. Nevertheless these were exceptional times. He was happiest—we all were—when the house was free from guests and we were all in all to each other. It was a paradise of four people; for the Abbé in time became as one of ourselves. If good influence were wanted, he gave it. He was a deeply religious man in the wide acceptance of the term; not thinking of saints and fasts and penances, but of the higher life which looks Above for strength and consolation. I much fear me he would have passed but a poor examination before the Consistory of Rome. I doubt if he would have escaped excommunication. Holy, upright man!" cried Delormais with emotion. "He was as much above ordinary human nature, with all its petty ways and narrowing limits, as the stars are above the earth."

Again he paused, and for a moment seemed plunged in profound sadness. He had evidently reached a painful crisis in his life. A deep sigh escaped him which seemed weighted with the burden of years. Then with an effort, still turning upon us that kindly, penetrating eye, he went on with his narrative.

"At the age of fifteen came my first great sorrow—the greatest sorrow of my life. I could not have conceived that our cloudless sky would so suddenly become overcast with the blackness of night.

"My mother died. A man loses his wife, and however much he loved her, he may get him another. But he can have but one mother in his life, one father.

"For long she had been gradually failing. Much as I loved her, my boyish eyes did not perceive the change that was coming. I did not see that this earthly angel was quietly passing away to heaven. She herself was conscious of it. There were times—how well I remembered it afterwards—when I would find her eyes fixed upon me with a yearning ineffable sadness. Her whole soul and spirit seemed to be speaking to me without words. She was about to leave me to the temptations and tender mercies of the world—how would it fare with me in the years to come? But she never spoke or gave me word or sign of warning.

"My father also saw the change coming, but would not admit it; could not believe or realise it. The loss would be his death-blow. For him there could be no second wife, no other companion. When the blow fell, it crushed him. He was never the same again. I never again heard him laugh, scarcely saw him smile. His body was still on earth, thought and spirit seemed to have followed his wife into the unseen world. His affection for me, the kindly remonstrances of the good Abbé, even these were not powerful enough to restore his desire for life. He went on quietly, patiently for four years, then followed the wife without whom it seemed he could not remain on earth.

"I told you just now their life was too happy to remain long without interruption. Fifteen years of perfect

companionship had passed as a flash, the dream of a long day, and then vanished.

"I was now nineteen, but mentally and physically more like five-and-twenty. A restlessness seized me. My home was haunted by the spirits of my parents; by the remembrance of days whose perfect happiness made that remembrance for the moment intolerable. I had passionately, tenderly loved both father and mother. If I went into the groves, her face seemed ever gazing at me amidst the fruit and foliage. Her accustomed place in the terrace was filled with her presence. In every room in the house I heard my father's voice, felt the clasp of his hand.

"The good Abbé was my frequent companion, but the blow had told upon him also. He had aged wonderfully. Though he tried to be cheerful for my sake, it was clearly forced. My life grew impossible. I felt that I must change the scene if I would recover mental tone and vigour. For a time I must travel; see the world; wander from place to place, country to country, until rest and calm returned to my soul. Even the Abbé, sorry as he was to part from me, commended my resolution.

"I was my own master; wealthy; free to come and go as I would; everything favoured the idea. At home I would change nothing. The Abbé should remain in his little house, his days and leisure at his own disposal. The old servants were retained in the château. Only the living-rooms should be closed to the ghosts that haunted them. The able superintendent of all outdoor concerns, a domestic chargé-d'affaires, who had for years filled the position under my father, remained at the head of all things. The only change in his routine was that once a week he should have a morning with the Abbé. All matters were to pass under the scrutiny of that wise judgment. If any difficulty arose he was to be appealed to. It was the only service I asked at the hands of my old tutor in return for the home and stipend it was my privilege to afford him. He had long been white-haired, and was now venerable beyond his nearly seventy years. He gave me his solemn benediction at parting, and for the first time I saw him break down. He wept as he placed his hands upon my head. 'This third parting is too much for me,' he cried. 'I can no more.'

"So I turned my back upon my home, my face to the world. I was strong, energetic, full of life and spirit, though for the moment clouded and subdued. The Abbé had taken care that my mental powers should be thoroughly trained. For twelve years I had been his constant care. In many things he thought me his superior. Mathematics and classics, the sciences, these by his rare skill he had made my amusement. But my impulsive nature, quick sometimes to rashness, had not been conquered. He had only given me a certain amount of judgment and common-sense which must stand by me in moments of difficulty or danger. Altogether I was well-fitted to take care of myself, in spite of my love of adventure and quick temperament. You see that it clings to me still," added Delormais with a smile. "The old Adam dies hard within us. Who else would have treated you to a homily on black coffee and strong waters as I did this morning?

"I departed on my travels with no fixed purpose other than to see the world. To which point of the compass I turned, chance should decide."

Again Delormais paused as though absorbed in past recollections. For a moment his white, well-shaped hand shielded his eyes. Then returning to his former attitude, now gazing earnestly at us and now into space, he continued his narrative.

CHAPTER X.

DELORMAIS' ROMANCE.

Rome—Count Albert—Happy months—Sweets of companionship—Egypt—Strange things—Quiet weeks—Sinai—Freedom of the desert—Crossing the Red Sea—Mount Serbal—Convent of St. Catherine—In the Valley of the Saint—Tomb of Sheikh Saleh—Pools of Solomon—Jerusalem the Golden—Bethel—Lebanon—Home again—Fresh scenes—Algeria—Hanging gardens of the Sahel—Mount Bubor and its glories—Rash act—At the twilight hour—Earthly paradise—Fair Eve—Fervent love—Arouya—Nature's revenge—Not to last—Eternal requiem of the sea—In the backwoods—Hunting wolves—Prairies of California—Honolulu—Active volcanoes—Lake of fire—Rare birds and wild flowers—Worship of Peleus—An eruption—Mighty upheaval—Coast of Labrador—Shooting bears.

"THE first morning that I wakened up away from home I found myself in the Eternal City. I had always loved Rome. Here I thought I might lose myself in ancient history. In imagination I trod the palace of the Cæsars, and in the Coliseum beheld the martyred Christians. I pictured the gilded pageantries of the Tiber, the splendours of the pleasure-lost citizens. I saw the vast Campagna clothed with its armies, listened to the clash of arms and shouts of warriors ascending heavenwards. I walked the Appian Way with St. Paul and at the Three Taverns seemed to hear his voice in sorrowful farewell. At the shrine of Cecilia Metella I lingered in sympathetic communion; and from the Pincio Hill watched the sunsets of those matchless skies. Why are the skies of Rome more beautiful than any other? The Vatican opened its doors to me and the Pope gave me his most intimate and friendly benediction. I fear that I thought too lightly of the latter.

"What just then was more to my purpose, in Rome I found a great friend. He, Count Albert, was the nephew of the duke my mother had refused to marry. We had been intimate from childhood, but he was five years my senior. I need not say that he was a very different man from his uncle: high-minded, earnest, a cultivated citizen of the world. About to visit Egypt and Palestine, he begged me to join him. His happiness he declared would then be complete.

"Thus chance, or an over-ruling Providence, decided for me. I willingly acquiesced, and the many months we spent together remain as some of the happiest of my life. Though never ceasing to mourn my loss, I quickly threw off depression in the excitement of ever-changing scenes. Only in the still darkness of the night hours would the beloved faces and voices come to me with an ever-recurring sense of loneliness, and, man though I was, my pillow was frequently wet with tears. But our friendship for each other was sincere and has remained so. For the Duke of G.—he has now by the decrees of fate become the head of his family—is still living, though we have seldom met of late years.

"We travelled together, enjoying those sweet pleasures of companionship only given us in youth. With Egypt and Palestine we became intimate and familiar. Cairo delighted us. It was less modern in those days than in these. We were never tired of visiting the mosques with all their sacred and historic charm. We made the acquaintance of the sheikhs, saw them perform impossible magic, heard strange things revealed in a drop of ink. To me these mysteries have remained unsolved to this day. We spent hours and days amongst the tombs of the Caliphs, revelling in their wonderful refinement. We visited all the ancient cities of the Nile: Thebes with its hills and ruins, Memphis with its palm forests and Pyramids—those monuments the most ancient in the world. We contemplated the great Pyramids of Ghizeh by moonlight and felt steeped in mystery. In the same weird light I have stood before the Sphinx and asked the reason and origin of its existence, but only profound silence has answered me. At Dendera, that perfect temple begun by Cleopatra and finished by Tiberius, I gazed upon the features of the famous queen and compared them with those of Hermonthis. I found they resembled each other and confess that I wondered in what consisted the beauty of the woman who changed the fate of the world—but beautiful she must have been.

We chartered our dahabeah and travelled up to the Second Cataract. Never shall I forget the soothing repose of those quiet weeks, the delight of our uninterrupted companionship, the books we read together, the daily thoughts we exchanged, the ruined cities we explored. It was an experience that comes only once in a lifetime.

"We both felt strongly the connection between Sacred Geography and Sacred History: how the one would be better understood if the other were visited. So together we became acquainted with the Peninsula of Sinai, its mountains, plains, and sea. The charm and freedom of the desert I had often dreamed about, but how far greater was the reality! Here we revelled day after day in the wonderful isolation: sky and sand and nothing else. A mingling of gorgeous tones: a vast expanse of blue and yellow; a molten sun burning down upon all by day, at night the infinite repose of darkness and star-lit skies. How endless were those sandy wastes, broken only by the wild broom and acacia yielding its gum arabic, the wild palm and manna-giving tamarisk!

"We traversed the desert in which the Israelites wandered for forty years, and crossed the Red Sea over the very spot where Pharaoh and his host were drowned. We ascended Mount Serbal and the cluster of Jebel Mûsa, and therefore must have trod the very Sinai of Israel. We stayed for days at the wonderful convent of St. Catherine, a strange building to exist in the very centre of the desert, with its massive walls, gorgeous church and galleries, monkish cells and guest chambers, its wonderful gardens. We spent much time in the Library, examining its ancient and singularly interesting MSS. We conversed frequently with the monks, and wondered why they should be Greek and not Arabian; and whether, so far removed from the world, temptation and sin and sorrow still assailed them.

"In the Valley of the Saint we visited the tomb of Sheikh Saleh, the 'great unknown,' where the tribes of the Desert assemble once a year and hold their races and dances and offer up burnt sacrifices. We looked upon Hebron, that wonderful sepulchre of the Patriarchs, and passed through the Valley of Eschol, once so abundant in the fruits of the earth. We visited the three Pools of Solomon on our way to Bethlehem. Never can I forget the gorgeous splendour of the scene, the wonderful undulations of those vine-clad hills. In the vast depression lie the sleeping pools, square and regular, and sky and atmosphere seem full of flaming colours, and one realises the true meaning of the glories of the East. Beyond lies Rachel's tomb, and from the top of a neighbouring hill one looks down upon Jerusalem the Golden. We feel that we are treading the holiest ground on earth.

"We went up the Passage of Michmash to Bethel; that dreary and barren spot where Jacob made him a pillar of stones and dreamed his dream. You remember his words: 'Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.... This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' The spot is very desolate; no wonder Jacob feared as he gazed around.

"We visited Lebanon, and in its grove reposed under the few remaining cedars, listened to the cry of the cicale, and watched the birds of brilliant plumage flitting from branch to branch. Though in the midst of the desert there was no silence. A wonderful spot, with its rushing streams, its vineyards and corn-fields, the magnificent sea flashing in the sunshine. What a forest life it must have been before Sennacherib laid it low!

"So we became thoroughly acquainted with Sinai and Palestine. I can never understand those who leave this magic land with a sense of disappointment. It is true that we were young, full of life and vigour, ready to extract all the honey from our sweets; but to me no after experience ever equalled this first lengthened journey of my manhood. With what sorrow and regret I brought it to an end and parted from my friend, you will easily imagine.

"But it had to be. I had been long absent from home. The Abbé wrote to me regularly; all had gone well and quietly, but I began to feel anxious to gaze once more upon the beloved groves and familiar shores; to hear once more the voice of the good old man who I knew hungered and thirsted for my return.

"One morning when the sun was shining and everything looked bright and happy, I suddenly appeared before the Abbé. He was absorbed upon a MS., putting the finishing touches to a chapter of peculiar merit, when he looked up and saw the desire of his eyes. For a moment I thought he was about to lose consciousness. Then the blood rushed to his pale, refined face, and I found myself clasped in his arms.

"We spent a quiet happy month together. I took up my abode in his house, not in the château. Everything was pursuing the calm and even tenor of its way. Every one was happy, and the return of the master made that happiness complete. They all hoped I had come to remain; but I found that could not be. I was unable to settle down to a quiet domestic life. This home-coming had brought back all my loss, the happiness of days gone for ever. I felt I must seek fresh scenes, and soon departed again on my wanderings. This time they were not very distant.

"I crossed over to Algeria, and from the bright green slopes of the Sahel learned to love the white terraces and hanging gardens that contrasted so well with the matchless blue of the Mediterranean. That was not all that I learned to love.

"I mixed freely with the Arabs and the French of all classes. Fate took me to Djidjelly. I wished to ascend Mount Bubor, and from its summit gaze as it were upon all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them. Here I committed the most rash, most impulsive act of my life. You will say it was impossible in one brought up as I had been. I have learned that nothing is impossible. Remember also my youth; that I was in a sense alone in the world; had never loved, never even thought of love. I will now tell you a secret hitherto locked within my own breast. In a word, I married. Djidjelly has been considered almost impregnable, but no fortress can keep out the arrows of Cupid.

"I had been in the town for about a week, exploring the rocks and heights, picturing that terrible expedition two centuries ago, when the Kabyles brought Beaufort and his men to utter defeat. One day I had walked some ten miles into the interior. I was revelling in the perfume of one of the lovely groves that abound, when suddenly I came upon a vision of grace and beauty that absolutely dazzled and astounded me. It was that witching hour of evening when the sun nears the horizon and all nature seems sinking to repose. A perfect paradise of orange and almond trees, olives and pomegranates interspersed with the wild laurel, surrounded me. Never did paradise boast a fairer Eve. The declining sun threw deep shadows athwart the paths; branches and foliage traced fairy pictures of sunlight and shade.

"In this enchanting scene stood a young Kabyle woman, lovelier than anything I had ever seen before or have ever dreamed of since. She was about seventeen, but here, as you know, women develop early. Her form was perfect as her face. If she walked, her step was light and majestic. If she ran, it was with the grace of the gazelle. Everything about her was harmonious. Her abundant dark hair crowned a small and shapely head. Her eyes, large, dark and soft, flashed with sensibility and intelligence beneath pencilled eyebrows and long drooping eyelashes that almost swept her cheek. Her expression was one of singular purity and guilelessness. All the passionate temperament of the East seemed to have passed her by. Yet how purely, how fervently she could love. Over a silken robe she wore a haick or burnous of fine gossamer that fell about her in graceful folds. When her small coral lips parted they revealed the most exquisite of pearly teeth. Her voice was music. You will say that I am making her too perfect. This would indeed be impossible. I have never met any one to approach her either in grace of mind or beauty of feature.

"But Nature had been cruel. She had bestowed those matchless charms only to withdraw them too soon. I saw her and from that moment loved her: loved her for ever. There was no doubt or wavering in my mind. I approached her. She met me fearlessly, naturally, without thought of guile. To my delight she spoke perfect French, was evidently refined and educated. Her father was the proprietor of this little paradise. This meant that he was probably at ease in the world without being exactly rich. I quickly got to know him. Wooing in this part of the world is not a matter of months or years. Within a week of our first meeting, I was engaged to Arouya. Her father was only too willing to give her to one who was young, good-looking, above all had wealth at his command. Almost immediately, without counting the cost or reflecting upon the mistake of a union with one of another race and religion, we were married. But all the reflection in the world would have made no difference. I was borne on by a mighty torrent against which there was no struggling.

"For six months I lived a charmed, enraptured, secluded life with Arouya, my wife. We were intensely happy in each other's love: bliss that is rarely given to mortals. It was not a mere life of the senses; her mind was wonderfully pure, bright and expansive. From the very first I laboured to convert her to Christianity, and with singular clearness she grasped and embraced all its profound yet simple truths: became deeply, devotedly religious. This only seemed to strengthen her affection for me.

"But it was not to last. Almost from the day of our marriage I felt the shadow of the sword. Our happiness was to be as fleeting as it was perfect. Arouya was already stricken with mortal illness. Consumption had set its seal upon her. Before we had been married three months she began to droop; at the end of six months she died. Died in my arms, blessing the hour in which we had first met. I laid her in her far-off grave, within sound of the sea, which chants her eternal requiem.

"I will draw a veil over my grief. For the third time in my young life I was heavily stricken. But I have learned to see the hand of mercy in the blow, and in time I lived it down. It was an episode in my life so romantic, so sacred, that I never spoke of it even to the good Abbé. You are the first to whom I have confided it. The secret is locked in my own breast—and in yours.

"I left Algeria and sought distraction from my grief by going farther abroad. I visited America, where I saw Nature on a gigantic scale. There I went through endless experiences and adventures. In the backwoods of the North I have spent whole nights watching for wolves, and heard their howlings on all sides. Often I have been sore beset. Many a tree have I climbed to save my life; from its branches shot many a tiger whose glaring eyes and deep growls told me one or other must conquer. But as in childhood, so in later years I seem to have carried about with me a charmed life. Many a time has my thirst been assuaged by the monkeys, who in return for stones pelted me with cocoanuts. In the Indian jungle I have hunted lions, and once was surprised and sprung upon by a tiger that at that very moment was providentially shot by my servant. Otherwise I should not now be here to tell you the tale. It was a narrow escape.

"In the vast prairies of California I delighted. Here I saw vegetation as I had never conceived it. Even the cedars of Lebanon paled before these gigantic monarchs of the forest. Loveliest flowers of gorgeous hues, wonderful tree-ferns, abounded. There was no limit to their wealth. Once, whilst here, the desire seized me to visit Hawaii—the Sandwich Islands as they are called: those wonderful volcanic isles of the Pacific. Beside them, everything else of a like nature fades into insignificance. Vesuvius, Ætna, Hecla, these are child's play in comparison. The eight islands form a rich and productive chain.

"I embarked from San Francisco for Honolulu, and reached it after a run of sixteen days before the wind. Here I found much to repay me. The island is full of rocky spurs which form so great a contrast to

the green plains of the interior with their clear flowing streams and endless forests. Vast craters are ever in a state of eruption: the largest volcanoes in the world: some extinct, others in a state of activity. One of these days I believe that a tremendous upheaval will take place and the islands will disappear. The mountain peaks of Hawaii, Mauna Kia and Mauna Loa, 14,000 feet high, with their eternal snows, would alone repay a visit. Perpendicular precipices 3000 feet high present a bold savage front to the sea, and looking at them you think that never before have you gazed upon rock scenery. The sandy shores have the loveliest, most perfect of coral reefs. The waters surrounding the islands are clear and brilliant with every rainbow colour. Here the world is a paradise; but its people, though harmless enough, are not angels.

"Kilanea on Mauna Loa is the largest of the active volcanoes. Its oval-shaped crater is nine miles in circumference and 6000 feet above the level of the sea. Within this a lake of fire is for ever burning and seething, moving and heaving to and fro in liquid waves of molten lava. Imagine the tremendous, the awful sight. I was there in 1856 when it was in a very active state and continued so for some years. At night the spectacle was sublime beyond description. Herds of wild horses roam the islands. There is a curious bat that flies by day. Many of the trees are productive. The sugar-cane flourishes; the palm, banana, cocoanut and *ti*. The natives bake and eat the roots of the latter and thatch their huts with its leaves. The snow-clad hills are the most distinctive feature, here and there rising in overpowering masses wreathed in fantastic vapours. Above these the clear blue sky rises in brilliant contrast and unbroken serenity. At sundown the white snow-tops flush a rosy red. Wonderful creepers interlace the trees of the forest, so that you walk under an endless magic roof of green, through which the sun at mid-day penetrates only in delicate gleams and patches. Gorgeous wild-flowers grow everywhere through the pathless woods. Birds of rare plumage flash from bough to bough, chattering and calling, but soulless in point of song. Everywhere one meets the pungent odour of wild fruit. Here too I found orange and lemon-groves that almost rivalled those of my Mediterranean home. You have heard of those wonderful trees with their wealth of blossoms that live one day, changing colour three times in the daylight hours: white in the morning, yellow at noon, red at sundown—blushing their life away.

"The heat of the days was intense, but at sunset a cool breeze would spring up, laden with the perfume of orange and lemon-groves. I mixed freely with the natives, a curious, superstitious race.

"It was here that I first experienced the sensation of earthquakes. They are common enough in these volcanic islands, and unless violent, excite little attention. I had been travelling for two days. Suddenly I felt the ground as it were slipping under my feet. The trees about us swayed, the leaves rustled as though moved by a strong wind. In the air was a brooding stillness. We were not far from a tremendous volcano. An eruption was evidently about to take place. I had two or three native servants with me, and an acquaintance who was half a Frenchman and had settled in the island. The former were frightened and superstitious, given up to the worship of Peleus, goddess of the volcano.

"With difficulty we made our way to the mouth of the crater through the pathless forests surrounding it. Never can I forget the beauty of the immense tree-ferns that abounded. It was no doubt a rash proceeding, but at last we stood at the edge of the crater. We looked upon a vast lake of liquid fire. The sight was terrific, and made me think of Dante's most graphic passages.

"All this soon changed. Presently the surface of the lake of fire had turned black, sure sign of an approaching eruption. Not a breath of air stirred. All nature was steeped in a profound hush. The very birds ceased to fly and flutter. Our horses trembled and manifested every symptom of fear. There was no time to be lost if we wished to save our lives. After a sharp ride we gained the slopes of a snow mountain. Here we waited for what soon came; shock after shock of earthquake. Rocks and stones

detached themselves around us and rolled into the valley. Trees were uprooted. Then came a mighty, rushing, hissing sound, as a sea of molten lava rolled down in many directions and spread over the plain. Never shall I forget the grandeur, the awful majesty of the sight. We knew not how far it would reach or to what extent our lives were in danger. Dense volumes of smoke rose in the air, obscuring the sky. Torrents of ashes fell far and wide. I thought of the fate of Herculaneum and Pompeii, scenes I had visited with my parents only a few years before. Was such a fate to be ours? We were almost choked with the smell of sulphur. Vegetation was scorched and burnt up under the terrible influence. It was a monster devouring all that came within its path. The poor monkeys in the cocoa-nut trees no longer thought of pelting us with fruit. They crouched and hid themselves in the branches, and understood the peril of their lives. I will not weary you with further description. Suffice it that we escaped, and when I again found myself in Honolulu, it was to bid the islands a long farewell.

"For a time there was no end to my wanderings. From Honolulu I went off in an American whaler to the coast of Labrador and shot bears as they drifted southward on icebergs coming from that mysterious and hitherto inaccessible North Pole. Once I spent a week with that curious little people, the Esquimaux, who inhabit the creeks of Labrador and live chiefly on the excellent fish abounding in those waters: waters so wonderfully tempered by the Florida stream. In my travels I have experienced the extremes of refinement on the one hand, of hardship on the other. But the latter has been my own choice, and this makes all things bearable. I once had a friend who went out to break stones on the road; work we give to our convicts; but he did it for pleasure and thought it delightful."

Once more Delormais paused as though in deep reflection. The silence in the room was only broken by the faint ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece. Outside not a sound disturbed the sleeping world. Not a breath stirred in all the corridors of the old palace that had seen better days. We waited until the spirit should move him again.

CHAPTER XI.

MONSEIGNEUR.

Great conflict—Returning to Paris—Count Albert married—Marriages declined—Love buried in the grave of Arouya—Frivolities—Napoleon at the Tuileries—Illness—Doctors' errors—Days of horror—Vow registered—Between life and death—Victory—Home again—Abbé's objections—Resolve strengthened—Death of the Abbé—Taking vows—Life of energy and action—Rapid sketch—Sympathies—All ordained—"Monseigneur"—"Mon ami"—Cry of the watchmen—Candles wax dim and blue—Wandering in dreams—False prophet—H. C. rises with the lark—Beauty of Gerona—Pathetic scene—Colonel administers consolation—Widow's heart sings for joy—In the cloisters again—Good-bye—In the cathedral—Anselmo—Sunshine over all—Miguel—On the ruined citadel—Anselmo's signal—A glory departs.

"I HAVE told you of the great romance of my life," he presently continued. "Now let me tell you of its great conflict.

"After many wanderings I returned to Paris. Here the great world opened wide its doors to me. In a short time I was *l'enfant de la maison* amongst all people worth knowing. Count Albert had married one of the most charming women in the great world. You can picture my welcome. Few days passed but I spent some portion of my time with them. I was naturally sought after, my wealth and position rendering that inevitable. Fathers proposed marriage for their daughters after the French fashion, offering the bribe of large dowries. But they knew not my secret. All my love was buried in a quiet Algerian grave, within sight of the ever-sounding sea. I had never loved before; I should never love again. I shuddered at the idea of a mere *mariage de convenance*. Love and love only could make the chains of matrimony bearable. Who could love again after such a love, such a marriage as mine?

"I soon felt the life of Paris feverish, enervating. There was no rest, or repose, or freedom about it. A wild series of frivolities succeeded each other: court ceremonies—Napoleon III. reigned at the Tuileries—balls, receptions, the life of the clubs. I hated wine, yet indulged freely in it to help me through the days. I had not been made for this kind of life; all the better parts of my nature were being stifled. Still I went on from week to week, partly because I could not tear myself away from Albert and his charming wife.

"At last I fell ill of a nervous malady which prostrated my strength. The doctors ordered brandy in large doses. They should rather have forbidden it. The day came when I saw that brandy was my master. I could not live without it. Nothing could exceed my horror when I made the discovery. Then the moral struggle began, and that my nature was strong only made the conflict more severe. But the evil was more physical than mental or moral and so far beyond my control.

"At length, almost in despair, sick of this frivolous, aimless life, I vowed to devote my days to the service of Heaven if I might be permitted to conquer.

"Again I fell ill, but this time of a malady for which all stimulant was forbidden. For weeks I kept my bed, part of the time hovering between life and death. Heaven was merciful. My vow had been heard, my prayer answered. When I recovered, the victory had been gained for me. I hated the very sight of all stimulant. From that hour nothing stronger than tea or coffee has passed my lips.

"I left Paris and returned to my home in Provence. What delight, what repose, what charm I found there. Paradise had once more opened its gates. There, with the Abbé, I spent a whole year in calm and quiet retreat. Health and vigour of mind, strength of body, returned to me.

"But I did not forget my vow. The Abbé treated me to many an argument and disquisition upon the subject. He showed me the life of an ecclesiastic in all its lights and shadows; the sacrifice of domestic happiness it entailed; the constant self-denials if I would do my duty in the spirit as well as letter. He pointed out how by nature and position I was eminently fitted to take my part in the world; to marry; become the ruler of a little kingdom, as it were; the father of sons and daughters. He was growing old, he

declared, and certainly in the last year had greatly changed. An expression on his face told me he was not far from heaven. He felt his own end approaching.

"All this only strengthened my resolve. If anything could have made me more in favour of a religious life, it was the quiet ecstasy with which he contemplated passing to celestial regions. Nothing could be more saintly and beatific than his last days. He was in perfect happiness, and frequently said so. I was permitted to be with him when his eyes looked their last upon the world. I was the last object they rested on; my name was on his lips as his soul winged its flight to heaven. For the fourth time the hand of affliction was laid upon me. My last link with the world was severed. I stood alone.

"In due time I took upon myself the vows of the Church. Never for a moment had I contemplated the cloister. Mine must be a life of energy and activity. Whether it be a weakness or not, I have ever loved to command; to rule mankind; to have the ordering of things. There I feel in my element. I have a capacity for organisation which will not lie dormant. It has been my lot to have it more or less fully exercised. With all humility, and giving the sole glory to Heaven, I may say that I have succeeded in every work or mission I ever undertook; advanced every cause in which I have been concerned. The great moral, the great secret of my life, is this: I have first of all been convinced of the soundness of my intentions; I have held decided views; I have never entered upon a single act of importance without first placing it under the guidance of Heaven, as Hezekiah went up into the Temple and spread the letter before the Lord. And then I have gone forward, nothing doubting. Paul may plant and Apollos may water in vain, if they trust to their own strength. That has been my rule and conviction through life. I have constantly endeavoured to have no will of my own; no personal ends and aims and prejudices; but to obey the great Master, whose I am and Whom I serve."

Here Delormais rapidly sketched his life in the Church. He described every office he had held in succession; the difficulties he had contended with; the evils he had suppressed; the reforms he had made; the manner in which he had once fought with and at length convinced the Consistory of Rome. Through all he spoke with the utmost humility, recognising himself an agent, not a principal to whom any credit was due.

Over this portion of his life we draw a discreet veil. It was disclosed under secrecy. Partly to prevent identification; partly because other names were inevitably introduced, some of which were as household words in the world of the French Church.

The time had passed unconsciously. There was a singular charm and attraction about Delormais. His fine presence and high breeding, his animated way of talking and graphic powers of description, all carried you beyond yourself. Everything was forgotten but the man before you. For the moment you were lost in the scenes he portrayed so vividly. Underlying all, running through all like a fine silken warp, his sympathetic nature was evident. Strong, decided, commanding, loving to rule, he was yet singularly lovable. When was this ever otherwise where sympathy was the keynote of the disposition? He was a man to come to for advice and consolation. Broad-minded above all the small views and judgments of human nature, if he chastised with the one hand, he took care to heal with the other. No one need dread his condemnation. We had been so recently under the influence of both men it was impossible to help contrasting this strong, admirable nature with the calm, retiring, almost celestial beauty of Anselmo: each perfect in its way. We mentioned him to Delormais as a type.

"Ay, I know him well," he replied: "have known him always. The Canon who was his protector and left him a portion of his wealth, was one of my few intimate friends. A purer spirit than Anselmo's never breathed. He might be advanced to high places in the Church, but is better and happier where he is. In all

my wide experiences I have never met his equal. Of course I know his story, and his love for Rosalie—hers for him: an idyll almost too perfect for earth. I know her well also, and all her saintliness. Such love and faith are rare: a consistency worth all the sermons that ever were preached. How different was my fevered love from theirs; my rash, unreflecting impulse in that Algerian paradise. And yet, Heaven be praised, nothing but good came of it. All is ordained; all is for the best if only our heart's desire is to do well. All comes right in the end. I have never known it otherwise. If ever I feel in the slightest degree discouraged, if ever my faith in human nature is unduly tried, I immediately think of these two saintly people, and courage revives."

Once more he paused, and seemed lost in thought. Whether it was given to Anselmo and Rosalie, or whether to retrospection, we could not tell. The clock ticked its faint warning of the passing of time. All else was profound silence. But he soon roused himself to the present, and again turned to us with an expression in which humour was mixed with kindliness.

"And now," said Delormais, with that peculiar smile that had puzzled us at the beginning of our interview, "I am going to surprise you. Life is full of the strangest coincidences and combinations, which would be laughed to scorn in fiction. It is the unexpected which happens. You remarked some time ago that my palace would be known as a shining light, if I ever were made a bishop. I shall never be made a bishop," he laughed, "and for this reason."

Here he quietly took an official-looking document out of a capacious side pocket, and placed it in our hands. It was an intimation of his elevation to the See of X.—— a place we knew by heart, and loved.

"Can this be true?" we asked in perplexity.

"It is indeed," laughed Delormais. "So you see I cannot be made a bishop, for I am one already; though not duly enthroned. You will have to be present at that ceremony. I am not surprised. I knew it was coming, though I could not tell the exact day and hour. It reached me only this evening. And you are the first to whom I have told it."

"Then," we replied, rising and making him a profound bow, "let us be the first to greet you by your title, *Monseigneur*. The first to wish you all honour and success in that high office Heaven has destined you to fill."

"Nay," he returned; "Monseigneur to others it may be; but to you it shall be ever *mon ami*. For with your permission I intend our acquaintance to ripen into friendship. You shall come and visit the old Bishop in his palace. We will make it a shining light together. The oftener you come, the longer you stay, the more welcome you will be. You know that X. is surrounded by antiquities, endless monuments of interest. Amidst these attractions you will feel at home. Your visits will not be a mere sacrifice to friendship."

"You are sketching a delightful picture. Will it ever be realised?"

"That only depends upon yourself," laughed Delormais. "The Bishop has not to be made, nor the palace to be built; the guest-chamber awaits you with the blue skies and balmy airs of spring. Of all appointments it is the one I would have chosen. A life of activity, of responsibility and usefulness; a wide sphere of action; opportunities for doing much good in public, still more in private. The latter brings the greater blessing."

"You are a wonderful man," we could not help exclaiming. "Your life ought to be written. We should love to make it known to the world."

"You shall become my biographer," laughed Delormais, "if you will undertake it in French. Do what you will with what I have told you to-night. Only keep to yourself all my ecclesiastical history. That is sacred and private, at any rate as long as I am living. For the rest, change names and dates only sufficiently to prevent recognition. Not that it would matter. My life is my own, as I have said. And not that I have anything to conceal. My faults, follies and indiscretions have been those of impulse; of the head, not of the heart, I would fain believe. I cannot remember the time when I did not at least wish to do well. Of evil men and deliberate sin I have ever had a wholesome horror. But all and everything by God's grace, not of my own strength."

At that moment we were startled by a cry in the street: the well-known call of El sereno.

"Another watchman," cried Delormais. "What is the hour?"

We had not thought of time. A few months earlier and the sun would long have been up. Want of space prevents our giving more than a mere outline of Delormais' life. He filled in an infinite number of details impossible to be recorded here. They would swell to a volume, but a volume of singular interest. He spoke rapidly and with few pauses. Our watches marked the hour of five. It was that period of the night when darkness is greatest before dawn. The watchman's voice cried the hour and the starry night for the last time.

"For your own sake I must break up the assembly," laughed Delormais. "Two hours' sleep will refresh us both. Presently we shall meet again. See! our candles wax dim and blue—or is it fancy? This is a ghostly house, you know. My great-grandmother was Spanish, and for all I can tell some of its ancestors and mine may have met here in times long past and played out their comedies and tragedies together. As we are playing ours."

We parted. Sleep came to us, but scarcely unconsciousness. In our dreams we lived over again all the scenes Delormais had so graphically described, but more highly-coloured, full of impossible adventures. We wandered through endless groves of paradise peopled with myriads of Arouyas. Our only difficulty was to choose the fairest. Life was one long poem; time had passed into eternity. From such celestial regions we were awakened at eight o'clock by the entrance of our host with morning coffee and steaming rolls, accompanied by José bearing hot water. The latter had constituted himself our *criado* or *valet de chambre*.

"Señor," he said, "it is a cloudless morning. Our astronomer has proved a false prophet. My heart bleeds for him. I fear his glory has departed. Heaven send he does not commit suicide. Is it you, señor, who have influenced the stars against him?"

"Monsieur," said our host, putting down the tray, "your friend the poet rose with the lark—figuratively speaking, for who knows what time the lark rises in November? Taking his coffee, he went out with his umbrella shouldered à la militaire. For a poet, monsieur, your friend can put on a very defiant air, as if, like Don Quixote, he had a mind to fight with windmills. He told me he was inflated with inspiration. He was going to contemplate the Pyrenees from the Citadel, and to write a sonnet to the eyebrows of a young lady he saw last night at the opera. I confess I should have thought the eyes a finer theme. Joseph tells me it was the Señorita Costello. She is considered the great beauty of Gerona; and even in Madrid, I am told, created a profound sensation. No wonder the susceptible monsieur's heart beat fast when he beheld her. Now, señor, we leave you to enjoy your coffee and perform your toilet. His reverence, Père Delormais, sends you his greeting and hopes you have slept. I have just taken his coffee also. Contrary to his usual custom, though wide awake he was still reposing. Ah! what a great character we have there!"

Upon which the attentive deputation retired and we were left in peace.

It was indeed glorious to see the blue unclouded sky, to find the cold winds departed, summer reigning once more. How changed the aspect of Gerona. How all the wonderful colouring came out, the effects of light and shadow, under the sunshine. H. C. arrived just as we left the hotel, and together we went to the bridge where we had stood not many hours ago under the stars.

It almost seemed as though we had gone through years of experience since then. This morning everything was bright and animated. The river now flashed and sparkled and reflected brilliant, broken outlines. The old houses looked older than ever in this youthful atmosphere, but seemed warmed into life. They now appeared quite habitable, almost cheerful. The towers standing above and beyond them were pencilled against the blue sky. The very air seemed full of sun-flashes. In the boulevard the trees in the sunshine made wonderful play of light and shade upon the white houses. The arcades lost their gloom. Every one seemed to rejoice and expand. No people are so responsive to atmosphere as the Spanish. Warmth and sunshine are more necessary to them than food and sleep. They are hot-house plants.

Towards ten o'clock we made our way up the street of steps to the barracks. The scene was much the same as yesterday; conscription was not yet over. We were evidently expected, and a sentry at once conducted us to the colonel's office.

"I knew you would come," he cried, with quite an English handshake. "Your interests are not of the butterfly nature, passing with the moment. And see; here is our disconsolate widow. Now you have come, we will talk to her."

We easily recognised the forlorn mother of yesterday's little drama. She was quietly seated in a chair, her mantilla drawn closely about her, a pathetic image of grief.

"Oh, señor Colonel, it is useless," she said. "Hope is dead and my heart broken. Heaven has seen fitting to afflict me at all points. I have lost my husband, my position; I am poor and in misery; my eldest son turns out a disgrace; my remaining consolation is torn from me by the cruel conscription. Nothing is left for me but to die."

"This is quite wrong," returned the colonel, pretending a severity he did not feel. "Heaven is merciful. Brighter days will dawn for you if you are patient. You will see that conscription is a blessing, not a curse. It will make a man of your boy. Discipline is good for all. It is just what he needed. He will return to you strong and vigorous; able and willing to make a home for you. I promise to make him my special charge. He shall be always about me. I will give him all the favour possible, and will keep a constant eye upon him. Heaven permitting, he shall return to you, not spoilt or lowered, but mentally and physically improved. In the meantime—I have been making enquiries—I have found you a position where you can honourably earn your living; where you will be comfortable and respected; and if you will only look at the best side of things, happy also. What do you say to it?"

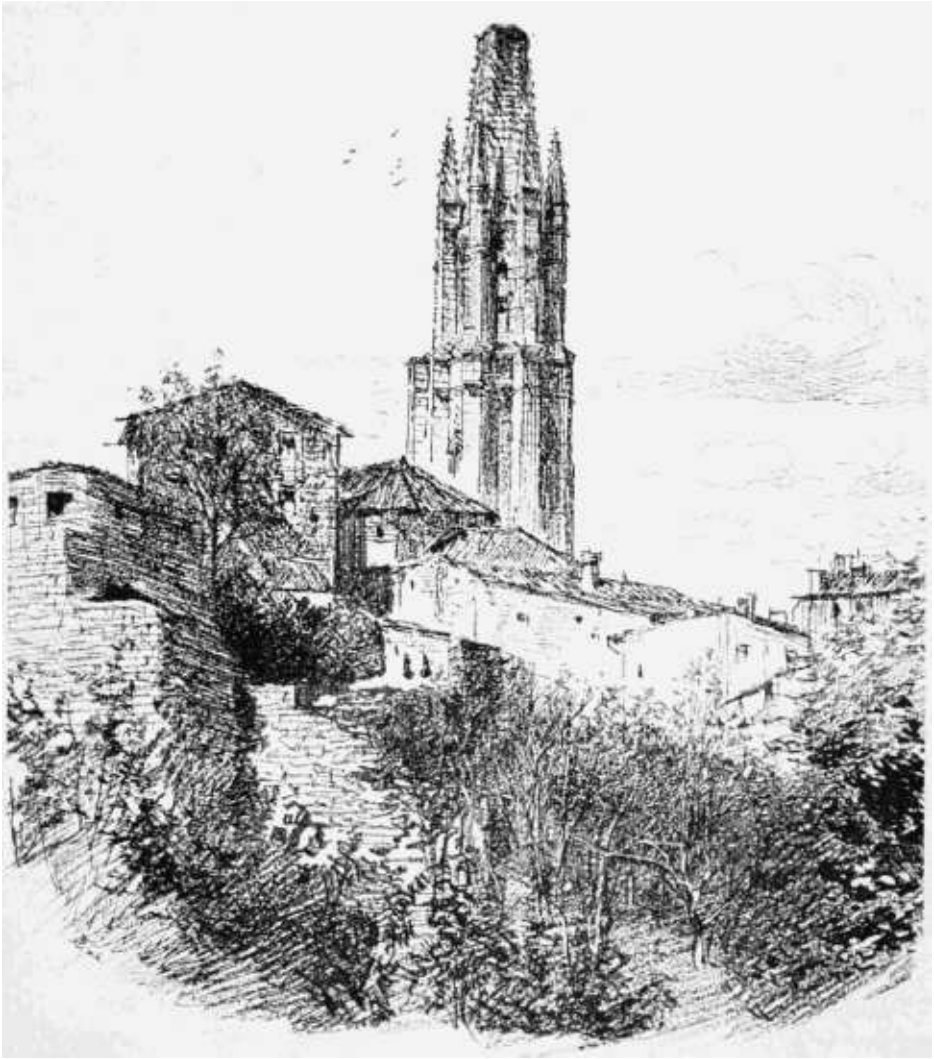
Here he described the nature of the proposed occupation. The poor lady burst into tears.

"Heaven reproves me for my ingratitude by showering mercies upon me," she cried. "Hope once more kindles within me. This is the one thing for which I am fitted. Ah, colonel! it is you who have brought back life and hope to my despairing heart."

"Nay," he returned, "I am merely the humble instrument, as we all are, carrying out the purposes of Heaven. But I exact one thing of you. Cease to be sad: let hope and energy return; carry out your daily

tasks heartily; and make up your mind that life still has much in store for you."

The change was already apparent. A drooping, grief-stricken woman had entered the office; one with hope and energy and patient waiting revived left it.



SAN FILIU, FROM WITHOUT THE WALLS: GERONA.

"Life is full of such sorrows," said the colonel. "Unfortunately we cannot reach a millionth part of them. In this case help has been made strangely easy. It is so seldom that the wish to aid and the power go together. Let us now take a turn in your favourite cloisters."

Reposing under the blue skies, in the strong light and shade thrown by the sunshine, they were even more beautiful and effective than yesterday. In presence of their colonel, the men kept at a respectful distance. They were all occupied in the same way; drawing water from the well, mending clothes, running to and fro; some diligently doing nothing. All seemed happy and contented.

"And they are so," said the colonel. "To a large number the change is infinitely better in every way. They all find their own level. Those of the better class discover each other, soon fraternise, and form themselves into cliques. Youth is the age of friendship and enthusiasm. Even these have their popes and go in for hero-worship. Life has its charms for them. Yes," looking around, "no doubt these cloisters have a beauty of their own. They influence me more to-day than ever before. I think you would convert me in time," he laughed; "widen my interests and enlarge my sympathies. You see, to me they are mere military barracks. The men come first, and you will admit that they are not romantic. Plant these cloisters in the midst of a desert, and no doubt I should be duly impressed with their refined atmosphere."

We left them and stood at the head of the long flight of steps, admiring the picturesque scene. To-day everything was radiant with light and sunshine. The very crowd outside the Conscription-house looked more hopeful. Even misfortune was less depressing under such blue skies. The wonderful houses to our right, in their deep lights and shadows, looked more rare and more artistic than ever. The ancient red roofs of the town sloping downwards were deep and glowing. Many a gable stood out vividly, many a dormer window and lattice pane seemed on fire as it reflected in crimson flashes the rays of the ascending sun.

We reluctantly said good-bye to our colonel. These passing episodes, possessing all the charm of the unexpected, are one of the delights of travel. But they leave behind them a regret, for too often there can be no renewal of the intimacy. Yet we realise that the world holds many pleasant people, and that life is too short for all its possibilities.

"If you ever visit Gerona again," he said, with a final hand-shake, "you will come and see me. If I am no longer quartered here, find out where I am, send me a telegram, and follow quickly. May we meet again!"

Then we took our winding way up to the cathedral.

The fine square was in full sunshine. Deep lights and shadows lay upon cathedral and palace. The house in which Alvarez once lived looked as though human tragedy had never touched it. A golden glow lay on the grey stone, restoring its lost youth. The ancient windows with their wonderful ironwork, seemed kindled into life, ready to reveal a thousand secrets of the dead-and-gone centuries. There was no gloom and mystery to-day. The long, magnificent flight of steps were in full sunshine also. Sunshine lay upon the town with its clustering roofs; flashed here and there upon the surface of the winding river; gilded the snow-tops of the far-off Pyrenees. The skies were blue and laughing; all nature was radiant.

We passed through the west doorway into the cathedral.

Even here there was a change. The dim religious light might still be felt; nothing could take that away. A sense of vastness and grandeur still lay upon the splendid nave; a feeling of mystery still haunted pillars and aisles and arches, and the deep recesses of the east end. But to-day shafts of wonderful light flowed in, redeeming all from the faintest suspicion of gloom. Rainbow-coloured beams from the upper windows fell athwart the nave in rich prismatic streams. Beautiful as the interior had been yesterday, it was yet more so this morning. These shafts of light piercing the semi-darkness created a marvellous effect of contrast, adding infinitely to the charm of the lovely building.

There was no mistaking the tall slender figure that approached us with its quiet grace. It was Anselmo, his face lighted up with its rare smile.

"We meet again," he said, in tones subdued to the sacred spot on which we stood. "And yesterday I know that you met and conversed with Rosalie. As we went together this morning to the bedside of a dear maiden whose days are numbered, she told me of your encounter. I am glad. Now you know us both and will keep us together in your memory. You must have seen that she is more angel than woman walking the earth. I often wonder how all her deep affection, purified and exalted, can be given to one so unworthy. You smile! You think ours a strange history, we a singular pair. I suppose it is so. Ours must be almost a unique experience; and I believe that to few in this world is given the peace and happiness we enjoy."

Talking, we passed on to the cloisters, lovelier than ever in their brilliant light and shade. Once more we went through the north doorway and gazed down upon San Pedro, the desecrated church, the ancient town walls, and ruined citadel crowning the slopes. Sunshine everywhere; hope upon all; the gloomy

skies of yesterday forgotten; earth seemed many degrees nearer heaven. We climbed down into the narrow streets and found Miguel at his door waiting to give us a morning salutation.

"The photograph, señor. Is it a success?"

We told him that still lay in the uncertain future.

Again we found ourselves seated upon the ruined citadel. It was difficult to realise all the horrors of that long past invasion under the influence of these glorious skies, the gladness of this laughing sunshine. The air was scented with wild thyme. The outlines of the towers stood out wonderfully; the blue of heaven shone through the open work of San Filiu's lovely steeple. All the sunshine glinted upon the leaves of the trees in the hollow and traced patterns in the hanging gardens.

"How beautiful it all is," said Anselmo. "On such days how thin the veil separating the seen from the unseen. Our vision seems only just withholden. What an awakening it will be to the higher life!"

With him, also, we had to part; a yet more reluctant farewell than that lately gone through at the barracks. But we hoped to meet again. This must not be our only visit to Gerona; and here Anselmo wished to live and die. He had no ambition for a higher destiny, though even this, it has lately been whispered to us, may one day come to him without change of scene.

We parted as friends part, not mere acquaintances of a day. There is, we have said, a magnetic power that bridges over time and conventionality. As in dreams we sometimes live a lifetime in a moment, so in friendship an hour may do the work of years. Again the clock struck twelve; Anselmo's signal. History repeats itself. To-day he went alone, leaving us standing amidst the ruins. We watched him as he climbed the rugged heights of the cathedral, a tall, dark, graceful figure upon the landscape. At the north doorway he turned, gazed steadily at us for a few moments, raised his hands as though in benediction, and the next moment was lost to sight.

A glory appeared to depart; the spot seemed emptier without him; there was less brightness in the sunshine. We hastened to change the scene, and in the lively streets of the fair, to disperse the sad current of our thoughts. For our hours in Gerona the beautiful were numbered.

CHAPTER XII.

A MINISTERING SPIRIT.

Sweet illusions—Everything seen and done—True devotion—In the vortex—Sunshine and blue skies—Less demon-like pit—Lights and shadows—Arcades lose their gloom—Rosalie—Charm of Anselmo—Romance not dead—H. C. in ecstasy—Escorting an angel—Cathedral steps—San Filiu—A lovely spot—Ancient house—Mullions and latticed windows—Passing away—Rosalie's ministrations—Resignation—Rosalie's farewell—"Consuelo"—Taken from the evil to come—The door closed—Ernesto's world topsy-turvy—Ernesto turns business-like—The catapult again—Up the broad staircase—Not the ghostly hour—Madame in her bureau—Posting ledger—Balance on right side—Madame philosophises—Shrieks to the rescue—"My dear daughter"—Our host and the nightingales—Waiting for next year's leaves—The Señorita Costello—Delormais on the wing—Another vigil—Promise given—Departure—Inspector quails—H. C. collapses—The susceptible age—Lady Maria alters her will—Possession nine-tenths of the law.

It was not an unmixed sorrow. At sunrise the next morning preparations for the cattle fair must commence. By mid-day bipeds and quadrupeds would rule the town, our beautiful palace find itself desecrated. In its present half-deserted condition an air of refinement and antiquity hung over it. One felt, almost saw and heard, the great crowd of cavaliers and dames, besacked and besworded, that had passed up and down the broad marble staircase in the picturesque and romantic Middle Ages. All the ghosts and ghostly sighs and shadows lurking in secret corners, halls and corridors, would vanish before the vulgar herd. Under this influence Gerona the beautiful would become intolerable; better leave with impressions and sweet illusions undisturbed.

And little remained. Everything had been seen, everything done. We had said farewell to Anselmo, then plunged into the vortex of the fair, where noise, crowd and confusion fought with each other. Sunshine and blue skies were having their usual effect upon the Spanish people. Every one was in high spirits, inclined to patronise booths, monkeys, and fortune-tellers.

A GERONA PATIO.

Every hour spent in the ancient town strengthened our devotion. This old-world atmosphere, these marvellous outlines lost nothing by familiarity. Standing once more on the bridge we confessed how difficult it would be to look upon such a scene again. To-day, under the sunshine the chestnut-roasters appeared less demon-like, the bed of the river less a bottomless pit. A little of the weird element had departed. The sense of mystery so strongly felt last night could not live in this brilliant atmosphere.

By way of compensation the deep lights and shadows appealed to the imagination quite as strongly as any sense of mystery. They filled the air with life and motion. The trees rustled and gleamed and glinted and drew moving pictures upon the white houses. Arcades lost their gloom, but not their charm, and these

apart from all else raise Gerona far above the rank of any ordinary town. As we left the fair and turned into the quieter streets, it seemed almost a natural consequence that from one of the deep round arches there glided the quiet, graceful form of Rosalie. She had foretold that we should meet again.

"But for the last time, Rosalie," as she greeted us with her rare sweet smile. "We leave this evening. Time presses, and we would avoid to-morrow's ceremony."

"They are terrible days," returned Rosalie. "No wonder you escape them. Until they are over we keep as far as possible out of sight. You have seen Anselmo to-day, señor?"

"Yes, and wished him farewell. It was a sad moment. He alone has repaid us for our visit to Gerona. We should like to spend many days here and know him more intimately."

"Days of profit, if I may venture to say so, señor. The more you saw Anselmo, the more you would love him. It is every one's experience. Apart from his saintliness, you cannot tell on a slight acquaintance how much there is in him. His is not the goodness of a weak but of a strong nature; intellectually strong; but so refined and unambitious that to an ordinary observer it may seem passive. He is of a different order from Père Delormais, who is full of action and energy, and does so much and does all well. But Delormais was born to great things; they are his of inheritance. Anselmo had not these privileges."

"The greater merit, Rosalie; but we think you count for very much in his life. He has kept you before him, and your image has inspired him to deeper holiness."

"Ah, no, señor. Rather is it the other way. He has been my guide and king, as I told you yesterday. Anselmo is above all earthly mortals, all human aid. But you will meet him again and know him better. This your first visit to Gerona will not be your last. Few people come here, but those who do always return. I think of it as a place apart, possessing ideal beauties, a separate atmosphere. And for me," she smiled, "everything seems imbued with the charm of Anselmo. The bells ring out his name; I hear it in the song of the birds, the whispering of the trees. Romance is not dead within me because I am Sister Anastasia."

Here H. C. struck in, unable to contain himself any longer.

"If I were here very long," he cried excitedly, "I should fall madly in love with you myself, and write reams of poetry to your lovely eyes. I have never seen such eyes. They have all the light of heaven in them, and—and—all the beauty of earth."

Rosalie laughed.

"You are very outspoken, señor. I could have told you were a poet from your look. But you must exercise your genius on a worthier theme. On me it would be wasted; my life, all I have, all I am, is dedicated to Heaven. Time is passing. Will you not go with me on my way that I may show you one of the loveliest spots in Gerona?"

So Rosalie walked through the quiet old-world streets with an escort on either side. We felt we were attending an angel. H. C. did not attempt to conceal his rapture. It is a weakness of which he seems unconscious. Rosalie pointed out many a house in which she had ministered; here soothing the pillow of the dying, there rescuing one from the grasp of death. Under her guidance the streets seemed more beautiful than ever; a holier atmosphere surrounded them.

At length we reached the wonderful steps leading to the cathedral. They were flooded with sunlight and

gave dignity to the ugly west front, so unworthy of the splendid interior. Passing under the fine old gateway and turning to the left, we found ourselves close to the old church of San Filiu. In days gone by, when the Moors captured Gerona and changed its cathedral into a mosque, the Christians had worshipped here. Whatever its interior at that time, it is now dark, gloomy and depressing.

Rosalie entered a quiet street beyond, a short narrow turning of only a few yards, then halted.

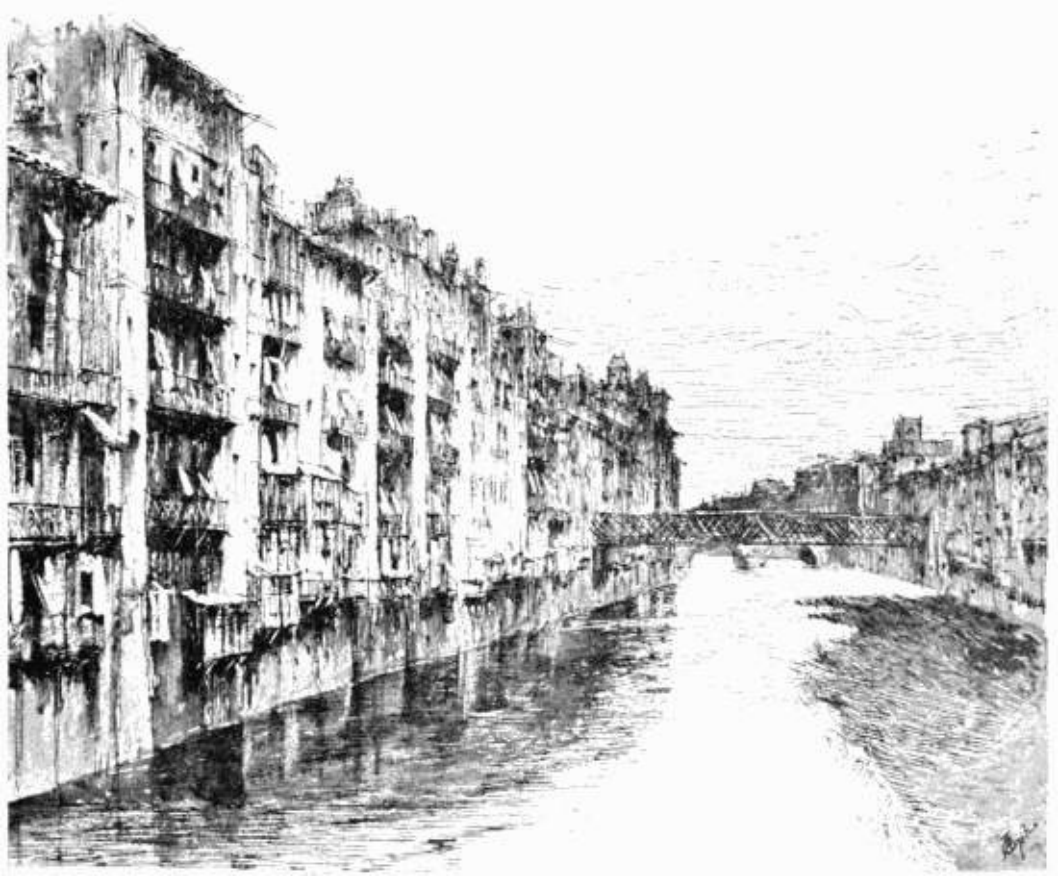
It was, as she had said, one of the loveliest spots in Gerona; so hidden that few would find it by chance. A small house of great antiquity but perfectly preserved. An exquisite Gothic archway over which the house was built led into a small quadrangle. Beside this archway was a mullioned window with latticed panes. We imagined the quaint old room within and longed to enter. Above this was another latticed window with Gothic mullions and ornaments. It was open, and sweet-scented flowers threw their perfume upon the air. This was crowned by a sloping roof with red tiles bearing all the tone and beauty of age. At least three centuries must have rolled over them unmolested. Even H. C. forgot the charms of Rosalie and became enthusiastic in favour of still life.

"It is my destination," said Rosalie. "I was hastening here yesterday when you saw me crossing the square of San Pedro. Where those lovely flowers are scenting the air, a lovelier earthly flower is passing away. Consumption is doing its work. The only child of a mother who will soon have no tie left on earth. So Heaven sometimes sees well to draw our souls upwards. There are those who need this discipline. Trouble, like everything else, enters into the wise economy of God's purposes. I doubt if a single unnecessary care or pain is dealt out to us. But here the hand of affliction is charged with a heavy burden. The invalid is a fair maiden of seventeen, pure and beautiful. Her resignation is a gift from heaven, a lesson to us all. But for that I don't know what would become of the mother."

As she spoke a face appeared at the window above the flowers; the sweet gentle face of a middle-aged woman, pale and pathetic, to which the mantilla added grace and charm. There was a look of patient sorrow in the dark eyes, lightened by a momentary gleam as they caught sight of Rosalie.

"Sister Anastasia," said the subdued woman, "the sun is not more true to its course than you to your hour. My child hungers for you. Next to her mother you are her only consolation."

"I come, I come," replied Sister Anastasia. "Tell Rosita that in my bag I bring her refreshment for the mind and food for the soul. Ah, señor, this is indeed farewell, since you tell me your moments in Gerona are numbered. The sun shines, the skies are blue, let these be an omen of your life until we meet again. For by the love you bear Anselmo—you must love him; we all love him—you must return. He will be here and so shall I. We shall probably see no change until Heaven calls us to the great change of all. This fair child above will have passed away, and the mother's heart will be desolate. But Heaven that brings the sorrow will heal the wound. Adieu señor. Adieu."



OLD HOUSES ON THE RIVER: GERONA.

She glided through the archway and on the other side gained admittance to the house. The door opened to receive her, a quiet voice was heard in greeting. "You are an angel of light," it said. "Your new name should have been Consuelo. But, oh, Anastasia, my child is worse. I fear me a few days will see the ending, and I shall be lonely and desolate upon earth. Why did Heaven take the child and spare the mother?"

"God knows best," returned Anastasia. "Let His will be done. Be sure He who deals the blow will not forsake you. Your child is spared the sorrows of earth. You will think of her as in safe keeping; taken from the evil to come."

We heard no more. The door was closed. Let us leave Rosalie in her true element, a ministering spirit shedding abroad more happiness and consolation, more holy influence, than she at all realised; doing all with that unconscious modesty which was one of her greatest gifts. The picture of that last interview remains vividly in our memory. A little mediæval old house that has scarce its equal in Gerona; the flowers behind the latticed panes and the sad, subdued face appearing above them; Rosalie's eyes looking up in all their loveliness with an expression of almost divine sympathy.

We went our way, richer for having known her. It was our last look upon these cathedral precincts. The afternoon shadows were lengthening as we went back through the quiet streets to the hotel. All the brilliant glory of the day had departed. These repeated farewells were depressing, yet not quite over, for as we approached the Fonda who should be standing at their own door but Ernesto and his mother. We had not met them since the previous day when they had disappeared within the lion's den, and we had gone round to the reeds and the river.

"Ernesto! how is this? Why are you not at school?"

"School, señor!" opening very wide eyes. "Fair week is holiday. We should have a revolution if they

attempted school upon us. For this one week in the year we change places with our fathers and mothers, pastors and teachers. They obey and we command."

"We congratulate you on this topsy-turvy state of things. But as you are strong be merciful. Remember that Black Monday comes. Cinderella went back to her rags at midnight; you must go back to school and good work. And the monkeys? You are still at large; we feared the opposite, as you had not brought us your report."

"Oh! I brought it, señor; but it was rather late, and Señor Lasoli said you were at the opera. You should have seen the monkeys!" And here he went off into convulsions at the recollection of the performance. "They couldn't understand what was inside the lozenges to bite their tongues so! First they would take a nibble, then rub the lozenge on the arm; then another nibble; then a whole torrent of monkey-swearing and lozenge-rubbing because it kept on biting and burning. I quite thought I should die with laughing."

From the way he laughed now, it seemed doubtful whether all danger was over.

"But that is not the worst, señor," said the mother, at length making herself heard. "Will you believe that the boy has a wretched catapult in his pocket, and there will be any number of broken windows and assassinated cats in the town. I don't know what will become of us. If there is one thing I dread more than another, it is a catapult. They are the implements of the devil."

"There is absolutely no fear," laughed Ernesto. "I never broke a window in my life—at least, hardly ever. As for cats, they are quite outside the law of murder. A dead cat is as rare as a dead donkey. Are you really going to-day, señor? Then I shall have no more pleasure in the fair, though this year it is better than usual. The lions roared like thunder, and the monkeys accepted all the lozenges. They were punished for their greediness. But will you come back to spend a whole month at Gerona? And if you allowed me, I would take you to some of the excursions in the neighbourhood. There are any number within twenty miles; ruined churches and deserted monasteries. I don't care much about them myself, but I know many who do. It seems to me that a good show and a handful of chestnuts are worth all the wretched old ruins in the world."

In spite of this vandalism, we assured Ernesto that when we spent a month in Gerona he should have the honour of escorting us, provided it was not school-time. He wished to bind us to a given date, thereby showing a decided talent for business, but we refused to be committed to the inevitable. We left mother and son together, a picture of domestic happiness. As we disappeared under the archway of the hotel, Ernesto held up his catapult in triumph, successfully parrying his mother's attempt to obtain possession of the forbidden weapon. She evidently looked upon it as only one degree below an infernal machine.

Once more up the broad marble staircase. But it was not the ghostly hour, and sighs and rustlings and shadows were in the land of the unseen. Madame in her bureau looked the picture of massive contentment. At this moment she was posting a ledger, and the balance was evidently on the right side.

MARKET PLACE: GERONA.

"As it need be, for they worked hard enough for their living," she assured us. "She couldn't tell how it was; no one would think from her size that she never relaxed in her exertions. Do what she would, she could not get thin. As for her husband, she made him eat all the richest bits at dinner; never allowed him to fast; supplied him with eggs and butter and beer *ad libitum*. No; he was obstinate. He *would* keep thin. The consequence was they were a ridiculous couple. She was the Duomo at Florence, he was the Campanile. However, they made the best of it. Life was too short to grieve over inevitable troubles. Clearly she was an inevitable. When she was a girl, there were five ladies who might be seen walking out morning, noon, and night, and always together. Go which way you would you were sure to meet them. They knew every one, and five perpetual bows were everlastingly see-sawing like a wound-up machine going through its performance. They were called the Inevitables. No one ever thought of them by any other name. They were quite aware of it and rather liked it. It was something to be in constant evidence. What other five sisters would live together in such harmony? Well, these five ladies were for ever running in her head. For a long time past she had felt like all five ladies rolled into one. She was one great Inevitable. Fate was a little cruel. Her movements might be compared to those of the elephant. As for her husband, he could still run up and down stairs like a lamplighter—almost pass through a keyhole—but it took her five minutes to get up a dozen steps. Soon it would take her ten. And then she wanted pulling up in front and pushing up behind. It was quite a ceremony. She had serious thoughts of having a crane and pulley adjusted to her windows, and of being hoisted up and down, but the question was whether a hempen rope would bear her weight, or anything under a cast-iron chain. Was it true that Queen Victoria was carried wherever she went, because she suffered from rheumatism? Ah! it was a great thing to be a queen. No ledgers to post up; no anxiety as to whether the balance would be on the right side at the end of every month. What a blessing to have a good, solid, comfortable margin at one's bankers to draw upon for

contingencies, which was only another word for the unexpected. This year it was painting inside, next year painting outside. If there was no painting, it was chairs, tables or linen. The extras went on for ever and swallowed up all the profits."

We thought the old lady, like the extras, would also have gone on for ever, but to our infinite relief a piercing shriek was heard from an upper region. Madame turned pale and mildly echoed the scream.

"My dear daughter!" she cried. "Something has frightened her, or she is suddenly taken worse. She is always being taken worse, though worse from what I cannot possibly imagine. Sometimes I think it is fancy or hysteria. She is really perfectly well all the time."

At this moment the mysterious daughter appeared upon the scene, running downstairs at a speed that testified to the soundness of her limbs, whatever her state of nerves.

"A dreadful mouse," she moaned, throwing herself into her mother's capacious protection. "It ran right over my feet, across the room, and went into my little cupboard."

"Perhaps you have some cake there?" said this sensible mamma.

"A mere fragment," acknowledged the daughter.

"Poor little mouse," said the mother soothingly. "It is hungry, perhaps, and fond of cake. My dear, it will eat cake; it will not eat you."

We caught sight of our industrious host in his garden surveying his possessions, and escaped. The cook stood in his doorway in white cap and apron, a satisfactory object in all hotels. Over the slanting tiled roof grew the fruitful vine, a picture of beauty. Our host, surrounded by his birds and pigeons, was vainly imploring the nightingales to sing. They only looked at him with their little black eyes, opened their beaks, shook their heads, and said as plainly as possible that the song had left them. It would return with next year's leaves and garlands, more glorious for the rest.

"I should have liked you to hear them," said their proud owner in quite a melancholy voice. "You would have thought yourselves in Italy, as I often do."

"Or on the Rhine, or the Blue Moselle, or the Dauphiné Alps, Señor Lasoli, where the nightingales assemble in myriads, and sing and rave night and day through the weeks of spring. We have heard them."

"They are more beautiful near water," said our host. "The song gains volume and vibration by being carried across. But I have chiefly heard them in our woods on the Mediterranean shores. France to me is a sealed book. So, señor, you leave us, and I cannot even wish you to remain. To-morrow you would not be in your element. Gerona will be out of joint until we settle down again to our normal condition. I trust you will one day return, and that your friend will write an epic poem in honour of our town. It would certainly be translated and might be dedicated to the Señorita Costello. He would be fêted on his arrival; fireworks, illuminations, and municipal addresses. The hubbub of conscription would be nothing to it. At five o'clock, señor, the omnibus will be at your service."

As we went through the haunted corridors to our rooms, Delormais came up the marble staircase, apparently somewhat hurried.

"We are both on the wing," he cried, "and so I the less regret your going. I thought to have stayed until to-morrow, but sudden news compels me to leave to-night. Summoned to Rome, I must obey. I know that I

have a battle before me, and also know that I shall win. Conquering as a humble Vicar of Rheims, I shall not do less as Bishop of X. You will see me dismissed with a Cardinal's hat, an honour I would not cross the road to obtain, so little do I care for the pomps of the world. With such models before me as my father and mother and the good old Abbé, one feels that the only thing worth living for is to do good and cultivate the graces of the spirit."

We were in his room, scene of last night's vigil, where he had sketched an outline of his life and the hours had passed unconsciously.

"Another night of vigil, but without companionship," said Delormais. "On the contrary, time will only place distance between us. You go southward, I northward into France, reaching my destination about two o'clock to-morrow afternoon. Would that I might accompany you to Barcelona and gaze with you upon the wonders of that loveliest of cathedrals. Again I say that the Catalonian cathedrals are the glories of Spain. But my own has its charms, and those at least we shall often see together. I have your promise?"

We gave it unconditionally, in this instance not fearing to commit ourselves to a given date. Delormais was a man whose friendship was a privilege and whose sympathy and conversation made all days a delight. We parted, hoping to meet again.

Not long after this the omnibus rattled out of the courtyard, and our host intimated that time was up.

The sun had set, darkness had fallen when we clattered through the quiet streets. Passing the deep, round arcades we looked out for Rosalie, but no light, graceful figure speeding on its errand of mercy appeared. The arcades were again mysterious and impenetrable. We turned on to the bridge and for the last time looked upon the scene as the omnibus rattled on. All down the boulevard booths were on active service. Torches flared and still the crowd sauntered to and fro. The river flowed on its way, and all the outlines of those wonderful old-world houses were faintly visible. We knew them by heart now, and they were almost as real to us by night as by day.

The station once more. Only forty-eight hours had passed since we had struggled across that crowded platform, but we had gone through so many experiences, heard and seen so much, that many days seem to have flown. When we thought of Delormais it was impossible to realise we had not known him for years, visited his early home, joined in his travels. The father and mother, still the objects of his undying affection, the old Abbé in whom he delighted, had become personal friends by his vivid descriptions.

Reflections were suddenly put to flight as the omnibus brought up with a jerk that almost landed H. C. once more on his knees. The station crowd was small compared with that previous crowd. Again we had a slight adventure with our luggage, and began to fear in earnest that we and it should never reach Barcelona together. They refused to register or have anything to do with it; luggage was never booked to Gerona by the express. One other miserably slow train left in the early morning, and the officials calmly intimated that we might wait for it.

But a worm will turn, and we felt the law must be taken into our own hands. We bade the omnibus conductor leave at his peril, made him carry our baggage through the buffet to the platform, and when the train arrived, the whole, great and small, was put into a carriage. Then we followed and mounted guard. The inspector came up and demanded an explanation, upon which H. C. put on his Napoleon air and shouldered his umbrella. He looked so much in earnest that the inspector quailed, bowed, withdrew, and gave a hasty signal for departure. Away we steamed, masters of the situation.

Then H. C.'s military aspect collapsed. He turned paler than usual. "What is it?" we asked; for his

susceptible heart is subject to spasmodic attacks. The doctors declare they are functional and not organic, and will pass away with the emotional age. Lady Maria was once terribly frightened and sent post-haste for Sir William Broadbent—though he was not Sir William at that time. The report was encouraging, but Lady Maria had received a shock. "I am sure my dear nephew will never be fit for hard work in this world," she said; "he must be made independent of it." And forthwith she sent for her man of business, and altered the paltry £200 a year she had left him into four th——. Well, well; Lady Maria is still living, and nothing on earth, they say, is certain excepting death and quarter-day. "What is it, H. C.?" we asked. "Will you take a little of the century-old——"

"No, no," he cried despondently. "I am only thinking that that inspector will be one too many for us. He looked revengeful. At Barcelona we shall find ourselves under arrest. Instead of a comfortable night at the Four Nations, we shall occupy a dark cell in the town prison."

A gloomy prospect indeed—too terrible for reality.

"Calm yourself," we replied. "You played your part too well just now. The inspector was really alarmed and glad to get rid of you at any price. If he pursued us with vengeance, we might turn up against him, like the eastern slippers. Depend upon it we have seen the last of him."

We looked round comfortably upon our possessions. With nine points of the law on our side all must be well.

CHAPTER XIII.

A WORLD'S WONDER.

Barcelona—H. C.'s anxiety—Mutual salutes—Old impressions—Disappointment—Familiar cries and scenes—Flower-sellers—Perpetual summer—Commercial element—Manchester of Spain—Surrounding country—Where care comes not—Barcelonita—The quays—A land of corn and wine—Relaxing air—Lovely ladies—Ancient element conspicuous by its absence—Historical past—Great in the Middle Ages—Wise and powerful—Commerce of the world—Wealth and learning—Waxes voluptuous—Ferdinand and Isabella—Diplomatic but not grateful—Brave and courageous—Fell before Peterborough—Napoleon's treachery—Republican people—Prosperous once more—Ecclesiastical treasures—Matchless cathedral—Inspiration—Influence of the Moors—Work of Majorcan architect—Dream world—Imposing scene.

WE made way without further let or hindrance, and about ten o'clock the train steamed into Barcelona. H. C. gazed out anxiously for a regiment of soldiers with drawn swords, and was relieved at seeing only the usual couple of policemen with guns and cocked hats, looking harmless and amiable. He smiled benignly, saluted, and they returned the compliment.

Our hearts beat quicker as we found ourselves in presence of familiar haunts. The very name conjured up a thousand scenes and pictures, every one of them a delightful recollection. From its fair port we had more than once sailed in days gone by for our beloved Majorca, loveliest of islands. Here we had spent days of pleasant expectation, waiting for the island steamer; more than once had returned with a cargo of Majorcan pigs, and after a tug-of-war seen some of the obstinate animals landed at last without their tails. Arriving from the sea was a far pleasanter way of gaining a first impression. The coast views are very fine. Approaching the harbour, church turrets and towers are outlined against the transparent sky. Passing between low reaches, the immense fortress of Montjuich, nearly a thousand feet high, rises like an impregnable rock defying the world.

Approaching to-night by train was less exciting and romantic. Still it was Barcelona, and the porters calling out the syllables in their soft Spanish set our heart beating.

It was a certain disappointment to find our favourite Four Nations—at that time one of the best hotels in Spain—closed. We had to put up with the Falcon, not by any means the same thing. It is pleasant to return to familiar quarters and people who welcome you as old habitués. The atmosphere of the Falcon was also more commercial and had no repose about it. Yet it was on the Rambla, and the next morning we awoke to the well-known cries of Barcelona, the old familiar scene.

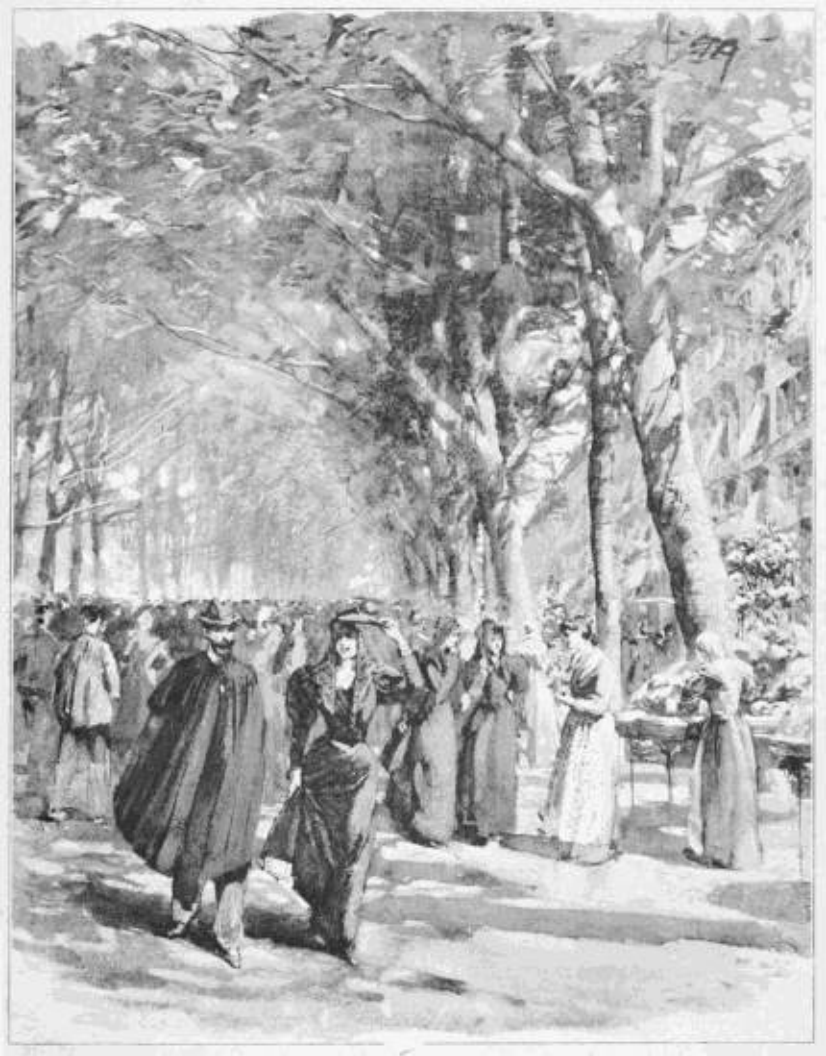
A very Spanish scene, with its broad imposing thoroughfare and double row of well-grown trees rustling in the wind, glinting in the sunshine, filling the air with music and flashes of light. As the morning went on, the broad road became more crowded. Stretching far down, under the trees, were flower-stalls full of lovely blossoms. Roses, violets and hyacinths scented the air. It was delightful to see such profusion in November; to find blue skies and balmy airs rivalling the flowers. This land of perpetual summer is highly favoured. If a cold wind arises, turning the skies to winter, it is only for a short interval. Though it be December, summer soon returns, and the sunny clime is all the lovelier by contrast.

Like the Hôtel Falcon, the element of Barcelona is, we have said, commercial. It is perhaps the most flourishing and enterprising of all the towns of Spain. There are immense ship-building yards, and all sorts of ironwork is made, but the town itself has no sign or sound of manufacturing. It has been called the Manchester of Spain, yet its skies are for ever blue, the air is clear and untainted: a peculiar brilliancy and splendour of atmosphere not often met with even in the sunny South.

The country for many miles around is beautiful and undulating; beyond the immediate hills it has often a wild and savage grandeur that sometimes reaches the sublime. Year by year the town grows in extent. Well-organised tramways carry you to and fro through endless thoroughfares. The richer merchants have built themselves streets of palatial residences that stretch away into suburbs. Few cities are so brilliantly

lighted. If Spain is a poor country, Barcelona seems to have escaped the evil. There is animation about it, perpetual movement, a quiet activity. For it is quiet with all its business and energy, and so far has the advantage over Madrid, where the commercial element was less evident but the noise infinitely greater. There people seemed to like sound for its own sake. In Barcelona they were intent upon making money, and as far as one can see, gained their object. Everything prospered. It was delightful to go down to the fine harbour and watch the vessels loading and unloading, the flags of all nations vividly contrasting with the brilliant blue sky as they flashed and fluttered in the wind. The port is magnificent. Its waters are blue as the heaven above them, and a myriad sun-gleams light up its surface. Nothing can be more exhilarating and picturesque. The faintest outline of a ship possesses a nameless charm; suggests freedom, wide seas, infinite space: speaks of enterprise, danger, and courage, yet is an emblem of absolute repose; hours and days and weeks where the world cannot reach you, and its cares and worries are non-existent.

Nowhere is the element found under more favourable conditions than in Barcelona. Few harbours are so well placed. Climb the heights for a bird's-eye view of the port, and the scene is enchanting. Low-lying shores undulate towards the mouth of the harbour; green pastures, glittering sandhills, the blue flashing sea stretch beyond. If your vision could carry so far, you might gaze upon the lovely Island of Majorca, rising like a faultless gem out of its deep blue setting of the Levant. Nothing meets the eye but the broad line of the horizon, broken here and there by a passing vessel.



THE RAMBLA: BARCELONA.

On the other side the water, beyond the shipping, lies a small new settlement of houses called Barcelonita. It is not aristocratic and is the laundry of the mother town, where dwell the ladies who undertake to rapidly bleach and destroy one's linen with unrighteous chemicals, and have earned for

Barcelona an unenviable reputation. Ship-builders and fishermen alone dispute the right of way with these women of the wash-tub. Turning back to the town, the broad thoroughfare running down a portion of the quays is lined with magnificent palms, giving it an almost Oriental aspect. At one end rises a monument to Columbus; at the other an enormous triumphal arch, combining the Oriental with the classical; the former quite the pleasanter. Everything bears witness to the well-being of Barcelona. Its quays are lined with bales of goods. Men keep tally with the monotonous sing-song one knows so well. Boxes of oranges betray themselves by their exquisite perfume, and the whole year round brings a succession of fruits. In this lovely climate the earth is abundantly productive. It is a land of corn and wine; the warm days of winter more beautiful than those of summer.

Of Barcelona this is especially true. Its climate seemed more relaxing than that of any other Spanish town. Even Valencia, so much farther south, appeared less enervating. Long walks were out of the question. All one could do was to hire one of the open carriages and drive lazily about: a luxury obtained at a trifling cost. But vehicles and drivers hardly seemed to share in the general prosperity; both appeared equally shabby, worn-out and antediluvian. Their horses looked no less forlorn.

In the afternoons the Rambla was crowded with people, strolling to and fro under the shadow of the trees. All the town seemed to close ledgers, lock up counting-houses, and turn to the very innocent pleasure of taking the air.

Ladies appeared with mantillas and fans; the younger women here as in Madrid using a distinct language of fan and eye. Large, softly flashing eyes, full of expression for the most part. H. C.'s susceptible heart had no chance of repose. His dreams were feverish and disturbed by night; his leisure moments by day devoted to love-sonnets. These lovely ladies in their first youth are certainly very captivating and poetical; and a slight touch of the voluptuous, *dolce far niente* element is a distinct characteristic of their subtle grace and charm.

In the afternoons, if the Rambla gained a charm it also lost one. The flower-stalls disappeared with their picturesque and pretty flower-sellers. Empty spaces remained, looking forlorn and neglected. Great masses of blossom that delighted the eye and scented the early morning were no more. Here the red and white camellias flourish in the open air, but are by no means given away, as they were almost given away in Valencia. Barcelona has its price for flowers as for everything else.

All this, the reader will say, belongs to the modern element. The splendid outlines of Gerona; the old-world houses, with their ancient ironwork and Gothic windows; the Anselmos, Rosalies, Delormais' of Barcelona—where were they?

Conspicuous by their absence. With the exception of a few narrow tortuous streets, Barcelona is essentially modern. Even these picturesque thoroughfares are distinguished by discomfort, a shabby air, and little beauty of outline. In the Rambla you might almost fancy yourself on a Paris boulevard. Barcelona has increased so rapidly that all the new part, including the rich suburb of Gracia—its West-End—is twice as large as the old. All its great buildings are modern; and modern, though specially bright and engaging, is the scene of its port and harbour.

Yet with few vestiges of age, Barcelona has an historical past. In both a religious and military sense, she has played her part in the annals of Spain. More than one document in the archives of Samancas holds records to her honour and glory.

Her days are said to go back to four centuries before Rome, and tradition credits Hercules with her foundation. Two hundred years later, under the Romans, it became a city, and about the year 400 A.D.

began to prosper. Tarragona was the capital when the Moors destroyed it, and Barcelona, wise in its generation, yielded to the conquerors and succeeded as chief town. In the ninth century it was ruled by a Christian chief of its own under the title of Count of Barcelona, merged later on into that of King of Aragon.

But it was in the Middle Ages that Barcelona was great, and these Middle Ages have left their mark on her ecclesiastical history. Powerful, she used her power well; rich, she spent wisely.

INTERIOR OF CORO, GERONA CATHEDRAL.

At that time, she divided with Italy the commerce of the East, practically the commerce of the world. She was the terror of the Mediterranean. Trade was her sheet-anchor. The Castilians held trade in contempt, and suffered in consequence; Barcelona, proud of her commerce, flourished. Her name was great in Europe. The city became famous for wealth and learning, a rendezvous of kings, the resort of fashion, voluptuous in its tastes. Ferdinand and Isabella especially loved it, though self-indulgence played little part in their lives. Here in 1493 they received Columbus after his famous voyage of discovery.

Yet this very connection with Castile led to the decline of Barcelona. In her policy she has never been consistent, otherwise than consistently selfish. Now and then, to keep up her prestige, she has claimed the aid of a foreign power, only to throw it off when her turn was served. Diplomacy, but not gratitude, has been her strong point—and sometimes she has overreached herself.

Nevertheless, as we have said, there are passages in her history of which she may be proud. She behaved bravely, but suffered, at the time Marlborough was gaining his victories elsewhere, when she had to fight Spain and France single-handed—for Barcelona, it will be remembered, formed part of an

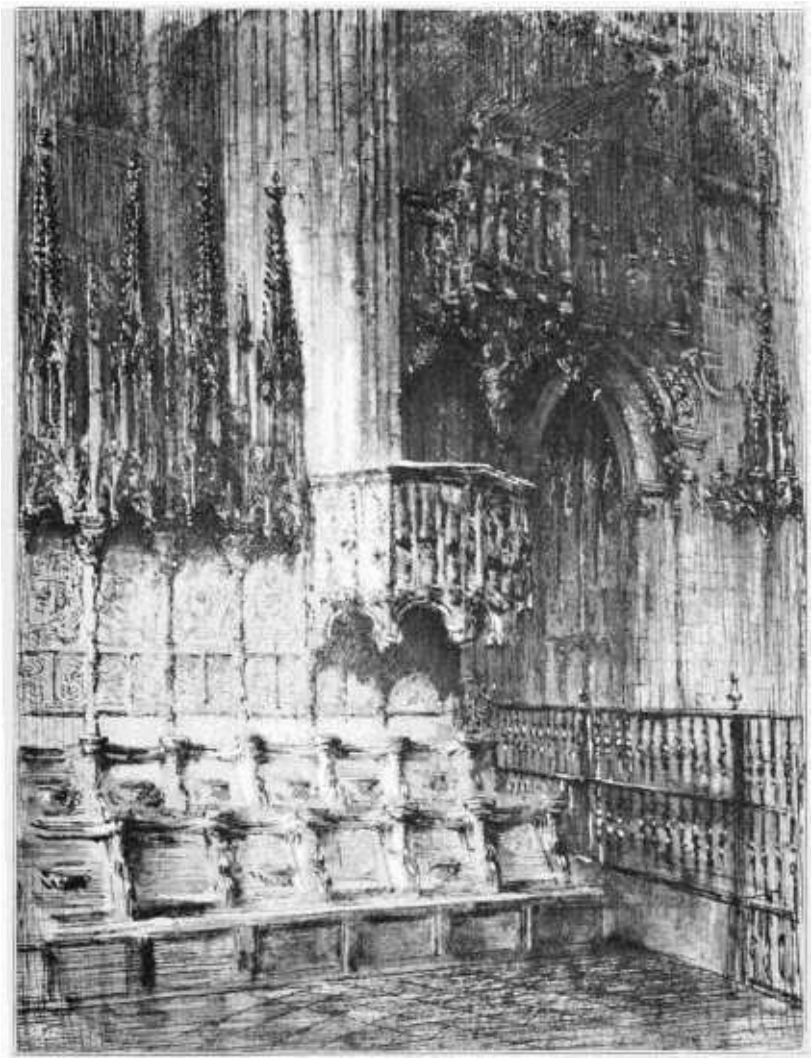
independent kingdom. Louis XIV. sent Berwick with 40,000 men to the rescue of Philip V., and an English fleet under Wishart blockaded them. Against this formidable array, Barcelona acted with courage, but the foe was strong. She fell; was sacked, burnt, and lost her privileges. In the War of Succession, in 1795, her almost impregnable fort was taken by Lord Peterborough—one of the great captures of modern times. But she arose again and kept her prosperity until Napoleon obtained possession of her by treachery in 1808, when Duhesme, entering with 11,000 men as a pretended ally, took the Citadel. Napoleon looked upon Barcelona as the key of Spain, and considered it practically impregnable.

Of the beauty of her site there can be only one opinion, but she is, and always has been, very Republican. That her people are noisy, turbulent, riotous, they have clearly shown of late years. In any revolt she would be ready to take the lead. Should the kingly power ever fall in Spain, Barcelona will be amongst the first to hoist the red flag. Though no longer the terror of the Mediterranean, she seems to have regained more than her former prosperity, and on a safer basis than of old. In 1868 one of the last vestiges of antiquity—the town walls—disappeared to make way for the modern element.

But if the streets of Barcelona are modern, and to some extent uninteresting, the same cannot be said of her churches. She is rich in ecclesiastical treasures. Catalonia has a style of architecture as marked as it is pre-eminently her own. If her churches are less magnificent and extensive than those of other countries, in some points they are more beautiful.

We have referred to one of these points—the extreme width of the interiors. This, however, is not a feature in Barcelona, though in both height and breadth it is splendidly proportioned. In effect, tone and feeling, we place this cathedral before all others whether in Spain or elsewhere. Beauty and refinement, the repose of a dim religious light, softness and perfection of colouring, these merits cannot be surpassed. Crowded with detail, it is so admirably designed that perfect harmony exists. Every succeeding hour spent within its walls seems to bring to light some new and unexpected feature. Day after day admiration increases, and wonder and surprise; and many visits are needed before its infinite beauties can be appreciated.

From the moment of entering you are charmed beyond all words. Here is a building no human mind could plan or human hands have raised. Never other building suggested this. However great the admiration—from St. Peter's at Rome, largest in the world, to Westminster Abbey, one of the most exquisite—nothing seems beyond man's power to accomplish. Barcelona alone strikes one as a dream-vision enchanted into shape and substance, possessing something of the supernatural, and is full of a sense of mystery. A faint light softens all outlines; half-concealed recesses meet the eye on every hand; mysterious depths lurk in the galleries over the side chapels. Sight gradually penetrates the darkness only to discover some new and beautiful work. Not very large, it is so perfectly proportioned that the effect is of infinitely greater space. Not a detail would one alter or single outline modify.



PULPIT AND STALLS, BARCELONA CATHEDRAL.

Some of its coloured windows are amongst the loveliest and richest in the world. Rainbow shafts fall across pillars and arches. We are in Eden and this is its sacred fane. The whole building is an inspiration.

It is cruciform, and stands on the site of an ancient Pagan temple. This, in 1058, gave place to the first Christian church, very little of which now remains. Converted into a mosque, it ceased to be Christian during the reign of that wonderful people, the Moors—wonderful throughout their long career, and falling at last, like Rome, by a fatal luxury. The more one sees their traces and remains, the more their strength is confirmed. Their influence upon Spain was inestimable. In all they did a certain religious element is apparent, not an element of barbaric worship, but of cultivation and reverence. Strange they should have hated the Christians, failing to realise an influence that was gradually changing the face of the earth.

In Spain their history runs side by side with that of the Christians, yet they were so divided that nothing done by the one was right in the sight of the other. So each kept its school jealously separate, to our endless gain. The very name of Moorish architecture quickens the pulse, conjuring visions that appeal to all one's imagination and sense of beauty. Intellectually they were more advanced. The rough and warlike Christians had not the nervous development of the Moors, who were learned in the arts and sciences; possessed the traditions of centuries; had ruled the fortunes of the world. Christianity had to triumph in the end; but for long the Moors were powerful and supreme.

Barcelona Cathedral was commenced at the end of the thirteenth century, in the year 1298, and carried on through a great part of the fourteenth. It seems to have been the work of Jayme Fabre, who was summoned over from Palma de Mallorca by the King of Aragon and the reigning bishop, and designed and for many years superintended the work. To him is due the chief credit of this world's wonder, to Mallorca

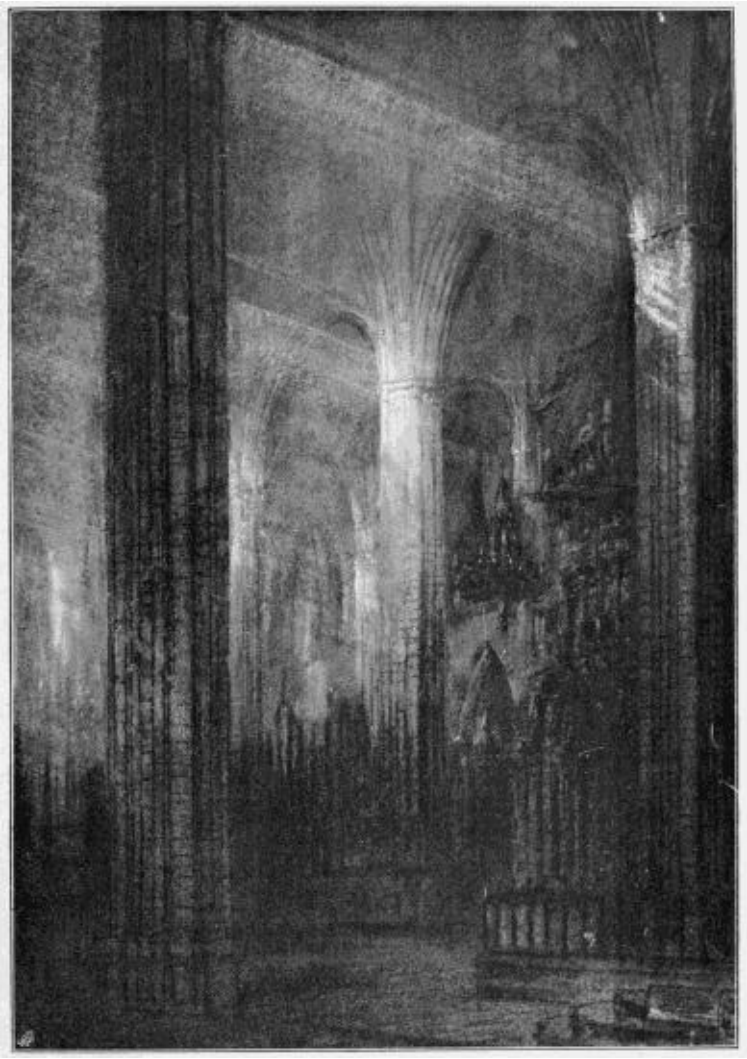
the honour of producing him.

Nearly the whole merit lies in the interior, and the exterior is of little value. Its poor and modern west front opens to a square, but the remainder is so surrounded by buildings and houses that it is difficult to see any part of it. The octagonal steeples are plain below the belfry; but the upper stages, pierced and beautiful, are finished off by pierced parapets. Some of the windows are richly moulded. The small flying buttresses are not effective. The east end is the best part, with its Gothic windows and fine tracery, though otherwise severely simple. Here the upper part of the buttresses have been destroyed, and the walls ending without roof or parapet give it a half-ruinous appearance.

The interior has an aisle and chapels around the apse, following the French rather than the Spanish school. The details, however, are entirely Catalonian. The arches are narrow, but extremely beautiful. The capitals of the fluted pillars are small, delicate, and refined, and the groining of the roof is carried up in exquisite lines. Beyond the main arches is a small arcaded triforium, and above this a circular window to each bay.

The dark stone is rich, solemn and magnificent in effect. Owing to the clever placing of the windows and the prevalence of stained glass, a semi-obscurity for ever reigns: not so great as that of Gerona, but so far dim and religious that only when the sun is full on the south windows can many of the details be seen.

The Coro, forming part of the plan of the building, is less aggressive than in many of the Spanish cathedrals. The stalls are of great delicacy and refinement; the Bishop's throne, which has been compared to that of Winchester, is large and magnificent, taking its proper position at the east end of the choir. The pulpit at the north corner, and the staircase leading to it, are marvels of exquisite wood-carving and rare old ironwork. The canopies are delicately wrought, and the *misereres* ornamented with fine foliage. Upwards, the eye is arrested by the beauty of the surrounding fluted pillars, on which rest the main arches of the nave. These cut and intersect the pointed arches of the deep galleries beyond, placed above the side chapels, of which there are an immense number. Turn which way you will, it is nothing but a long view of receding aisles, arches, and columns free or partly hidden by some lovely pillar; windows of the deepest, richest colours ever seen; mysterious recesses where daylight never penetrates; a subdued tone of infinite refinement; a solemn repose and sense of unbroken harmony.



TWILIGHT IN BARCELONA CATHEDRAL

A little to the right the eye rests on the great organ, filling up one of the deep dark galleries. Its immense swinging shutters are open, exposing silvery pipes. The organist is at his post, but only for recreation, for it is not the hour of service. Soft, sweet music breathes and vibrates through the aisles, dies away in dim recesses, floats out of existence in the high vaulting of the roof; but the sense of repose is never disturbed. Sitting in a quiet corner of the stalls, amidst all this beauty of tone and outline, one feels in Paradise.

But the charm of charms lies in the octagonal lantern at the west end, and here Barcelona stands unrivalled.

This crowning glory is of extreme richness yet delicacy of detail. Looking upwards and catching all the infinite combinations of arches and angles—the bold piers resting on square outlines—the marvellous cuttings and intersectings—the purity yet simplicity of design—the dim religious light in which all is so mysteriously veiled—the few beams of light cunningly admitted at the extreme summit—observing this, one is lost in silent wonder. It seems almost as difficult to penetrate into the beauty and mystery of this lantern as into heaven itself. And we ask ourselves again and again if the world contains a more exquisite dream-building than this.

Well do we remember the first time we saw this lantern and its imposing accompaniment.

A state council was being held in the church. Immediately beneath it sat the clergy; Bishop, Dean, and Canons in gorgeous vestments. One carried a Cardinal's hat, whose thin inscrutable face reminded us a little of Antonelli, that man of influence and mystery, whom none understood, and whose greatest schemes and ambitions were not destined to succeed. Many were dressed in purple and fine linen; not a few

looked as though they fared sumptuously. Their actions were grave and solemn. Something weighty and momentous as the election of a new pope or the founding of a new religion, might have been under discussion. In reality, it was the choice of a new canon. One or two possessed refined, intellectual faces, but the greater number were not born to be leaders of men. The gravity of the occasion, perfect outlines of the building, splendour of the vestments, all the pomp and ceremony with which, at last, they broke up the assembly; the veneration paid to the old Bishop and he of the crimson hat; the solemn procession filing down the aisle and through the cloisters to the Bishop's palace—this remains in the memory as an impressively splendid picture. Fifteen years have gone by since that day, but we see it as vividly before us as though it had been but yesterday.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE CLOISTERS OF SAN PABLO.

In the cloisters—Sacred geese—Bishop's palace—House of the Inquisition—Striking quadrangles—*Ajimez* windows—A rare cloister—Desecration—Library—Rare MSS.—Polite librarian—Romantic atmosphere—Santa Maria del Mar—Cloisters of Santa Anna—Sister of Mercy—San Pablo del Campo—More dream cloisters—Communing with ghosts and shadows—Spring and winter—Constant visitor—Centenarian—Chief architect—Cathedrals of Catalonia—Barbarous town-council—Hard fight and victory—Failing vision—Emblems of death—Laid aside—Wholesome lessons—Placing the keystone—Finis—*Resurgam*—Charmed hour—Possessing the soul in patience—City of Refuge.

EVERY succeeding visit to Barcelona has confirmed our love and reverence for its cathedral. Toledo, Burgos and all the greater cathedrals pale before the charm of its rare beauty and refined splendour.

It could only be that such a cathedral had corresponding cloisters, and passing through the south doorway, we accordingly found ourselves in another old-world dream; but with the blue sky for canopy, and with no mysterious recesses or hidden depths.

Exception has been taken to the detail of the cloisters, but as a whole they are amongst the most effective in existence. Gothic arches, large and beautiful, rested upon fluted pillars whose capitals very much resemble those of the interior; an enchanted land and an architectural revelation. The garden was full of orange trees and flowers not too carefully tended, so that a certain wild beauty, all the contrast of the green with the ancient stone and wonderful outlines, charmed the vision. Plashing fountains caught the sunbeams and threw rainbow drops into the air.

In a corner of the enclosure behind the iron railings some sacred geese intruded upon the sanctity of the precincts. The piety of these ungainly birds had to be taken for granted. They were aggressive, and hissed if only one ventured to look at them. Nothing could be more strangely out of place in a scene so beautiful and full of repose, and for which with all their sacredness they evidently had no veneration. Life passed lazily; they grew monstrously fat, and we wondered if at a certain age they disappeared for the benefit of the Bishop's table: other geese taking their place in the cloistered garden. No one could tell us anything about them, but the people seemed to think them indispensable to the welfare of the town.

Here we found the best view of the exterior. Through lovely and graceful arches which framed in the picture, one caught the pointed windows of the nave with their rich tracery, above which rose the

decorated belfries with pierced parapets.

But the immediate surroundings were also exceptionally interesting. South of the cloister is the Bishop's palace, with a quadrangle ornamented with some fine Romanesque arcading and moulding. North, is an immense fifteenth-century barrack built for a palace, and given over to the Secret Inquisition by the Catholic monarchs. The Casa Consistorial and Casa de la Disputacion, though much altered, retain splendid traces of fourteenth-century work. The quadrangles are striking, though one has been much spoilt; and the *ajimez* windows with their slender columns, capitals and arches are full of grace.

Seeing an open doorway close to the cathedral, we had the curiosity to enter, and found ourselves in a wonderful little cloister, half sacred, half secular, its ancient walls grey and lichen-stained. In the centre grew a tall palm-tree whose graceful fronds seemed to caress and curve and blend with the Gothic outlines that charmed one back to the days of the Middle Ages. A crumbling staircase, old and beautiful, led to the upper gallery, where open windows with rare Gothic mouldings and ornamentation invited one to enter into silent, empty, but strangely quaint rooms. As we looked, two women approached the wonderful old fountain in the centre with its splendid carvings, and filled their picturesque pitchers. The cloisters were in the hands of workmen. We asked a reason, and found that a new tenant, objecting to the refined atmosphere of time's lovely ravages, was scouring, cleaning, and polishing up the general effect. One shed tears at the desecration.

SMALL CLOISTER OR PATIO: BARCELONA.

Still nearer the cathedral is the Library, with its ancient picturesque *patio*, and the most striking roof and staircase in Barcelona. The library is rich in volumes and MSS., containing amongst much that is interesting all the archives of the kingdom of Aragon. Amidst other records will be found those of

Catherine, who was bold enough to place her hand—and head—at the disposal of Henry of England. The chief librarian conducted us over the whole building, and most kindly and patiently showed everything worthy of note, dwelling humorously upon passages in records that in any way referred to Great Britain.

CLOISTERS OF SANTA ANNA: BARCELONA.

In such an atmosphere we lost sight of the Barcelona of to-day. It became ancient, ecclesiastical, historical, learned and romantic. Here we returned to scenes and influences of the Middle Ages. And here, within a narrow circle, this "Manchester of Spain" is one of the most absorbing towns in the world.

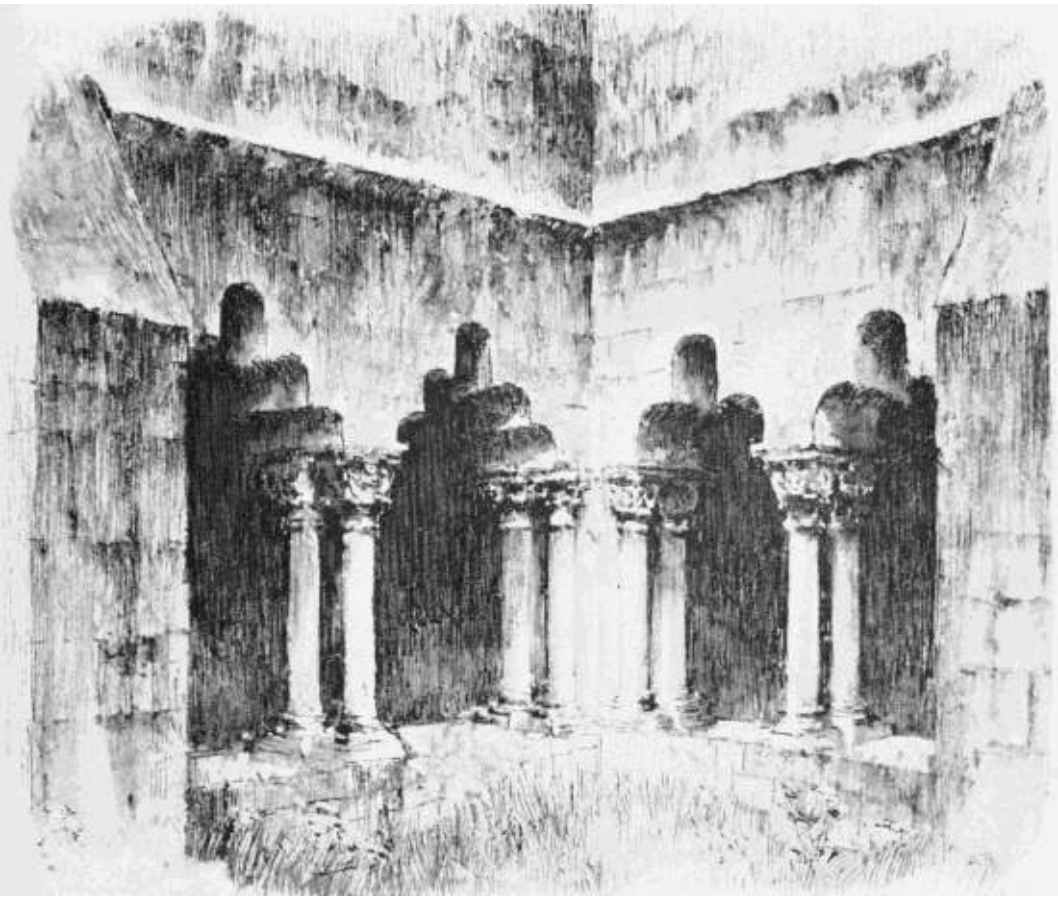
But the ecclesiastical merit of Barcelona is not confined to the cathedral. Though some of her best and most ancient churches have disappeared, others remain. Amongst the foremost is Santa Maria del Mar, taking rank after the mother church. A vast building, simple to a fault; cold, formal and severe, though architecturally correct; the interior hard and repelling, without sense of mystery or feeling of devotion. Yet it has been much praised; even to comparison with the Cathedral of Palma, and is said to be the work of the same architect; but Palma with all its simplicity is full of dignity and grandeur. The west front of Santa Maria is its best feature. The central doorway is fine, but the rose window above is hard and German in tracery, therefore has little beauty, and is of later date than the church.

Not far from here, in the narrowest of narrow streets, beyond an obscure archway we found the small church of Santa Anna, interesting by reason of its cloisters with their pointed arches springing from delicately carved capitals that rested upon slender, graceful shafts; a vision of refined beauty. In the centre grew a wild and lovely garden. Spain is undoubtedly the land of cloisters, loveliest in existence; and Barcelona is especially rich in them. As we looked, a Sister of Mercy passed through on some errand of charity. We thought of Rosalie, only to be more certain than ever that there was but one Rosalie in the

world.

Yet more marvellous was a still smaller church of extreme interest and antiquity; San Pablo del Campo, formerly a Benedictine convent of some renown, said to have been founded in the tenth century by Wilfred II., Count of Barcelona. In the twelfth century it was incorporated with the convent of San Cucufate del Vallés, a few miles from Barcelona, of which the interesting church and cloister still exist.

This remarkable San Pablo is extremely small, and cruciform, with three apses, a short nave and an octagonal vault over the crossing. It is solidly and roughly built, and until recently possessed every aspect of antiquity. All this will probably now disappear, for it has been given over to the workmen to be restored and ruined, and the work will be done to perfection.



CLOISTERS OF SAN PABLO: BARCELONA.

So with the west front. With the exception of the circular window over the striking Romanesque doorway, one feels in presence of the remote ages; but the window rather spoils an otherwise admirable effect. By this time it has no doubt shared the fate of the interior; when we were there it was still a glorious dream of the past.

Yet more dreamlike were the small cloisters. In point of tone and atmosphere we might have almost been in the early ages of the world. No one had thought it worth while to interfere with this little old-world building, buried in solitude by surrounding houses. The obscurity reigning even at mid-day was never designed by its architect. No one would dream that in this little corner, unknown, unvisited, exists a gem of the first water and great antiquity; dating probably from the eleventh century.

It was a very small cloister, having only four arches on each side divided by a buttress in the centre. The arches were trefoil-headed, separated by double shafts and the capitals were richly carved. In the north wall a fine fourteenth-century doorway admitted into the church, and in the east wall of the cloister an equally fine doorway led to the fourteenth-century chapter-house. Everything was complete on a small

scale.

It was solemn and imposing to the last degree; an effect of age and decay so perfect that we seemed to meet face to face with the dead past. To enter these little cloisters was to commune with ghosts and shadows. If ever they lurked anywhere on earth, here they must be found. We were infinitely charmed with their tone. In spite of surrounding houses—where dead walls were seen—a tomb-like silence reigned. We looked at the small neglected enclosure, where the hand and foot of man might not have intruded for ages, and almost expected to see rising from their graves the dead who had possibly lain there for eight centuries. The stones were stained with damp and the lapse of time; wild unsightly weeds grew amongst them; but nothing stirred.

As we looked, lost in the past, we became aware that we were not alone.

Entering the small cloister was an aged man with long white hair and a long grey beard, half-led by a small child of some eight or nine summers. He might have been one of the patriarchs come back to earth, and seemed venerable as the cloister themselves. More fitting subject for such surroundings could not exist. His movements were slow and deliberate, as though for him time's hour-glass had ceased to run. The child seemed to have learned to restrain its youthful ardour; gazed up into the old man's face with fearless affection, and appeared to watch his will and pleasure. A lovely child, with blue eyes and fair hair, who might belong to Andalusia, or possibly a northern province of Europe.

"Spring and winter," said H. C., looking at this strange advancing pair.

"Or life and death; for surely they are fitting emblems? Who can they be, and what do they want in this forsaken spot?"

The child said something to the aged man and motioned towards us. He paused a moment as though in doubt, then approached yet nearer.

"I am your humble servant, gentlemen," he said, with something of courtliness in his manner. "It is seldom any one shares with me the solitude of these cloisters."

"You are then in the habit of coming here?" returning his salutation.

"For many years I have paid them an almost daily visit," was the reply. "I live not very far off, and they speak to me of the past. A long past, sirs, for I am old. I have no need to tell you that. You see it in my face, hear it in my voice. In three years I shall be a centenarian, if Heaven spares me as long. I do not desire it. A man of ninety-seven has almost ceased to live. He is a burden to himself, a trouble to others. I was once chief architect of this city, and many of the more modern buildings that your eyes have rested upon are due to me. In my younger days I had a boundless love for the work of the ancients. Gothic and Norman delighted me. Half my leisure moments were spent in our wonderful cathedral, absorbing its influence. Ah, sirs, the cathedrals of Catalonia are the glories of Spain. I dreamt of reproducing such buildings; but we are in the hands of town committees who are vandals in these matters. Fifty years ago—half a century this very month—the destruction of this church and these cloisters was taken into consideration. They wanted to pull down one of the glories of Barcelona and build up a modern church and school. I was to be the architect of this barbarous proceeding. It happened that this was one of my most loved haunts. Here I would frequently pace the solitary cloisters, thinking over my plans and designs, trying to draw wholesome inspiration from these matchless outlines. I was horrified at the sacrilege, though it was to be to my profit. I fought valiantly and long; would not yield an inch; pleaded earnestly; and at last persuaded. The idea was abandoned. That you are able to stand and gaze to-day

upon this marvel is due to me. Ever since then I have looked upon it as my own peculiar possession. Day after day I pay them a visit. My failing sight now only discerns vague and shadowy outlines. It is enough. Shadowy as they are, their beauty is ever present. What I fail to see, memory, those eyes of the brain, supplies. Rarely in my daily visits do I find any one here. Few people seem to understand or appreciate the beauty of these cloisters. They are like a hermit in the desert, living apart from the world. But here it is a desert of houses that surrounds them. Like myself, they are an emblem of death in life."

We started at this echo of our own words. Could his sense of hearing be unduly awakened? Or was the emblem so fitting as to be self-evident?

"You have long ceased to labour?" we observed, for want of a better reply to his too obvious comparison.

"For five-and-twenty years my life has been one of leisure and repose," he answered. "It has gone against the grain. I was not made for idleness. But when I was seventy-two years old, cataract overtook me. A successful operation restored my sight, but the doctors warned me that if I would keep it, all work must be abandoned. Since then I have more or less cumbered the ground. But for many friends who are good to me, life would be intolerable. Heaven blessed my labours, and gave me a frugal wife; I have all the comforts I need and more blessings than I deserve. This child is my favourite little great-granddaughter, and is often my charming companion to these cloisters. A dreary scene, gentlemen, for a child of tender years, but they read a solemn and wholesome lesson. Unconsciously she imbibes their influence. They tell her, as I do, that life is not all pleasure; that as these ancient architects left beautiful traces and outlines behind them, so we must build up our lives stage by stage, taking care that the outlines shall be true and straight, the imperishable record pure and beautiful. For every one of us comes the placing of the keystone, with its momentous *Finis*. But, blessed be Heaven, as surely beneath it appears the promised *Resurgam*."

We walked round the cloisters together, and for a full hour this patriarch, with the support of our arm, charmed us with reminiscences of Barcelona, descriptions of the lovely monuments of Spain he had visited in the course of his long life. In spite of his years, his memory still seemed keen and vivid, his mind clear. He had not passed into that saddest of conditions a mental wreck.

"And I pray Heaven to call me hence ere such a fate overtake me," he said, in answer to our remark upon his admirable recollection. "Whilst memory lasts and friends are kind, life may be endured. I possess my soul in patience."

We parted and went our several ways, leaving the little cloisters to solitude and the ghosts that haunted them. The streets of Barcelona grated upon us after our late encounter. It was returning to very ordinary life after the refined and delightful atmosphere of the past ages. We crossed the Rambla, and entering a side street quickly reached the cathedral, which became more and more a world's wonder and glory as we grew familiar with it, an unspeakable delight. In this little City of Refuge we again for a time lost ourselves in celestial visions. In this inspired atmosphere all earthly influences and considerations fell away; sorrow and sighing were non-existent: a millennium of happiness reigned, where all was piety and all was peace.

CHAPTER XV.

MONTSERRAT.

Early rising—Imp of darkness—Death warrant—The men who fail—Ranges of Montserrat—Sabadell—Labour and romance—The Llobregat—Monistrol—Summer resort—Sleeping village—Empty letter-bags—Ascending—Splendid view—Romantic element—Charms of antiquity—Human interests—Mons Serratus—A man of letters—*Solitude à deux*—Fellow travellers—Substantial lady-merchant—Resignation—Military policeman—"Nameless here for evermore"—Round man in square hole—Romantic history—*Cherchez la femme*—Woman a divinity—Good name the best inheritance—No fighting against the stars—Fascinations of astrology—Love and fortune—Too good to last—Taste for pleasure—Ruin—Sad end—Truth reasserts itself—Fortune smiles again—Ceylon—Philosophical in misfortune—A windfall—Approaching Montserrat—Paradise of the monks—Romance and beauty—New order of things—Gipsy encampment.

WE rose early one morning for the purpose of visiting Montserrat the sublime, the magnificent, and the romantic.

Early as it was, Barcelona was by no means in a state of repose. Many of its people never seemed to go to bed at all, and some of its shops never closed. If we looked out upon the world at midnight, at three in the morning, or at five, Bodegas selling wine and bread were open to customers. The Rambla was never quite deserted. Before daylight trams began to run to and fro; the street cries soon swelled to a chorus.

Early rising is not always agreeable when wandering about the world in search of the picturesque. Perhaps you have gone to bed late overnight, tired out with running to and fro. Energy is only half-restored when an imp of darkness enters, lights your candles, and pronounces a death-warrant. "It is five o'clock, señor. Those who wish to catch the train must get up."

You think it only five minutes since you fell asleep. "Two o'clock, not five," cries a drowsy voice. "You have waked me too soon."

"As you please, señor. Not for me to contradict you."

The imp retires. If, like Mrs. Major O'Dowd, you carry a *repater*, you strike it. Five o'clock, sure enough, and ten minutes towards six. Nothing for it but to yield. Not as a certain friend who once bribed another imp of darkness with half-a-crown to wake him at five o'clock. The half-crown was duly earned. "Another half-crown if you let me sleep on until eight," cried the sluggard. The imp disappeared like a flash, and a gold mine was lost through an appointment. Of such are the men who fail.

We came down and found the hotel in the usual state of early-morning discomfort—doors and windows all open, a general sweeping and uprooting, sleepy servants, a feeling that you are in every one's way and every one is in yours. Breakfast was out of the question, but tea was forthcoming. The omnibus rattled up.

"Take your great-coats," said the landlord, who set others the example of rising early. "You will find it cold in the mountains of Montserrat, especially if you remain all night to see the sun rise."

He forgot that we were not chilly Spaniards. Our imp of darkness, however, who stood by, disappeared in a twinkling and returned with the coats. The landlord—a very different and less interesting man than our host of Gerona—wished us a pleasant journey, closed the door, and away we went under the influence of a glorious morning. The sun shone brilliantly, everything favoured us.

After some ten miles of rail the wonderful ranges of Montserrat began to show up faint and indistinct, with their sharp outlines and mighty peaks. In the wide plains below cultivated fields and flowing

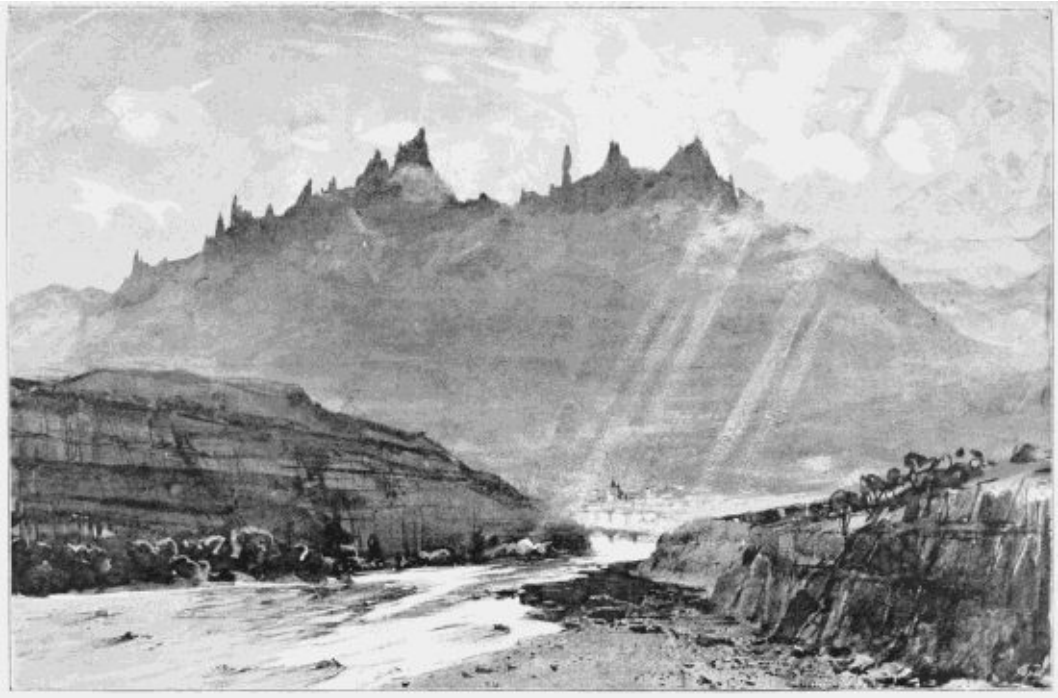
undulations abounded. Sabadell, the midway station, proved a true Catalonian manufacturing town, but very different from an English town of the same nature. No smoke, no blackness of darkness, no pallid sorrowful faces. Under these blue skies and brilliant sunshine the abundant signs of work and animation almost added a charm to the scene. To those who delight in labour, life here is a combination of romance and reality—a state of things wholesome and to be desired.

We looked down upon many a valley well-wooded with small oaks, pines and olive trees, many a hill-slope covered with vines. Approaching the mountains of Montserrat, their savage and appalling grandeur became more evident. The monastery was seen high up, reposing on a gigantic plateau with its small settlement of dependencies. Villages were scattered over the plain, through which the river Llobregat took its winding way.

The train drew up at Monistrol. Here we left the main line for the small railway which winds up into the mountains. Not being a crowded time of year, the train consisted of two carriages only, with an engine pushing up behind. The outer carriage was open, and here we took seats, the better to survey nature.

We were high above the plains; the train had to descend into the valley, then re-ascend into the mountains. Far down was the little town of Monistrol, with its white houses. The river rushed and frothed over its weir, spanned by a picturesque stone bridge of many arches. As the train twisted and turned like a serpent, it seemed that we must every moment topple over into the seething foam, but nothing happened. Down, down we went, until we rolled over the bridge, felt the cool wind of the water upon our faces, and drew up at the little station amongst the white houses of the settlement.

Here people from the hot towns spend the months of summer, exchanging in this hill-enclosed valley one species of confinement for another. It was the perfection of quiet life, no sound disturbing the air but the falling water. Not a soul was visible; the lifeless village, like Rip Van Winkle, seemed enjoying a long sleep. We might have been a phantom train in a phantom world. Though the train stopped at the little station, no one got in or out—no one but the postman, who silently exchanged attenuated letter-bags. Evidently the correspondence of this enchanted place was not extensive. Not here were wars planned or treaties signed.



MONISTROL.

Away we went again and now began to ascend. Every moment widened our view and added to its splendour. Until recently all this had to be done by coach, a journey of many hours of courageous struggling. Now the whole thing is over in three-quarters of an hour, and it is good to feel that all the hard work is done mechanically. We had once gone through something similar in the Hex River Valley of South Africa, but in the Montserrat journey there was a more romantic element; the charm and glamour surrounding antiquity, the keen human interest attached to a religious institution dating from past ages. We easily traced the old zigzag carriage road up which horses had once toiled and struggled. Almost as zigzag was our present road, winding about like forked flashes of lightning.

The scene was almost appalling. Before us the ponderous Mons Serratus, with all its cracks and fissures, ready to fall and reduce the earth to powder. Its sharp, fantastic peaks against the clear sky looked like the ruins of some mighty castle. The mountain rises four thousand feet high and is twenty-four miles in circumference—a grey, barren mass of tertiary conglomerate, an overwhelming amount of rock upon rock seemingly thrown and piled against each other. In all directions are enormous cañons and gorges with precipitous ravines; one rent dividing the range having occurred, it is said, at the hour of the Crucifixion. No eye has ever penetrated the depths below.

Far up the mountain reposes the monastery, with its dependencies and cultivated gardens. Every new zigzag took us a little nearer than the last. Very high up we stopped at another small station. No doubt some sequestered nook held an unseen village, for again the old postman silently exchanged letter-bags.

He was a fine specimen of humanity, this "man of letters," whose grey hairs and rugged features witnessed to a long and possibly active life. The head was cast in a splendid mould, to which the face corresponded. Such a man ought to have made his mark in the world. That he should end his days in playing postman to the monks of Montserrat seemed a sorry conclusion. The times must have got out of joint with him. As a leader in parliament or head of some great financial house, his appearance would have assured success. There must be a story behind this exterior, a mystery to unravel. But physiognomy seldom errs, and the expression of the face spoke in favour of honest purpose.

He was a notable man, a man to be observed passing him on life's highway. For a time we watched him closely. There was a certain unconscious dignity about him. His remarks to the conductor were above the

chatter of ordinary people. Our carriage was a third class, though we had lavishly taken first; but in those small, closed compartments nothing could be seen. This carriage was large, open, airy; we breathed, and were in touch with our surroundings; our fellow-travellers were also more interesting than the turtle-doves who occupied the luxurious compartment in a blissful *solitude à deux*.

They were few and characteristic. First the conductor, who varied the monotony of his going by paying visits to the engine-driver and leaving the train to look after itself. Next, our postman, the study of whom would have been lost in any other compartment. Then a stout lady, who wore a hat that was quite a flower-garden, and substantial seven-leagued boots; a large basket laden with small nick-nacks was very much in evidence, to which she clung affectionately, and one felt it was all her living.

This modest pedlar was on her way to Montserrat to dispose of her stock-in-trade—not to the monks, who could have no interest in housewifes and pocket-mirrors, but amongst the visitors. A humble peasant, with an honest, upright look in her dark eyes; a certain patient resignation in their expression which often comes to those who live from day to day, uncertain whether the morrow will bring fast or feasting. She sat at the end of the large square carriage, under the short bit of roofing. Here the magnificent surroundings were less seen, but what mattered? She was of those to whom the realities of life mean much more than the beauties of nature.

Next came a military policeman duly accompanied by his gun and cocked hat, on his way to a three months' duty at Montserrat.

Thus the carriage contained a poet, who could be on occasion a Napoleon; a man of letters, though apparently of letters limited; an armed Government official of more or less exalted rank; a lady-merchant representing the great world of commerce; and a humble individual who, like Lost Lenore, shall be "nameless here for evermore;" all personally conducted by a paid menial who neglected his duty and jeopardised the lives of his passengers. No merit to him that the journey passed without accident, but a great escape for ourselves.

Of this small group of Catalonians, our postman alone was of the higher type and by far the most interesting.

"I see you are not of our country, señor," he remarked after exchanging letter-bags at the last station. "Your interest in the journey proves you unfamiliar with it. You may well marvel at this stupendous miracle of nature."

"We marvel at everything. The whole scene is overpowering. And, if we may venture to say so, you are yourself an enigma. In England we have a proverb which speaks of a round man in a square hole; might it not almost be applied to you?"

"In other words, you pay me the compliment of saying that I magnify my office," quickly returned the postman. "Well, it is true that I was not born to this, but it is not every one who has the wit to find it out. My father was an officer in the Spanish navy, and in the navy my first years of labour were spent. And now I am playing at postman—to such base uses do we come. Yet is my calling honourable.

"You would ask how I fell from my high estate, and politeness withholds the question. In reply I can only quote the old saying, *cherchez la femme*. They say that a woman is at the bottom of all mischief, and I believe it. On the other hand, there is no doubt that at her best she is a divinity. No, sir; I perceive what you would say; but I have nothing questionable to disclose; no intrigues or complications, or anything of that sort.

"My father died when I was twenty. He had been made admiral, and lived to enjoy his rank just four months. Unfortunately, all Admiral Alvarez had to bequeath to his son was his good name. Of fortune he had none. You will say that a good name is the greatest of all inheritance, and so it is; and a young man with health, strength, and a noble profession before him should be independent of fortune. I quite agree with you. But there are exceptions, and the exceptions are those who are born under a conjunction of stars against which there is no fighting. If I had lived in the days of the Egyptians I should have been an astrologer, for I believe there is something in the science. Right or wrong, it possesses a mysterious fascination.

"At twenty-one I married, apparently with discretion. The lady I chose was young, handsome, and owned a fortune. Without the latter matrimony for me would have been a dream. My lieutenant's pay, which hardly sufficed for one, would have reduced two to the necessity of living upon love, air, or any other ethereal ingredient that may be had for nothing.

"For a time all went merrily. We were both well-favoured by Nature—perhaps I may be allowed to speak thus of myself when life is closing in—and fortune seemed to have been equally considerate. It was, however, too good to last. As I have said, I was not born under a lucky star. All through life I have just missed great opportunities. Even as a child I can remember that the ripe apples never fell to my share. If we drew lots for anything I was always next the winning number and might as well have drawn the lowest. My father, who really ought to have left me something in the way of patrimony, left me only his blessing.

"Well, señor, my wife, I repeat, was young and handsome. She was fond of gaiety, and having the *entrée* to a very fine society, her taste for pleasure was easily gratified. She became extravagant, and gradually fell into a state of nervous excitement which required constant dissipation. I was often away from home with my vessel, but not for long absences. They were, however, sufficiently frequent to render me careless and unsuspicious as to the true state of our finances. When I really learned this, it was too late. We were ruined. And not only ruined, but overwhelmed in debt.

"In the first moment of horror I bitterly upbraided my wife. She, poor thing, took her misfortunes and my anger so much to heart that she fell into a consumption, and died in less than a year. I was so affected by my troubles—more, I believe, for the loss of my wife, whom I really loved, than for the loss of my income—that I fell for a time into a despondent frame of mind. I had felt compelled to retire from my profession—a man in a state of debt and bankruptcy had no right to be holding a royal commission—and my enforced idleness did not help to mend matters. At length life, health, and youth—I was not yet thirty—asserted themselves. Melancholy flew away; energy, a wish to be up and doing something, returned.

"I looked around me. The prospect was a sad one. There was nothing to be done. No one wanted me.

"At length fortune, tired of frowning upon me, smiled awhile. I fell in with an old friend of my father's, a wealthy coffee-planter in Ceylon. He had come over for a holiday to his native country. For the father's sake, for the sake of old times and the days of his youth, he was kind to the son. He sympathised with my sorrows, which were not of my own making. About to return to Ceylon, he offered me a certain partnership in his business, promising greater things if I remained.

"How thankfully I turned my back upon Spain, the land of all my misfortunes, I could never say. I began a new and prosperous life in a new country. In course of time my old friend died, and I became senior partner in a flourishing concern. For twenty-five years I remained out in Ceylon. I had made a considerable fortune, and you will think that I had probably married again. No, señor. I gave up my life to

work, and would not a second time tempt fate.

"At last, after an absence of a quarter of a century, a feeling crept over me that had every symptom of *mal du pays*. As this increased, I realised my possessions and returned to my own country, a rich man. But, alas! youth had fled. Wealth did not now mean for me what it had meant at five-and-twenty. The first thing I did was to pay up all my debts with interest, and to stand a free, honourable and honoured man. What surprised me most was the comparative smallness of the sum which in the hour of our misfortunes I had thought so formidable.

"And now, señor, do you think that I could let well alone: or, rather, that fortune could still turn to me a smiling face? It seemed as though the land of my birth—my mother country—was to bring me nothing but sorrow. In searching to place my capital, and remembering that you should not have all your eggs in one basket, I invested some of it in certain bank shares. It was a flourishing concern, paying a steady nine per cent. That it should be unlimited was a matter of no importance. So prosperous a company could never fail. Yet, señor, in less than a year, fail it did for an amount which swept away every penny of my fortune, and left me stranded high and dry on the shores of adversity.

"This time my ruin was more complete than before, for I was getting old and could not begin life afresh. Yet—perhaps for that very reason—I felt it less, and bore it philosophically. I had brought no one down in my reverses. There was no one to upbraid me, and more than ever I felt thankful that I had never married again. I obtained a situation in the Post Office of a light description, which would just enable me to live. Three years ago, a small windfall came to me: a sum of money that, safely invested, assures me comfortable bread and cheese for the remainder of my days. No more flourishing banks with unlimited liabilities. And now here I am, in daily charge of the mail-bags between Monistrol and Montserrat. A humble office you will say, but not ignoble. After the free life of Ceylon, with all its magnificent scenery, I felt it impossible to live shut up in a town, and especially requested this post might be given me. In the midst of this wild grandeur, which really somehow reminds me of parts of Ceylon, I am happy and contented. Bricks and mortar are my abomination; they weigh upon one's soul and crush out one's vital power. I love to breathe the morning air with the lark. At best I can live but a few years more, and I will not spend them in regretting the past. On the whole, I consider that I am rather to be envied than pitied. That I am no longer obliged to work for my bread gives an additional zest to my occupation.—We are approaching Montserrat. Is it not a sublime scene?"

It was indeed nothing less. We rose above the vast magnificent valley, until at last it looked dream-like and intangible. We seemed to overhang bottomless precipices. On a plateau of the great mountain reposed the monastery and its dependencies. Luxuriant gardens flourished, paradise of the monks—a strange contrast of barren rocks and rich verdure. Here dwelt a wonderful little world of its own, never deserted even in winter, and in summer crowded with people who spend hours, days, weeks breathing the mountain air, living a life of absolute freedom from all restraint.

No monastery can be more romantically placed; perhaps none ever equalled it; yet of late years some of its romance and beauty has disappeared. The lovely old buildings that were a dream of Gothic and Norman refinement, of architectural perfection, have given place to new and hideous outlines. Nothing remains to show the glory of what has been but one side of a cloister through whose pointed arches you gaze upon a perfect Norman doorway—a dream-vision. A railway has brought Montserrat into touch with the world, and to accommodate the crowd of visitors, a new Hospederia has been built containing a thousand rooms, resembling an immense and very hideous prison. The passages are long, dark, narrow and cold. Rooms open on each side—single rooms and sets of rooms. The latter are furnished with a kitchen; so that a family or party of friends may come here with bag and baggage, pots, pans and all

kitchen equipage, servants included, and encamp for as long or as short a time as may please them.

Our train stopped at the little station under the very shadow of the mountain. This was the more crowded part of the settlement, and on the left we noticed what looked like a party of gipsies encamped, enjoying an open air feast with much laughter and merriment. The monastery buildings were at the other end of the plateau.

We left the station under the pilotage of our friend the postman, carrying his mail-bag. Before us, raised on a terrace, was a long row of buildings old and new, of every shape and size. These were the dependencies, and helped to form the little world of Montserrat. Towering behind, up into the skies, were the precipitous sides, peaks and pinnacles of the great mountain.

"There lies the Post Office," said our man of letters, "and that is my destination. If you have any intention of remaining the night, you should first pay a visit to the little house on the right. The funny little monk who attends to visitors will receive you, conduct you to the Hospederia and give you rooms. In summer every room is often occupied to overflowing, but now you will have the place to yourselves—you and the ghosts—for I maintain that it is haunted. I will not say farewell, señor; we shall frequently meet during the day. There is small choice of ways in this little settlement; but for all that you will find that Montserrat is one of the glories of Spain."

He went his way, and we wondered what news from the outer world could now have any interest for the monks who were as dead to that world as though they reposed under their nameless graves in the little cemetery.

CHAPTER XVI.

A HIDDEN GENIUS.

Monk's face—Superfluous virtue—"Welcome to Montserrat"—Mean advantage—Exacting but not mercenary—Another Miguel—Missing keys—Singular monk—Hospederia—Uncertainty—Monk's idea of luxury—Rare prospect—Haunted by silence—Father Salvador privileged—Monk sees ghosts—Under Miguel's escort—In the church—Departed glory—The black image—Gothic and Norman outlines—Franciscan monk or ghost?—Vision of the past—Days of persecution—Sensible image—Great community—Harmony of the spheres—Sad cypresses—Life of a hermit—Monk's story—Loving the world—Penitence—Plucked from the burning—Talent developed—A world apart—False interest—Salvador—Temptation and a compromise—Salvador extemporises—"All the magic of the hour"—Salvador's belief—Waiting for manifestations.

WE turned to the right, and entering the building indicated, passed into a bare, unfurnished room. Through a square hole in the wall, not unlike a buttery-hatch, a monk's face peered at us with large coal-black eyes, startling in their effect; a small, spare monk, with unshaven face, round head and black hair, habited in the ugly dress of the Jesuit order. It struck us rather unpleasantly that everything about him was black, not the eyes and hair only. He evidently belonged to a sect who thought washing superfluous, if not sinful.

"Ah!" he exclaimed in quite friendly tones. "Welcome to Montserrat! I am very happy to see you."

"We might be chums of a lifetime," said H. C., shuddering, as the well-disposed ecclesiastic advanced a dusky hand; for we saw it coming and meanly put him in the foreground. In spite of his Napoleon

manner, he had to shake it. The little monk was not to be frowned down.

"I am very happy to see you," he repeated. "You are welcome. Our visitors are few at this time of the year. Every visitor adds his quota to our common fund. However small, it is acceptable. Do not think me mercenary. The fathers and brothers must live, and they do a great deal of good. Even up here, out of the world, you have no idea how much may be done. And we have many branches. But the beauty of Montserrat is supreme, and you know that it is world-wide. Now you want rooms," continued the eloquent little monk. "I will go across with you to the Hospederia. But first you must record your names in this book. Miguel," to a young man in attendance, "where are the keys? They are not here. Why are they not here? How often am I to report you to the Father-Superior for carelessness?"

The keys were guiltily produced by Miguel.

"I thought so," cried the monk. "Suppose, now, you had gone down to Monistrol with the keys in your pocket! We must have got through a window like thieves and vagabonds. A very undignified proceeding. The Reverend Father would have stopped your butter for a month. As it is, I must overlook it, I suppose; you are so very fond of butter. Now, gentlemen—— Dear me, what beautiful writing you English always have!" scanning the book, in which, with the aid of a very bad pen, we had hieroglyphically scratched our names. "Now, gentlemen, I am at your service. We will take our little pilgrimage. You have a choice of rooms. There is not a soul in the Hospederia—a thousand rooms, every one empty. Miguel, attend us; you will have to make up beds for these gentlemen."

The pilgrimage was certainly a short one. We gave the little monk as wide a berth as politeness and the way permitted. To keep step with him was impossible. He had a curious motion which resembled more the trotting of a young colt than the walk of a human being. As he skipped across the road, a small, animated mass of quicksilver, full of peculiar life and energy, it was difficult to keep becomingly grave. The great Hospederia was in front of us, huge, modern, unsightly, depressing. The monk jingled the great keys as though they made pleasant music in his ear. Then he applied one of them to the huge lock and the heavy door rolled back on its hinges.

If the exterior had looked depressing, it was cheerfulness itself to the interior. A chilling, silent, uninhabited, ghostly atmosphere met us at the very threshold. Our postman might well say it was haunted. Voices and footsteps echoed in the long, bare, gloomy corridors. A monk's cell could scarcely have been more guiltless of comfort. We had hardly made up our minds whether to stay the night or not, and our proposed lodging kept us still more undecided. As far as sunrise was concerned, at this time of the year the effects were doubtful. More often than not a thick mist enshrouded the whole visible world like a white sea. We might remain, have our trouble and discomfort for our pains, and nothing more.

"Here," said the monk, throwing open the door of a small room, and pointing to a bed hard as pavement, "you may sleep in comfort, even luxury. And," opening the window, "what a prospect!"

True enough as regarded the outlook. Such an assemblage of vale, mountain and river could hardly be surpassed. The luxury of the bed, on the other hand, was a distinct effort of the imagination. We would not, however, disturb the sensitiveness of the little monk by arguing the matter, and indeed, it would have been difficult to lower his self-complacency. Two rooms belonging to a suite were duly apportioned to us. The bare kitchen between them looked cold and lifeless. These rooms would be prepared, and any one remaining here for the night might reasonably consider it a penance for his sins. It would be rather a gruesome experience to find ourselves in sole possession of this vast building of a thousand rooms. An army of ghosts—the ghosts of dead-and-gone monks—would certainly come down upon us, and H. C.'s

most Napoleon manner would have no effect whatever. Like the little monk, ghosts are not to be frowned down.

"A pity to disturb this Hospederia, which may be considered closed for the season," we remarked. "My poet friend is very much afraid of ghosts, and this place might very well be haunted. It is certainly haunted by silence. Why not give us cells in the monastery, where, in presence of the Father-Superior, ghosts would hardly venture to intrude?"

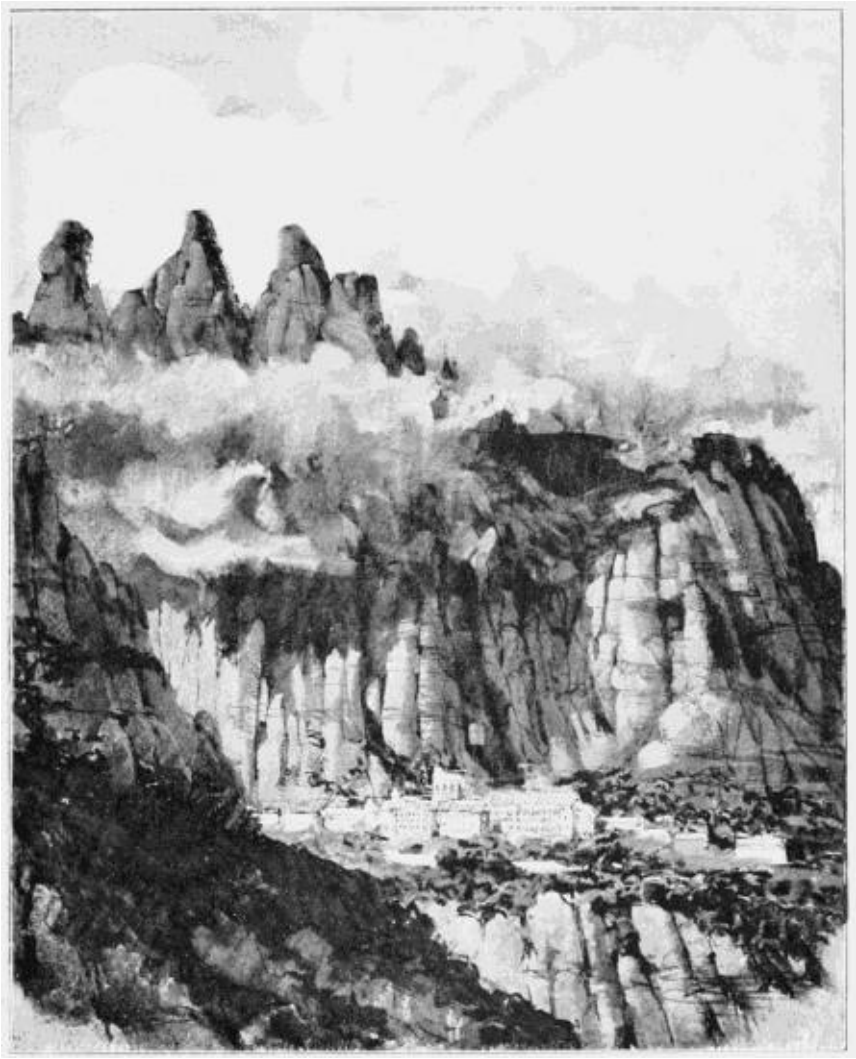
"An excellent idea," said H. C., looking blue and shivery. "This place is more gloomy than the grave."

"In the darkness one place is very much the same as another," said the monk. "No one is allowed even within the walls of the monastery without an order from the Holy Father at Rome, the Archbishop of Toledo, or some equally great authority. Father Salvador is the only one who can prevail with our Superior. As for ghosts, I have seen them with my own eyes on All Souls' Eve, at midnight, in the monastery graveyard, and oh! how frightened I was! How I shivered in my sandals! They were the ghosts of two monks who had committed suicide within a year of each other in their cells. Of course, they were quite mad, and they left a letter behind them—both of them—to say they could bear their solitude no longer. In the dead of night they heard groans, and saw shapes like immense bats flying about. Each bat had four wings, two tails, fiery eyes and forked tongues. They were quite insane. But there are no ghosts here, sirs. For the matter of that, the building is far too modern. Ghosts have excellent taste and cultivate the antique. There, that is settled. Everything is at your disposal—the whole building. Now, Miguel, show the gentlemen where they can dine. I have heard that the fare in the restaurant is equal to anything in Madrid. I am your most humble servant and delighted to see you. Welcome to Montserrat."

Upon which the little monk skipped once more across the road with the same acrobatic motion, and disappeared within his sanctum.

Under Miguel's escort—who had had so narrow an escape from losing his butter, and doing a month's fasting out of Lent—we found the dining-room. Several dining-rooms indeed, of great size, one above another, apparently quite prepared to entertain the Hospederia with its full complement of guests. The manager informed us that we could have any meal we liked at any appointed hour; he was equal to the largest dinners at the shortest notice; and having settled this part of the programme to H. C.'s satisfaction, we dismissed Miguel and took to exploring.

As Don Alvarez had said, we could not go very far wrong. One road led to the summit of Mons Serratus, another down into the world; a third round the mountain into another part of the world. This was still traversed by a coach and four, and presently we had the pleasure of seeing it start with great preparation and ceremony. For the moment we contented ourselves with the immediate precincts.



CHURCH OF MONTSERRAT.

The convent buildings stood on a plateau at the far end of the settlement. Almost buried under the side of the mountain was the immense church or chapel in which the monks attend mass. One may see them at stated hours in the choir behind the great iron *grille* that separates them from the outer worshippers. There are now only about twenty fathers, for the monastery was suppressed some sixty years ago, only a few being allowed to remain. It is of very ancient origin, and rose from small to great things, and again has fallen from its high estate. The foundation is due to a black image of the Virgin; a small figure in black wood supposed to have been specially carved by St. Luke, and specially brought to Spain by St. Peter. If in St. Luke's best style, he was certainly not a Michel Angelo. The image, however, is highly prized by the religious order, as having worked countless miracles and brought them fame and wealth.

In crossing towards the chapel we met our funny little monk. "Ah, you are going into the church?" he cried. "You will find the fathers at prayer—it is nearly the hour for the refectory. And you will see the black Virgin—the beautiful black image—carved by St. Luke—carried by St. Peter—blessed by twelve popes! No wonder she performs miracles. Withered arms and legs come to life again. I have seen old people turn young. Once when I looked at her she blinked with both eyes. It is true I am short-sighted, but I am certain of the fact: as certain as that I saw ghosts in the graveyard on All Souls' Eve. Señor, that wonderful black image is the one great thing to see at Montserrat. The cleverness of the railway, the beauty of the landscape, the grandeur of the mountain, the splendour of the church—all this is very well in its way; but it is as nothing compared with the black image. Go and study it, and if you look long enough perhaps she will blink her eyes at you too, or bow her head. It is quite possible."

Then he skipped through the quadrangle back to his den.

This quadrangle was very interesting; large, quiet, and solidly built: an outer court to the holy of holies, which was the church itself. Under the mountain-side, its covered passages ever seemed in deep gloom and shadow; a death-in-life atmosphere hung about it. In days gone by it was one of the loveliest nooks in the world, for the ancient buildings were beautiful and refined. Gothic cloisters and Norman doorways mingled their outlines in close companionship without rivalry, and the beholder was charmed at finding himself in an element where nothing jarred.

All has disappeared to make way for the modern traveller, whose name is legion. Nothing remains but the one little Gothic fragment, with its pointed windows and slender shafts. A lady in a mantilla graced them as we stood looking at the Norman archway beyond: the more interesting of the turtle-doves who had travelled with us from Monistrol. Her mate was attending to the vulgar side of life, arranging a select repast with the restaurant manager at the farther end of the settlement. We saw him come out and advance towards her with that degree of fervour which generally marks the *lune de miel*. She, too, went to meet him half-way—and they disappeared out of our lives.

As we looked at the Norman doorway it was suddenly filled with the figure of a monk. Nothing could have been more appropriately romantic and picturesque. He was clothed not as a Jesuit, but in the far more becoming dress of a Franciscan. His cowl was thrown back, revealing a pale, refined face and well-formed head, on which the hair seemed to be arranged almost like a circlet of leaves—the crown of the poet. He stood still and motionless as though carved in stone. In his hand he held a breviary. A girdle was round his waist confining the long brown robe. As far as we could see, he appeared unmindful of his surroundings, lost in a dreamy gaze which penetrated beyond the skies. It was the attitude and expression of a visionary or mystic.

What was this monk in the strange garb? Who was he? What brought him apparently at home amidst the Jesuits, he who evidently belonged to another order? Had he thrown in his lot amongst them? Or did he live, a solitary being, in one of the surrounding hermitages?

Whilst we looked he slowly turned, and, with bent head and lingering steps, as though in deep contemplation, passed out of sight. Nothing remained but the empty doorway with a vision of arches beyond; a few ruined walls stained with the marks of centuries, to which patches of moss and drooping creepers and hardy ferns added grace and charm. We were alone, surrounded by intense quiet and repose. Sunshine was over all, casting deep shadows. No sound disturbed the stillness, not even the echo of the monk's receding footsteps. So silent and motionless had been his coming and going, we asked ourselves whether he was in truth flesh and blood or a mid-day visitor from the land of shadows. How remote, how out of the world it all was!

Suddenly, as we looked upwards, an eagle took majestic flight from one of the mountain peaks, and, hovering in the blue ether, seemed seeking for prey. But it was not the time of the lambs, and with a long, sweeping wing, it passed across the valley to an opposite range of hills.

The great church was before us with its dome, of Roman design and sufficiently common-place. But, after all, what mattered? Its effects and those of the hideous Hospederia were lost in their wonderful surroundings, just as a drop of water is lost in the ocean.

On entering the church this comparison disappeared. There was an expanse about its aisles, largeness and breadth in the high-domed roof, that produced a certain dignity, yet without grace and refinement. No magic and mystery surrounded them, and the dim religious light was the result, not of rich stained glass admitting prismatic streams, but of an obscurity cast by the shadows of Mons Serratus. For great effects

one had to go back in imagination to the days when the monks were many and assembled at night for service. It is easy to picture the impressive scene. Beyond the ever-closed screen, within the great choir, a thousand kneeling, penitential figures chanting the midnight mass, their voices swelling upward in mighty volume; the church just sufficiently lighted to lend the utmost mystery to the occasion; a ghostly hour and a ghostly assemblage of men whose lives have become mere shadows. On great days countless candles lighted up the aisles and faintly outlined the more distant recesses. The fine-toned organ pealed forth its harmony, shaking the building with its diapasons and awakening wonderful echoes in the far-off dome.

CLOISTERS OF MONTSERRAT.

All this may still be seen and heard now and then, but with the number of monks sadly curtailed. It is said that they now never exceed twenty. When their day of persecution came they escaped to their mountain fastness, climbing higher and ever higher like hunted deer, hiding in the cracks and crevices of the rocks; fear giving them strength to reach parts never yet trodden by the foot of man, whilst many a less active monk slipped and fell into the bottomless abyss, his last resting place, like that of Moses, remaining for ever unknown. The troops of Suchet followed the refugees, found them out, and put an end to many a life that, if useless, was also harmless. Not a few of the survivors became hermits, and on many a crag may be found the ruins of a hermitage, once, perhaps, inhabited by a modern St. Jerome, though the St. Jeromes of the world have been few and far between.

Some sort of religious institution existed here in the early centuries, long ages before Ignatius Loyola founded the order of the Jesuits. In the eighth century the famous black image was hidden away in a cave under a hill to save it from the Moors. Here it miraculously disclosed itself a hundred years later to some simple shepherds. These hastened to the good Bishop, who took mules, crook and mitre, and came down

with all the lights of the church and all the pomp of office to remove the treasure to Manresa.

Apparently the image preferred the fresh mountain air to the close, torrent-washed town with its turbid waters, for having reached a certain lovely spot overlooking the vast plain, it refused to go any farther. As it could not speak—being a wooden image—it made itself so heavy that mortal power could not lift it. This was the first of a long succession of miracles. On the spot where the image rested, the Bishop with crook and mitre, and bell and book, and Dean and Chapter, held solemn conclave and there and then went through a service of Consecration. A chapel was built, and the image became the object of devoted pilgrimages.

All traces of the chapel have disappeared long since. Nothing now marks the spot but an iron cross which may be seen far and near. Approaching, you may read the inscription: *Aqui sè hizo inmovil la Santa Imagen*. After this a nunnery was founded, which in the tenth century became a Benedictine convent.

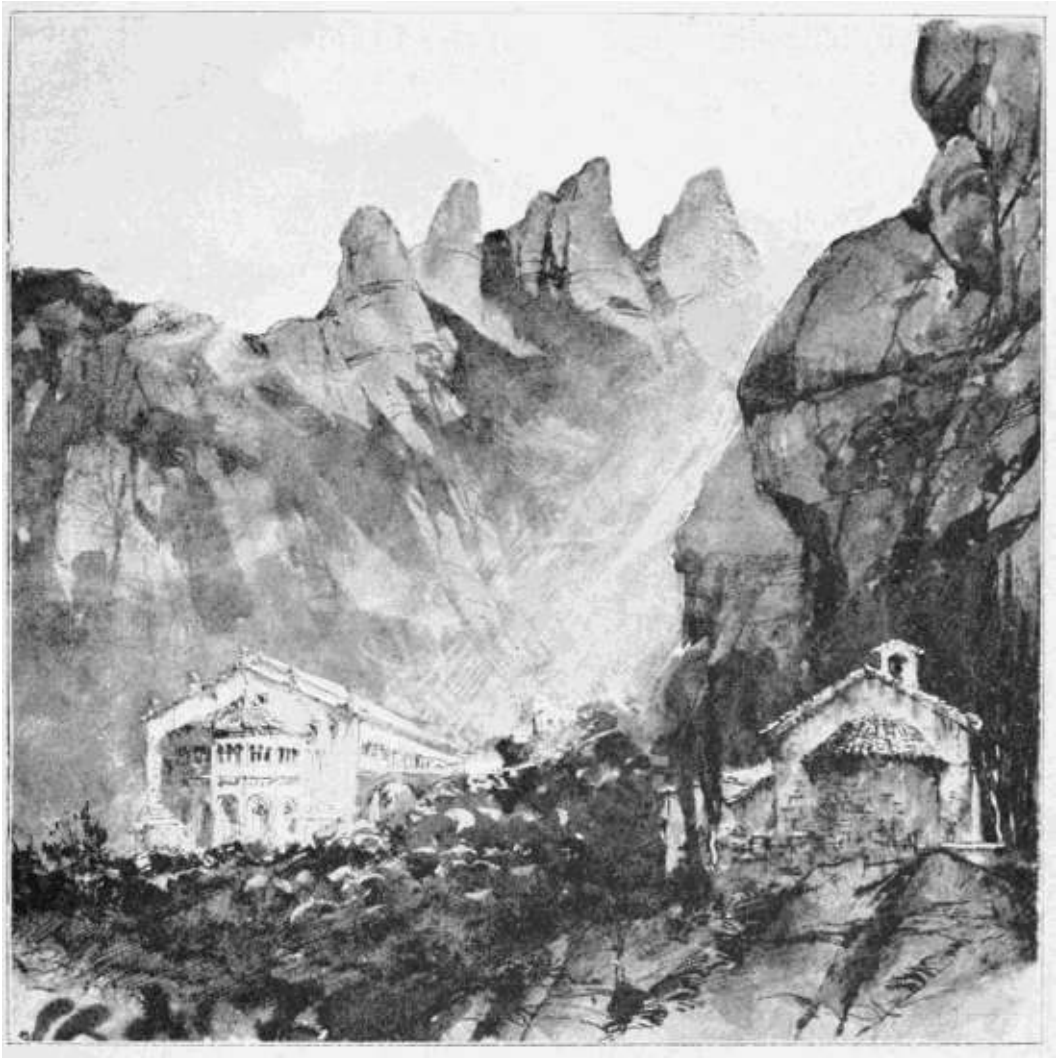
Ages rolled on, and it grew famous. When destroyed by the French it held as many as 900 monks: a great religious community, wealthy and powerful. But the mighty are fallen. The few remaining monks, more exclusive in their retirement than the great body of their predecessors, have a school attached to the monastery in which much time is given to the study of music. It is going far out of the world for instruction, but Nature herself should come to their aid. Amidst these lonely solitudes the Harmony of the Spheres might well be heard.

Passing through the great quadrangle, we entered a narrow passage between the church and hill-side, reminding one a little of some of the narrow streets of Jerusalem. Here, too, we found some arches and buttresses framing in the sky, arch beyond arch. At the end of all we came out once more upon the open world, and what a scene was disclosed!

In front of us was a small chapel attached to a little hermitage. Beside it ran a long avenue of sad and solemn cypresses. It might have been the cemetery of the dead-and-gone monks, but no small mounds or wooden crosses marked where the dead reposed. This mournful avenue extended to the brow of the hill, where we overlooked vast wild precipices. Cañons and gorges opened beneath us and above us in appalling magnitude. The stupendous valley stretched right and left in the distance. Far on the other side reposed a chain of snow-clad hills. Villages lay about the plain and hill-sides. In the far-off hollow slept the little town of Monistrol, its blue smoke mingling with the clearer atmosphere. Through all the valley the river ran its winding, silvery course on its way to the sea.

The plateau on which we stood held the monastery buildings. Near us stretched the gardens of the monks in cultivated terraces, and above them, winding round the mountain was the white road leading out into the world lying to the south of Montserrat. Again, as we looked, another eagle soared from one of the peaks and took its slow majestic flight across the valley, no doubt on the track of its mate, perhaps to find out why he tarried so long. A string of boys in caps and black cloaks left the convent and wound round the white road, conducted by a few of the monks whose duty it was to keep watch and ward over the students. These passed out of sight, and once more we seemed alone with nature.

But on turning back down the cypress avenue, sitting against the little chapel we saw the Franciscan monk who had lately filled the Norman archway. Though his breviary was open, he was not reading. His eyes—large, dark, dreamy eyes that ought to belong to a genius—were looking out on the mountain and the far-off sky, lost in profound contemplation.



CHURCH OF MONTSERRAT.

Of what nature were his thoughts? Introspective or retrospective? Was he thinking of days that were past, or of the life to come? Were regret and remorse his portion, or resignation to his present surroundings? Was he dwelling upon some terrible Might-have-been? He looked inexpressibly lonely, as though he and the world had parted company for ever, but there was something singularly interesting about him. It seemed difficult to intrude upon his solitude, as impossible to pass without speaking.

Some influence compelled us to stop. His face was pale and refined. He was so thin as to be almost cadaverous; not an ounce of flesh had he to spare on his bones; there was a certain look of hunger in his large magnificent eyes; not a hungering after the flesh-pots of Egypt, but, as it seemed, for peace of mind and repose of soul. Grazing at the skies, he appeared to be asking questions of the Infinite Beyond. Where was the kingdom of Heaven and what was it like? When there came for him the great apocalypse of the soul how would it find its way to the realms of paradise?

We stopped in front of him, and he started as though he had only that moment became aware of our presence. He did not seem to resent the intrusion, but looked up with a searching inquiring glance, which presently changed to a smile beautiful and almost childlike in its confidence: sad, beseeching, as though it were in our power to interpret to him the hidden mysteries of the unseen; the perplexing problems of life; the doubts and difficulties with which his questioning heart contended.

"You have indeed found a quiet corner for contemplation," we remarked after he had greeted us with a subdued: "May Heaven have you in its holy keeping."

SALVADOR THE MONK.

"It is all my want and all my desire," he replied, in a voice that was full of melody. "I live the life of a hermit. Near at hand I have my small hermitage, and I also have my cell in the monastery, occupying the one or the other as inclination prompts me. For you see by my dress that though this is my home, where I shall live and die, I do not belong to the Jesuits. I am really a Franciscan, but have obtained a dispensation, and I live here. I love to contemplate these splendours of nature; to read my breviary under the blue sky and the shadow of our great mountain. Here I feel in touch with Heaven. The things unseen become real and tangible, doubts and difficulties vanish. My soul gathers strength. I return to my cell, and its walls crush all life and hope out of me; weigh upon me with an oppression greater and deeper than that of yonder giant height. I feel as though I should die, or fall away from grace. There have been times when they have come to my cell and found me unconscious. I have only revived when they have brought me out to the fresh air, this freedom and expanse. The good Father-Superior recognises my infirmity and has given me the hermit's cave. I will show it to you if you like. It is quite habitable and not what you might imagine, for it is a built-up room with light and air, not a cavern dark and earthy. I love solitude and am never solitary. Once I loved the world too much; I lived in the fever of life and dissipation. Heaven had mercy upon me, and you behold a brand plucked from the burning. When my heart was dead and seared, and love and all things beautiful had taken wing, I left the world. The profligate became a penitent. I took vows upon me and joined the Franciscan Order. But I should have died if I had not come up here, where I have found pardon and peace. That was twenty years ago. Yet I am not fifty years old, and am still in the full vigour of manhood. It may be long before a small wooden cross marks my resting-place in the cemetery. When the last hour comes I shall pray them to bring me here, that amidst these splendours of nature my soul may wing its flight to the greater splendours of paradise. I feel that I could not die in my cell."

"How is it you are allowed so much freedom?" we asked. "We thought that here you were all more or less cloistered. It was our wish to see the interior of the monastery, but the lay monk who receives visitors said it was not permitted."

"A strict rule," returned the monk; "but if you are staying here a couple of days, I could take you in. To-morrow is a great fast; to enter would be impossible; the day after it might be done."

"Unhappily we cannot remain. To-morrow at latest we return to Barcelona. But, if we may ask it again without indiscretion, whence have you this indulgence and power?"

"The secret lies in the fact that I possess a talent," smiled the monk. "I was always passionately fond of music, and as a pastime studied it closely and earnestly. Here I have turned it to account. Whether it was the necessity for an occupation, or that it was always in me, I developed a strange faculty for imparting knowledge to others. I fire them with enthusiasm, and they make vast progress. My name, I am told, has become a proverb in our large towns. It has been of use to the monastery: has enlarged the school, added to the revenues. In return I have obtained certain privileges; a greater freedom of action. Otherwise my power would leave me. This is why I can promise to open doors to you that are usually closed to the world. Yet in what would you be the better? Curiosity would hardly be satisfied in viewing the bare cells and long gloomy passages, the cold and empty refectory, where perchance you might see spread out a banquet of bread and water, a little dried fish or a few sweet herbs."

"There is always something that appeals to one, strangely attractive, in the interior of a monastery," we returned.

"I know it," replied the monk, whose new name he told us was Salvador. "It is a world apart and savours of the mysterious. It possesses also a certain mystic element. Thus the atmosphere surrounding it is romantic and picturesque, appealing strongly to the imagination. Sympathy goes out to the little band of men who have bound themselves together by a vow, forsaken the world and given up all for religion. But if you were called upon to share that life only for a month, all its supposed mystery and charm would disappear. It only exists in the sentiment of the thing, not in the reality. It lies in the beauty of the solitary mountains in which the monasteries are often placed; or the splendid architecture they occasionally preserve. In the dull monotony of a daily round never varied, you would learn to dread the lonely cell—even as I once dreaded it more than death itself. Hence my freedom. It will soon be our refectory hour," looking at a small silver watch he carried beneath his robe. "I must return or fast."

Then there came to us a bright idea. "Why leave us?" we said. "Or if you must do so now, why not return? Would you not be allowed to dine with us this evening? You would tell us of your past life before you became a monk, and of your life since then. It must contain much that is interesting. In the evening shadows you would guide us about the mountain paths, tell us of the evil days that fell upon the monks and their flight into the hills."

Salvador the monk smiled. "You tempt me sorely," he replied. "I should like it much. Such a proposal has never been made to me since I put on cloak and cowl. It would be like a short return to the world—a backward glance into the life that is dead and buried. Then imagine the contrast between your sumptuous repast and the bread and sweet herbs with which we keep our bodies alive. I fear it would not be wise to awaken memories. No, I must not think of it. But to-night I shall dream that I have been to a banquet and walked with you in quiet paths, taking sweet counsel. Oh, I am tempted. What a break in my life to spend a whole day with you, and become once more, as it were, a citizen of the world! But I will make a compromise. If you go up the mountain to-morrow morning to see the sun rise, I will accompany you.

Though a fast day, I can do this; and I may take a modest breakfast with you."

This decided us, and we agreed to remain: it would have been cruel to deny him. He folded his camp-stool and prepared to depart.

"You will accompany me to my door," he said, somewhat wistfully, "though to-day I may not ask you to pass beyond."

So we wended back through the arches in the narrow passage between the hill and monastery, and the mountain shadows fell upon us. We reached the great quadrangle, lonely and deserted.

"Let us enter by way of the church," said the monk; "I will show you our little private door."

The great building was silent and empty. Our footsteps woke weird echoes in the distant aisles. Salvador by some secret touch unfastened the door of the screen, which rolled back on its hinges, and we passed into the choir.

"Here we attend mass," said our guide; "a small community of monks, though I am more often at the organ. In days gone by, when they numbered nearly a thousand, it was a splendid and powerful institution —a magnificent sight and sound. No need then to add to the funds by teaching. All the glory has departed, but perhaps, in return, we are more useful. Nothing, however, can take from our scenery, though its repose is no longer unbroken. With a railroad at our very doors, who can say that we are now out of the world? Ah!" as a man crossed the choir towards the sacristy; "there is my organ-blower. Would you like me to give you some music?"

"It would be enchanting. But your repast—would you not lose it?"

"I have twenty minutes to spare, and should then still be in time for the end." He beckoned to the man, who approached. "Hugo, have you dined?"

"Si, Padre Salvador."

"Then come and blow for me a little."

He bade us seat ourselves in the stalls, where the organ was best heard. We listened to their receding footsteps ascending the winding staircase leading to the organ loft. In a few minutes we had lost all sense of outward things. The loveliest, softest, most entrancing music went stealing through the great building. Salvador was evidently extemporising. All his soul was passing into melody. Divine harmonies succeeded each other in one continued flow. It was music full of inspiration, such as few mortals could produce; fugitive thoughts more beautiful by reason of their spontaneity than any matured composition ever given to the world. Here indeed was a genius.

Never but once before had we heard such playing. Many years had gone by since one evening on the Hardanger Fjord, we glided through the water under the moonlight and listened to such strains as Beethoven himself could not have equalled. Many a hand oft-clasped in those days lies cold and dead; life has brought its disillusions; the world has changed; but even as we write the glamour of that moonlit night surrounds us, those matchless strains still ring in our ears, lifting us once more to paradise.

This monk's music brought back all those past impressions; "all the sorrow and the sighing, all the magic of the hour." We listened spell-bound, enraptured; and again we were in paradise. No wonder he inspired his pupils to accomplish the impossible. It lasted only a quarter of an hour, but during that time

we never stirred hand or foot, scarcely breathed. Ordinary life was suspended; we were conscious only of soul and spirit. When this divine influence ceased we were hardly aware of the silence that succeeded. The monk had thrown us into a trance from which it was difficult to awaken. Only when his cloaked and cowled figure once more entered the choir and quietly approached us did we rouse to a sense of outward things.

"I see my music has pleased you," he said. "I do not affect to depreciate its power, since it influences me no less than others. For the time being I am lost to myself. All my soul seems expressing thoughts that words could never utter. No credit is due to me for a power outside and beyond me. The moment I sit down to the organ, Saint Cecilia takes possession of me, and I merely follow whither she leads. Of all arts, it is the most divine. Now before we separate let me take you into the Chapel of the Virgin. The image, you know, is considered the great treasure of the monastery."

In his voice there seemed almost an inflection of doubt or amusement. "And you also look upon it in this light?" we asked. "You believe in all the miracles, legends and traditions time has gathered round the image?"

"I must not talk heresy," smiled the monk; "but I believe more in my music."

We had entered the small chapel, where a light was burning before the celebrated image, black and polished as ebony; an image less than two feet high, seated in a chair, with an infant in its arms. The workmanship was rough and rude, the face ugly and African. There was nothing about it to raise the slightest emotion, for it was not even artistic.

"On this very spot," said the monk, "Ignatius Loyola is said to have waited for hours in rapture watching the image and receiving manifestations, after which he founded the Order of the Jesuits. He laid his sword upon the altar, declaring that he had done with it for ever, and henceforth his life should be devoted to paths of peace. In like manner I have stood here for hours, waiting for inspiration, for some manifestation, some token, though it should be only borne in upon the mind with no outward and visible sign. And I have waited in vain. Nothing has ever come to me. But I seat myself at the organ and seem wafted at once into realms immortal; my soul awakens and expands; I feel heaven within me. It is my one happiness and consolation; that and being alone with nature."

He conducted us back to the screen.

"Then we cannot prevail upon you to be with us this evening?" we said in a final effort. "You will not give us all the experiences of your past life, spiritual and otherwise?—all you went through in your transition state?"

"Tempt me not," returned the monk. "Your voice would persuade me against my reason. I must not return to the sweets of the world even for an evening. Think of the going back afterwards. But to-morrow morning before dawn breaks in the east I will be with you."

He bade us farewell and closed the gate. We watched the solitary figure glide down the choir until it disappeared. The quiet footsteps ceased to echo, and we stood alone in the church. The silence was painful and the building had no power to charm. We passed out to the great quadrangle and soon found ourselves in a very different scene.

CHAPTER XVII.

SALVADOR THE MONK.

Gipsies—Picturesque scene—Love passages—H. C. invited to festive board—Saved by Lady Maria's astral visitation—The fortune-teller—H. C. yields to persuasion—Fate foretold—Warnings—Photograph solicited—Darkness and mystery—Night scene—Gipsies depart—Weird experiences—Troubled dreams—Mysterious sounds—Ghost appears—H. C. sleeps the sleep of the just—Egyptian darkness—In the cold morning—Salvador keeps his word—Breakfast by candlelight—Romantic scene—Salvador turns to the world—Agreeable companion—Musician's nature—Miguel and the mule—Leaving the world behind—Darkness flies—St. Michael's chapel—Sunrise and glory—Marvellous scene—Magic atmosphere—Salvador's ecstasy—Consents to take luncheon—Heavenly strains—"Not farewell"—Departs in solitary sadness—Last of the funny monk.

IT was the other end of the settlement. All the houses were behind us; the railway station was in a depression at our left. The plateau expanded, forming a small mountain refuge, sheltered and surrounded by great boulders that were a part of Mons Serratus towering beyond them. Grass and trees grew in soft luxuriance. Under their shadow a picnic party had encamped; noisy Spaniards who looked very much like gipsies; an incongruous element in these solemn solitudes, yet a very human scene. They were scattered about in groups, and the bright handkerchiefs of the women formed a strikingly picturesque bit of colouring. Baskets of rough provisions were abundant. A kettle hung on a tripod and a fire burnt beneath it, from which the blue smoke curled into the air and lost itself in the branches of the trees. The people were enjoying themselves to their hearts' content. Here and there a couple had hoisted a red or green umbrella, which afforded friendly opportunities for tender love passages. Some were drinking curiously out of jars with long spouts shaped like a tea-kettle. These they held up at arm's length and cleverly let the beverage pour into their mouths. Practice made perfect and nothing was wasted. Chatter and laughter never ceased. They were of humble rank, which ignores ceremony, and when H. C. approached rather nearly, he was at once invited to join their festive board and make one of themselves.

One handsome, dark-eyed maiden looked at him reproachfully as he declined the honour—the astral body of Lady Maria in her severest aspect having luckily presented itself to his startled vision. The siren had a wonderfully impressive language of the eyes, and it was evident that her hand and heart were at the disposal of this preux chevalier.

"Señor," she said, "I am a teller of fortunes. Show me your hand and I will prophecy yours."

H. C. obligingly held it out. She studied it intently for about half a minute, then raised her eyes—large languishing eyes—and seemed to search into the very depths of his.

"Señor, you are a great poet. Your line of imagination is strongly influenced by the line of music, so that your thoughts flow in rhyme. But the line of the head communicates with the line of the heart, and this runs up strongly into the mount of Venus. You have made many love vows and broken many hearts. You will do so again. You cannot help it. You are sincere for the moment, but your affections are like champagne. They fizz and froth and blaze up like a rocket, then pass away. You will not marry for many years. Then it will be a lady with a large fortune. She will not be beautiful. She will squint, and be a little lame, and have a slight hump—you cannot have everything—but she will be amiable and intellectual. I see here a rich relative, who is inclined in your favour. It is in her power to leave you wealth. Beware how you play your cards. I see by your hand that you just escape many good things by this fickle nature. I warn you against it, but might as well tell the wind not to blow. There is one thing, however, may save you—the stars were in happy conjunction at your birth. The influence of the house of Saturn does not affect you. I see little more at present. Much of your future depends on yourself. To you is given, more than to many, the controlling of your fate. You may make or mar your fortune. No, señor," as H. C. laughed and tried to glide a substantial coin into her hand, "I do not tell fortunes for money to-day. It is a *festa* with our tribe, almost a sacred day, the anniversary of a great historical event. To-day we do all for love; but I should much like your photograph."

VALLEY OF MONTSERRAT.

H. C. chanced to have one in his pocket-book, which he had once put aside for the Madrid houri who married the Russian nobleman. This he presented with much grace to the enraptured Sibyl. Their heads were very close together at the moment; there seemed a clinking sound in the air. We happened to be consulting the time, and on looking up, the Sibyl's face seemed flushed and conscious, and H. C.'s poetically pale complexion had put on a delicate pink. This was a little too suspicious—even to our unsuspecting mind—and with a hasty bow to the interesting assembly, and wishing them all good appetites and fair fortunes, we went on our way. Looking back once, the charming Sibyl was still gazing towards us with a very sentimental expression, whilst H. C. for the next ten minutes fell into silence.

The day wore on to evening. We watched the shades of night gathering over the vast valley and distant hills. Everything grew hazy and indistinct, and finally gave place to a world of darkness and mystery. The outlines of Mons Serratus loomed upwards against the night sky. The stars came out flashing and brilliant as they travelled along in their awful and majestic silence. The great constellations were strongly marked. Here and there lights twinkled in the monastery, and in the various houses of the settlement. Where the gipsy party had encamped, silence and solitude now reigned. A black mark told where the tripod had held the kettle and betrayed what had been. The whole encampment had returned to the lower world by the evening train. We had watched them enter a special carriage, which they filled to overflowing. Their spirits had not failed. As the train moved off they sent up a shout which echoed and re-echoed in many a gorge and cleft. Presently, when the stars had travelled onwards, we felt it was time to disappear from the world for a season. We were taking a last look at the Gothic arches, through which the sky and the stars shone with serene repose. The night was solemn and impressive; a strange hush lay upon all. It might have been a dead universe, only peopled by the spirits of the dead-and-gone monks and hermits roaming the mountain ranges. Throughout the little settlement not a soul crossed our path; doors and windows were closed; here and there a light still glimmered. We caught sight of another wandering light far up a mountain path, held by some one well acquainted with his ground—perhaps a last surviving hermit taking his walks abroad, or a monk contemplating death and eternity in this overwhelming darkness. We wondered whether it was Salvador, our musical monk, seeking fresh inspiration as he climbed nearer heaven.

As we passed out of the arches we came upon our funny little monk, who, having ended all his duties, was going to his night's rest. He caught sight of us and gave a brisk skip.

"Welcome to Montserrat," he cried once more. "I am delighted to see you." From long habit he evidently used the form unconsciously—it was his peculiar salutation. "You are about to retire, señor. Let me conduct you to your rooms. I should like to see you comfortably settled for the night."

From his tone and manner he might have been taking us to fairyland; beds of rose-leaves; a palace fitted up with gold and silver, where jewels threw out magic rays upon a perfumed atmosphere. He swung back the great gates of the Hospederia. We passed into an atmosphere dark, chilling, and certainly not perfumed. Mysterious echoes died away in distant passages. The little monk lighted a lantern that stood ready in the corridor, and weird shadows immediately danced about. One's flesh began to creep, hair stood on end. In this huge building of a thousand rooms we were to spend a solitary night. It was appalling. As the monk led the way passages and staircases seemed endless: a labyrinth of bricks and mortar. Should we survive it: or, surviving, find a way out again?

A FEW OF THE GIPSIES AT MONTSERRAT.

At last our rooms. Small candles were lighted that made darkness visible. We should manage to see the outline of the ghosts that appeared and no more. The little monk skipped away, wishing us pleasant dreams. Pleasant dreams! Never but once before—and that in the fair island of Majorca—did we spend such a night of weird experiences. If we fell asleep for a moment our dreams were troubled. We awoke with a start, feeling the very thinnest veil separated us from the unseen. The corridors were full of mysterious sounds: our own particular room was full of sighs. Ghostly hands seemed to pass within an inch of our face, freezing us with an icy cold wind that never came from Arctic regions. Once we were persuaded an unearthly form stood near us; to this day we think it. We were wide awake, and when we sat up it was still there. The form of a monk in cloak and cowl. A strange phosphoric light seemed to emanate from it, making it distinctly visible. The face was pale, sad and hopeless. Large dark eyes were full of an agony of sorrow and disappointment. It was evidently the ghost of a monk who had repented his vows and learned too late that even a convent cell cannot bring peace to the soul. A strange thrill passed through us as we gazed, yet of fear or terrors we felt nothing. The sadness and beauty of the face held us spell-bound. We found courage to address it. "Spirit of the dead and gone, wherefore art thou here? Why wander in this unrest? Can we do aught to ease thee of thy burden? Will our earthly prayers and sympathy avail thee in thy land of shadows?"

No doubt there was a slight suspicion of rhythm in the words that would have become H. C. rather than our more sober temperament; but they came of their own accord, and we did not wait to turn them into better prose. We listened and longed for a reply, but none came. Nothing but a deep-drawn sigh more expressive of sorrow than all the words that ever were coined. The singular part of it was that whilst the apparition was visible, all the mysterious sounds and echoes in the passages ceased, and began again when it disappeared.

As disappear it did. No word was spoken; no sign was made. For one instant a mad thought had passed through our brain that perhaps it was about to conduct us to some buried treasure: some Aladdin's lamp, whose possession should make us richer than Solomon, more powerful than the kings of the earth. But the strange light grew faint, the outlines shadowy, until all faded into thin air. The room was once more empty; and we held no treasure. It was a long and troubled night. Rest we had none. Yet next morning H. C.—whose poetical temperament should have made him susceptible to all these influences—informed us that he had slept the dreamless sleep of the just. He had heard and seen nothing. This seemed unfair, and was not an equal division of labour.

Before daylight we were up and ready for our pilgrimage. It required some courage to turn out, for the world was still wrapped in Egyptian darkness. In the east as yet there was not the faintest glimmer of dawn. In the house itself a ghostly silence still reigned. Apparently throughout the little settlement not a soul stirred. Nevertheless it was the end of the night, and before we were ready to sally forth there were evidences of a waking world. We went down through the dark passages carrying a light, which flickered and flared and threw weird shadows around.

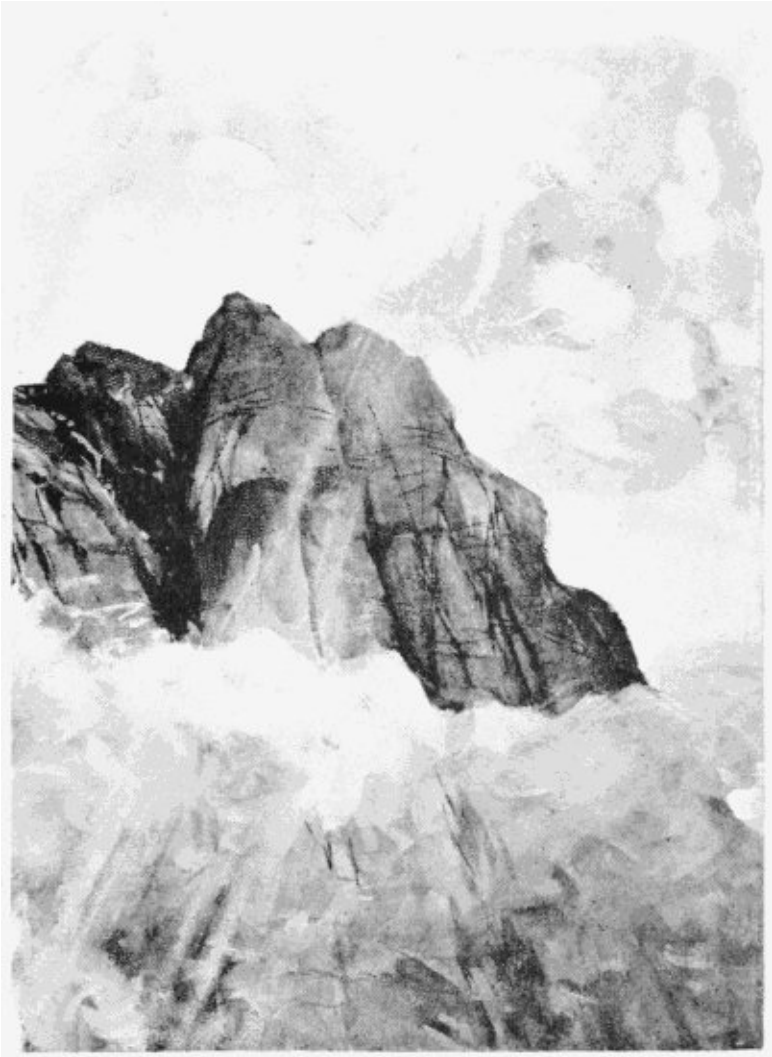
We opened the door and passed out into the clear, cold morning. The stars still shone in the dark blue sky. Through the gloom, passing out of the quadrangle, we discerned a mysterious figure approaching: a cowled monk with silent footstep. It was Salvador, true to his word.

"We are both punctual," he said, joining us. "I think the morning will be all we could desire."

It had been arranged that breakfast should be ready at the restaurant. Salvador had refused to dine with us, he did not refuse breakfast. The meal was taken by candle-light, and he added much to the romance of the scene as he threw back his cowl, his well-formed head and pale, refined face gaining softness and beauty in the subdued artificial light. Salvador had the square forehead of the musician, but eyes and mouth showed a certain weakness of purpose, betraying a man easily influenced by those he cared for, or by a stronger will than his own. Perhaps, after all, he had done wisely to withdraw from temptation.

This morning his monkish reticence fell from him; he came out of his shell, and proved an agreeable companion with a great power to charm. Once more for a short time he seemed to become a man of the world.

"You make me feel as though I had returned to life," he said. "It is wonderful how our nature clings to us. I thought myself a monk, dead to all past thoughts and influences; I looked upon my old life as a dream: and here at the first touch I feel as though I could throw aside vows and breviary and cowl and follow you into the world. Well for me perhaps that I have not the choice given me. Why did you not leave me yesterday to my solitude and devotions, and pass on, as others have done? You are the first who ever stopped and spoke. To-day I feel almost as though I were longing once more for the pleasures of the world."



MONS SERRATUS IN CLOUDLAND.

We knew it was only a momentary reaction. He had the musician's highly nervous and sensitive organisation. Our meeting had awakened long dormant chords, memories of the past; but the effect would soon cease, and he would go back to his monkish life and world of melody, all the better and stronger for the momentary break in the monotony of his daily round.

We did not linger over breakfast. At the door a mule stood ready saddled. This also went with us in case of need. H. C. and the monk were capable of all physical endurance. Like Don Quixote they would have fought with windmills or slain their Goliaths. Nature had been less kindly to us, and the mule was necessary.

It would be difficult to describe that glorious morning. When we first started, the path was still shrouded in darkness. We carried lighted lanterns, and Miguel, following behind with the mule, looked a weird, picturesque object as he threw his gleams and shadows around. Our path wound round the mountain, ever ascending. One by one the stars were going out; in the far east the faintest glimmer was creeping above the horizon. This gradually spread until darkness fled away and light broke. We were high up, approaching St. Michael's chapel, when the sun rose and the sky suddenly seemed filled with glory.

It was a scene beyond imagination. The vast world below us was shrouded in white mist. Under the influence of the sun this gradually rolled away, curling about the mountain in every fantastic shape and form, and finally disappeared like a great sea sweeping itself from the earth. The whole vast plain lay before us. Towns and villages unveiled themselves by magic. Across the plains the Pyrenees rose in flowing undulations, their snow-caps standing out against the blue sky. The winding river might be traced in its course by the thin line of vapour that hung over it like a white shroud. The whole Catalonian world,

all the sea coast from Gerona to Tarragona, came into view, with the blue waters of the Mediterranean sleeping in the sunshine. In the far distance we thought we discerned our lovely and beloved Majorca, and were afterwards told this was possible.

All about us were deep, shuddering crevices, into which one scarcely gazed for horror. Immense boulders jutted out on every hand; some of them seeming ready to fall and shake the earth to its centre. Wild and barren rocks gave foothold to trees and undergrowth more beautiful than the most cultivated garden; nothing lovelier than the ferns and wildflowers that abounded.

As the sun rose higher, warmth and brilliancy increased until the air was full of light. We breathed a magic atmosphere.

"This is what I delight and revel in," cried Salvador the monk. "This lifts me out of myself. It is one of the glories of Spain, and makes me feel a new being with one foot on earth and one in heaven. Can you wonder that I should like to inhabit yonder cave? Day by day I should watch the sun rise and the sun set, all the hours between given to happiness and contemplation. As I look on at these effects of nature my soul seems to go out in a great apocalypse of melody. The air is filled with celestial music. Yet no doubt our Principal is right, and in the end the influence would not be good for me. I am a strange contradiction. There are moments when I feel that I could go back to the world and take my place and play my part in all its rush and excitement; other moments when I could welcome the solitude of the desert, the repose of the grave."

It was almost impossible to turn away from the scene, undoubtedly one of the great panoramas of the world. Here, indeed, we seemed to gaze upon all its kingdoms and glories. Without the least desire to become hermits, we would willingly have spent days upon the mountain. As that could not be we presently commenced our long descent, winding about the mountain paths, gathering specimens of rare wildflowers, and gazing upon the world below. We made many a halt, rested in many a friendly and verdant nook, and took in many an impression never to be forgotten. On returning to the settlement we felt we had been to a new world where angels walked unseen. It was difficult to come back to the lower levels of life. We had quite an affection for our patient mule, that looked at us out of its gentle eyes as though it knew quite well the service rendered was as valued as it was freely given.

Salvador joined us at luncheon: we would not be denied.

"It is a fast-day," he said; "how can I turn it into a feast?"

"You are a traveller, and as such are permitted an indulgence."

He smiled. "It is true," he returned. "I perceive that you know something of our rules." Nevertheless he was abstemious almost to fasting. "And yet it has been indeed a feast compared with my daily food," he said when it was over. "Now would you like to go into the church and have some music? My soul is full of the melody I heard on the mountain."

So it happened that presently we were listening to such strains as we never shall hear again. Once more we were lifted to paradise with melody that was more heavenly than earthly. Again his very soul seemed passing out in music. Had he gone on for hours we should never have moved. But it came to an end, and silence fell, and presently we had to say farewell.

"I cannot say it," he cried in a voice slightly tremulous. "It has been a day of days to me, never to be repeated. Another glimpse of the world, and a final leave-taking thereof. I will never again repeat this

experience—unless you return and once more ask me to guide you up Mons Serratus."

This was very improbable, and he knew it. He grasped our hand in silence, essayed to speak, but the farewell words died unuttered. Then he silently turned, drew up his cowl and left us for ever. We watched him disappear within the shadows of the church, heard a distant door closed, and knew that in a moment he would have regained the solitude of his cell.

We went back to the world. As we crossed the quadrangle the little lay brother who had first received us caught sight of and skipped towards us.

"Welcome to Montserrat. I am most happy to see you," he cried. "So you have been to the top of the mountain to see the sun rise. And our good Salvador has been your guide. He is lucky to get so many indulgences, but he deserves them. What would the school do without him?—lose half its pupils. And what would the convent do without the school?—starve. Did you sleep comfortably in your beautiful rooms?"

We thought it hardly worth while to relate our ghostly visitations, and left him with the impression that, like H. C., we had slept the sleep of the just.

"And now you are going back to Barcelona," he said. "Well, there is nothing more to be seen. After looking upon the beautiful black Virgin and sunrise from St. Michael's chapel, you may depart in peace."

And in peace we departed when the time came, wondering whether we should ever again look upon this little world and listen to the divine harmonies of Salvador of Montserrat.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STUDY IN GREY.

Manresa—Tropical deluge—Rash judgment—Catalan hills and valleys—Striking approach—Taking time by the forelock—Primitive inn—Strange assembly—Unpleasant alternative—Sebastien—Manresa under a cloud—Wonderful outlines—Disappointing church—Sebastien leads the way—Old-world streets—Picturesque and pathetic—Popular character—"What would you, señor?"—Sebastien's Biblical knowledge at fault—Lesson deferred—A revelation—La Seo—Church cold and lifeless—Cave of Ignatius Loyola—Hermitage of St. Dismas—Juan Chanones—Fasting and penance—Visions and revelations—Spiritual warfare—Eve of the Annunciation—Exchanging dresses—Knight turns monk—Juan Pascual—Loyola comes to Manresa—Fanaticism—Vale of Paradise—"Spiritual Exercises"—Founding the Jesuit Order—Dying to self—The fair Anita—In the convent chapel—Two novices—Vision of angels—The White Ladies—Agonising moment—Another Romeo and Juliet—Back to the hotel—Sebastien disconsolate—"To-morrow the sun will shine"—Building castles in the air—A prophecy fulfilled.

ONLY a few miles from Montserrat and within sight of some of its mountain peaks, you find the wonderful old town of Manresa. Thither we wended our way one gloomy morning.

From the skies came a constant downpour of almost tropical rain. We were well sheltered and comfortably housed in Barcelona, but H. C. declared Joseph's friend was a true prophet after all, the rainy season had set in, and if we waited for the weather, we might wait for ever.

Acting upon this rash judgment we departed under lowering skies. Water ran down the streets like small

rivers, and the omnibus waded to the station.

"Such days have their beauty," said H. C. in his best artistic style. "The effect of atmosphere is very fine. And after all we are not made of sugar."

"We need be to bear this infliction calmly," was the reply; a sarcasm lost upon H. C. who was diligently studying the clouds.

The very train seemed to struggle against the elements as it made way through the Catalan hills and valleys, and we certainly acknowledged a peculiar charm as we saw them half veiled through the mist and the rain that yet was distinctly depressing. On nearing Manresa, it lightened a little: the clouds lifted and the rain ceased, but only for a short respite.

Nothing could be more striking than the approach to the old town. Perched on a hill, outlined against the grey sky was the famous old cathedral, rising upwards like a vision. Far down at the foot of the hill ran the rapid river, winding through the country between deep banks. A splendid old bridge added much to the impressive scene, about which there was a wildness that seemed very much in harmony with the grey and gloomy skies.

As we crossed the bridge outside the railway station, a young man, well built, handsome, with a fresh colour and honest face, came up and offered to bring us a carriage or personally conduct us to the hotel. Few people visit Manresa; omnibuses are unknown, and carriages only come out when ordered. We chose to walk, in spite of the rain, which was coming down again with vengeance. The services of the guide were accepted, and we soon found that he filled the important office of general factotum to the hotel.

"Ah, señor," taking us into his confidence in the first five minutes, "if you would only petition the padrone in my favour and get him to promote me to the dining-room! As it is, I fetch and carry all day long and scarcely earn money enough to pay for the boots I wear out."

We certainly thought no time was being lost in enlisting our sympathies, and mildly suggested the padrone might not thank us for meddling with his own affairs.

The streets were very steep, stony and winding. Water streamed from the houses and ran down the hills, and the place altogether looked very hope-forsaken, for it especially needed sunshine. Yet in spite of all we found it very interesting, and its situation is so striking that it could never be otherwise. We waded on and thought the rain would never cease or the walk ever end.

At last the inn, which would hardly have been found without our guide. He pointed to it with pride, but we could not rise to the sentiment. The entrance was small, and we soon found ourselves mounting a narrow wooden staircase which had neither the fashion of Barcelona nor the dignity of Gerona. The first landing opened to a long low room of many windows, looking old enough to have seen the birth and death of many a century. This was given over to the servants of the house, and the humbler folk whose rank entitled them to a place below the salt. They were seated at round tables—but certainly were not knights—in detachments of eight or ten, and their boisterous manners and loud voices kept us at a respectful distance, without any desire for a nearer approach. For ourselves, we had to go a stage higher in the world, represented by the second floor. Here we found the quality at breakfast—the substantial mid-day meal: a worthy crew hardly a degree better than those we had just interviewed. They proved, indeed, the roughest specimens we had yet met in Catalonia: an assemblage of small farmers, pedlars and horse-dealers. Had the landlord added house-breakers to his list, one or two might have answered to the description.

But as travelling, like adversity, makes us acquainted with strange companions, and we cannot always choose our types, we sat down to table with a good grace. The only alternative was to fast, a penance in which H. C. had no faith whatever. To-day this motley assemblage seemed peculiarly objectionable, without any of the redeeming points such people often have: honest, straightforward speech, directness of purpose and modesty of manner which are a certain substitute for cultivation, and atone for the want of breeding. Nothing of this was perceptible to-day.

The room like the one beneath was long and low, but lighted only by one window at the end, so that we were in a semi-obscurity still further increased by the weeping skies. A redeeming feature was the civility of the inn people, a fault their slowness. To make matters worse, the food was coarse and ill-served, and we had to pass almost everything. Long before déjeuner came to an end we left them to it and went forth to explore. We had very little time to spare, having arranged not to spend the night in Manresa: a lucky arrangement on our part, for picturesque and striking as the place really is, its resources are soon exhausted. A wet evening in such an inn would have landed one in the profoundest depths of melancholy.

On leaving the table we found that for the moment the rain had ceased. Our guide evidently thought it his duty to look after us, and no sooner caught sight of us as we passed downwards than he sprang up, leaving upon his plate a delicious piece of *black-pudding*. In vain we offered to wait whilst he finished his bonne-bouche. "You are very good, señor, but it is not necessary," he replied. "I am very fond of black-pudding, but this was my third helping, and really I have had enough."

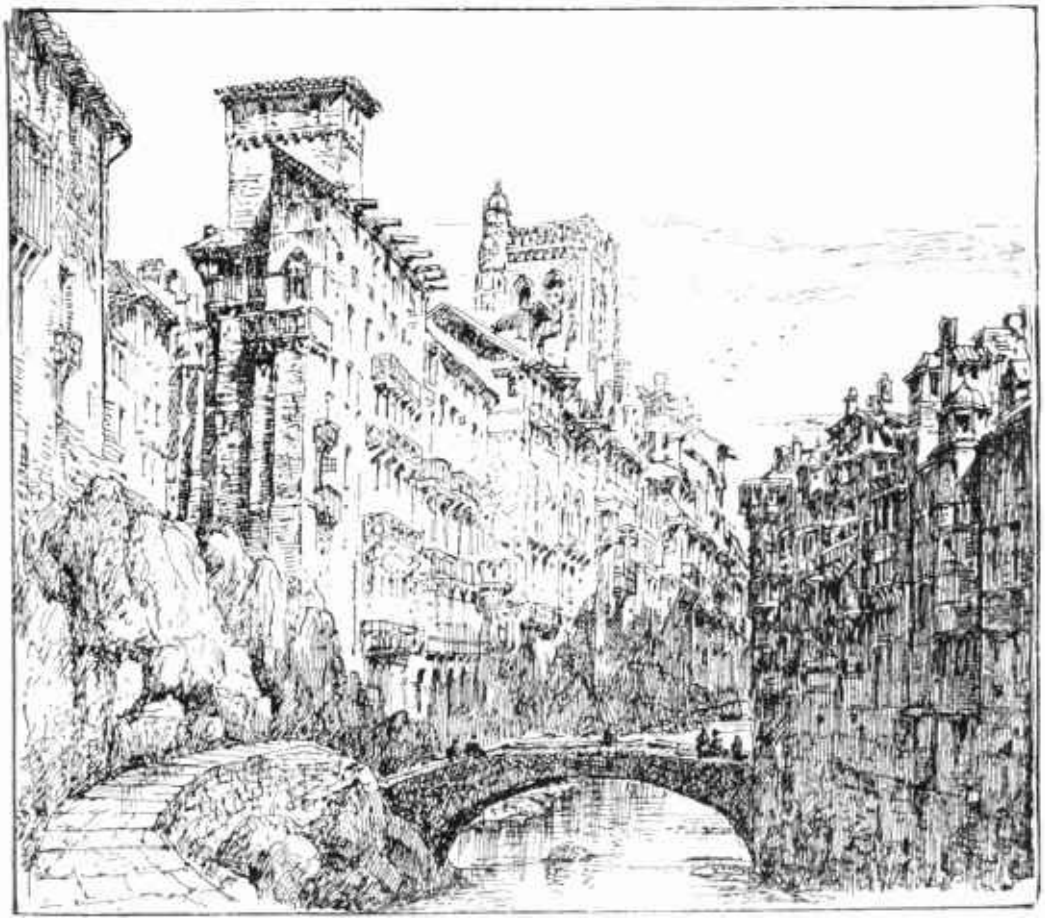
This seemed probable. "Apparently the supply equals the demand," we said. "You must have a liberal master in the landlord of the inn."

"Yes, that is true," returned Sebastien—for such he soon told us was his name. "But we only have black-pudding once a week, and we ought to have it twice. We are agitating for it now, and as the padrone knows the value of a good servant I expect we shall get it."

Sebastien would not leave us again and became our shadow, sublimely indifferent to the rain which every now and then came down in waterspouts. To this day we feel that we saw Manresa under a cloud. It was a study in grey; and if we paid it another visit in sunshine we should probably not know it again. For this H. C. was responsible in preaching up his rainy season: the true fact being that the next day and for ever after we had blue skies and cloudless sunshine.

Manresa is rich in outlines. Its church towers stand out conspicuously on the summit of the rock on whose slopes much of the town is built. On leaving the inn we saw before us one of the old churches standing in solemn repose, grey and silent above the houses. The interior proved uninteresting in spite of the nave, wide after the manner of the Catalan churches. Sebastien thought every moment spent here waste of time. "It is cold and ugly," he declared, constituting himself a judge—and perhaps not far wrong. "It makes me shiver. But when the altar is lighted up on a Sunday evening, and the place is full of people, and the organ plays, and the priest gives the Benediction, then it is passable."

We felt inclined to agree with him, and wished we could see the effect of a Benediction service, but as this was not possible we left the church to its silent gloom and shadows, Sebastien cheerfully leading the way.



MANRESA.

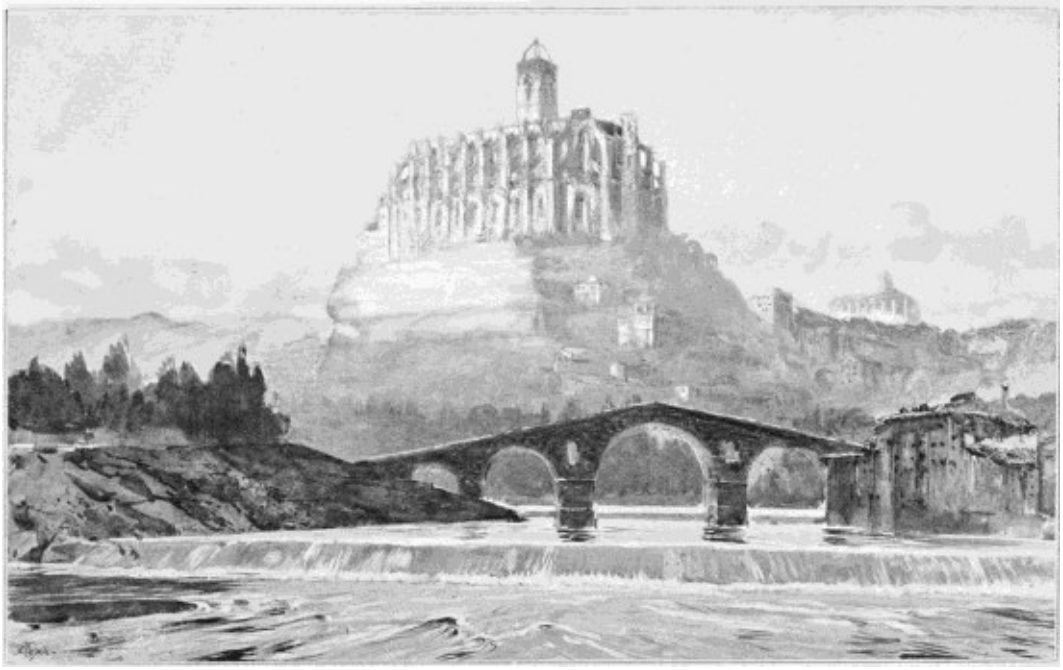
The streets, decayed and old-world looking, had a wonderfully picturesque and pathetic element about them, and on a bright day would have been full of charm. A canal ran through one of them, spanned by a picturesque single-arch stone bridge. On each side the houses rose out of the water, reminding one of Gerona or a Venetian street; handsome, palatial, full of interesting detail; a multitude of balconies, many of rich wrought ironwork; many a Gothic window with deep mullions; many an overhanging casement, from which you might have dropped into the running stream. Waterspouts stood out like gargoyles, and slanting tiled roofs were full of colouring. Towering above these rose a lovely church tower, splendid with Gothic windows, rich ornamentation and an openwork parapet, with a small round turret at one corner.

We stood long on the bridge, gazing at the wonderful scene, all its infinite detail and harmony of effect; the deep shadows reflected in the dark water which needed so much the blue sky and laughing sunshine. It was evident that Sebastien could not understand what kept us spell-bound. He stood by in patience, now looking intently as though trying to learn what was passing in our minds, now directing his attention to the water and the houses, as though to guess the secret of their fascination. Apparently he was hail-fellow-well-met with every one in the town—that dangerous element, a popular character; for not a creature passed us, man or woman, youth or maiden, but he had something to say to them.

"You seem to know every one, Sebastien," we remarked, as we took our kodak out of the case he had slung over his shoulder, in the wish to carry away with us some of these splendid outlines.

"What would you, señor? The town is not large, the inhabitants do not change, and I was born and bred here. I am fond of company, and make friends with them all. I wanted to be a soldier and go out and see the world, but they said my sight was not strong enough, and they would not have me; so I turned to and took service in the hotel. I am comfortable enough, and just earn my living, without a trifle over for the old mother, but I don't see much prospect of rising unless I am promoted to the dining-room."

"Your eyes look quite strong," we said; large blue eyes, bright and clear, without a sign of weakness about them.



MANRESA FROM THE RIVER: MORNING.

"They are as strong as yours, señor—if I may say so without offence. I never could make out what they meant. Sometimes I have thought my old mother was at the bottom of it, and because I was her only child, went to the authorities and begged them to spare me. I don't *know* that she did, but I have my suspicions. One day I taxed her with it point-blank. She was very confused for a moment, and then told me not to be foolish—the authorities wouldn't pay attention to such as her, even if she had gone to them. I'm not so sure of that. It is well known the old mother has seen better days, and when she goes out dressed in her best, with her black lace mantilla over her head, which she has had ever since she was a young woman, why, she commands respect, and I can quite believe the authorities would listen to her."

"Why not try again with those eyes of yours?" we suggested. "You cannot be more than nineteen."

"Not more than nineteen!" returned Sebastien, opening the said eyes very wide. "Why, señor, I am twenty-three, going on for twenty-four. I know I look young, and do what I will I can't help it, and can't make myself look any older. I have tried hard to grow a moustache, but it is only just beginning to sprout."

He laughed, and we laughed with him, for the down upon his upper lip was of the most elementary description. He looked youthful in every way, but we cheered him with the reflection that it was a fault time would inevitably rectify.

"I have one consolation," he said. "At the fonda I get as much black-pudding as I want—once a week; in the army they don't give black-pudding at all. So if I have lost something, I have gained something too."

"Sebastien, we are ashamed of you! Would you sacrifice your birthright for a mess of pottage?"

"What does the señor mean?" asked Sebastien, looking puzzled.

"Have you never heard of Esau?"

"Never, señor. Was he a Spaniard or an Englishman? And was he, too, fond of black-pudding?"

It was impossible to help laughing; but we passed over the question, feeling that a course of Bible

history begun on the bridge would come to an untimely end. So we left him to his ignorance and his preference for black-pudding, passed away from the canal, the old bridge and ancient outlines, and climbed about the steep decayed streets. The rain poured through the water-spouts, and every now and then we came in for an unwelcome shower-bath. This highly amused Sebastien, who never enjoyed the fun more than when he himself was victim.

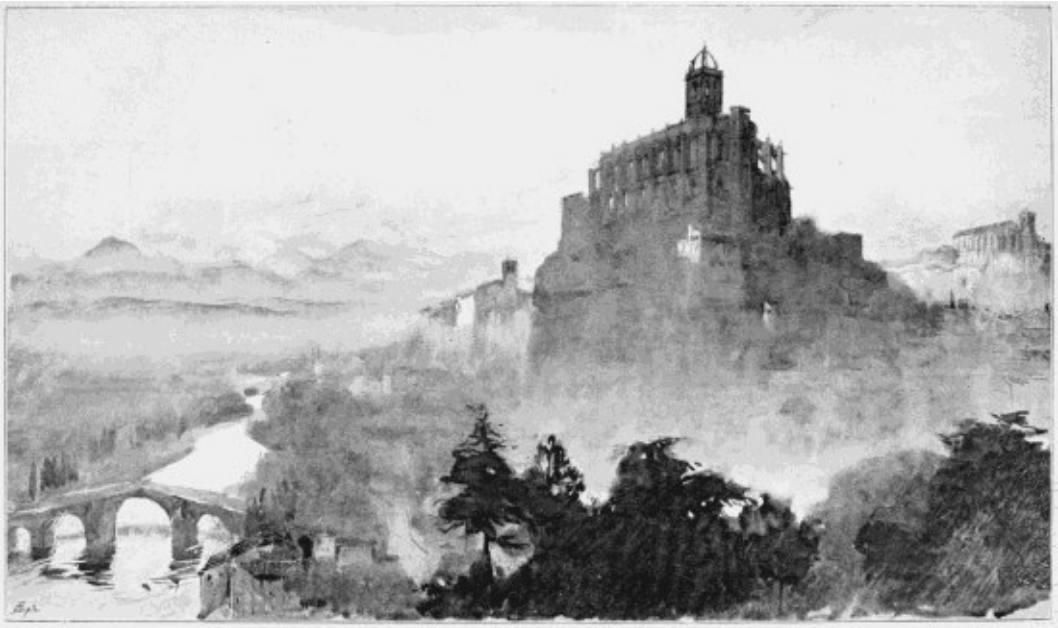
Suddenly we found ourselves confronted by one of those views which come upon one as a revelation of what nature sometimes accomplishes. We had seen nothing equal to it, nothing to resemble it since the days of Segovia. In sunshine the likeness might have been still more striking.

We had passed by a steep descent into the lower part of the town and stood upon the hill side. To our right rose the great collegiate church of La Seo, crowning a massive and majestic rock. Houses stretched far down the slopes, and the church rose above them in magnificent outlines. It was built of yellow greystone that harmonised wonderfully with the grey skies. For the time being these had ceased to weep, and everything was bathed in a thin mist, which rolled and curled about and threw a wonderful romance and glamour over the scene, especially refining and beautifying.

Still below us, on the left, ran the broad river, with its dark, almost blood-red waters flowing swiftly under the high, picturesque bridge. We traced its winding course between deep banks far out into the country; just as we had traced it from the heights of Montserrat, not far off as the eagle flew. Here too everything was veiled in a thin mist.

The rock on which the church stood consisted of a series of hollows, where grew lovely hanging gardens and flowering trees. The church with its striking outlines looked massive enough to defy the ages. It was of the true fourteenth century Catalan type, and took the place of a church that had existed here in the tenth century. Its buttresses are especially large and prominent. The lofty tower stands over the north aisle. Four arched stone ribs crown the steeple, within which a bell is suspended. A fine Romanesque doorway leads into the modern uninteresting cloister. Other fine doorways lead into the interior of the church. Its great size, high and wide, is impressive, but the details are trivial. The capitals of the enormous octagonal columns are poor, and the arches they support, thin and almost contemptible, take immensely from the general effect.

Here also, there was no need to remain long. With the charms of Barcelona cathedral lingering in the mind as a dream and a world's wonder, the collegiate church of Manresa, with all its loftiness and expanse, was cold and lifeless, without sense of beauty or devotion. In its striking situation lies the chief merit of the town.



MANRESA FROM THE HILL-SIDE: EVENING.

We went down the banks, stood on the shallows and watched the deep red waters rushing through the bridge. Beyond it was a slight fall over which the waters poured in a crimson stream. Near the bridge stood a large, ancient crucifix. On the farther bank of the river rose the outlines of the Cave of Ignatius Loyola. Above the cave has now been built a great church, and the cave itself, reached by a short passage in its north-east corner, has been turned into a votive chapel, to which pilgrims flock at stated times.

Manresa is of course for ever associated with the name of Loyola. He had been staying some time at the Monastery of Montserrat, preparing his mind for the great change he intended to make in his life. As he wandered about the mountain in his cavalier's dress, he must have looked far more fitted to lead an army than to become a member of the Church militant.

One of his most frequent visits was to the Hermitage of St. Dismas, high up amongst the rocks. Here dwelt a saintly priest, Juan Chanones, who gave Loyola much holy counsel. It must needs be that Loyola earnestly weighed the cost of what he contemplated; impossible but there were moments when the tempter placed before him in the strongest colours imaginable the allurements of the life he was renouncing. When the final die was cast there must be no turning back, no lingering regrets. Loyola was one of the last men to be vacillating or lukewarm; with him it was ever one thing or the other; and so in the quiet monastery, far out of the world, he considered well his decision.

Chanones was the very man for such a crisis. The hermit was one who imposed upon himself every possible penance. He fasted, wore a hair shirt, and spent many hours of the twenty-four in long prayers and devotions. Loyola had begun by confessing to him the whole of his past life, and confiding his hopes and aspirations for the future: how he wished to become a monk and devote his days to religion. He was already a mystic, full of ecstasies, seeing visions and dreaming dreams. Chanones strengthened his resolutions and fired him yet more with the spirit of mysticism.

Under his influence, the night before leaving the monastery he hung up his sword and dagger beside the image of the Virgin as a sort of votive offering, declaring that henceforth he had done with the world and with wars. His only warfare should be spiritual: fighting against the powers of darkness and the influence of evil. He spent the whole night in prayer before the altar; where according to his mystic moods, visions and revelations had been vouchsafed to him.

But earlier in the evening a slight event had happened.

It was the eve of the Annunciation, in the year 1522. Loyola had come down from the hermit's cave dressed in the rich garb of a cavalier which as yet he had not thrown off. In the Hospederia of the monastery were many poor pilgrims; beggars dressed in rags. Meeting one of these, Loyola persuaded him to exchange his rags for his own splendid dress. Disguised in his sackcloth gown and girdle, few would have recognised the once magnificent knight. His head, accustomed to a helmet, was now bare. His left foot was unshod, on his right he wore a sandal of grass. He was lame from that wound in his leg which had been the turning-point of his career. Never perfectly healed, of late it had become inflamed and painful. In this garb he spent his last night at Montserrat.

Next morning he went forth at daybreak with a few companions, one of whom was Juan Pascual. They had not proceeded many miles before they were overtaken by a hasty messenger who asked Loyola if it was he who had presented a beggar with the rich dress of a cavalier. The story had been doubted and the man put into confinement. Loyola declared that it was true, lamented the trouble he had brought upon the beggar, and prayed he might be liberated; adding that he had made the exchange from motives of penance and religion, as well as disguise. The messenger returned to the convent, and the little band of pilgrims continued on their way.

They journeyed slowly, but the distance was not great. At noon they were overtaken by the mother of Pascual, who in company with others, was returning from celebrating the Feast of the Annunciation at Montserrat. This lady, Inez, directed him to the hospital of Santa Lucia, where he would obtain relief for his leg, which threatened to become troublesome if not dangerous. Inez quickly discovered that Loyola was no ordinary pilgrim, and supplied him with food from her own table during the five days he remained in the hospital.

The day after his arrival he went up to the great church of La Seo, and remained in prayer for five hours, seeking direction for his movements. At the end of five days he left the hospital for a room found him by Inez. Here he at once adopted that spirit of fasting and penance which knew no moderation and with him became fanaticism. The food sent by Inez he gave away, and lived upon black bread and water. He constantly went bare-headed and bare-footed, wore a hair shirt like Chanones, and occasionally added to his sufferings by putting on a girdle made of the leaves of the prickly gladiole. He neglected himself in every way, never cutting his nails or combing his hair and beard; so that he who had once been the most fastidious of cavaliers now became a byword to those who met him and gazed in contempt and derision. He spent much time at the hospital nursing the sick, devoting himself to the most forbidding cases.

This life continued for four months, and then he withdrew to the cave which he declared had been miraculously revealed to him. It overlooked a valley called by the people the Vale of Paradise, and its existence was known to few.

The cave was dark and small and belonged to a friend of Loyola's who lived to be a century old. Here he existed in great seclusion, spending seven hours of every day in prayer, and often remaining on his knees all night. It was here that he chiefly composed his "Spiritual Exercises," which contain so much beauty and devotion. Here also came to him the first idea of the Order of Jesus, which he afterwards founded. But it must be remarked that the Jesuit Society as framed by Ignatius Loyola was a more simple and unworldy institution than it afterwards became. His own rules seem to have been very pure and without guile or worldly ambition; his mind embraced only heaven and the things which concerned heaven. If Loyola were to return to earth, he would be the first to condemn many of its principles and practices and to say: "These are none of mine."

That he became spiritual as perhaps has been given to few cannot be doubted by any one who had read

his writings and studied his life. We of another creed cannot be in touch with him on many points, but all must profoundly admire his absolute death to self, the perfect resignation of all his thoughts and wishes to the Divine guidance.

In Manresa, we have said that his penances amounted to fanaticism. His prayers and fastings so weakened the body, that frequently for hours and sometimes for days he would lose consciousness, and fall into death-like swoons. He retired to his cave and was tormented by a morbid recollection of his past sins. For many months he was filled with horror and knew nothing of peace of mind or spiritual consolation. He was haunted by terrible voices and visions; and it was only after body and soul had, as it were, been torn asunder, and he had gone through all the agonies of a living spiritual death, that at last peace and light, the certainty of pardon and the Divine favour, came to him.

After that his past life seems to have been placed behind him and knew him no more. He became a teacher of men; a great spiritual healer in whom the heavy-laden found comfort and encouragement; a profound reader of the human heart, to which he never ministered in vain. Perhaps one of his greatest weapons was humility, by which he placed himself on a level with all who came to him, and which enabled him to apply in the right way all the deep and earnest sympathy that was in him.

His visions, the voices he heard, the so-called miracles he witnessed, were no doubt delusions due to the highly wrought imagination and ecstatic state of the mystic; but with Loyola they did not end here. They bore fruit. He was practical as well as theoretical: and dead as he became to self, a little of the sensible, matter-of-fact discipline of his early training must have clung to him to the last. His after life was full of activity and action. It would be difficult to say where he did not go, what countries he did not visit with practical issues, in days when men could not easily run to and fro on the earth as they do now.

Loyola died as he had lived, full of faith and hope. He had caught the malarial fever in Rome, and was not strong enough to fight against it. In August, 1556, the end came, when he was sixty-five years old; but in everything except years he might have gone through a century of time. His physical powers were worn out with hard work and abstinence; and perhaps the greatest miracle in connection with Ignatius Loyola was the fact that he lived long after the vital forces should have ceased to hold together. After his death the doctors found it impossible to discover what power had kept him alive during his later years, but agreed that it was nothing less than supernatural.

Thus Manresa is for ever connected with the name and fame of Ignatius Loyola the saint.

Crossing the bridge and winding through a very ancient and dilapidated part of the town, we presently reached the church, which struck us as being new and gaudy, with very little to recommend it. But we had come to see what had once been the cave, and wished we could have found it in its original state. Certainly the saint himself would never recognise it as the old earthy cavern, nine feet by six, whose mouth was concealed by brier bushes, and where he was wont to pass long days and nights in prayer and penance. The walls are now lined with marble; a light burns before the altar; some poor sculpture represents Loyola writing his book and performing his first miracle.

The view from his cave must have been magnificent even in his day. There in front of him ran the famous river, and there stood the old bridge. Beyond it rose the rock with its hollows and gardens; and towering above were the splendid outlines of the collegiate church. Beyond all in the distance rose the chain of the Pyrenees, undulating and snow-capped; whilst in one distant spot, standing alone, cleaving the sky with their sharp outlines, appeared the peaks and pinnacles of Mons Serratus; the monastery

resting half way down on its plateau, far more beautiful and perfect than it is to-day. Upon this the hermit Loyola—as he might at that time be called—would fix his eyes for hours day after day, seeking inspiration for his "Exercises," perhaps occasionally dreaming of the days when he still wore his cavalier's dress, and had not yet renounced all the pomps and vanities of the world. But as we have said, he was not a man of two minds; having put his hand to the plough, as far as we know he never turned back even with the faintest regret or longing for the pleasures deliberately placed from him.

Sebastien our guide was evidently a good Catholic, having a great reverence for Loyola, with whom he was more familiar than with Esau. He watched us narrowly as we entered the chapel, and was evidently disappointed at the little impression made upon us: expecting a drop-down-deadness of manner, when we stood before the effigy of the saint, which unfortunately only excited a feeling of irritation at the badness of its workmanship.

So we were not sorry to find ourselves once more under the skies, dark and lowering though they were. Here indeed the magnificent view, the splendid outlines of Manresa, all slightly veiled in that charming mist, might well appeal to all one's sense of the beautiful and the sublime, and raise emotions the poor votive chapel could never inspire.

As we went back into the town, for the moment it seemed very much haunted by the presence of Loyola. Passing a picturesque little house in the centre of a small garden, Sebastien suddenly stopped in front of it and gave a peculiar call, whilst a flush of expectation rose to his face. Surprised at the movement we waited for the sequel. This quickly followed in the opening of a casement, at which appeared the charming head of a young woman.

"Sebastien!" she cried, clasping her hands in ecstasy. "Have you come to see me?"

"Yes, since I see you now," returned Sebastien. "But I cannot come in, Anita. I am guiding these gentlemen through the town, and have to show them everything; they would be lost without me. We have just been to the chapel of the saint, where I said a short prayer for our speedy marriage. Ah! when will it be?"

"Patience, patience!" cried the fair Anita. "I am getting on well, and you must make el padrone advance you to the dining-room. Oh, it will all come right. Then we are both young and can afford to wait."

We thought it a pity so interesting a conversation should be carried on in a public thoroughfare, and at a tantalising distance, and offered Sebastien five minutes' interval if he liked to go in and pay his respects to his ladye-love. But he declined, and wafting a warm salute to the fair vision of the casement, intimated he was again at our service.

"She is the sweetest girl in Manresa," said Sebastien quite openly, "and I am a lucky fellow to have won her. Unfortunately we are both poor. But Anita is with a dressmaker, and will soon be able to start on her own account: we shall not have much difficulty in getting on, if the padrone will only advance me—as indeed I deserve."

We congratulated Sebastien upon his good fortune and wished him promotion and success: and looking at his straight-forward open face, so singularly free from guile, we thought the fair Anita was by no means to be condoled with, however humble their prospects.

Then we made way into the upper part of the town, and presently Sebastien turned into a chapel attached to a convent.

It was a small building of no pretension, but with a marvellous repose and quietness about it. A screen divided the body of the church from the altar, and immediately before the altar, separated from us by the screen, was a strange and striking vision.

Two young girls who might have been some eighteen years old, knelt side by side at the foot of the steps, motionless as carven images and dressed in white. Their veils were thrown back, but their faces, turned towards the altar, were invisible. Their posture was full of grace, and their dress, whether by accident or design, was becomingly arranged and fell in artistic folds. All the time we looked they moved neither hand nor foot, and might have been, as we have said, carved in stone. We almost felt as though gazing upon a vision of angels, so wonderfully did the light fall upon them as they knelt: whilst in the body of the church we were in semi-obscurity.

Presently a bell tinkled, a side door opened, and two other young girls very much of the same age and dressed in exactly the same way, entered. The two at the altar rose, made deep, graceful curtsies, and veiling their faces, passed out of the chapel. Those who entered at once threw back their veils. In the obscurity we were not observed. We had full view of their charming faces, far too charming to become the nuns for which Sebastien said they were qualifying.

"They are White Ladies," he whispered, "and very soon will be cloistered and never see the world again. It is enough to break one's heart."

"You don't approve, Sebastien?"

"Ah, señor, I shudder at the thought. It occurs to me what a terrible thing it would be if Anita were to turn nun instead of becoming my happy wife—at least I shall do all I can to make her happy. But these poor girls—think for a moment of the humdrum life they are taking up; nothing to look forward to; no change, no pleasure of any sort. They might as well be buried alive at once and put out of their misery."

As the door opened to admit the two novices—if novices they were—we had caught sight of others in the passage; some eight or ten, as we fancied. An elderly nun, equally dressed in white, was going amongst them, almost, as it seemed, in the act of benediction. She was evidently counselling, encouraging, fortifying those to whom she ministered. One might have thought that passing through that doorway was renouncing an old life and taking up a new one; an irrevocable step and choice from which there was no recall and no turning back.

H. C. was taken with a lump in his throat as the young fair women unveiled and moved towards the altar. One of them was certainly very beautiful. Large wistful blue eyes stood out in contrast with the ivory pallor of her oval face, than which the spotless veil was not more pure and chaste.

It was too much for H. C.'s equanimity. He coughed and betrayed himself.

She turned hurriedly; and seeing a face that corresponded to her own in pallor, and eyes that were quite as wistful, gave him an appealing, imploring glance which seemed to say that she would be saved from her present fate.

For an instant we trembled. The case was so hopeless. There was the dividing screen. There was the nun on guard beyond the closed door. There was the drenching rain outside. An escape in a deluge would not have been romantic—and where could they escape to? It was one of those agonising moments of helplessness that sometimes drive men insane.

H. C. grasped the screen. There was an instant when we thought he would have torn it down come what

might. He looked reckless and desperate and miserable. Then we placed our hand on his arm as we had done that night at the opera in Gerona, and he calmed down.

We turned to leave the chapel. As we did so, a louder bell rang out, the door opened, and in walked the Mother-Superior at the head of her little army of novices.

They quickly grouped themselves round the altar, moved in utter silence like phantoms and subsided into graceful attitudes, apparently absorbed in devotion. The sight was as charming as it was painful: for who could say how many of these young girls were voluntarily renouncing the world, or in the least realised what they were doing?

Before passing out we gave a last look at this angelic vision. Quiet as we were we did not move exactly like phantoms. The meaning of our slight stir penetrated beyond the screen. It was too great a temptation for the fair young novice we have described. She felt that her last hope was dissolving, and she turned towards H. C. with a gaze that would have moved a stone.

Fortunately his eyes were buried in his handkerchief, or it is certain that we should never have left the chapel in the state in which we found it. The screen would have gone; the Mother-Superior defied, there would have been rout and consternation, the alarm bell rung, and perhaps—who knows?—a priest would have appeared upon the scene and married this romantic Romeo and Juliet. The novices would have turned into bridesmaids, and the Mother-Superior have given away her spiritual daughter. A lovely transformation scene indeed! Slighter currents have before now changed the course of nations.

The door closed upon us without tragic event or catastrophe. Through the deluge we waded to the hotel.

The long dining-room was now empty. The waiter brought us coffee and cognac, ordered to restore H. C.'s nervous system; we paid our bill, which was by no means as modest as the pretensions of the inn; and under the faithful and unfailing pilotage of Sebastien, departed for the railway station. The poor fellow looked melancholy.

"Oh, señor, I wish you were going to stay a week," he cried. "I did hope you would be here for at least four days."

"The fates forbid!"—horrified at the bare thought. "A week here in such weather would make one desperate, Sebastien. Remember that we have no fair Anita to turn all our thistles to roses, dull streets into a paradise."

Sebastien sighed. "To-morrow the sun will shine, señor. You would not know Manresa again under a blue sky."

"But our poet friend declares the rainy season has begun. This deluge is to last many days, if not weeks, Sebastien."

"It is a mistake," said Sebastien. "We have no rainy season. You will see that to-morrow there will be no rain, no clouds. Then if you had stayed, I am sure you would have spoken to the padrone for me, and got him to promote me to the dining-room. And then we could have been married."

Sebastien, like everyone else, was building his castles and dreaming his dreams; and it certainly caused us a slight regret that we could not help to lay them on a solid foundation. All we could do was to give him our best wishes, and tell him that if sufficiently earnest and persevering he would certainly gain the desire of his heart. It only depended on himself.

This prophecy seemed to inspire him with hope and courage; and our last reminiscence of Manresa was that of a young man, strong, handsome, fresh coloured, standing hat in hand on the platform, and begging us "with tears in his voice" to stay at least two days in Manresa the next time we passed that way and formally petition the landlord in a deputation of one for his promotion.[B]

CHAPTER XIX.

LERIDA.

Picturesque country—Approaching Lerida—Rambling inn—Remarkable duenna—Toothless and voiceless—Smiles upon H. C.—Nearly expires—Civilised chef—A procession—Lerida Dragon—City of the dead—Night study—Charging dead walls—A night encounter—Armed demon—Wise people—Watchman proves an old friend—No promotion—Locked out—Rousing the echoes—Night porter appears on the scene—Also El Sereno—Apologetic and repentant—The charming Rose—Porter congratulates himself—Cloudless morning—H. C. confronted by the Dragon—In the hands of the Philistines—A Lerida fine art—Boot-cleaner in Ordinary—Remarkable character—H. C. hilarious—Steals a march.

NO sooner had we left Manresa than the rain ceased, and though the sky remained grey, the clouds lifted.

As far as Cervera the country we passed through was evidently picturesque, and only wanted the contrast of sun and shade to make it charming. Conspicuous amidst the landscape for many and many a long mile was the wonderful mountain of Montserrat with its peaks and pinnacles, about which the white mists still rolled and wrapped themselves. The scenery was diversified by many a wide ravine, where tangled bushes grew over the hard rock; many a fertile vale rich in fruit trees, pines, olives, oak and cork trees, intermixed their various shades of green. Beyond Cervera, the country was cold and barren and abounded in rock-strewn plains, to which the grey skies gave a still more sad and sombre tone. We approached Lerida when the shades of night were falling, and could just discern its grand outlines rising out of the great plain. These seemed to yield in interest only to Manresa, whilst the town itself proved far more attractive.

We found the place sufficiently civilised to possess an omnibus, which transported us bag and baggage to the hotel. The long straight thoroughfare in which we found ourselves looked in the darkening night like the fag end of a village, unfinished and unpaved; almost like the street of some far away colonial settlement. It was wide and lined with trees, and beyond the trees on one side, a row of large houses; amongst them our inn; a rambling, cheerless sort of building, too new to be peopled with ghosts or distinguished by artistic outlines. Anything more opposite to the ghostly element could not be imagined. Still, in spite of frightful drawbacks it was some degrees better than Manresa.

We were conducted by a curious but amiable duenna to a large lofty sitting room with a bedroom opening on each side: evidently the state apartments. The place looked empty and neglected, and our candles hardly lighted the obscurity. The electric bells were all broken, and we soon found that if we rang till doomsday no one appeared.

Our duenna was toothless and apparently voiceless, for when she opened her capacious mouth and began to talk, no sound came forth. The mouth worked up and down in absolute silence, and the effect was creepy and peculiar. It almost felt as though a mummy had been galvanised into life minus the voice. Her costume had nothing redeeming about it. An impromptu turban placed over a shock head of hair, petticoats of the shortest, revealing feet and ankles that would have supported a substantial Dutch vrouw. We afterwards found she was the laundress of the establishment, and this was the costume in which she presided at the wash-tub. She smiled sweetly upon H. C. and her face looked like a huge, amiable cavern. With an imagination full of the lovely face of that young novice in Manresa, he shuddered, dropped into the furthest chair, and begged us to complete the arrangements without him.

There was nothing to arrange, and the Dragon soon withdrew with her cavernous smiles and voiceless words. Then from a distant corner we heard an anxious murmur: "What about dinner?" H. C.. had not expired; the Dragon had evidently not frightened away all earthly desires.

Fortunately dinner was forthcoming, though when we had finally settled down and removed the stains of travel, and H. C. had recovered his nerves, the night was growing apace. We plunged into wide passages,

and after half a dozen wrong turnings at length found ourselves in the dining-room, large, lofty and well lighted. The chef sent up a civilised bill of fare, and the landlord himself waited upon us; whilst under the influence of fortifying dishes and refined wines the charms of the Manresa novice faded into the background, and H. C. felt almost equal to challenging the Lerida Dragon to single combat as a libel upon her sex. We were conducted back to our rooms by quite a procession, including the thin landlord and imposing landlady, headed by the Dragon bearing a flambeau.

Once on our balcony, we found the night had changed for the better. Clouds had disappeared, stars shone, the trees before us were rustling gently in the wind, calmness and repose had fallen upon the world. It was past ten o'clock; the place seemed still and deserted as a city of the dead; not a sound broke the silence as we went forth for a night-study of Lerida.

It was intensely dark. Here and there an oil lamp glimmered, making darkness visible. Presently we found ourselves on the bridge, looking down upon the waters of the river that runs so closely to the town as to reflect its outlines. To-night it was too dark to reflect anything, excepting here and there a faint track of light thrown by a distant star. The surface was not disturbed by any sort of craft.

To the right rose the houses of the town, and above them faint and shadowy against the night sky, the outlines of the wonderful old cathedral, perched on its rock 300 feet above the town itself.

We tried to reach it, climbing and stumbling up the narrow ill-paved thoroughfares, that seemed to wind and twist about like the contortions of a snake. The darkness might be felt. There was not a solitary light to guide our feet, and every now and then we found ourselves charging a dead wall as Don Quixote charged the windmills.

Once H. C. plunged against the door of a low cottage, and before he could turn round there rushed out a demon in light attire with a torrent of hard words and a blunderbuss-sort of weapon. Fortunately for H. C. a dog also rushed out at the moment between the man's legs, bringing him to the ground, where he and his blunderbuss lay motionless. All the dogs in the neighbourhood set up a howl and a bark, and the place was fast turning to pandemonium.

We were evidently on dangerous ground, where strangers were not expected and made welcome; doors opened above us and voices inquired who passed that way so late. Our lives were in jeopardy amongst these wild Catalonians, howbeit they have not the sword-and-dagger temperament of the more impulsive Spaniards. We had fallen amongst thieves. Discretion being the better part of valour, we glided back like phantoms, passing safely through the ranks of the enemy, and found ourselves on the great square which is the market-place, and where we breathed freely.

No one followed in pursuit. It seemed as though, their own territories abandoned, they cared nothing what became of intruders. Presently the dogs ceased to bark, silence once more fell upon the night. We hoped our friend of the blunderbuss had not been seriously wounded, but under the circumstances it was impossible to make anxious inquiries.

It was difficult to get even a faint impression of the town. Here and there we caught a vision of promising arcades, and apparently ancient outlines of houses and gabled roofs, but everything was in tenebrous gloom. Hardly a single window reflected the faintest ray; the streets were deserted. Only from a solitary café came forth, as we passed, a small band of some half dozen men, who quietly went up a side street and disappeared. It was only a little past eleven, but the people of Lerida are wise and know nothing of midnight oil, wasting energies, and burning the candle at both ends.

"We are doing no good," said H. C. whose head had been rather damaged by coming in contact with doors and walls in the narrow lane. "I think it would be as well to follow the example of these people and retire, reserving our energies for to-morrow. In this darkness we might charge another cottage door without a friendly dog to deliver us from a murderous blunderbuss."

So we turned back in the long narrow street of which Lerida seemed chiefly composed, and presently found ourselves in the broad hotel avenue.

In the very centre of it was an old watchman with his staff and lantern. He threw his light upon us as we approached, then gave a "Buenas noches" and turned down the spear of his staff in friendly token.

We thought we recognised both face and voice. Where had we met?

"You are late, gentlemen. It grows towards midnight. In a few minutes I must call the hour and the weather. The people of Lerida are even earlier than those of Burgos, where I was watchman until six months ago."

Then the mystery was solved. This was the very old watchman who had piloted us to the hotel the night we had lost ourselves in that most uncomfortable of Spanish towns, with the worst of Spanish inns.

"Have you forgotten us?" we asked. "Do you not remember taking two strangers through the streets of Burgos more than a year ago, and seeing them safely to their door?"

The watchman put down his lantern deliberately and struck the ground with his spear. "Is it possible, señor! Santa Maria! A plague upon memory and eyesight! But the night is dark, and my lantern burns dim. Indeed I remember it well. Can I ever forget your largesse on that occasion? I have often wondered how you fared in Spain and whither you wandered. Often wished I might meet you again."

"But what brings you here? Surely Burgos is more important than Lerida, and you have progressed backwards. This hardly looks like promotion."

"Oh, señor, there is no promotion for us poor watchmen. One town is much as another. I earn as much in Lerida as I did in Burgos, and the saints know either pays little enough."

"Were you, then, sent here for any special reason?"

"A reason of my own, señor. My wife's old parents live here and she wanted to be near them; so I petitioned to come here and it was granted. On the whole I am better off than in Burgos."

After some further conversations, and with a substantial remembrance for auld lang syne, we left the old watchman and turned for our hotel.

We soon felt almost as lost as in that past time at Burgos. The houses were all exactly alike. Every light was out, every door closed. There was no especial lamp to indicate which was the inn, and we could discover neither sign nor name. At last in the darkness we managed to trace on a lamp, in small characters, the words *Fonda de España*. The great door beneath was shut, like every other door; but there was a ponderous knocker, to which we directed our energies.

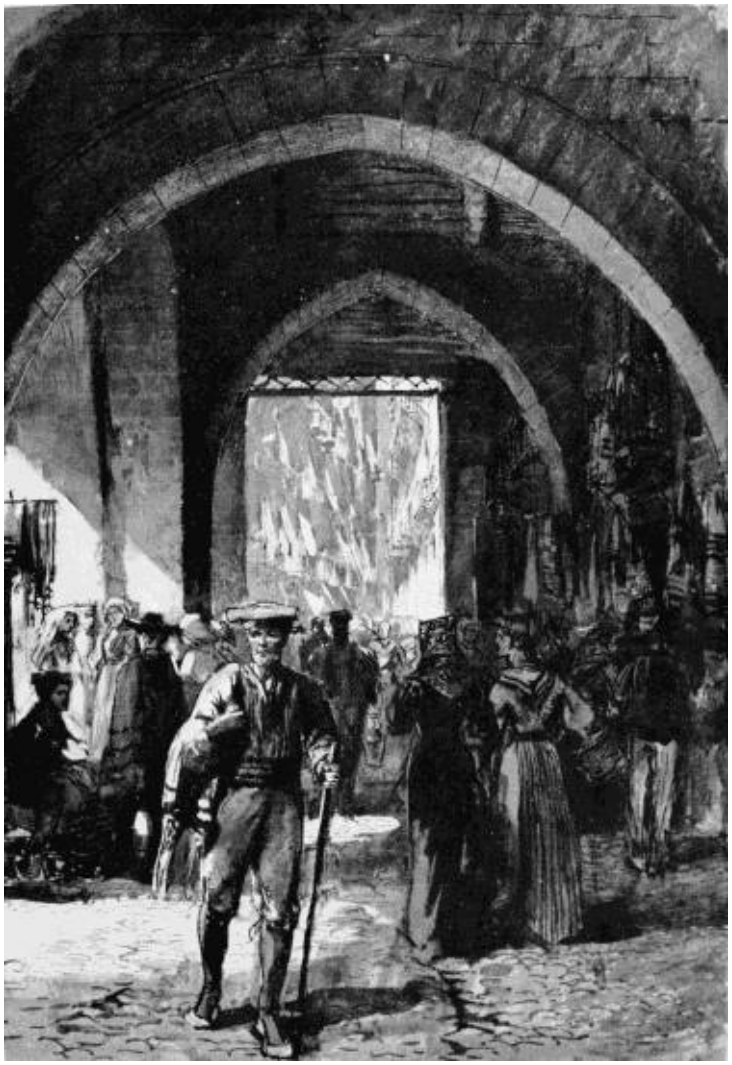
It was all in vain, for no one responded. Knock after knock brought forth no result. The echoes we roused in the avenue were enough to wake the dead. Our watchman had gone to the far end, and by the gleam of his lamp we saw him turn and hasten. The habitable part of the inn was upstairs, a league of passages separated it from the outer door. If everyone was in bed and asleep, we might knock away until

daybreak.

We were growing concerned, when just as our old friend the watchman arrived upon the scene, up rushed another functionary in breathless agitation: the night porter of the hotel, and he carried great keys in his hand.

"A thousand pardons, gentlemen," he began, as far as want of breath would allow him. "I did not know any one was out and went for a short walk just to breathe the midnight air and contemplate the stars. I heard you knocking when quite a mile away. You have indeed the strength of Hercules. And there is also something peculiar in this knocker. You may hear it all over the town, but cannot hear it in the hotel unless you are in the porter's lodge. It has been said the house is bewitched, and I think it; for once, when the Bishop breakfasted here, as soon as he entered the doors a loud report was heard and the place trembled, just as if some evil spirit were frightened and had departed in a flash of lightning. If you only knew how I ran when I heard the knocker, you would pity me."

"I guessed what was up," said our watchman, "but waited, thinking you would be sure to arrive. Contemplating the stars with you, Juan, means taking an extra glass or two at your favourite bodega. You are too fond of leaving your post, and one of these days your post will leave you."



ARCADES: LERIDA

This we thought highly probable, but the porter merely shrugged his shoulders, intimating that if he lost one place another would turn up. He applied one of the great keys to the lock, and the great door rolled open.

We passed into a dark vaulted passage which rather reminded us of the gloomy entrance to the Hospederia at Montserrat. Upstairs every one had gone to bed, and they had not even left us a light. But for the night porter we might have sat all night upon chairs. When the candles threw out a faint illumination, H. C. looked round shudderingly as though he expected to see the Dragon lurking in some corner.

We had found out that this extraordinary creature rejoiced in the charming name of *Rose*, and mentioned the name aloud.

"Rose," said the night porter, "that is my wife. She is not a beauty, señor, but she can't scold—she has no voice. When I see other good-looking wives rating their husbands I say to myself, 'Ah ha, my fine fellow! after all beauty is only skin-deep. I wouldn't exchange my peace of mind for all your handsome wives put together.' I married her because she had no voice and also earns good wages. But though she is voiceless by day, she snores by night, and really becomes quite musical. It is a singular contradiction, but nature is freaky."

He marshalled us to our rooms, a candle in each hand, striding along with great dignity and evidently thinking that he was the life and soul of the establishment. Putting the candles on the sitting-room table, he backed towards the door, made a low bow, once more apologised for being absent without leave and keeping us beating a midnight tattoo, and begged as a favour that we would not mention the circumstance to the landlord.

This we readily promised, and as it was utterly impossible to maintain any sort of gravity on the occasion, the night porter, wishing us refreshing slumbers, departed in great peace of mind—probably to resume his devotions at the untimely bodega. We heard his receding footsteps, and the house sank into repose.

The next morning there was not a cloud in the sky. Our study in grey had given place to more positive tones. H. C.'s rainy season had been a pure effort of the imagination. Sebastien was right after all, and in sheer gratitude we sat down and wrote an epistle to his master that would have moved a heart of stone. We represented in glowing colours the happiness of the young pair that a word from him could make or mar; enlarged upon the moral question of conferring pleasure where it was possible, and wound up with a rash assertion, almost an undertaking, that Sebastien would prove a tower of strength to the well-being of the hotel. The result has been recorded.

We rose early. With that glorious sun shining, who could waste moments in sleep? Presently we heard a sort of alarmed shout from H. C., and on going into the sitting-room, and asking how he had slept, found him pale, agitated, and confronted by the Dragon.

She looked if anything more terrible than last night. Her cavernous mouth was wide open, but no sound came forth, though her capacious jaws moved up and down and her eyes rolled in a fine frenzy. Her sleeves were tucked up above the elbow, revealing a muscular arm that would not have disgraced a prize-fighter. She was evidently primed for another field day at the wash-tub. When we went in she was smiling sweetly upon H. C.

"What does it all mean?" we asked. "Surely you have not been offering to elope with the Dragon?"

"I simply want my boots," said H. C. unromantically. "I rang away at the bell just as we knocked at the door last night, and with the same result. The place *must* be bewitched. Then I opened the door and clapped my hands, and the Dragon suddenly sprang out upon me from a dark cupboard close by, right into

my very arms. I nearly had a fit of convulsions. And now when I ask for my boots all she does is to mouth and shake her head. What's to be done? Is it a plot to keep us here? Have we fallen into the hands of the Philistines?"

Being in a more advanced stage of toilet than H. C., we marched forth in search of the landlord on what we hoped would not prove a bootless errand. He was in his counting-house counting out his money—and arranging his dinners. On making anxious inquiries we discovered that in Lerida boot-cleaning was considered one of the fine arts. There was a Boot-cleaner in Ordinary to the town, who took the inns in turn and was paid according to his work. People had to wait his pleasure. That morning he had not yet arrived; we had risen early.

Fortunately he appeared at the moment: an old, grey-bearded man with a fine presence, who looked almost past boot-cleaning or any other occupation. We found him quite above his humble employment. He was a Frenchman by birth, but had lived in Spain for nearly seventy years—was now verging on ninety, and his old wife, he told us, was eighty-seven, and two years ago had gone blind. He had not forgotten his native language, which he still spoke very purely. In his last days he was supporting himself and his old wife by cleaning boots. It was the custom of the town. The hotels would do anything for you but clean boots. As far as he was concerned he just managed to keep the wolf from the door, and that after all was all they wanted.

He went off to his task, and returning to H. C. we found a change had come over the spirit of his dream. He sat hilarious and comforted before an empty tray of rolls and coffee, our own share as well as his having disappeared, whilst the Dragon had departed to adorn other realms.

In due time the old man arrived with his boots, was duly paid for his work, and we presently found ourselves under the blue skies of Lerida.

CHAPTER XX.

THE STORY OF A LIFE.

Lerida by daylight—Second city in Catalonia—Past history—Days of the Goths—And Moors—Becomes a bishopric—Troublous times—Brave people—Striking cathedral—Splendid outlines—Desecration—The new cathedral—Senseless tyranny—One of the most interesting of towns—Crowded market-place—Picturesque arcades and ancient gateways—Wine-pressers—Good offer refused—Another revelation—Wonderful streets—Amongst the immortals—Our Boot-cleaner in Ordinary again—Thereby hangs a tale—His story—Blind wife—Modest request—Nerissa—Charming room—Little queen in the arm-chair—Faultless picture—Renouncements but no regrets—"All a new world"—Time to pass out of life—Back to the quiet streets—H. C. contemplative—Proposes emigration to Salt Lake City—Lerida glorified by its idyll.

A GREATER contrast than Lerida in the morning and Lerida at midnight could not be imagined. Last night had by no means prepared us for the charms of to-day.

Little as one hears of it, it is the second city in Catalonia, with an historical and eventful past that has submitted to constant wars and sieges. In the far-off days it was occupied by the Romans, and the present bridge is built on Roman foundations. It was held by Pompey in the first century B.C. and these were

unsettled times for Ilerda, as it was then called. In very early days it became a university town, but so little esteemed that the students of Rome were sent here when rusticated. As the centuries rolled on it grew in favour, though the trail of the rusticated Romans must have remained upon it, for two of its most famous students were Vicenti Ferrer the inquisitor and Calixtus III. the wicked pope.

The Goths had much to do with Lerida, and in 546 it became a Bishopric. It fell under the influence of the Moors, but was destroyed by the French at the end of the eighth century.

For the next 400 years little is heard of Lerida; but in 1150 it was restored by Ramon Berenguer, and quickly became popular and important. In the seventeenth century during the great Catalonian revolt, Lerida chose Louis XIII. for king; upon which Philip IV. came down upon them and defeated La Mothe, causing him to raise the siege. Four years afterwards, in 1644, the French again tried to take it but were again defeated. The Grand Condé opened another siege, and caused a number of violins to play before the town to encourage his soldiers. But this also had the effect of encouraging brave Gregorio Brito, the Portuguese Governor, who sallied forth with his army, silenced the fiddlers and put the French to the rout.

In the War of Succession Lerida was again besieged by the French, who behaved with great treachery and cruelly sacked the town after capitulation. Retaliation came in 1710, when Stanhope routed Philip V. at Almenara. The French fled before the English bayonets, and Philip himself, in these early days of his long reign, nearly lost his life. He would have been spared many troubles.

A little later on, in 1810, during the Peninsular War, it was taken by Suchet, and the inhabitants men, women and children were so cruelly treated that the governor, unable to bear the sight of so much suffering, capitulated. Since then Lerida has enjoyed more or less tranquil days. She would now hardly be thought worth taking.

It was during some of these troublous times, in 1707, that her beautiful cathedral was desecrated, and remains to this day a prominent illustration of the barbarities of war. It towers 300 feet above the town, a magnificent outline against the clear blue sky. The first church existed here as far back as the sixth century. This in time gave place to the present church, of which the first stone was laid by Pedro II. in 1203. It is one of the finest specimens in Europe of the early-pointed style and its desecration was a world's regret. Nevertheless, its style is a little contradictory, for the windows are for the most part round-headed.

Perched on the summit of an almost perpendicular rock, it looks even higher and larger than it really is. Its fine octagonal steeple stands out a bold and conspicuous object over many a mile of plain and country. As the sun declines, its shadow falls upon the houses of the town sleeping below, and creeps over the surface of the river. Near it is a building now used as a powder magazine, but in the Middle Ages was a palace given up to the rude scenes of splendour of which those days were typical, and before that it had been a Moorish castle and a Christian temple. Its walls have defied the centuries, but nothing is left of its Moorish beauty and refinement.

In 1707 the French turned the great church into a fortress, and it was never restored to its sacred uses. Peace fell upon Lerida, but the fat old canons had learned to shirk the steep climbing of the rocks in all seasons and all weathers. They agitated for a new cathedral within the town, and had their wish. A hideous Corinthian building arose, and the magnificent church upon the hill after five hundred years of faithful service was shorn of its glory.

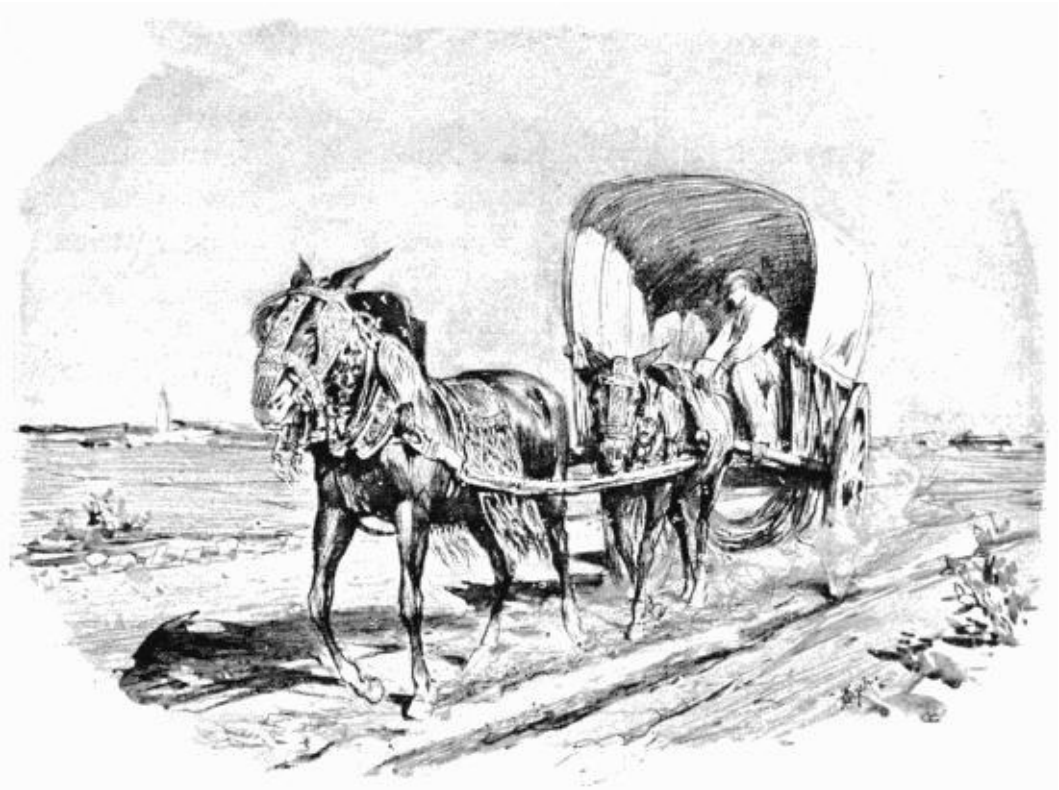
Yet its outlines are as fine and as striking as ever, and the columns, stonework and tracery that remain, still bear witness to its ancient splendour. It is, however, with the greatest difficulty that admission is obtained, a senseless piece of tyranny. The interior is to the last degree interesting to the lover of ancient

architecture, and there are no military or other secrets to be carried away. But say what one will, courtesy is not one of the virtues of the Spanish, and in this matter the Catalonians perhaps take the lead. They are abrupt and uncivil, and unwilling to stir hand or foot to oblige you unless something is to be gained by it.

Sallying forth this morning, we had these magnificent outlines in full view. We have said that the tenebrous darkness of last night had not prepared us for the charms of to-day. Lerida proved one of the most interesting of Spanish towns. This morning it was full of life and movement. The market-place was crowded with buyers and sellers; men and women still wearing a certain amount of picturesque costume. The air seemed full of sound. Fruit and flower-stalls were splendid, and large quantities of each could be bought for a very small sum.

As we had discovered last night, the town consisted of one long street running parallel with the river. It was narrow and straggling, full of lights and shadows. Now and then you came upon short arcades that were singularly picturesque, whilst every here and there a fine old gateway led to the river-side. These gateways form part of the fortifications of the town, for Lerida is strongly protected.

Making way through this long street, we presently came upon a wine-pressing machine in the very middle of the road, worked by strong, stalwart men; a very southern and picturesque scene. We watched them pile up the grapes, that had already once been pressed, until the machine was full. Then adjusting it by means of long poles, they turned the press and the rich red grape-juice poured itself into a vat placed for the purpose. The air was full of the scent of muscatel. The men looked as though the red juice ran in their veins and inspired them with energy.



LERIDA MULES.

As the vat filled, it was emptied with a great ladle into a larger barrel that stood inside the archway of the adjoining house. The sight was novel, and the men seemed amused at our interest. They offered us of the juice in a small vessel, declaring it excellent; but there was a suspicious want of cleanliness about the whole thing—it might have been fancy—and we civilly declined the attention; upon which, possibly to set us a good example, they emptied the vessel themselves, smacked their lips and pronounced it very good.

Narrow streets led upwards from the main street to the old cathedral, a steep, rough climb. It was a place to revel in, full of wonderful perspectives and artistic groupings, as much the result of accident as of purpose. The eye was arrested by a bewildering accumulation of wrought-iron balconies, casements and sunblinds, all sparkling in sunshine and shadow, whilst above one could trace a long succession of ancient gabled roofs, clear-cut against the blue sky, the projecting water-spout of every house looking like a grinning gargoyle and adding much to the quaint antiquity of the place. Through the old gates we watched the mules passing in their rich and curious trappings.

Very distinctly we felt that Lerida was a revelation and a discovery; a town by no means to be passed over when searching out the glories of Spain.

We found the narrow thoroughfare in which last night we had almost come to grief; so tortuous and ill-paved, we wondered how we had escaped destruction. Here and there small houses of the meanest description broke the continuity of dead grey walls. At the door of the cottage H. C. had charged sat an evil-looking dog that growled and showed its teeth as we passed and evidently connected us with the midnight raid. Whether the owner of the blunderbuss had killed himself with his own weapon or was only absent on business remained uncertain; he did not appear.

Continuing upwards we presently came out upon the open space surrounding the old cathedral.

The precincts were certainly not ecclesiastical. We seemed to have reached the poorest part of the town, and the houses were quite picturesque in their shabbiness. A splendid doorway admitted to the interior of the semi-religious fortress, before which a sentinel with gun and bayonet kept watch and ward. No one passed him without a special permission from the churlish old commandant of the town, who, after tracing your pedigree back to Adam, bestowed the simple favour as though conferring upon you the dignity of Spain's high order of the Saint Esprit.

LERIDA.

Strangers and especially Englishmen, evidently visit Lerida at long intervals, and wherever we went we found ourselves attracting an amount of attention that might have confused more bashful minds. As in most other places, the people were especially interested in our little kodak, and seemed to think the honour of being taken equal to canonisation. In the market-place men and women threw themselves into groups and attitudes, set out their stalls to the best advantage, and begged the favour of being made immortal.

But as the day wore on the crowd dispersed and disappeared, the market-place grew empty, arcades lost their loungers; the afternoon shadows lengthened; there were not so many sun-flashes in the air; outlines mellowed as the sky behind them grew less dazzling; the river lost some of its jewels.

We were gazing at the latter, at the wonderful outlines of the town rising gradually upon its rock, crowned by that magnificent fortress with its imposing and impressive tower, when a voice suddenly said beside us: "We hope, señor, you have spent a happy day in Lerida and seen the interior of the old cathedral—now nothing but a useless barrack. The commandant suffers from dyspepsia and is capricious. No one ever knows beforehand whether he will grant or withhold permission. It entirely depends upon his digestion."

We turned and saw our Boot-cleaner in Ordinary standing meekly and humbly beside us. Noting his fine face—it was really dignified in spite of his office—his white hair, his nearly ninety years, we thought humility should have been on our side.

"How is it that you, a Frenchman, come to be living on Spanish ground?" we asked.

WINE-PRESSERS: LERIDA.

"Ah, señor, thereby hangs a tale. If I am to give you my reason, I must go back seventy years in my life, for it dates from that time. And that, you see, will take us very nearly to the days of Waterloo. All my people were respectable and well-to-do, some even distinguished: there was a prosperous life before me. I was in the French army, serving my time. I had been unfortunate and drawn a low number in conscription; besides which, soldiers were wanted and few escaped. Napoleon in devastating other countries had not spared his own. It was then I committed the one great folly of my life, which has ever since been one of repentance. I fell in love with a beautiful Norman girl of gentle blood and breeding; so madly, so desperately, that I think for the time being I lost the balance of my mind. Every consideration faded before the strength of my passion. This beautiful girl seemed equally in love with me. I was young, they told me I was good-looking, and in my uniform I dare say I was not unattractive. Then came my error. I obtained a week's leave of absence, and deserted. We fled together to Spain, and of course I was outlawed. I sacrificed home, country and honour; I ruined all my worldly prospects; and for what? For a pair of bewitching eyes. Nay, she had more than that; she was a good woman and has made me a good wife; but had she been twice favoured, my folly would have been equally vast. For years and years I was possessed of a fever—that of mal du pays: all I had deliberately thrown away gained a hundred-fold in charm, haunted my mind by day, coloured my dreams. But there was no place for repentance. Now it has all passed away. Señor, my great-nephew is a French count, rich and well spoken of, one of the high ones of the land. He does not even know of my existence. Life has only one thing left me—death! But I pray I may live to close the sightless eyes of my wife, and then follow her speedily, that we may rest in one grave."

"Has your wife long been blind?" we asked in sympathy.

"Only two years, señor. You would not know it to look at her. In spite of her eighty-seven years, her eyes are still soft and bright, though closed to the world. I have now not only to earn the daily bread, but to buy it and manage the household. We have many good neighbours who help the old couple, and look in upon the wife when I am at work. Ah, señor, it is delightful to find one to whom I can talk in my own tongue. Surely the señor is French too?"

"Land of our birth," we confessed; "nevertheless we are English, and would have it so."

The old man hesitated; we saw there was something upon his mind; it came out at last.

"Would the señor deign to come and see the wife, and talk to her a little of France and the French? She still speaks it perfectly, and she too has often longed for the country and privileges that for her sake I threw away. Such a visit would colour the remaining of her days. It is but a few steps."

Who could resist such an appeal? We turned and accompanied the patriarch, who in spite of his nearly ninety years, still walked with a certain amount of vigour. The few steps grew into a good many, as the old man passed under the gateway and turned to the left down the long narrow street.

Soon we reached the spot where we had watched the grape-pressing. The men were giving up work and clearing away, leaving nothing behind them but the stains of the fruit and the scent of the muscatel. They nodded in friendly recognition, and we knew the laugh they gave meant to say that the cup we had refused they had found very cheering. The narrow street was growing dim, and in the arched room, half cellar, half wine vault, they had lighted candles. The semi-obscurity was weird and picturesque in the extreme, almost Rembrandt-like in effect. The men's faces were thrown up against the dark background as the light fell upon them; and as one of them sitting astride a barrel raised a cup to his lips, he looked a true disciple of Bacchus.

Our guide passed on and turning up a narrow street halted before the door of a quaint old house. The street was quiet and respectable; the house clean and well cared for, in spite of its age.

"We have lived here for a quarter of a century and more—twenty-seven years," said the old man, "and the house does not look a day older than it looked then. Ah, señor," with a sigh, "we cannot say the same of ourselves. Twenty-seven years in a lifetime make all the difference between youth and age. But let us mount. My wife does not expect you, but you will find her ready to receive the young king himself if he paid her a visit."

We passed up a broad old staircase of solid oak, that would almost have adorned a palace. In days gone by, this house, fallen to a low estate, must have had a greater destiny. The walls were panelled. There was a refined, imposing air about the place. We would have given worlds for the power to transport the staircase over the seas.

The old man mounted to the topmost floor, and knocked at a large oak door which well matched its surroundings. A voice responded, he lifted the latch and we walked in.

"I bring you visitors, Nerissa," said the old man. "A gentleman from France, who will talk to you in our beautiful language, and tell you of scenes and places you have not looked upon for nearly seventy years. You were only eighteen, I only twenty when we turned our backs for ever upon la belle Normandie."

It was a sight worth seeing. The room was large and airy, quaint and old as the rest of the house. Light came in through large casements with latticed panes that bore the unmistakable seal of time. The room itself was in perfect and spotless order. In a large alcove stood the bed, neatly draped and curtained. What furniture the room contained matched its surroundings. There was an utter absence of any commonplace element about it.

But it was not all this that distinguished it so singularly. It was the figure of a little old woman seated near the latticed panes in an arm-chair. The evening light, still strong in the west, fell upon her. As we entered she did not move, but turned her sightless eyes towards us, with the intent, listening look that is so pathetic. She was very small, and looked almost like a fairy-queen. Her hair was white as snow, but still

abundant and faultlessly arranged. The face was small and refined, and possessed all the beauty of age, just as in years gone by it must have possessed in a very marked manner all the beauty of youth. It had the placid look the blind so often wear, was delicately flushed, and without line or wrinkle. This was very strange in one who must have had, to some extent at least, a hard and laborious life, with many anxieties. Her dress was neatness itself; an old dark silk probably given to her by a rich visitor whose turn it had served; and it was worn with the air that seemed to betoken one who had been a lady. But her whole appearance and bearing was gentle. It was a perfect and faultless picture, charming to look upon.

We turned to the old man in wonder. His eyes were fixed upon his wife with an intensity of admiration and reverence almost startling. It was evident that the love of youth had survived every trial, all life's rough lessons. So far he could have nothing to regret. The folly of which he had been guilty—and it was an undoubted folly and mistake—had been condoned and excused by the after life.

"We no longer marvel that you deserted the ranks of the army for those of a sweeter service," we said, looking from one to the other and feeling that we gazed upon a wonderful idyll.

"Was she not worth it—even all I renounced!" he cried. "Nerissa, I have told these gentlemen all my boyish folly and indiscretion—all you made me give up for your bewitching eyes."

Almost a youthful flush passed over the old lady's face as she smiled rather sadly in response.

"It was indeed much to renounce for me," she said, in a very sweet voice. "I was not worth it; no woman could be worth it. I ought never have permitted it, and the thought has been one of the lasting sorrows of my life. But we act first and think after. Though after all, what I renounced was also great."

"We are quite sure you would do it all over again. You do not in the least regret it, and your life has been a very happy one."

Again the youthful flush passed over the old lady's face. She put out her hand—a small, delicate hand—as though searching for her husband's. He had soon clasped it.

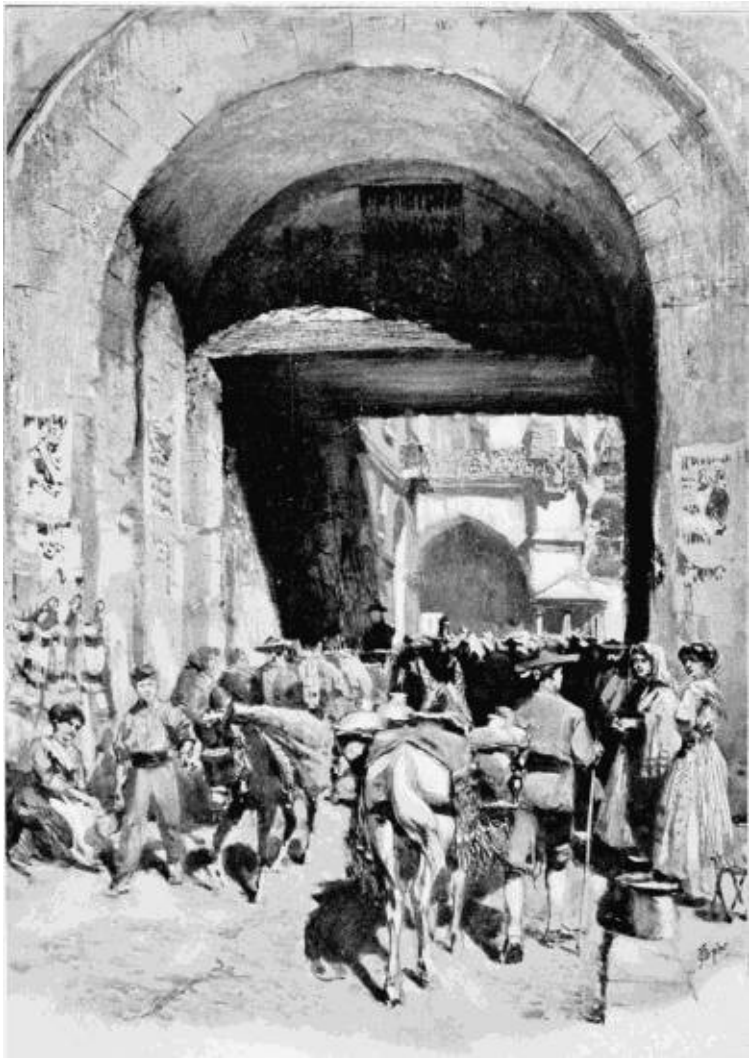
"Nerissa, you do not regret anything," he said. "You know quite well you would do it all over again if we could go back to the beginning of life."

Her sightless but still wonderfully expressive eyes looked up into his face.

"With you to tempt me, Alphonse, how could I resist? Alas, human nature is weak where the heart is concerned."

"Have you any children?" we asked.

"We have four, señor," replied the old lady. "And grand-children also. Our children are all out in the world, and not one of them lives in Lerida. As far as I was able I brought them up well, and tried to give them a little bearing and refinement. But we have always been poor, and poverty means limitation. They are all prospering, but in fairly humble life. At rare intervals one or other pays us a visit; but time flies quickly and they are soon gone again."



OLD GATEWAYS: LERIDA.

Then we talked about France and the French. We happened to know many places in common, and describing what they are to-day, enabled her to realise the vast changes seventy years had worked. The old lady gave many a sigh.

"Alphonse, it is all a new world," she said over and over again. "If we went back to it we should be lost and strange. It is time we passed out of life. But, señor, your visit has brought back a breath of that old life to me. Those who come to us now are humble, and know nothing of our past world. You almost make me feel young again; bring back lost realities, when I was a lady, and had not thrown up all for love, and dreamed not of a humble life of poverty. But, oh, I would renounce it all again a second time for my husband's sake."

Who would have supposed such an idyll in the quiet town of Lerida? When our Boot-cleaner in Ordinary had come to us that morning and received his humble dole for the work done, who could have imagined that such a romance, a poem in real life, was concealed in his history?

When we went back into the quiet streets the gloom had deepened; twilight reigned; a soft glow was in the evening sky; one or two stars were faintly shining. We could not lose the impression of the visit we had just paid; the wonderful little fairy-queen in the arm-chair, who was still ladylike and beautiful and refined in spite of a hard and humble life, and the fine and venerable old man, who for seventy years had remained true and faithful to his first love. No Knight of the Round Table could ever have proved more noble and devoted; worthier King Arthur's friendship. The very streets of the town seemed to have gained a charm as we passed through them on our way to the fonda.

H. C. was singularly quiet and grave. "Of what are you thinking?" we asked.

He started, as if suddenly aroused from sleep. "I am thinking of the faithfulness of that beautiful old couple," he replied. "No, if I tried for a hundred years I never could be as constant as that. In fact I begin to think my only chance of happiness is to emigrate to Salt Lake City and become a Mormon."

"Wait until you are in love," we returned. "You were never that yet. Your fancy has been touched often enough, but your heart never. That comes only once in a lifetime."

H. C. only shook his head and murmured something about having a heart large enough to embrace a whole Agapemone of beauty. We did not argue the point, feeling there are opinions and delusions time alone can correct.

But we went back to the bridge and looked down upon the quiet stream, and beyond the houses of the town to the wonderful outlines of the old cathedral, darkly and distinctly visible against the evening sky. Everything seemed glorified by the story we had just learned, the romance we had witnessed. It was an experience we would not have lost; and henceforth to us the word Lerida would be weighted with a hidden charm of which the interpretation meant everything that was true and chivalrous, everything that was brave and constant, lovely and of good report.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE END OF AN IDYLL.

Days of chivalry not over—In the evening light—Night porter grateful—Dragon in full force—Combative and revengeful—Equal to the occasion—Gall turns to sweetness when H. C. appears—Last night in Lerida—Bane of our host's life—Mysterious disappearance—Monastery of Sigena—Devout ladies—Returning at night—Place empty and deserted—Birds flown with keys—Quite a commotion—"The señor is pleased to joke"—Was murder committed?—Mysteries explained—Probably down the well—Drag for skeletons—Host's horror—"We drink the water"—A tragedy—Out in the quiet night—Discords—Lerida café—Create a sensation—Polite captain—Offer declined—Regrets—Final crash—Paradise or Lerida—Deserted market-place—Trees whisper their secrets—El Sereno at the witching hour—Hard upon the angels—Not a bed of roses—Alphonse—End of a long life—Until the dawn—Acolyte and priest—"We must all come to it, señor"—El Sereno disappears for the last time—Daybreak—In presence of death—Alone, but resigned—Surpassing loveliness—Sacred atmosphere.

So the days of chivalry and devotion were not over: could never be over as long as there are Alphonses and Nerissas in the world. As we went back to the hotel in the evening light, the whole town seemed full of romance. One by one the outlines faded and died out, and when we entered the fonda the stars were beginning to shine.

The night porter was standing in the doorway, though his reign had not yet begun. He made us a low bow.

"Señor, allow me to thank you for not complaining of me this morning to the padrone. I am still full of remorse for having locked you out last night, but it is seldom any of our visitors trouble the dark streets of Lerida at midnight. Most of our guests are commercial travellers, who have no eye for the ancient and picturesque, and are generally glad to get early to bed."

Again assuring the worthy man of our good will, we passed up the shabby old staircase. At the top we came into contact with the Dragon striding along with bare arms and flourishing a rolling-pin. She looked the picture of fiery indignation and we wondered what had gone wrong.

After some difficulty we managed to gather that the waiter, in spite of her want of beauty, in spite of her being an appropriated blessing, had offered her a chaste salute. In return for the affront, the rolling-pin—it was a *washing* pin, by the way—had come into sharp contact with his skull, which, fortunately for him was a hard one. Since then the Dragon had been marching up and down with threatening weapon and flashing eyes, brandishing her rolling-pin like another Communist, mouthing voiceless words.

As soon as she caught sight of H. C., however, her gall turned to sweetness; she marshalled him to our rooms, threw wide the door, and beamed on him one of her most cavernous smiles. That a chaste salute from him would have been very differently received was evident.

It was our last night in Lerida. The landlord still attended us at dinner, for the waiter was nursing his wounds in the kitchen. A violent headache had come on, and he was vowing vengeance against the Dragon, declaring she had imagined the whole thing.

"But for the servants, my life would be happy," said our host. "If they keep the peace with me, they are disputing amongst themselves. The last waiter and chambermaid I had, after quarrelling like cat and dog for six months, suddenly went off one day together, and we never heard of them again. It was a Sunday, and madame and I had gone off with some friends by train to Sariñena—a long day's excursion, for we were going to the Monastery of Sigena, near Villanueva. Has the señor visited the famous monastery?"

We had never done so.

"It is to be regretted," returned the landlord, as he busily changed the plates and poured out the wine. "The monastery is the most interesting in our neighbourhood; and people come from far and wide to see it. In situation it is most romantic, standing near a lovely stream full of fine fish. The nuns, however, don't fish; the very thought would be sacrilege. They are devout ladies, some of them very handsome; a pity so much beauty should be wasted. They are of the order of St. John of Jerusalem, which I have heard dates as far back as the twelfth century, but I am not learned in those matters. I have seen the nuns at mass in their chapel, and they looked like a vision of angels. But I was saying. We had left the hotel in charge of the waiter and chambermaid. As it happened, there were no guests staying here. When we came home at night, we found the place locked and empty. Both servants had flown, and to add insult to injury had taken the keys with them. Fortunately the glass doors in this very dining-room had been left open, and by means of a ladder, and climbing over walls at the risk of one's life, I managed to get in, took the duplicate keys out of my desk, and admitted madame. It caused quite a commotion."

"And had the enterprising pair taken nothing but the keys?" we asked. "Was your gold plate safe, and madame's diamonds?"

"The señor is pleased to joke," laughed the landlord. "My gold plate is pewter, and madame's jewelry is false, excepting her wedding-ring and the few things she happened to have on that never-to-be-forgotten day. No; they had taken nothing. But they had made a first-rate meal, and had tapped and emptied three bottles of my very best Chambertin 1868 vintage, and consumed half a bottle of Chartreuse."

"But you have no proof that they went off together," we suggested. "It may be that murder was committed. The dead body of the chambermaid all this time may be crumbling to dust and ashes in some hole or corner of your cellar. Have you a cellar, or any other place in which a murdered body might be

concealed?"

"Santa Maria!" cried our host, turning pale. "The idea never occurred to me, but I shouldn't wonder if you are right. It would explain a good deal that has remained a mystery. We have a deep well out in the yard; so deep that we do not know the bottom, which is supposed to communicate with the river. The man might easily have murdered the woman and thrown her down. And we drink the water!"

"That is hardly the solution that suggests itself. After drinking your three bottles of Chambertin and your half-bottle of Chartreuse, depend upon it their heads began to go round; they felt the world coming to an end, and determined to be beforehand with it. It is clear as daylight: they both threw themselves down the well, and there you will find the skeletons. You had better have it dragged and give them decent burial, or you will certainly be seeing ghosts in the house."

By this time the landlord was trembling with horror; his eyes, grown large and round, would almost have matched the Dragon's. He was no longer in a fit state to pour out wine or change plates.

"And we drink the water," he murmured half a dozen times over. "We drink the water. This accounts for my queer symptoms. But, after all, the bodies cannot be there. They must have communicated with the river, and so floated out to sea. I dare say they will some day turn up in the Panama Canal or on the shores of New Zealand. Señor, I am quite certain this is the true state of the case. I never could understand why those two should go off together. They were always quarrelling, and seemed to hate each other like poison, and I dare say they even disputed as to which should go first down the well. But when all's said and done, it is three years ago, and they will never come back to trouble me."

"Not even as ghosts?"

He shivered.

"I never saw a ghost, señor, but I suppose there are such things. I shouldn't care to see one. Nevertheless, I will have the well dragged—quietly, not to raise a scandal. I can pretend to have dropped in a diamond ring belonging to a client. If the skeletons turn up we must hush up the matter as well as we can, and so dispose of the ghosts. They would never walk after decent burial. Ah, señor, what a tragedy you have opened up! And all the time I was accusing the wretched pair of I know not what!"

Fortunately for us this conversation took place towards the end of dinner, or we should have fared badly. We left the landlord in his dining-room. He had dropped into a chair and was gazing on vacancy, evidently in deep thought as to how he could have the well dragged without creating a scandal to the detriment of his hotel.

We went out into the quiet night, making sure the night porter was on duty and would keep there. The streets were as dark, quiet and ill-lighted as ever, and we took care to avoid Pandemonium. The market-place, so full and lively this morning, was now empty and silent. From the café already alluded to streams of light and strains of music were flowing. We turned in out of curiosity. Half a dozen musicians at the further end were making unearthly discords: shrieking and wailing instruments set one's teeth on edge and went down one's back like cold water. The room was fairly full, the atmosphere heavy with smoke; such smoke as only the Catalonians know how to produce.

Our entrance created quite a sensation. We were recognised as English, and the English who visit Lerida are few and far between. Was our visit friendly or the opposite? Their glances plainly asked the question. Then one in military uniform came up, and, with a military salute ventured to sit down near us.

We thought it a singular proceeding, but decided to take it in good part. He proved to be a captain of the regiment stationed at Lerida, and a really friendly and polite man.

"I perceive, sirs, that you are strangers," he said. "Can I be of any service to you in a place where I am very much at home?"

To which we replied that our stay was drawing to a close, and we had probably seen the best of the town. "There is nothing you can do for us, though we are grateful for your good intentions. But if you would induce those in authority to grant their passes into the fortress with less restriction, you would confer a favour upon any who may come after us."

"A senseless restriction indeed," replied our new friend, "and we all feel it so; but until some disappointed visitor of consequence appeals to the Queen or the Madrid Government, the thing will go on. There is absolutely no reason why all the world should not be admitted."

At this moment the musicians finished up with a crash. The sound was horrible. H. C. made an excruciating grimace and our captain shook with laughter.

"Do you call that music?" we asked.

"*I* do not," he returned, "because I have spent much time in Paris, where barbaric music would not be tolerated. But these frantic discords just please the people of Lerida, who have not been educated to anything better. It is over for the night, and now everyone will depart. They have drunk their coffee or wine or spirit, sat a whole evening in a clouded, heated atmosphere, listening enraptured to the strains which have set you quivering, and are going home feeling that if this or paradise were offered to them they would not hesitate to reject paradise. Such is their life."

We got up to depart also.

"I am sorry that I can be of no use to you," said our polite captain; "but if you are leaving Lerida to-morrow, time certainly runs short. I can, however, give you my card, and place myself and all I have at your disposal. If ever you visit Lerida again, and I am quartered here, I hope you will find me out. I will at least promise you a pass into the fortress; and there are a few things you would not be likely to see without the open sesame of one of ourselves."

Upon which he shook hands, gave us a military salute, "wrapped his martial cloak about him," and passed out into the night.

We listened to his quick receding footsteps and then turned away. The silence was only broken by the distant cry of a watchman proclaiming the hour and the weather. "El Sereno," as we called the old guardians of the darkness in Majorca, where many a time we wandered with them in the dead of night amidst the old palaces and watched them light up the wonderful old Moorish remains with their swinging lanterns.

ENTRANCE TO POBLET.

It was a very dark night, though the stars flashed overhead. We found ourselves on the empty market-place, where trees whispered together. In the morning, when fruit and flowers and a hundred stalls and a crowd of noisy people called for all one's attention, the whispering trees were neglected. Now it was their hour, and they told each other their mighty secrets, and one felt that they were wiser and greater than mankind in its little brief authority. We stood and listened, but they talked in an unknown tongue. Almost as mysterious and full of meaning seemed the outlines of the gabled houses on the hill slopes crowned by that splendid semi-religious fortress, the tall tower cleaving the sky.

From this in days gone by the bells had rung the people to church, and hastened the steps and shortened the breath of many a fat old canon who, purple and panting, crept into his place before the altar after service had begun. But those days are over. For nearly two hundred years the bells have been silent. The sober cassock of the priest no longer haunts the precincts. Sentries with gun and bayonet now rule, and signs and symbols of warfare fill up the ancient aisles and desecrate the sacred pavement.

Gazing upon the faint outlines in the darkness of night, the gleam of a distant lantern coming up a narrow side street caught our eye. It was a watchman, and instinct told us he was none other than our Burgos *Sereno*.

He waved his lantern more energetically than usual, as though expecting to find the inhabitants of Pandemonium lurking in secret corners. As he walked, his staff struck the ground "in measured moments," keeping time with his footsteps. "It is twelve of the night," he cried, "and the night is fair. *El sereno*." We gradually approached him, knowing well we were in his mind. The rays suddenly flashed upon us, and the lantern had peace.

"Señor, instinct told me you were still in Lerida. Midnight seems your hour for walking. In truth it is far better than midday, for the world is sleeping and we have the stars in the sky. I hope that wily porter does not mean to play you the same trick to-night. To-day fifty people have asked me if the town had been bombarded, declaring they expected to see the place in ruins. Have you seen his wife, señor? She is not the angel she looks——"

"Are you not rather hard upon the angels, *Sereno*?"

"I don't think I quite meant to put it that way," he returned, with a laugh that seemed to come from great depths. "No, she does not look an angel—and she is not one either. It is said that when her husband misbehaves, she beats him with her washing-pin; and it is also said that more than once she has held it over the landlord himself. It may be a fable, but when a woman has no voice she is bound to find some other way of venting her spleen. I don't think the porter sleeps on a bed of roses, though his wife is named Rose, and he tries to make the best of his bargain."

"How did you leave Burgos?" we asked, feeling speculations on the porter's domestic relations unprofitable.

"Just the same as ever, señor. There was no change anywhere. The everlasting bells chime out the hours and the quarters, and the voices of a half a dozen watchmen take up the tale. The hotel grows rather worse and more unpopular, if that be possible, and for want of a good inn the town is neglected. No one ever goes there a second time. In that respect one is better off in Lerida."

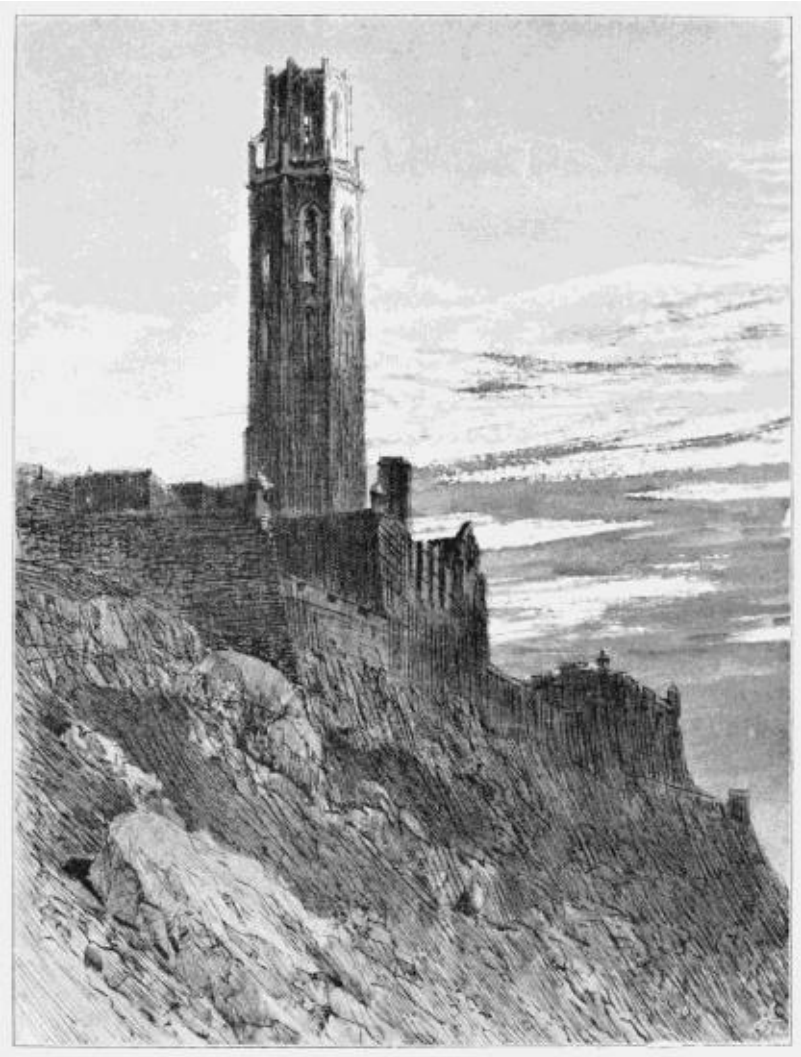
We were standing near the new cathedral in the market-place, when suddenly we saw a quiet figure hurrying towards us. Even afar off we knew it well. It was our Boot-cleaner in Ordinary.

At once we felt something was wrong; the figure, in spite of quick footsteps, was tragic in its bearing. We went up to him. He grasped our hand and his face told its own tale.

"Oh, señor! the end has come, the end of a long life. Who would have thought it would be so sudden? My poor Nerissa! My life's partner, and my life's blessing! Two hours ago the heart suddenly failed. The doctor gives her until the dawn. But she is quite ready and quite resigned. 'Think what it will be, Alphonse,' she said to me just now. 'To-morrow morning I shall see once more.' Señor, I am broken-hearted. And now that she is being taken from me, I feel that I have not prized her half enough."

"You have been her joy and happiness on earth, and have an eternity of happiness to look forward to. For you and for her life is only beginning. The end of a long and happy life is a matter for rejoicing, not for sorrow."

We had no need to ask a reason for his presence there. He passed on to fulfil his mission.



OLD CATHEDRAL: LERIDA.

Presently a small door was opened and there issued forth in the stillness of the night an acolyte bearing a lighted lantern, followed by a priest carrying the Host. Alphonse had gone before, and we felt that the greatest kindness was to let him return alone, unhindered. The small silent procession was full of mysterious pathos and solemnity. It told of a soul about to take its solitary and awful journey to the unknown and the unseen. Seldom, we felt, would extreme unction have been administered to a soul so pure as that of our little fairy-queen. El Sereno went down on one knee as it passed, and bared and bowed his head. With arm outstretched resting on his staff of office, he looked quite solemn and picturesque.

"We must all come to it, señor. But I often ask myself what consolation even extreme unction can bring to a badly spent life."

We watched the little procession cross the great square, their footsteps scarcely echoing. The sacred hush and atmosphere that surrounds the dying seemed to go with them as they walked. Fitful gleams and shadows were thrown out by the lantern—they might have been shades of departed spirits. In the dark night, under the silent stars, and in that solemn moment, we seemed brought into touch with the unseen world. We felt deeply for Alphonse, who was passing through the great sorrow of his life. His own silver cord would now loosen, and no doubt he too would quickly follow into the unseen. His wife would take with her all his hold upon life.

After this solemn incident we could only make our way back to the fonda. El Sereno accompanied us to its threshold. We walked down the avenue between the trees, that were still whispering their mighty secrets to each other. Now they seemed laden with immortal mysteries: their burden was of souls winging their flight to realms where no torment touches them. They were in communion with the stars overhead

shining down with a serene benediction.

Our portal to-night was open and the night porter was at his post, watching for his tardy visitors! wondering why they tarried. What to him was that tragedy that was passing at the other end of the town?

We inquired for Rose. She had put up her washing-pin, and forgiven the erring waiter; the sun had not gone down upon her wrath. Had her spouse also forgiven the gay Lothario, or had they arranged for coffee and pistols?

The señor was joking. Such manner of dealing was for gentlefolk. For his part, if he owed any one a mortal grudge he would avenge himself by the short Corsican way: a stab in the dark. A short reckoning and a long rest. But he had never quarrelled in his life; never owed any man a grudge. Life was too short; he was too lazy. He thought it a good plan to let things take their course. If any one cared to embrace his wife, they were welcome to do so. He had no jealousy in his composition. She was now sleeping the sleep of the just: and for all he knew and for all he cared, her dreams were of gay Lotharios whom she was chastening with her washing-pin.

We said farewell to El Sereno, who lamented our departure on the morrow, and feared he might see us no more.

This was probable. Lerida, for all its quaint streets, old-world nooks and splendid outlines, was hardly a place to come to a second time. He moved away rather sadly, for he had his duty to perform, and the moments would not stand still.

We watched him receding in the dark night; a stalwart figure; an honest man, with much that was good in him, though his lines were not cast in grooves where influences for good are strong. At the end of the avenue he called the hour and the night; then passed up out of sight into the market-place once more. There in due time would return that quiet, solemn procession of two; the acolyte bearing the lantern, the priest with his bent back and the weight of years upon him bearing the Host: their mission accomplished: the last rites administered: the pure soul perhaps already far on its long journey.

The night passed on to dawn and daybreak and sunrise: a new day, a new world. Was Nerissa still lingering here, or, as she had said, had her sightless eyes opened to the world beyond? It was impossible to leave Lerida without ascertaining how it fared with this couple that we had found so interesting and exceptional. Though it delayed us some hours, it must be done, the visit paid.

We breakfasted, attended by the erring waiter, who looked pale and brooding and revengeful, as though he meditated drowning the Dragon in her own soapsuds. Then, in the clear early morning, we went forth.

The way was familiar by this time. We knew its every aspect: all the outlines were old friends. We passed up the avenue and through the crowded market-place, where people laughed and talked and bought and sold, as if life were one long joke and would last for ever, and there was no such thing as death and decay. Down the long narrow street where we again saw the men pressing the grapes, and noted the stain of the rich red juice, and smelt the luscious perfume of the muscatel—for they have red grapes here with the muscatel scent and flavour. Onwards into a quiet side street and the quaint old house that now had upon it the dark grey shadow.

We mounted the fine broad staircase with its carved oak balusters and panelled walls. There was not a sound to be heard. At such moments sympathy is quick to respond, and the awful messenger makes the weight of his errand known.

The door was slightly ajar. We pushed it gently open and entered, feeling ourselves in the presence of death. Peace had fallen upon the house.

There in the quiet room was the vacant chair near the latticed window, where so recently we had seen that wonderful embodiment of beauty in age. It would never be seen again. Near the bed Alphonse was seated, holding the hand of his dead wife, his other hand up to his face. He looked the picture of sad despair. The aged form, so recently still endowed with life and vigour, was now bent and bowed under the weight of sorrow.

As we entered he glanced up, and stronger than all the evident grief we were surprised to see an unmistakable look of resignation. Quietly placing the cold hand that never would move or clasp his own again, he rose and came towards us.

"Oh, señor, this is kind. You come to me in my loneliness. It is all over. The sightless eyes are closed, the beautiful voice is still. I have often prayed that I might be the last to be taken. Heaven is merciful, and has answered me. As the dawn broke in the east her spirit went. Raising her hand as though pointing to some unseen vision: 'Alphonse,' she said, 'I am called. You will soon join me, beloved.' Then a glory seemed to pass over her face, and she was gone. Señor, come near and look upon that beautiful face once more."

He approached the bed and with reverent hand drew down the sheet.

We were almost startled by the beauty disclosed. The face seemed to have gone back to the days of its youth; it might have been that of a young woman of surpassing loveliness. The rapt expression the old man had spoken of was still there. It was impossible but that some divine vision had been seen at the last by those eyes closed to mortal things. It spoke of intense happiness, of a joy that was to be eternal.

"Alphonse, how can you look upon that face, which has the divine image upon it and the divine glory, and be sad?"

"Señor, I have lost my all. I am very lonely. Yesterday I was rich; I knew not how rich; to-day I am poor and stricken. Yet I am resigned; and I am happy in the thought that in a few days—I verily believe in a few days—my body will rest with hers in one grave, and our spirits will be united in Paradise. I am not sad; only intensely lonely. Señor, you gave her almost her very last pleasure. After you had left, she said that for years our little room had not seemed so bright. You brought her a breath from her old world and she declared that she felt her youth renewed. Was it not the spirit telling her in advance how soon her youth should indeed return to her? Oh, Nerissa, my life's joy, my best beloved, in what realms is your pure spirit now wandering? Surely you need me to perfect your happiness?"

We stayed awhile with him, and before leaving found the forlorn attitude, the despairing droop had departed. As we said good-bye we quietly placed money in his hand.

"To buy flowers," we explained. "Place them gently in her coffin. The fairest flowers you can find. They will still be less fair than she."

"Ah, señor," he returned, "it is a long farewell. I shall look upon your face no more. But when I meet her again we will talk of you. And do not think that you leave me to utter solitude. I have many friends about me, and though humble they are good. For my few remaining days I need have no thought, and I have no fear."

We departed. The little episode was over. But it would be ever associated in our mind with Lerida,

enshrouding the town in a peculiarly sacred atmosphere.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SAD HISTORY.

Broad plains of Aragon—Wonderful tones—Approaching Zaragoza—Celestial vision—Distance lends enchantment—Commonplace people—The ancient modernised—Disillusion followed by delight—Almost a small Paris—Cafés and their merits—Not socially attractive—Friendly equality—Mixture of classes—Inheritance of the past—Interesting streets—Arcades and gables—Lively scenes—People in costume—Picture of Old Spain—Ancient palaces—One especially romantic—The world well lost—Fair Lucia—Where love might reign for ever—Paradise not for this world—Doomed—The last dawn—Inconsolable—Seeking death—Found on the battlefield—A day vision—Few rivals—In the new cathedral—Startling episode—Asking alms—Young and fair—Uncomfortable moment—Terrible story—Fatal chains—"And after?"—How minister to a mind diseased?—Sunshine clouded—Burden of life—Any way of escape?—Suggestions of past centuries—The mighty fallen.

THE sun was still high in the heavens when our train steamed out of the station towards Zaragoza and the ancient kingdom of Aragon. Much of the journey lay through broad plains that had no specially redeeming feature about them. Even fertility seemed denied, for they were often destitute of trees and vegetation. Yet were they sometimes covered with a lovely heather possessing a wonderful tone and beauty of its own.

Most to be remembered in the journey was the sunset. Towards evening as we approached Zaragoza, the sun dipped across the vast plains and went down in a blood-red ball. Immediately the sky was flushed with the most gorgeous colours, which melted into an after-glow that remained far into the night.

In the midst of this splendid effect of sky we saw across the plains the wonderful towers and turrets and domes of Zaragoza rising like a celestial vision. As we neared, we thought it a dream-city: not perched on a gigantic rock like Segovia, but on a gentle height of some 500 feet above the sea-level.

The approach to the town is very striking. There is an abundant promise of good things, not, we are bound to confess, eventually carried out. Apparently, it is of all cities the most picturesque, with its splendid river running rapidly through the plain, spanned by its world-famed bridge, above which rise the beautiful, refined, eastern-looking outlines; but once inside the town the charm in part disappears. It is to be worshipped at a distance.

Our first impression told us this, as we rumbled through the streets in the old omnibus and marked their modern aspect, the busy, common-place bearing of the people.

We had expected a great deal of Zaragoza; hoped to find a city of great antiquity, with nothing but gabled houses and ancient outlines worthy the fair capital of the fair kingdom of Aragon. These we found the exception. Its antiquity is undoubted, but too much of the town has been modernised and rebuilt. Still, the exceptions are so striking that when one's first disillusion is over, it is followed by something very like delight and amazement.

The hotel was a large rambling building which might have existed for centuries; and as comfortable as most of the Spanish provincial inns. A perfect maze of passages; and when the hotel guide piloted us to a far-off room to see a collection of antiquities of very modest merit we felt it might have taken hours to get

back alone to our starting point.

Zaragoza is large and flourishing; its prosperity is evident; its new streets are handsome and common-place. Some of them are wide boulevards lined with trees, lighted with electric lamps, possessing "every new and modern improvement." As you go through them you almost think of a small Paris. At night its cafés are brilliantly lighted, and rank as the finest in Spain. They are always crowded, and fond and foolish parents bring their children and keep them in the glare and glitter until towards midnight, when they fall off their perches. Music of some sort is always going on; sometimes the harsh, barbarous discords and howlings the Spanish delight in, at others civilised harmonies and trained voices that are really beautiful but less popular.

Those who frequent these cafés are not socially of an attractive class. Many are rough country people who are evidently in Zaragoza as birds of passage. The roughest specimens of apparently unwashed waifs and strays will take possession of a table, and at the very next table, almost touching elbows with them, will be a fashionable couple, dressed smartly enough for a wedding. The one in no way disconcerts the other, and all treat each other on the basis of a friendly species of equality. The lowest of the people who have a few sous to spare in their pocket devote them to this, their earthly paradise. They love the glare and glamour and warmth—it is the one green oasis in the desert of their every-day lives; all the working hours are gilded by the thought of the evening's amusement. Many of them have dull, dark homes, in which they feel cribbed and cabined. Of the quiet pleasures of domestic life they know little, but they are all perfectly happy. One of the strongest characteristics of human nature is its adaptability to circumstances; the back fits itself to the burden. People seldom die of a broken heart.

In Zaragoza, more than anywhere else, we saw this strange mixture of classes; wondered that some of them were admitted. But they behaved like ladies and gentlemen, drinking coffee and helping themselves to detestable spirit with an air and a grace only they know how to put on. Yet it is not put on; it is born with them; an inheritance from the past.

It was not in all this, however, that the charm of Zaragoza consisted. These everyday common-place sights and experiences have few attractions for those who seek to link themselves with the past in its ancient outlines and glorious buildings. The cafés were all very well as studies of human nature, but one very soon had enough of them.

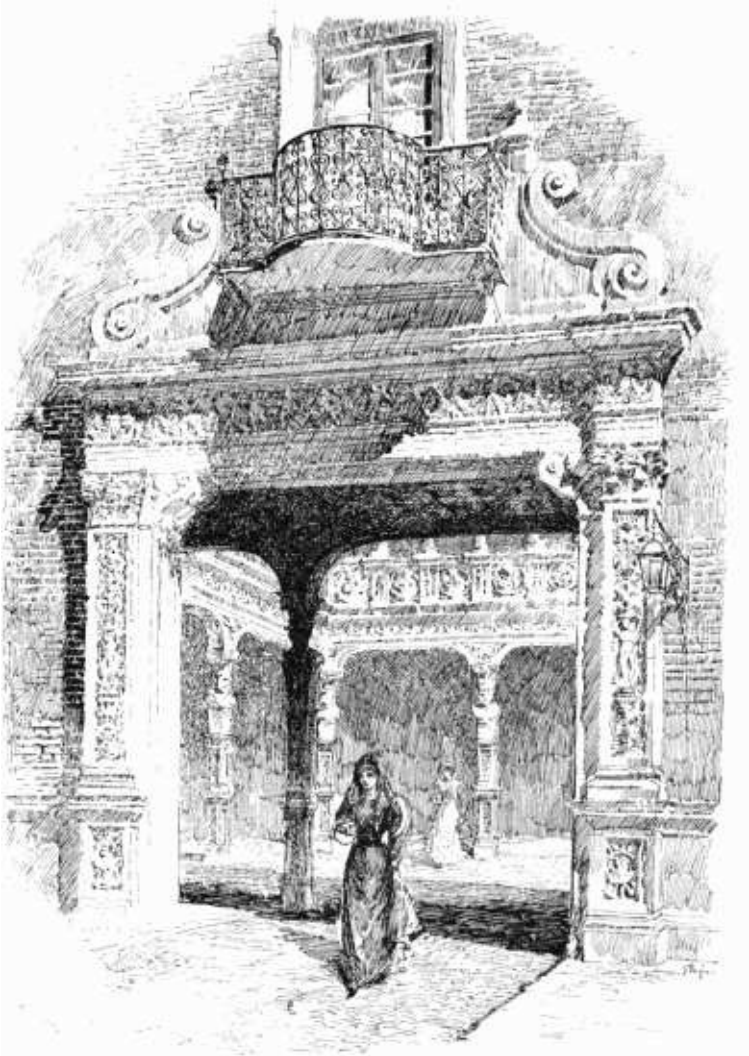
There was one long street especially old and interesting. On each side were deep, massive arcades of a very early period, above which the houses rose in quaint, gabled outlines, many of the windows still possessing latticed panes, which added so much to their charm. To make the street more interesting, the market was held here. On both sides the road, in front of the arcades was a long succession of stalls, where everything relating to domestic life was sold. Fruit and flower and vegetable stalls were the most picturesque, full of fragrance and colouring. Luscious grapes and pomegranates were heaped side by side with a wealth of roses and orange blossoms and the still sweeter verbena. Many of the stall-holders wore costumes which harmonised admirably with the arcades and gabled roofs. The street was crowded with buyers and sellers and loungers, though few seemed alive to the picturesque element, in which we were absorbed. Many of the men, stalwart, strong and vigorous, were dressed in the costume of the country; knee-breeches and broad-brimmed hat; whilst broad blue and red silken sashes were tied round the waist: a hardy, active race, made for endurance. This scene had by far the most human interest of any we found in Zaragoza. As a picture of Old Spain, it would have made the fortune of an artist as we saw it that day in all the effect of sunlight and shadow, all the life and movement that seemed to rouse the arcades of the past into touch with the present.

Near to this a wonderful leaning-tower stood until recently; a magnificent Moorish-looking clock-tower built about the year 1500. This was one of the glories of Zaragoza; but the inhabitants after subscribing a sum of money to prop it up, grew alarmed and subscribed another sum to pull it down. In reality it was perfectly safe and might have stood for centuries.

But when all is said and done, it is in its side streets, narrow, tortuous and gloomy, that the interest of Zaragoza chiefly lies.

Many of the houses are ancient and enormous palaces, once inhabited by the old aristocracy of Aragon. They are so solidly built that they not only defy time, but almost the destructive hand of man. Some of them have wonderfully interesting facades: roofs with overhanging eaves and Gothic windows guarded by wrought ironwork; features that can never tire.

Magnificent and imposing gateways lead into yet more imposing courtyards. One of these was especially beautiful: and its history was romantic.



FAIR LUCIA'S HOUSE: ZARAGOZA.

It once belonged to the son of a reigning duke who renounced all for love, and thought the world well lost. He offended his family by his marriage, and they treated him as one dead.

The lady of his choice, fair Lucia, was beautiful and charming, but beneath him. Tradition says that she was an actress, and that he fell hopelessly in love with her as she played in a drama where all ended tragically. It might have been a warning to them, but when was love ever warned? He espoused her and they took up their abode in this wonderful old palace, fitting home of romance.

As we gazed upon the matchless courtyard: the overhanging eaves, the rounded arches of the balcony with their graceful and refined pillars, the exquisitely-carved ceilings and staircase of rich black oak: the latter wide enough to drive up a coach and four: we felt that here love might reign for ever. And probably it would have lasted long; for the lady, as history says, had all graces of the spirit as well as all the charm of exquisite form and feature: whilst her knight was true as the needle to the pole, constant as death.

They were happy in each other; life was a paradise; and when did such a perfect condition of things ever last? Paradise is not for this world.

Five summers and winters passed and found them still devoted to each other. Every day was a dream. Then a cruel visitation came to their town: an epidemic, sparing not high or low. It attacked the fair Lucia: and though her husband nursed her night and day, and all the leeches of the town combined their skill and judgment to save her, a stronger power than theirs was against them.

The last day dawned; instinct told her that another sun for her could never rise. Her husband bent over her in an agony of grief. She clasped her fair, frail arms around his neck.

"My love, my love, we have been very happy: all in all to each other," she murmured. "These five years, an eternity of bliss, have yet flown swiftly as a day. You have been good—so good; dear—so dear. Perhaps it is well to die thus and now, with all our youth, and all our dreams, and all our illusions undispelled. Eternity will restore us to each other. I leave you with not one mark on the delicate bloom of our great love."

She died and he was not to be consoled. His people offered to be reunited to him but he would none of them.

It was the time of the War of Succession. Into this he madly plunged, seeking death and finding it. As a rule death is said to avoid those who court him; but here it was not so. The knight, faithful to the end, was found upon the battlefield, his eyes wide open, looking upon the heavens; where perhaps he saw the vision of his lovely wife, whilst her miniature lay next his heart.

The house still stands much as it stood in those days, but two centuries older. It is the most beautiful in Zaragoza, perhaps has few equals in all Spain. A special atmosphere surrounds it: and as we look a vision rises.

Standing in the courtyard and gazing upon that wide staircase, we see that youthful pair, so favoured by nature, passing to and fro; we see them looking into each other's eyes, hear their love vows. Their arms entwine, their love-locks mingle. A mist blurs the scene, and when it passes all has changed. A sad cortége is descending. A coffin bearing the remains of what was once so fair and full of life. A knight armed cap-à-pied follows, with clanking sword and spur; but his face is pale and his eyes are red with weeping, though they weep not now. They will never weep again. The fountain of his tears is dried.

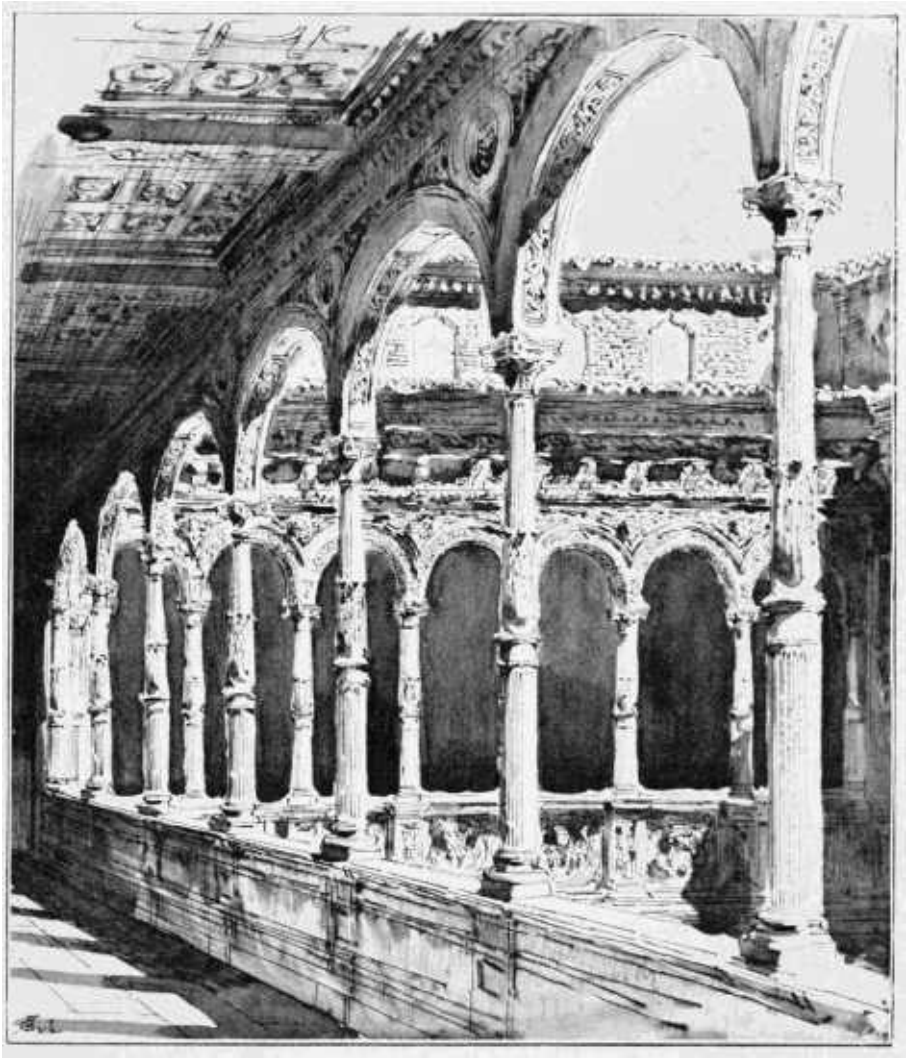
Again the mist blurs the scene, and when it clears nothing is visible but the solitary knight ascending to his lonely room, love flown, hope dead, his life gone from him.

Presently the palace is closed; no one ascends or descends the staircase; voices are never heard, footsteps never echo. Surely ghosts haunt the sad corridors, look out from the vacant arcades upon the silent courtyard. For the knight has long lain dead upon the battlefield and no one comes to claim the palace and once more throw wide its portals to life, and laughter and sunshine.

We paid it more than one visit during our sojourn in Zaragoza, and each time there passed before us in

vivid colours the love-poem of two hundred years ago.

In the bright sunshine, the morning after our arrival we had gone forth to acquaint ourselves with the city. No view was more striking than that beyond the river looking upon the town.



FAIR LUCIA'S HOUSE: ZARAGOZA.

We stood on the farther bank. The stream flowed rapidly at our feet. Before us the wonderful bridge spanned the water with its seven arches: a massive, time-edifying structure. Above this in magic outlines rose the towers, turrets and domes of the new cathedral of El Pilar, as splendid from this point of view as it is really worthless both outwardly and inwardly on a closer inspection. It is certainly one of the most remarkable scenes in all Spain: and from this point Zaragoza possesses few rivals.

The new cathedral of El Pilar: so called because it possesses the pillar on which the Virgin is said to have descended from heaven. It is a very large building, and the domes from a distance are very effective, but the interior is in the worst and most debased style.

As we stood within the vast space that morning, wondering so much wealth had been wasted on this poor fabric, a female, apparently a lady, dressed in sable garments, her face veiled by the graceful mantilla, glided up to us and solicited alms.

At the first moment we thought we had mistaken her meaning, but on looking at her in doubt, she repeated her demand more imploringly.

"Señor, for the love of heaven, give me charity." The building was large, the worshippers were few, it was easy to converse.

"But what do you mean?" we said. "You look too respectable to be asking alms. Surely you cannot be in want?"

"In want? I am starving."

And throwing back her mantilla she disclosed a face still young, still fair to excess, but pale, pinched and careworn.

We felt terribly uncomfortable. She walked and spoke as a lady. There was a refinement in her voice and movement that could only have come from gentle breeding. How had she fallen so low? Eyes must have asked the question tongue could not.

BRIDGE AND CATHEDRAL OF EL PILAR: ZARAGOZA.

"Listen, señor," she said, as though in reply. "Listen and pity me. I was tenderly and delicately brought up, possessed a comfortable home, indulgent parents. We lived in Madrid, where my father held an office under Government. I was an only child and indulged. Pale, quiet and subdued as you see me now, I was passionate, headstrong and wilful. I fell under the influence of one outwardly an angel, inwardly a demon. He was a singer at the opera, and his voice charmed me even more than his splendid presence. He was beneath me, but we met clandestinely again and again, until at last he persuaded me to fly with him. I was infatuated to madness. All my past life, all past influence, teaching, thought of home, love of parents—all was thrown to the winds for this wild passion. We were secretly married before we fled, for mad as I was I had not lost all sense of honour. Almost from the very first day retribution set in. My father had long suffered from disease of the heart though I knew it not, and the shock of my flight killed him. The home was broken up, my mother was left almost destitute, and in a frenzy of despair, a moment of insanity, took poison. I was an orphan, and then discovered that my husband had thought I should be rich. On learning the truth, he began to ill-treat me. His fancy had been caught for a moment by my fair face. Of this he soon tired and, base villain that he was, transferred his worthless affections elsewhere. Things went from bad to worse. There were times when he even beat me—and I could not retaliate. I had come to my senses; I recognised the hand of retribution, and accepted my punishment. But what wonder that in my misery I learned to seek oblivion in the wine cup? Perhaps my worthless husband first gave me the idea of this temptation, for he was seldom sober. It was in one of those terrible moments that he fell from a height and so injured himself that after five days of intense agony he died. I was free but penniless; knew not where

to go, which way to turn. I had not a friend in the world—all had forsaken me. There was but one thing I could do. I had a voice and could sing. I sang in cafés, at small concerts, wherever I could get an engagement and earn a trifle. Now I am in Zaragoza. Most nights I sing in the great café, but my small earnings all go in the same way—to satisfy my craving for wine. Wine, wine, wine; it is my one sin, but oh! I feel that it is fatal. I know that it is surely drawing my feet to the grave. And after that?"

She shuddered; then pointed to a tawdry image of the Virgin, before which we stood.

"There, before that altar, I have knelt day after day and prayed to be delivered; but I have prayed in vain; no answer comes, and the chains are binding about me. Señor, I saw you enter; recognised that you were a stranger. Something told me I might address you and you would at least listen; would not spurn me or turn away in hateful contempt. But what can you do? I have asked for alms. I have told you I am starving—and so I am; but it is the soul that is starving more than the body. You will bestow your charity upon me—I know you will—and it will not go in food but in wine. Ah, if you could cure me, or give me an antidote that would send me into a sleep from which I should never waken, that indeed would be the greatest and truest charity."

Then we realised that the pale face and pinched look were not due to want of food. The cause was deeper and more hopeless. It was one of the saddest stories we had ever listened to; and it came upon us so abruptly that we felt helpless and bewildered: sick at heart at the very thought of our want of power to minister to this mind diseased.

"Give us your name and address," we said, after trying to think out the situation. "Let us see if there is any way of escape for you. Your sad story has clouded the sunshine."

She drew a card from her pocket in a quiet, ladylike way and placed it in our hands with a pathetic, appealing look that haunts us still.

We watched her turn away and noted the quiet, graceful movement with which she glided down the aisle and disappeared through a distant door; and our keenest sympathy went out to the poor, fair, frail creature whose burden of life was greater than she could bear. Could by any possibility a way of escape be found for her?

We passed out of the church, which now seemed laden with an atmosphere of human sorrow and suffering, glad to escape to the free air and pure skies of heaven. From the Cathedral Square we turned into the narrow streets with their great grey palaces and enormous courtyards all full of suggestions of the past centuries. But the mighty have fallen: Aragon has not escaped decline any more than the rest of Spain.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN ZARAGOZA.

Bygone days—Sumptuous roosting—Old exchange—Traders of taste—Glory of Aragon—Cathedral of La Seo—Modernised exterior—Interior charms and mesmerises—Next to Barcelona—Magnificent effect—Parish church—Moorish ceiling—Tomb of Bernardo de Aragon—The old priest—Waxes enthusiastic—Supernatural effect—Statuette of Benedict XIII.—Mysterious

chiaroscuro—One exception—Alonza the Warrior—Moorish tiles—Bishop's palace—Frugal meal—Trace of old Zaragoza—Fifteenth century house—Juanita—Streets of the city—Cæsarea Augusta—Worship of the Virgin—Alonzo the Moor—Determined resistance—Days of struggle—Falling—Return to prosperity—Fair maid of Zaragoza—The Aljaferia—Ancient palace of the Moorish kings—Injured by Suchet—Salon of Santa Isabel—Spanish café—Four generations—Lovely voice—Lamartine's *Le Lac*—Recognised—Reading between the lines—Out in the night air—An inspiration—Night vision of El Pilar—In the far future.

THE prosperity of Zaragoza to-day is entirely commercial, but on a small scale. It is not a great financial or manufacturing town. The rooms that once echoed with the voices of dames and cavaliers, flashed with the blaze of jewels and the gleam of scabbards, have now in many cases been turned into stables. The courtyards, once crowded with mailed horsemen setting out for the wars, are now given over to the fowls of the air, that roost in the eaves and have little idea how sumptuously and artistically they are lodged.

Going on to the old Cathedral Square, we faced the ancient Exchange with its splendid cornice and decorations of medallion heads of the bygone kings and warriors of Aragon. The Gothic interior is very interesting, with low, vaulted passages leading to the one great room with its high roof and fine pointed windows, where once the merchants of the town carried on their operations. It would seem that in those past days the sale of stocks and shares, the great questions of finance, did not imply a contempt for the charms of outline and refinement. They loved to surround themselves with the splendours of architecture; and in more than one Spanish town the last and best remnant of the Gothic age is to be found in the Exchange.

The whole square was striking. In the centre was a splendid fountain, at which a group of women for ever stood with their artistic pitchers, filling them in turn. Fun and laughter seemed the order of the day. The square echoed with merriment, to which the many-mouthed plashing fountain added its music.

On the further side of the square is the great glory, not of Zaragoza alone, but of the whole kingdom of Aragon—the old cathedral of La Seo.

The exterior has been much modernised, and perhaps was never specially striking. It is curious only at the N.E. angle, where the wall is inlaid with coloured tiles of the fourteenth century; of all shapes, sizes, patterns and colours. The whole has a rich Moorish effect almost dazzling when the sun shines upon them. Above this rises an octagonal tower decorated with Corinthian pillars.

From all this glare and sound, hurry and bustle of life, you pass into the interior and at once are charmed, mesmerised. Calmness and repose fall upon the spirit; in a moment you have suddenly been removed from the world. At once it takes its place in the mind as ranking next to Barcelona. If some of its details are not to be too closely examined, the general effect is magnificent in the extreme.

In form it is peculiar and unlike any other cathedral, for it is almost a perfect square, but this is not observed at the first moment; the Coro occupies the centre, and a multitude of splendid columns support and separate the double aisles. The nave and aisles are all roofed to the same level, giving a very lofty appearance to the whole interior. The vaulting springs from the capitals of the main columns with an effect of beauty and grace seldom equalled. To look upwards is like gazing at a palm-forest with spreading fronds.

Like many of the Spanish churches, the light is cunningly arranged, and the shadow-effect is very telling. A solemn obscurity for ever reigns, excepting when sunbeams fall upon the windows. Towards evening the gloom deepens, and all looks weird and mysterious. The outlines of the lofty roof and spreading capitals are almost lost. We seem to be in a vast building of measureless dimensions: a dream-structure. The grey, subdued colour of the stone is perfect. Immense buttresses support the side walls, and between

these are the chapels.

AN OLD NOOK IN ZARAGOZA.

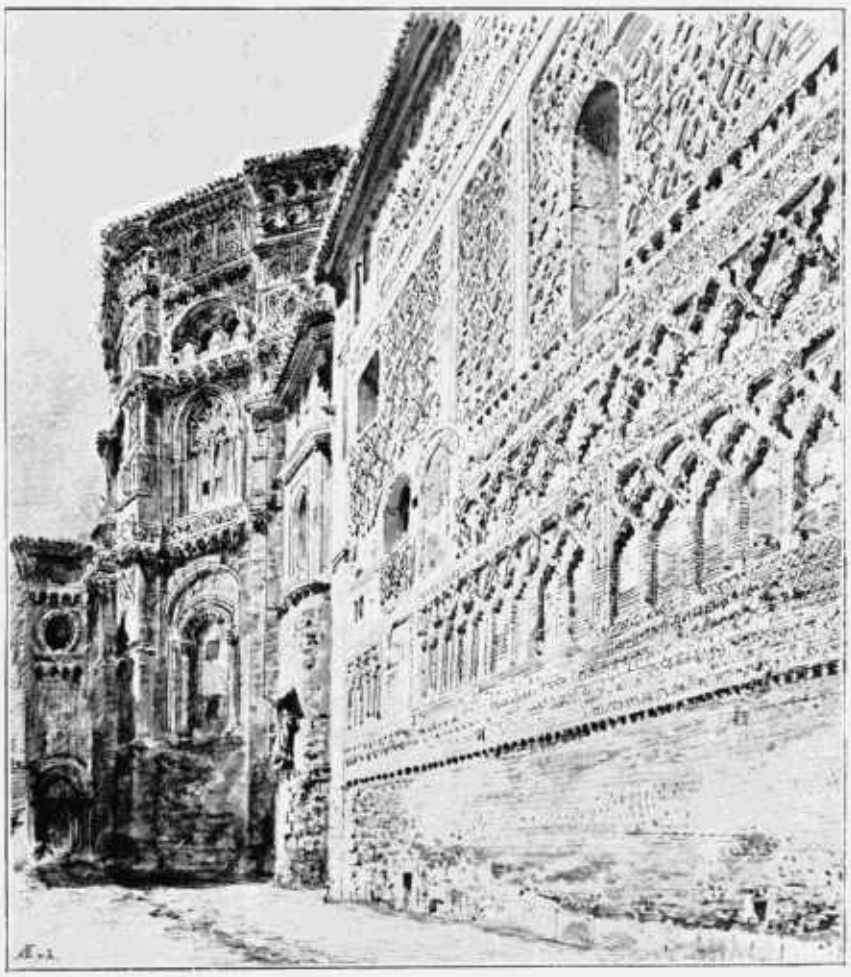
The first chapel on the left on entering is used as a parish church. Its Moorish ceiling is magnificent, though difficult to make out in the dim religious light that too often reigns. The chapel also contains a very remarkable alabaster tomb of Bernardo de Aragon, brother of King Alfonso. When we entered, it was almost at the end of a service, and for congregation the old priest had no one but the verger. He seemed relieved when it was over, waddled down the steps and disrobed. Then in a very kindly way he turned to us, bowed as gracefully as his rotund personage permitted, and bade us note the beauty of ceiling and tomb.

"Light a few more candles," he said to the verger, "and let us try to get at a few of the exquisitely carved details. It is considered one of the finest Moorish ceilings in Spain," he continued; "and in my opinion it is so. You will mark the depth of the sections, beauty of the workmanship, rich and gorgeous effect of the whole composition. There never was a people like those wonderful Moors—never will be again as long as the world lasts. How these candles add a charm to the scanty daylight, giving out almost a supernatural effect! Has it ever struck you in the same way, this strange mingling of natural and artificial light? It is especially refining. Then look at this tomb, and admire its beauty—though it is of a very different character from the ceiling. Here we have nothing Moorish. That overwhelming wealth and gorgeousness of imagination is absent from the cold marble. But how pure and perfect! Note that exquisite statuette of Benedict XIII.: the figures of the knights that surround him with their military orders; the drooping figures of the mourners in the niches. But after all, what is all this compared with the splendours of the cathedral itself," cried the old priest, without pausing to take breath. "Put out the lights, Mateo," turning to the

verger; and then without further ceremony led the way into the larger building.

He had a large, red, amiable face, this old priest; some day we felt sure that he would die of apoplexy; but he was evidently a lover of the beautiful, and as evidently one who loved his fellow-men.

"Look!" he said, throwing up his hands as we stood entranced at the scene. "What can be more perfect? Whichever way you gaze you are met by a forest of pillars—a true forest, full of life and breath, for are not those growing like spreading palms? And where will you find pillars so lofty and massive? Where will you discover such a feeling of devotion, so mysterious a chiaroscuro? Apart from their beauty, we must not disdain these influences. They are aids to devotion, and poor, frail, erring human nature needs all the help it can receive both from without and within, from below and Above. I always tell our organist to play soft voluntaries and pull out his sweetest stops, so that he may make music which will creep into the spirit and rouse all its capacities for worship. That should be the true aim of all harmony. Look at the richness of the coro—the splendour of the carving. It all forms an effect which makes this the most wonderful and perfect cathedral in the whole of Spain."



NORTH WALL OF CATHEDRAL: ZARAGOZA.

NORTH WALL OF CATHEDRAL: ZARAGOZA.

"With one exception," we ventured modestly to observe.

"Which is that?" cried the old priest, evidently sharpening his weapon of warfare—the tongue that did him such good suit and service.

"Your cathedral is a gem of the very first water," we said. "It throws one into a dream from which one might almost wish not to awaken; but it is not equal to Barcelona."

The old priest put his hand to his forehead and looked depressed.

"You are right," he said; "I cannot contradict you. But then Barcelona is beyond comparison." Here he brightened again. "Let me tell you the difference. Barcelona was never built by men; it was the work of angels. It is a dream-building that came down from the skies, and some day it will disappear into the skies again. And then here we shall reign supreme. With all its beauty and splendour and charm, there is nothing here to suggest angel master-builders; it is a dream-fabric if you will, but essentially the work of man: firm and strong and substantial, lasting through the ages. In the days of the Goths there was another building on this very spot. The Moors came and it was turned into a mosque; and when Alonza the Warrior re-took the city the church was reconstructed. This was early in the twelfth century. Here the kings of Aragon were crowned with pomp and ceremony, and here our most important councils have been held. Now come and look at our Moorish tiles."

And again, without pause in his talk, and without ceremony, he led the way. We could only willingly follow through the lovely forest of pillars, crossing one aisle after another, sharing his enthusiasm. We had the whole church to ourselves. The people of Zaragoza seemed too busy to trouble themselves about dreams of architecture.

"Look again," said the old priest, as we stood outside in front of the north wall. "These tiles are very beautiful and remarkable. They are undoubtedly Moorish; the work of Moorish craftsmen. Do you observe the fineness of the colours, the rich deep blue that contrasts so well with the emerald green? You would think the effect of so much colour would be garish, but on the contrary it is quiet and subdued, with great dignity about it. This is quite the oldest part of the exterior. One can only regret that the whole was not tiled, for then we should have possessed a unique building with which to challenge the world. You see there are still evidences of an earlier church than this," and he pointed to certain remains which were unmistakably Romanesque: in the lower part of the apse, the buttresses and in one of the windows.

"And there," said the old priest, pointing to an immense building, "is the Bishop's palace, which was sacked and ruined by the French in that terrible war. Since that day much that was interesting in Zaragoza has disappeared; but heaven be praised, we have still our cathedral, and as long as we have that, the rest matters little. And now I must wish you good-morning. It is my hour for breakfast—a very frugal meal with me, consisting chiefly of eggs and sweet herbs. Ah, señor," with a round gurgling laugh, "I see what you are thinking—that eggs and sweet herbs never developed this rotundity of person. You are wrong. I fast twice in the week; I never touch anything stronger than coffee; I have only two simple meals a day; and yet you see how prodigal nature is in her dealings with me. You doubt me? Come with me. I live at a stone's throw. You shall see my abode and interrogate my old housekeeper, and you will hear how she corroborates my tale."

He led the way, this singular old priest, whom we found not only appreciating the beautiful, but brimming over with humour: one of those delightfully simple, self-unconscious men, who are all sympathy and amiability. We could but follow: down a small narrow street into a quaint sort of *cul-de-sac*, where we came upon an exquisite trace of Old Zaragoza.

A small fifteenth-century house, with a quaint Gothic doorway, and a window guarded by magnificent iron-work. Touching a hidden spring, this door opened and admitted us into a panelled passage that apparently had not been touched for centuries. Then he turned into a wonderful old room, black with panelled oak, some of which was vigorously and splendidly carved.

"This is my living room," he said, "and here I am happy. I live in the past; the fine old fifteenth-century

days when men knew how to produce the beautiful and were great in all their ideas. Here I live, and here I hope to die."

He went to the door.

"Juanita!" he called. A distant voice answered, and in a moment a quaint old woman dressed in black appeared upon the scene.

"Juanita, is my breakfast ready?" asked the old priest.

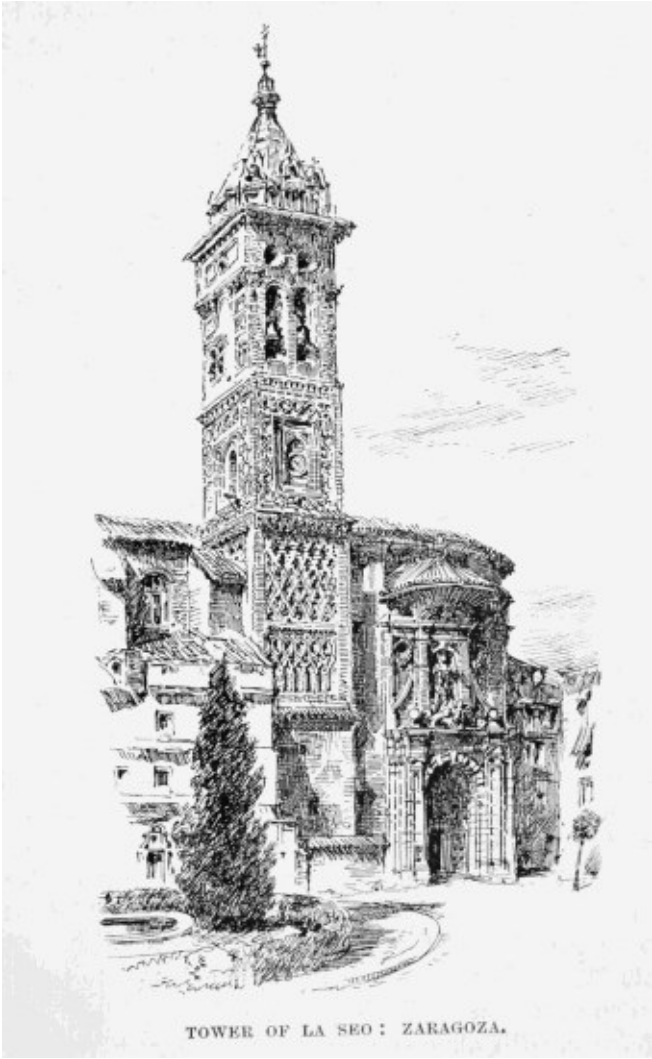
"Si, el canon."

"What have you prepared?"

"Two fried eggs, canonigo, flavoured with sweet herbs; bread, butter and coffee at discretion—as usual."

"You see," laughed the priest. "There is no collusion here! Would that I could ask you to share my frugal meal; but it is emphatically only enough for one—and that an abstemious old canon. Now if you will come and see me this evening or to-morrow, I shall be delighted to receive you. I would even ask you to come and dine with me, but my dinner is as frugal as my déjeuner. Well, for the moment we part; but you will come again."

As we said good-bye, Juanita appeared with her fried eggs, and steaming coffee served in a chaste silver pot that must have been at least a hundred and fifty years old; and the old priest accompanying us to the door, speeded us on our way with true courtesy and an old-fashioned blessing.



TOWER OF LA SEO: ZARAGOZA.

We passed from this delightful atmosphere into the modern streets of the city, thinking how little remained of its former traces. For it goes far back in history, even to the days of the Romans, when it was called Cæsarea Augusta; a name that in course of ages was transformed to Zaragoza. Early in the first century it was prosperous; a free city possessing its own charters, seat of the Assizes, owning a mint. But of the old Roman city all traces have disappeared. It was one of the first cities to renounce Paganism. Aurelios Prudentius the first Christian poet was born here in the year 348. Christianity was then the keynote of its life, and martyrs died for the faith. Now it is given up to the worship of the Virgin almost more than any town in Spain. In the eighth century it fell under the dominion of the Moors, who kept it until the twelfth century. Then came Alonso the Warrior, who captured it after a desperate siege of five years, when the people had most of them perished from hunger: one of the most determined resistances in the history of the world.

It passed through many vicissitudes as the centuries rolled on. Then in 1808 came the French, who without taking the town managed to leave it almost in ruins. Then came the attack under Napoleon's four generals, and Zaragoza resisted them single-handed for sixty-two days of terrible struggle, combined with plague and famine. All Spain looked on and did nothing to relieve it. It fell in 1809. Since that time it has had a peaceful return to prosperity.

Many of the ancient outlines and splendours of the city had disappeared in the "heap of ruins" left by the French. A new element arose, and as we walked towards our rambling old inn, with its thousand-and-one passages, we thought them painfully evident. At the inn we took up our guide, who escorted us through many streets and turnings to the Plaza del Portillo, where stood the ancient west gate of the city.

It was on this very spot that occurred the romantic episode of Augustina the Fair Maid of Zaragoza; a Spanish Joan of Arc on a small scale.

In the terrible siege to which the city was to succumb, Augustina was fighting on the walls side by side with her devoted lover. She watched him fall, death-stricken, then took the match from his loosening hand and worked the gun herself. Determined to avenge her lover, it is said that she fought long and desperately and with more fatal execution than any two artillerymen. But we all know the story by heart; and how, though courting death, she escaped all dangers.

Not to see this romantic spot were we here, but the Aljaferia, just beyond the gate, in some measure by far the most interesting secular building in Zaragoza. This was the ancient palace of the Moorish kings, and still possesses some exquisite Moorish traces and outlines, though chiefly by way of restoration. It was built by a Sheikh of Zaragoza as a royal fortress, with almost impregnable walls. Ferdinand the Catholic gave it over to the Inquisition party to add to the power of this wretched tribunal, partly because in these strong walls the hated judges found a safe refuge after the murder of the popular and ill-fated Arbues.

In the French war it was much injured by Suchet, who turned it into a barrack, then degraded this ancient palace of the Moorish kings and the kings of Aragon to the rank of a prison. Alphonso XII. restored the palace, and had it redecorated as far as possible to imitate its ancient splendour. The staircase is very fine, and the ceilings of some of the rooms are magnificent. One of the rooms is called the Salon of Santa Isabel, because here that future queen of Hungary, so famous for her goodness, was born in 1271. It is richly decorated in blue and gold. There is a small octagonal mosque of great beauty, which has been left just as it was in the days of the Moors; and some of the horseshoe doorways, in outline at least, have not changed. The visit was full of interest, and in spite of all alteration, carried us back to the days when that wonderful people reigned in Zaragoza. In the upper part was a magnificent armoury, kept in good order by the soldiers—for this fine old building has again been turned into a barrack, and devoted to military use.

The day passed on to night, and there came an hour when we found ourselves sitting for a time in the café that is said to be the largest in Spain, studying human nature, listening to the music—for once an interesting and civilised performance. The room was gorgeously fitted up with gilding and mirrors that seemed to reflect a million lights. The atmosphere was fast growing to that state of blue haze which the Spaniards delight in, many of whom are said to carry on their smoke in their sleep by some process of conjuring only to be acquired after long practice.

We happened to be looking away from the orchestra, in deep study of a curious group to our right—a group which seemed to comprise four generations. One was one of the oddest little old women we had ever seen, with a wonderfully wrinkled face, and small restless eyes sharp as an eagle's, and withered hands that looked like a bird's claws. This was the little great-grandmother. She had by no means passed into her dotage, the nonentity of old age, and was possibly not more than seventy or seventy-five, though she looked a hundred. Then came her son and daughter-in-law—unmistakably her son from the likeness to her on a larger and somewhat pleasanter scale. Then a still younger generation: a young man and woman, evidently husband and wife; she as evidently the man's daughter. These were better dressed and looked as though they had climbed a few rungs up the social ladder; they were prosperous in their small way; and the young man was distinctly of a better grade than his father-in-law. On his knee sat a lovely boy some five years old, fast asleep, his head pillowed against the father's shoulder. Here was the fourth generation.

But what most attracted us was the singular beauty of the young man's wife, with her delicate flushed

cheeks, her white teeth, clear hazel eyes, and abundant hair perfectly arranged. He seemed to follow her looks and hang upon her words and worship the ground she trod upon, and we did not wonder.

We were absorbed in this domestic picture, when suddenly we were arrested by the spell of a lovely voice, and well-remembered words fell upon our ear. It was that touching song of Lamartine's, *Le Lac*, so pathetic in words and music. We turned and felt thrilled and startled as we recognised the face and form that had accosted us in El Pilar and poured out her sad story.

But the face was changed. In place of the hungry pallor there was now a crimson flush; the eyes sparkled with light. Was it all due to inward fever, to the wine-cup, or to artificial aid? Not the latter, we thought. There was a beauty upon the face nothing artificial ever yet possessed. She was quietly dressed in black. It might have been the very robe she had worn in the morning, differently arranged.

We must have moved or slightly started, for at that moment she evidently recognised us. For an instant her face changed colour, her voice trembled; then she recovered herself, and apparently did not again notice us.

The very first words of the introduction had caught our ear with all the charm and familiarity of an old friend. All its dramatic power was well rendered by the singer.

"Ainsi toujours poussés vers de nouveaux rivages,
Dans la nuit éternelle emportés sans retour,
Ne pourrons-nous jamais sur l'océan des âges
Jeter l'ancre un seul jour?"

So it went on, to the end of the declamation. Then, after a slight pause, whilst the accompanist went through the short refrain, the soft sweet melody, the graceful, mournful words rose upon the air:

"Un soir, t'en souvient-il, nous voguions en silence,
On n'entendait au loin sur l'onde et sous les cieux,
Que le bruit des rameurs qui frappaient en cadence
Tes flôts harmonieux!

"O Lac! Rochers muets, grottes, forêt obscure,
Vous que le temps épargne, ou qu'il peut rajeunir,
Gardez de cette nuit, gardez, belle nature,
Au moins le souvenir!

"Que le vent qui gémit, le roseau qui soupire,
Que les parfums légers de ton air embaumé,
Que tout ce qu'on entend, l'on voit, ou l'on respire,
Tout dise: ils ont aimé!"

Not a word was lost. Every syllable rang out softly, distinctly, clear as a bell. We had never heard the song more beautifully sung, or greater justice done to its pathos. Every shade of sadness in its cadences was perfectly given. It was only too evident that trouble had helped the exquisite voice to its sorrowful

ring. To us, who were to some extent behind the scenes of the singer's life, it was difficult to listen without emotion. We could read between the lines and knew the source of her inspiration; the deep suffering and misery that lay behind it all.

When the song was over, with its applause that grated, and the singer had retired, we felt the room had become stifling and unbearable, and went out into the night air. The streets seemed to have grown small and contracted. Something must be done for that sad life that would otherwise soon be lost in every sense of the word; yet apparently we were powerless to move in the matter. Suddenly, as though by an inspiration, we thought of the old canon, so full of sympathy and human kindness. If there could be any possible way of escape, he was the one to suggest it; and we determined to lay the whole case before him.

Thus thinking, we unconsciously found ourselves on the banks of the river. The night was clear and calm; the stars hung in the sky: the moon, brilliant and silvery, was rising behind El Pilar, showing up in magic outlines all the grace of its domes and towers. The old bridge spanned the stream, whose dark waters flowed rapidly through its seven arches.

It was a perfect night, a witching scene. Everywhere intense quiet reigned, absolute stillness and repose. The world might have been a sleeping paradise, knowing nothing of human suffering. But we had learned that day by sad experience that the time for sorrow and sighing to flee away lay still in the far-off future.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CANON'S HOSPITALITY.

El Pilar by day—In the old cathedral—The canon reproachful—Equal to the occasion—No pressure needed—*Un diner maigre*—Dream of forty years—True to time—Juanita—Fruits of long service—Exploring Juanita's domains—House of magic—"Surely not a fast-day"—Artistic dreams—Who can legislate after death?—Canon's abstinence—Juanita withdraws—Our opportunity—Canon earnest and sympathetic—Eugenie de Colmar—Canon's surprise—An old friend—Truth stranger than fiction—"You will forget the old priest"—Ingratitude not one of our sins—A *rivederci*—Canon's letter—End of Eugenie's story—En route for Tarragona—Landlord turns up at Lerida—Missing keys—Skeletons floated out to Panama—Domestic drama—Dragon again to the front—Tarragona—Matchless coast scene—Civilised inn—Military element—Haunted house—Mystery unsolved—Distinct elements—Roman and other remains—Dream of the past—Green pastures and sunny vineyards.

It was the next day. We had again been standing on the farther bank of the river watching the flowing waters. They were dark and deep, a mighty stream that swept through the seven arches of the wonderful bridge reflecting its outlines. We had contemplated for the twentieth time the marvellous effect of the domes and towers of El Pilar rising like an eastern vision against the clear sky, had asked ourselves over and over again where we should find a fairer and a more striking view, and found the question difficult to answer. We had strolled over that same bridge back into the town, where the charm of outline and ancient atmosphere so strangely disappeared; had passed the fine old Exchange, crossed the square with its plashing fountain and ever-changing group of chattering women filling their artistic pitchers.

Finally we had found ourselves within the cathedral, also, for the twentieth time, lost in this architectural splendour; this wonder of a bygone age, where all the fret of every-day life had no room for

existence.

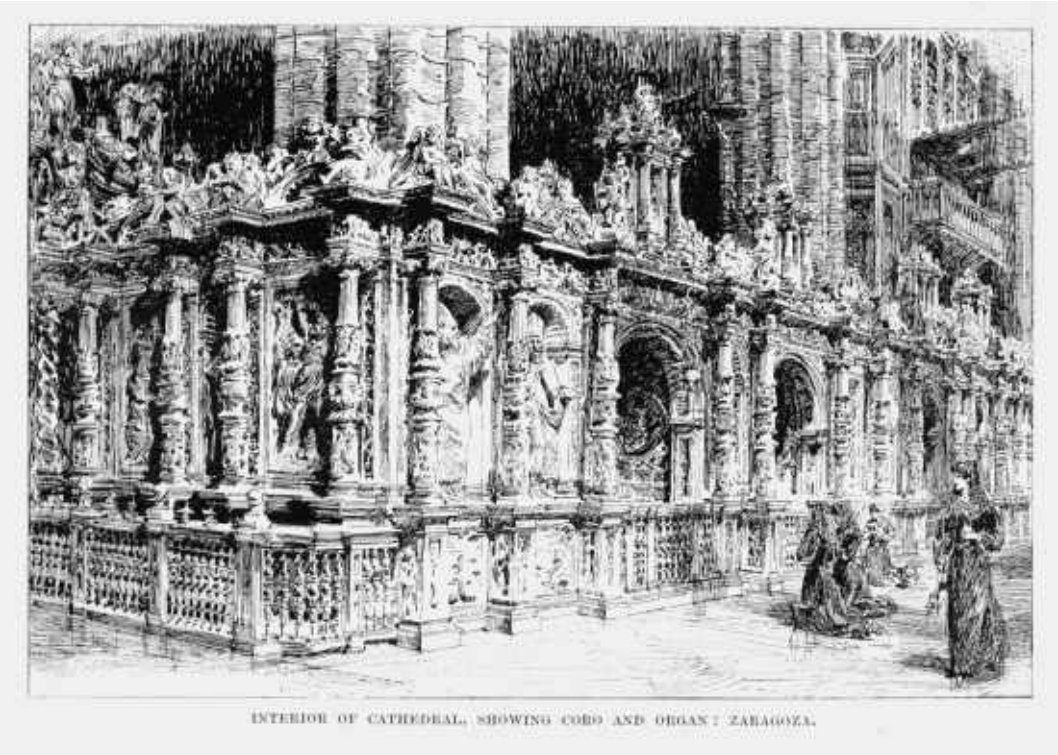
As we looked, we noticed a portly figure hurriedly crossing the aisles in our direction. At the first moment he did not see us. An expression of intense amiability and benevolence "was upon the large round face, that would otherwise have been so ugly, and by its aid was made so beautiful. He raised his eyes and came down upon us as an eagle to its prey.

"You are here!" he cried. "I have been wondering all the morning why I did not come across you, in what ancient nook you had buried yourselves. I was now on my way to your hotel to ask whether you had departed to other fields, and to find out why you did not come to me last night. To-night I shall make sure of you. You shall dine with me—I will take no refusal. For once the old priest's frugal fare must suffice you. It shall be a fast-day. Abstinence from flesh-meat occasionally is good, even for travellers. Tell me you will come. Do not pain me by refusing, or make me guilty of pressing you too much. Juanita, my old housekeeper, tells me she is quite equal to preparing you *un diner maigre*."

Pressure was not needed; we were too glad to accept the good priest's invitation. He was given to hospitality in the best sense of the word, and we readily promised to dine with him. For us, the diner maigre had no terrors.

"That is good," he replied, in his rich round voice. "I shall expect you at seven o'clock, though we shall not dine until eight. So you are still lost in amazement at this architectural dream. The oftener you see it, the more beautiful it becomes. With few interruptions I have looked upon it daily for forty years, and every morning its charm seems new and strange to me. Well, since I have seen you I shall not go to your hotel. I have sundry visits to pay to poor sick folk. Until the infirmities of old age become too strong for me I will not give them up. And before that happens I trust a merciful Creator will remove me to scenes where there is neither age nor infirmity nor sick poor in need of consolation."

He hurried away, leaving us to the marvellous interior. We were glad to go to the old canon's, and felt it would be our opportunity for laying before him that interesting but unhappy case.



INTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL, SHOWING CORO AND ORGAN: ZARAGOZA.

As the clock struck seven we rang the bell. The drooping handle was in itself an object of art: a

wonderful specimen of iron work cunningly wrought. We were not privileged to use the hidden spring, which moreover we could not discover. The bell was immediately answered by Juanita in grey hair, placid face and black silk gown; a picture of high respectability. She greeted us with a serene smile and assured us that we were welcome: tones and manner a reflection of her master's: the fruits of long and faithful service. Hers was a face to be taken on trust.

As we entered, the canon came out of his dining-room.

"I like this punctuality," he cried, "and you are doubly welcome. As our frugal dinner is not ready, I will take you through my little house whilst a glimmer of daylight lasts. Let us first lay siege to Juanita's regions—my good old housekeeper who has been with me or mine for fifty years—ever since she was a maiden of ten. We will explore the mysteries of her preparations for our benefit. I always feel like a child when gazing upon her handiwork."

A long passage panelled in old dark oak led from the dining-room to the kitchen. Here, indeed, we found ourselves in fairyland. The room was far larger than the dining-room. Latticed windows looked out upon a small courtyard, half conservatory, where bloomed a profusion of sweet-smelling flowers. The kitchen itself was a picture; walls were panelled, the ceiling was of oak; everything bore the unmistakable tone of age. Facing the windows were hooks and shelves bearing the brightest of brass pots and pans. The latticed windows, the flowers beyond all, here found their reflections multiplied. Every brass implement was of the most artistic description. At right angles with this, other shelves bore a small but special dinner-service of old Spanish ware, the only example of its kind we had ever seen. Below this was an old dresser on which the silver used by the canon was displayed, with here and there an artistic water-pot and cooler.

In the centre of the spacious kitchen was a large, solid, substantial oak table. At one end lay some work at which Juanita had evidently lately been busy. At the other end was a small pile of the curious Spanish-ware plates, evidently on their way to the dining-room.

Under one of the latticed windows was Juanita's help-mate: a young woman busily engaged in preparing a dish of olives. One could have lived in this room with the greatest pleasure, and never asked for anything more artistic or luxurious. A savoury smell, as of frying of eggs with sweet herbs, was in the air; yet were there no signs of stove or cooking. A huge chimney-place there was, in which half a dozen people might have comfortably found seats; but nothing was to be seen excepting a couple of old-fashioned dogs on which some lighted wood and peat sparkled and crackled, whilst the blue smoke went curling up the wide opening.

"Wonderful!" we cried, taking in the incomparable effect of the whole room. "This is a house of magic."

"Very simple magic," laughed the old canon. "I fear that in sleight of hand Juanita and I would be failures. Her magic lies in preparing simple dishes."

"But where are they prepared?" we said. "There is neither sign nor sound of cooking here."

"Come and see," laughed the canon; and crossing the kitchen, he led the way through a further door down a short passage into a small, whitewashed room beyond. Here on a large stove Juanita and her hand-maiden conducted their mysteries. A dozen brass pans stood upon the stove, and every one of them seemed in use.

"Surely these are not for dinner!" we cried. "It was to be a fast-day."

"A fast-day as far as flesh is concerned," laughed the canon. "That does not absolutely mean that you are to starve. I know no more than you what Juanita has prepared. If I intruded upon her province with the faintest suggestion, she might retaliate by sending us empty dishes. I fear our faces would lengthen before them—that is if anything could lengthen mine," he gurgled, turning his large, round, delightful countenance full upon us. "I see signs of approaching readiness in those steaming saucepans. Let us continue our inspection. Daylight dies; nothing remains but the afterglow."

We passed again through the charming old kitchen, where the logs on the great hearth blazed and crackled.

"Summer and winter, Juanita will have a fire," said the old canon, pointing to the crackling logs. "She declares that she is growing old and shivery, and the bright flames chase the vapours from her mind."

We passed up the old oak staircase. Everywhere we came upon the same signs of age; the same artistic old panelling; bedrooms with ancient oak furniture, oak ceilings finely carved. A perfect house of its kind, and much larger than it appeared from the outside. One room was the canon's own sanctum, fitted up with book-shelves, where reposed many a precious volume. Amongst his treasures he produced some ancient illuminated manuscripts of rare value. The desk at which he sat and worked was placed near a latticed window in a corner of the room, through which one just caught sight of the tower of La Seo.

Again we exclaimed that so perfect a house should be found in Zaragoza.

"Mine by inheritance," said the canon. "Early in the sixteenth century it belonged to a far-away ancestor, who was Bishop of Zaragoza. Dying, he left it to his brother and his children, of whom I am a direct descendant. The singular thing is that between the bishop and myself there has not been a single ecclesiastic in the family. When I die, the direct line of nearly four centuries will be broken. The house will pass to my nephew, who is mixed up with Court life, and has married a Court beauty. He is already nearly middle-aged, with sons and daughters growing up. As far as possible I have ordained that the house shall never be altered. But who can legislate for what shall happen after death?"

We returned to the dining-room, where we soon found that our fast was to be in reality a light, refined and delicate feast. Fish of more kinds than one, dressed to perfection; eggs and sweet herbs in many forms and disguises; choice fruits. And from his cellar the canon brought forth exquisite wines—priceless Johannisberg and Chambertin; whilst with our coffee he gave us Chartreuse fifty years old. Yet he himself passed over all delicacies, limiting his dinner to eggs and sweet herbs, with which he drank coffee.

"You censure others by the dignity of excelling," we said. "Though crowding upon us these indulgences, you abstain from all."

"I believe in St. James, who said, 'Use hospitality one to another without grudging,'" returned the canon. "I delight in doing this. Heaven has blessed me with means; how can they be better employed than in ministering to others, whether rich or poor? As for myself, do not think I am exercising self-denial. Habit is second nature. Did I not tell you that the pleasures of the table had nothing to do with my physical rotundity. But heaven be praised, I can still manage to roll over the ground without trouble."

Juanita waited upon us with unruffled ease, her comely face looking the delight she evidently felt in dispensing luxuries. Her hands were clothed in black silk mittens; her black silk gown rustled with a gentle dignity as she quietly moved about, taking plates and dishes from her hand-maiden, who stood outside the door. Some wonderful old silver adorned the table and everything from first to last showed the ruling hand and head of one born and bred in an atmosphere of refinement.

We had not sat down to table until eight o'clock, and when coffee was served the old clock on the oak mantelpiece had chimed nine, and its last vibrations had long died upon the air. Yet the time had passed with lightning rapidity, for the canon in giving us some of the experiences of his long life, and in telling us many legends of Zaragoza, had engaged our whole interest and attention.

When Juanita had handed us coffee, and left the charming old silver coffee-pot steaming upon the table dispensing its aromatic fumes, she made us collectively a court-curtsey at the door and withdrew.

Then came our opportunity, and we related to the canon our previous day's adventure, with all its sadness and its apparently hopeless element. He listened with earnest attention and sympathy.

"The world is full of these instances," he cried with a profound sigh, when we had ended. "Do you wonder at my frugal living when I hear of these wrecked lives? I have seen so much of this terrible vice. I know how hard it is to conquer, how seldom the victory is gained. It requires daily care on the part of one stronger than the tempted, and too often even that fails. But who is this frail creature? She must and shall be rescued if human aid, under divine help, can avail. For heaven will not always save us in spite of ourselves. 'My Spirit shall not always strive with men.'"

Her name and domestic history had been withheld to the last. We now explained who she was, who her father had been, his position under Government, his sudden death from grief. and we gave him her card, which bore both her married and her maiden name—the latter written in pencil: Eugenie de Colmar.

The canon quite started as we spoke it, and threw himself back in his chair.

"Is it possible!" he cried. "Is it possible! But life is full of these coincidences. Verily the Divine hand holds the threads of the world's human actions; and what we call coincidences are the silent drawing together of these threads for ordained purposes. De Colmar was my intimate friend, though many years my junior. He would come and spend a week at a time with me here, but his visits were not frequent. I knew little of his wife, still less of his child, whom I saw but once when she was about ten years old. I was told of his death; had heard of a tragedy; but the full details I now learn for the first time. It is one of the saddest stories I ever listened to. For the sake of the father I must make every effort to save the child. It will be a hard task, but only needing the more courage. To-morrow I will seek her out. She must be taken from this unwholesome life and excitement. I will tell her that she owes it to the memory of her father, in atonement for the wrong she did him, to place herself in my hands; to give up her will to mine. She shall come into this house and take up her abode with us for a time. Her reform shall be my daily care. Juanita, for all her placid face, has plenty of good sense and decision; she is quite equal to being her companion and to watching over her. It shall be done. I have seldom failed in what I earnestly took in hand, and I must not fail now."

This was good news. A load was taken from our mind. Surely all this would bear fruit. There seemed every hope that this poor creature would be rescued and restored. When we got up to leave, it was with a light heart. The time had passed quickly and the hands on the old clock pointed to eleven.

"Alas, you are going away. When shall we meet again?" said the canon, in tones as melancholy as we felt sure ever fell from his lips. Not his to look on the sad side of life. He passed his days shedding light and warmth around him like a substantial sunbeam, distributing favours with both hands.

"When shall we meet again?" he repeated. "Perhaps never! Even the splendours of La Seo may fail to draw from you a second visit; whilst the welcome awaiting you from the old priest will be altogether forgotten."

We assured him that ingratitude was not one of our sins. The delightful evening he had given us would be remembered for ever; we truly declared it a privilege and a pleasure to know him; a sorrow to say farewell.

"It is a word I never utter," quickly returned the canon. "With me it is ever *au revoir*; if not in this world then in the next. And we have now a bond of sympathy between us in this poor creature whom I am going to save and rescue whether she will or no. She is our joint protégée; I shall write and keep you posted up in her welfare. Be sure that if any power can possibly reclaim her, she is saved. *Au revoir*—let us leave it at this. Heaven be with you—and peace."

Full of peace indeed was the night as we passed out into the darkness. The stars seemed to shine down upon the world with a serene benediction. Much of the pain we had felt last night was removed. Surely no chance hand had guided us. The work begun to-night was destined to succeed.[C]

Before turning in, we went once more round to our favourite spot. It was our last look by starlight upon the deep, dark flowing river, the wonderful old bridge, the faint outlines of El Pilar rising beyond. To-night all was shadowy and indistinct; a dream vision; and the only sound to be heard was the swirling of the waters through the seven arches of St. Peter's bridge.

The next morning we left Zaragoza by an early train for Tarragona: a long roundabout journey. Again we had to pass through Lerida, where we had twenty minutes to wait. As chance would have it, our landlord was on the platform, speeding parting guests. We went up to him and drew him apart.

"Tell us," we said; "what about the dragging of the well? Has it been done?"

Our late host threw up his hands. "Oh, señor, I shiver and shake at the very thought of it. I had it done the very day after you left. And what do you think came up?"

"Two skeletons?"

"The keys, señor: the missing keys and a pair of slippers—very much down at heel."

"And the skeletons?"

"Not a vestige, señor; not a single bone. I told you the well communicated with the river, and the river with the sea. They must have floated out, and probably are now reposing in the Panama Canal."

"But why the Panama Canal?"

"Everything bad must drift there, señor. I lost a large sum in the wretched affair."

"And have you seen no ghost since we left?"

"No ghost, señor, and no mysterious sounds. All the same we have had a domestic drama."

"The Dragon?"

"Exactly, señor. Your penetration is wonderful. As she was leaning over her wash-tub, the waiter came behind and ducked her head in the soapsuds. Her mouth—you know her mouth—was wide open, and she swallowed a great gulp of soapy water; upon which, presto! quick as lightning, she up with her washing-pin and hit him on the head. Such a crash! Down went the waiter, and the Dragon was stooping over him with wet locks like a dripping mermaid, gloating and mouthing upon the ruin."

"And the waiter?"

"In the hospital, señor, with a broken head. That is why I am here. I have to come to the station myself, and be my own porter, and see my guests off. Servants are the bane of one's life. Like the flies, they were invented for our torment. But, señor, these troubles are nothing compared with the relief of finding that the skeletons had cleared out to sea."

Our train came up and we went our way, leaving Lerida behind us with its fine outlines, and the landlord to the difficult task of managing his womenkind.

So far we had travelled on the line before, but now branched off towards Tarragona. We did not again see Manresa, but even a comparative approach to its neighbourhood brought all the splendid and imposing outlines, the blood-red river, vividly before us. Once more we saw Mons Serratus with its jagged, fantastic peaks: lived through our haunted night in the Hospederia; again Salvador the monk and his wonderful music took possession of our spirit and Serratus itself appeared enveloped in harmony and romance. We were glad not to pass through the station, where possibly Sebastien would have been on the watch for passengers; and we should have left a heart-broken expression behind us at the very thought of our not staying a couple of days to see Manresa under sunshine.

The day was wearing on to evening as we approached Tarragona with its matchless coast scene. The blue waters of the Mediterranean stretched far and wide, and the harbour reposed upon them like a sleeping crescent. As the sun dipped in the west, the waters flashed out its declining rays, reflected the gorgeous colouring of the sky. The train landed us in the lower town. We had to reach the upper town, and the rickety old omnibus rolled and struggled up the steep streets, finally depositing us at the Fonda de Paris.

We found the inn quite civilised. The landlord was half Italian and spoke several languages. On the first night of our arrival the cook must have been in a very amiable mood, for he sent up an excellent dinner. But to H. C.'s sorrow and surprise the after dinners were a lamentable falling-off. The cook had been crossed in love, received notice to quit, or his art failed him: everything was below par. On the evening of our arrival, the evil had not fallen.

The hotel, like many of the Spanish inns was large and rambling. Our landlord conducted us to excellent rooms facing the road, and from the balcony the scene was enchanting. Before us was an old Roman tower. To our right, far down, 700 feet below our present level, we caught sight of the sleeping Mediterranean.

It was not quite so pleasant to find ourselves surrounded by the military element; barracks to right and left of us; sentries in slippers patrolling up and down; raw recruits, looking as little like soldiers as anything to be conceived; constant snatches of bugle-calling, which seemed to end at midnight and begin again at four in the morning. So far, all was unrest. But we soon found that the charms of Tarragona soared far above all small and secondary considerations.

Down the long passage behind our rooms we came to the garden of the hotel. It was after dinner and pale twilight reigned. In the centre of the garden a splendid spreading palm outlined itself against the evening sky, in which shone a large, liquid, solitary star. The garden was surrounded by a white wall, and the scene was quite eastern. Far down was the wonderful coast-line and crescent harbour. Of late we had had only rivers, and this broad expanse of sea brought new life to the spirit.

Returning indoors, we found the inn haunted, but not by spirits of the dead.

The ghost was unmistakably flesh and blood. The first time we caught sight of him—it was a masculine ghost, therefore doubly uninteresting—he was cautiously putting his head into our rooms and taking a look round. The said rooms were raised above the rest on that floor by steps that led to our own quarters only. Thus the ghost was clearly trespassing. He neither looked confused nor apologised as he took his slow departure. All his time seemed spent in prowling about the passages in a spirit of curiosity or unrest. Often we found him on our premises on suddenly coming in, and once or twice, when quietly writing, on looking up were startled by an evil-looking countenance intruding itself at the open door, and as quickly withdrawing on finding the room occupied.

We never discovered the mystery. Whether the ghost was a little out of its mind, whether it was its peculiar way of taking exercise, or whether it suffered from kleptomania and had a passion for collecting sticks and umbrellas, nothing of this was ever learned. We only knew that the ghost looked like a broken-down dissenting parson, that it dressed in sable garments, and went about with a pale face and large black eyes that seemed to glow with hidden fire suggestive of madness, and long, straight, black hair plastered down each side of its face; a curiously unpleasant object to encounter at every trick and turn of the gloomy corridors.

Tarragona possesses two distinct elements, both in an eminent degree. The town, especially the lower town, is mean and common-place. Ascending beyond a certain point, you come upon everything refined and beautiful. It stands on a hill which gradually rises to some seven or eight hundred feet above the sea-level. At the highest point of all is its mediæval cathedral, surpassing most of the cathedrals of Spain or elsewhere—one of those wonders of architecture that visit us in our dreams, but are seldom actually found. It does not, however, stand out far and wide in magnificent outlines, like Manresa or Lerida. Only a close inspection reveals its charms.

The upper town is surrounded by walls ancient and imposing. Within their boundaries are many Roman and Christian remains, such as few places still possess, making of Tarragona a dream of the past crowded with interest. Outside the walls the views are splendid and extensive. Looking towards the ever-changing sea, the coast-line is magnificent. Point after point juts out; hill after hill rises towards the East. Far down at one's feet lies the little harbour, encircling all the craft that seek its shelter: steamers from Barcelona with their daily freights, steamers from Norway and Sweden laden with scented pinewood, a whole fleet of picturesque fishing boats. Inland, the country is a succession of rich green pastures and sunny vineyards, whilst on the sloping hills afar off reposes many a town and village.

CHAPTER XXV.

QUASIMODO.

Tarragona by night—Cathedral—Moonlight vision—Dream-fabric—Deserted streets—Ghostly form approaches—Quilp or Quasimodo?—Redeeming qualities—Pale spiritual face—Open sesame—Approaching the apparition—Question and answer—Invitation accepted—Prisoners—The Shadow—Under the cold moonlight—Enter cathedral—Vast interior—Gloom and silence—Fantastic effects—Enigma solved—Strange proceeding—No inspiration—Why Quasimodo turned night into day—Weird moonlight scene—Soft sweet sounds—Schumann's Träumerei—Spellbound—The magician—Witching hour—Cathedral ghosts—An eternity of music—Varying moods—Returning to earth—Quasimodo's rapture—Travelling moonbeams—Night grows old—Sky full of music—Lost to sight—Dreams haunted by Quasimodo—New day.

THAT first night we went out into the darkness, when details were lost in outlines. We passed the barracks where bugling seemed to be in full play. A narrow street to the right led to a short flight of steps, above which rose the west front of the cathedral. As far as we could see, the porches were deep and beautiful. But it was the south and east sides that presented the most marvellous outlines. Even the darkness could not hide their beauty. And presently, when the moon rose and her pale silvery light shone full upon the grey walls and gleamed upon the Gothic windows and ancient tower, it turned to a dream-fabric.

The night was intensely still, not a sound could be heard, not a soul was visible. Our footsteps alone woke the echoes as we walked to and fro before that moonlight vision, and felt unable to leave it.

SOUTH-WEST EXTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL: TARRAGONA.

The cathedral clock struck eleven. As the last stroke vibrated upon the air, we saw a shadowy form approaching. It was not yet the ghostly hour, therefore it must be flesh and blood, to be boldly challenged. Was the mysterious being that haunted our corridors prowling these precincts in search of relics? No; as the form approached we saw that it was short and slender; almost diaphanous, almost deformed. The head seemed enormous in comparison with the body; legs and arms were unusually long. Yet even in the moonlight we noticed that something pale and spiritual about the face redeemed its ugliness. We thought of Quilp, of Quasimodo, all the grotesques we had ever heard of, but he only resembled these at a distance; we soon found that he was far better than they.

This apparition was followed by a lean, lanky youth who seemed to be shod in india-rubber, so silent his footsteps. He towered above Quasimodo, whom he followed as a shadow follows its substance. We happened to be standing near a small gate in the south railings, and up to this gate came Quasimodo, inserted a magic key into the lock and swung it open. What did it mean? Were they, this moonlight night,

going into the interior? What a weird experience; what an opportunity not to be lost! The apparition must be won over.

"Are you entering the cathedral?" we asked as they passed in and half closed the gate. To our relief a very earthly voice responded in matter-of-fact tones.

"Yes," it replied. "Do you want to enter also?"

It needed no further invitation. We passed through, and the gate was closed and locked. As we heard the sharp click and Quasimodo pocketed the key, we felt ourselves prisoners. All the possible and impossible stories we had ever heard of midnight murders and mysterious disappearances flashed through the brain. But the die was cast and we must follow. The enigma which even at the instant puzzled us was the motive for this midnight visit. We could think of none.

We stood for a moment in the space between the railings and the building. Repairs were going on; it had been turned into a stonemason's yard. The cold moonlight fell upon heavy blocks of marble lying about. There was an erection that looked for all the world like a gibbet, and we almost expected to see a ghostly skeleton dangling from its cross-beam.

Quasimodo moved on and opened a small south door. He entered and we waited whilst he took a lantern from the hands of the Shadow. It was lighted in a moment, and we found it to be a powerful electric lamp. Then we too passed in, and the door closed upon us. If we were to be murdered, it would not be in utter darkness. The lantern was brilliant, and threw around its ghostly lights and shadows. We are compelled to repeat the adjective, for everything was ghostly and weird.

The vast interior was lost in profoundest silence and gloom. No single light could reach the depths and spaces, but round about us the lantern lighted up the outlines of aisles and arches and pillars.

The effect was inexpressibly solemn. There seemed no limit to the space. We paced the aisles and thought them endless. Our footsteps awoke ghostly echoes. As far as could be discerned, we were surrounded by the loveliest, most refined outlines. Gothic aisles and arches were dimly visible. And still the Shadow followed Quasimodo, and still his footsteps made no sound.

Quasimodo walked in silence for a time, evidently enjoying our own silent delight and experience. His long arms and legs, his large head, his long-drawn, backward shadow, all suggested gnome-land. He swung the lantern about as though charmed and allured by all the fantastic effects it produced.

At last we felt we must break the silence.

"Why are you here?" we said. "May we ask? It seems so strange to be walking with you in this midnight space and darkness."

"Can you not guess?" he returned. "What object could I have in coming here at this dark hour? Look."

Then we noticed for the first time that the Shadow carried a music-book. The enigma was solved. Quasimodo had come to practise.

"But what a strange hour!" we exclaimed. "You turn night into day. Is it that these ghostly shadows inspire you as nothing else can?"

EAST END OF CATHEDRAL, SHOWING NORMAN APSE: TARRAGONA.

"No," replied Quasimodo; "I have no inspiration. I possess the souls of others, I have no soul of my own. It is given to me to interpret the thoughts of all musicians with a wonderful interpretation, but not a single thought of my own do I possess. Not a single line can I extemporise. I am like a man to whom has been given all the feelings, all the aspirations, all the fire of the poet, and from whom is withheld the gift of language. But I am content. All the thoughts of the great masters are mine, my very own, and I am grateful for the power. It is a gift. As a rule I need no music. All is stamped on my brain in undying characters. You shall hear. This is a book of Bach's Fugues that I scarcely need; and this quiet and devoted creature is my organ-blower. He is deaf and dumb, which explains his silence."

"But you have not told us your reason for turning night into day," we remarked. "Everything about you is so weird and unusual that we cannot help our curiosity. You must not think it impertinence."

"True," replied Quasimodo. "It must indeed seem strange to you that I come here now, yet the reason is simple enough. I teach all day long, for I have to work for my living. Yet I cannot live without occasionally pouring out my soul in music; and as I have no time but the night, I come here now rather than not at all. I was not here last night or the night before; I shall not be here again any night this week. I have to work not only for my own living, but for a wife and two lovely children. You start. You wonder that any woman could have married this grotesque creature—much more a beautiful woman. You do not wonder more than I do. I tell my wife that she married me for my music, not for myself. The music charmed and bewitched her; threw a glamour over her eyes and judgment and taste. She laughs in reply. We have been married twelve years now, and she still seems the happiest of women, most devoted of wives. Heaven be praised, there is nothing grotesque in our lovely children. They might have come from paradise. But now I

will go and play, and you shall listen. You have chosen to enter here, and here you must remain until I let you out again. I will leave you my lantern and you may wander where you will."

With that he placed his lamp in our hand, and lighting a small wax candle which he produced from his pocket, departed down the long, dark, solemn, solitary aisle, followed by his silent Shadow. We soon lost them in the gloom, and nothing but the distant sound of Quasimodo's footsteps told us we were not alone. Even this sound ceased, and for a time absolute silence reigned.

Presently a far-off glimmer showed where the organ-loft was placed. Quasimodo had lighted the candles and taken his seat. We turned off the light of our lantern. The moonlight was playing upon the windows, and the pale rays streamed across the aisles upon pillars and arches. Never was a more weird, more telling and effective scene.

We sat down on the steps of one of the chapels. The whole ghostly building, shrouded in gloom and mystery and moonbeams, stood before us in all its solidity, all its grandeur and magnificence. Intense silence reigned. We could hear the beating of our hearts, feel the quickening of our pulses.

Then through the silence there stole the softest, sweetest sounds. Quasimodo was interpreting the thoughts of others. He had chosen that soothing, flowing, exquisite Träumerei of Schumann's, and rendered it as never rendered before. The whole melody was hushed and subdued. Nothing seemed to rise above a whisper. All the aisles and arches were full of exquisite vibrations. Quasimodo appeared to linger upon every note as though he loved it and could not part with it. One note melted into another. The sense of rhythm was perfect.

We listened spellbound to the end. Never had the simple, beautiful melody so held all our senses captive. It ceased, and again for a moment the whole vast interior was steeped in profound silence; the moonbeams streaming their pale light through the windows possessed the building.

Then a different spirit held Quasimodo. Our dream changed. Louder stops were pulled out, and he plunged into a vigorous fugue of Bach's. Again we had never heard it so played. Every note fell clear and distinct. The music seemed gifted with words suggesting wild thoughts and emotions. What Quasimodo had said was true. The souls of the dead-and-gone masters possessed him. He was their true interpreter. The fugue came to an end. Again a moment's silence and again a change in our dream.

INTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL: TARRAGONA.

This time it was Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. More fitting time and place could never have existed. The pulses thrilled as we listened. Never had music seemed so perfect. Beethoven himself would have declared the rendering beyond his own conception. Quasimodo was a magician. His body might be grotesque, his mind was angelic. Be his wife never so beautiful, he never so grotesque, she could not fail to love that soul and spirit. He was worthy, and she was wise.

Again the soft sweet strains went trolling through aisles and arches, all their exquisite melancholy cadence fully rendered. And presently it changed to the louder, more passionate strains, suggestive more of storm and tempest than serene moonlight. It ceased; and one thing gave place to another; Quasimodo's moods seemed as wild and eccentric as they were uncertain but ever charming. For two whole hours he kept us spell-bound. We never thought of the night; of the passing of time; of the necessity for rest. We were in a new world. The moonbeams travelled onwards and downwards.

Midnight struck. Twelve slow strokes fell upon the air. The ghosts came out to listen; it was their hour. We were persuaded that the aisles and arches were full of them. We saw faint shadows thrown upon the moonbeams, as they passed to and fro. It is useless to say ghosts do not throw shadows: that night we distinctly saw them. The wonderful moonlit building seemed full of sighs and subdued sobbings. H. C. declared it was nothing but the vibrations of the organ: we knew better. The ghosts were sighing and sobbing at the wonderful music. There could not be a more ghostly time or place; and they would not often have such harmonies to listen to.

The moments passed. One o'clock struck; solitary, melancholy sound; more suggestive of ghosts and death and the long journey we must all take before we become ghosts ourselves, than the twelve drawn-

out strokes of midnight which bear each other company.

Into those two hours Quasimodo seemed to have crowded an eternity of music. Every vein, from the mournful to the triumphant, from the faintest whisper to a crashing torrent, possessed him. He passed into Wagner, and the sweetest strains from Lohengrin, the most impassioned from Tannhäuser, thrilled the darkness. He slided into Handel's airs, and with the aid of a wonderful voix céleste, that loveliest of melodies, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, stole through the moonlit aisles with such pathos that our eyes wept involuntary tears, and the Divine drama of nearly two thousand years ago passed in detail before our mental vision.

Quasimodo seemed to have power to raise emotion, to play upon every nerve, and he appeared to delight in using that power.

He went on in all his varying moods, until again there came a pause, and once more Schumann's Träumerei in soft, sweet strains went stealing through the aisles. With this he had begun, with this he would end: as one who had taken a long journey, and would bring us safely back to haven.

A journey indeed; a flight into fairyland; spiritual realms where nothing earthly can enter.

It came to an end: and we had to return to earth. Quasimodo had poured out his soul and was satisfied. No wonder he could not live without it. Such a gift must find expression, or the spirit would die. The lights went out in the distant organ-loft, and by the help of his taper Quasimodo groped his way down the winding stair, followed by his silent Shadow. We turned on the lamp, and its light guided him to us. He sat down beside us on the steps.

"Well," he said, "have you enjoyed my music? Have they kept you spell-bound, all the thoughts of the great masters of the past? Did you think there was so much in them? Have I given you new ideas, revealed unsuspected beauties? Have the hours passed as moments? Oh, the divine gift of melody to man, which brings us nearest to heaven! How could we live without it?"

He had played himself into rapture. He was intoxicated with the influence of all the melody to which he had given such amazing expression. It was a language more powerful than words, more beautiful than poetry, more soul-satisfying than love itself. What a strange contradiction had nature here been guilty of—this grotesque, almost deformed exterior united to such loveliness of mind and spirit.

CLOISTERS: TARRAGONA.

But time was passing. We could not indulge for ever in these dreams, perfect though they were. The change in the moonbeams warned us that the night was growing old. The ghosts would soon depart to the land of shadows. Yet the building was so weird and mysterious, the outlines were so marvellous, that it was difficult to break the spell. It had to be done. The grey dawn must not find us here. All our romance, all our charm of music would evaporate before the cold creeping upwards of daybreak.

So we rose from the steps, and Quasimodo rose too, and his Shadow took up its customary position.

We still held the lamp. As we went down the long aisles we flashed it to and fro. Lights and shadows mingled with the moonbeams, and all the fantastic forms we awoke were only reflections from ghostland. At the south doorway Quasimodo inserted the key; the door opened and we passed out into the night.

The moon and the stars had travelled far; the sky itself seemed full of all the music and melody we had listened to. Quasimodo locked the door and joined us, followed by his Shadow. But once outside the iron gate the Shadow bade him good-night by a silent gesture in which we were included, and rapidly and silently, like the shadow he was, glided away and was soon lost to sight.

We stood looking at the cathedral, all its wonderful outlines showing up clearly in the pale pure moonlight. Silence and solitude now reigned within and without. Then we turned away, and Quasimodo accompanied us as far as the bottom of the steps. There he bade us farewell and we never met him again.

The incident passed almost as a dream. We sometimes ask ourselves whether Quasimodo was really flesh and blood, or an angel that for a short time had visited the earth in the form of man. But he was no spirit. We watched his quaint shape as he went down the narrow street, flashing his light. Towards the end he looked back and turned the lamp full upon us, as though by way of final benediction. Another turn and he had passed out of sight.

The street had not the glimmer of a light or the ghost of a sound. Our own broad thoroughfare was in darkness. The Roman tower seemed wrapped in the silence and mystery of the centuries. From the end of the road we looked over the cliff at the sea sleeping in all its expanse, bathed in moonlight. In the harbour one caught the outlines of the vessels, and from one of them came the bark of a dog baying at the moon. It

was one of those perfect nights, still, clear and calm, only to be found in these latitudes.

The cathedral clock had long struck two, when we finally turned towards the hotel. What if the night-porter failed us, as he had failed in Lerida? But he was more cunning. He was not there, indeed, but he had left the door ajar, and the gas slightly turned on at the foot of the staircase.

We made all fast and sought our rooms. With open windows, even from here we could hear the faint plash and beating of the ripples upon the shore—the slight ebb-and-flow movement of this tideless sea. Our dreams that night were haunted by Quasimodo. We had left the world for realms where no limit was, and divine harmonies for ever filled the air. Some hours later this harmony suddenly resolved itself into a bugle call, and we woke to a new day.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE DAYS OF THE ROMANS.

Charms of Tarragona—Roman traces—Cyclopean remains—Augustus closes Temple of Janus—Great past—House of Pontius Pilate—Views from ramparts—Feluccas with white sails set—Life a paradise—City walls—Cathedral outlines—Lively market-place—Remarkable exterior—Dream-world—West doorways—Internal effect—In the cloisters—Proud sacristan—Man of taste and learning—Delighted with our enthusiasm—Great concession—Appealing to the soul—Señor Ancora—Human or angelic?—In the cloister garden—Sacristan's domestic troubles—Silent ecclesiastic—Sad history—Church of San Pablo—Challenge invited—Future genius—Rare picture—Roman aqueduct—A modern Cæsar—Reminiscences—Rich country—Where the best wines are made—Aqueduct—El puente del diablo—Giddy heights—Lonely valley—H. C. sentimental—Rosalie and fair Costello—Romantic situation—Quarrelsome Reus—Masters of the world—Our driver turns umpire—Battle averted—Men of Reus—Whatever is, is wrong—Driver's philosophy—Dream of the centuries.

ONLY the broad daylight could discover all the charms of Tarragona: the beauty of its situation, the extent of its ancient remains. The very perfect walls, fine in tone, bore distinct Roman traces. Below them, on a level with the shore, were other traces of a Roman amphitheatre. There were also Cyclopean remains, dating from prehistoric times. Tarragona was a great Roman station when the brothers Publius and Cneidos Scipio occupied it. Augustus raised it to the dignity of a capital: and twenty-six years B.C., after his Cantabrian campaign, he here issued his decree closing the Temple of Janus—open until then for seven hundred years.

Tarragona was already a large and flourishing city with over a million of inhabitants. It was rich and highly favoured, and its chief people considered themselves lords of the world. Many temples were erected, one of them to the honour of Augustus, making him a god whilst still living. There are fragments in the cloister museum said to have belonged to this temple, which was repaired by Adrian.

On our upward way near the Roman tower we passed the still wonderful house of Pontius Pilate, who was claimed by the Tarragonese as a fellow-townsman. It is said to have been also the palace of Augustus, and the lower portion bears traces of an existence before the Romans. To-day it is a prison, and as some of its walls are twenty feet thick the prisoners have small chances of escape. Few spots in Spain are more interesting, or so completely carry you back to the early centuries. On its south wall is an entrance to a short passage leading to the Cyclopean doorway, communicating by a subterranean passage

with the comparatively modern Puerta del Rosario. To the east of this gateway we soon reach the ramparts, just above a ruined fort, and near the modern battery of San Fernando. From these ramparts you have the finest view of Tarragona and its surroundings.

On one side stretch far and wide the blue waters of the Mediterranean. Lateen-rigged feluccas, with white sails set, are wafted to and fro by the gentle breeze. Life on board seems a paradise of luxurious ease and indolence. Nothing marks the passing hours but the slow progress of the sun. The sky is as intensely blue as the sea, and the air seems full of light. You are dazzled by so much brilliance. Distant objects stand out in clear detail. The wide undulating plain stretches far away to the left, broken by towns and villages, the famous castle of Altafulla in the distance. Below the town lies the aqueduct, one of the most perfect Roman remains in Spain.

At our feet are the city walls, enclosing all the wonderful antiquities, and above the picturesque roofs of the houses rise the matchless outlines of the cathedral.

To this same cathedral we made our way this morning, passing through the market-place lively with stalls, buyers and sellers; Spanish men and women picturesque in their national costumes: a modern human picture side by side with outlines of the highest antiquity.

Passing through an archway we found ourselves in the Cathedral Square, dazzled by the splendour of the vision. Here the market had overflowed, and the market-women, full of life and colouring and animation, sat in front of their fruit and flower-stalls. One and all tempted us to buy, and rare were the wares they sold. Again the new and the ancient blended together; for beyond the women rose those marvellous outlines, sharply pencilled against the brilliant blue sky: magnificent contrast of colouring, wherein everything was in strong light and shadow.

Our strange experience of last night was still full upon us. We had hardly recovered from the dream state into which the marvellous music of Quasimodo had plunged us with strange mesmeric influence.

The beauty of the night, the pure pale moonlight effect, had not prepared us for the splendours of to-day: so effective, lovely and diversified a cathedral: the most remarkable exterior we had yet found in Spain. The whole square with its surrounding houses is a dream. The church dates from the eleventh century. Above the round apse of the choir at the east end—probably the oldest part of the building—rose outline upon outline, all bearing the refining mark of age. Much of it appeared never to have been touched or restored. On the south side was a tower, of which the lower part was Romanesque, the remainder fourteenth century and octagonal. Apart from the east end most of the church is transitional. The roofs are covered with pantiles, but they are not the original covering, and are not quite in harmony with the rest of the work.

The west doorways are very fine. Those that open to the aisles are of the earliest date; the central and more important is fourteenth century, deeply recessed, with a massive buttress on each side. This doorway rises to a triangle, above which are many statues of the apostles in Gothic niches. Above the Romanesque side doors are rose windows with rare and delicate tracery, and the south door has a finely carved relief of the Entry into Jerusalem.

The internal effect was most impressive. Few cathedrals are more solidly built, yet few display greater ornamentation. The columns are splendid, their richly-carved capitals redeeming the somewhat stern severity of the pure transition work. The piers are very massive, and the eye is at once arrested by the early-pointed clerestory and unusually large bays. The view of the interior of the transept, above which rises the octagonal lantern with its narrow pointed lights is especially striking. A little of the coloured

glass is very brilliant and sixteenth century, but the greater part is modern. The chancel is pure Romanesque, the chapels are chiefly fourteenth century. In the baptistery the font is a Roman sarcophagus found in the palace of Augustus.

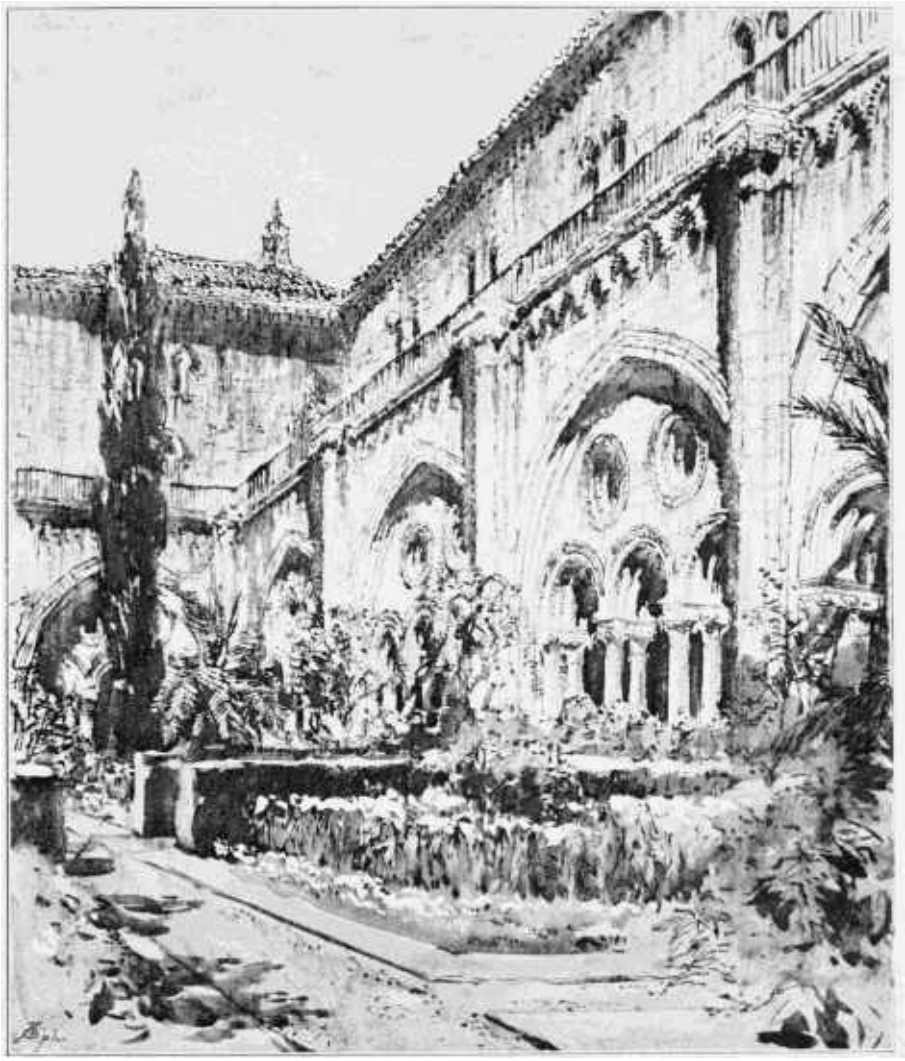
But the cloisters are the gem of the cathedral. Here again was an architectural dream, grand in design, of noblest proportions: six splendid bays on each side, each bay enclosing three round arches. These are divided by coupled shafts of white marble, decorated with dog-tooth mouldings. Above them two large circles are pierced in the wall, some retaining the original interlacing work of extreme beauty and delicacy, and of Moorish origin.

Many of the capitals are quaintly carved, with humorous subjects: one of them, for instance, representing a procession of rats carrying a cat to her burial. The cat shams death, and the too-confident rats omit to bind her. Presently the tables turn: the cat comes to life, springs upon the rats and devours them.

The verger or sacristan was very proud of these capitals, and of the whole cathedral: full of energy and enthusiasm: understood every detail, delighted to linger at every turn. He seemed intelligent and educated, and declared he was only happy when gazing upon his beloved aisles and arches. He begged us to give him an English lesson in architectural terms, which he soon accomplished. Dressed in his purple gown, he looked as imposing as any of the priests in their vestments, and more intelligent than many.

Enchanted to find our enthusiasm equal to his own, he left the cloister doorway unlocked, so that we might enter at any moment. This was a great concession, for in Spain they keep their cloisters under constant lock and key, partly for the sake of the fee usually given: a mercenary consideration quite beneath our sacristan. He talked and exhibited out of pure love for his work.

"The cathedral is my hobby and happiness," he said, "and I would rather die than leave it. I know the history of every stone and pillar by heart, could sketch every minute detail from memory. In those glorious aisles, these matchless cloisters, I feel in paradise. I love to come here when the church is closed and sit and study and contemplate. Born in a better sphere, I should have become an architect. All these outlines appeal to my soul, just as music appeals to Señor Ancora."



CLOISTERS: TARRAGONA.

"Is he your wonderful midnight player?"

"Si, señor. Do you mean to say you have heard him?"

"We were with him last night, and spent more than two hours in the cathedral listening to his wonderful music."

"It is hard to believe. Never will he admit any one to his midnight vagaries, as I call them. I do not know how you won him over to let you in; but he seems to guess things by intuition. Something must have told him that you had a soul for music, and he could not find it in his heart to refuse you."

"A curious, grotesque man, who almost gives one the impression of being supernatural," we observed.

"We all think he is bordering upon it," returned the sacristan; "half man, half angel. Curious and almost deformed as he looks, he is the envy and admiration of the whole town, has the most beautiful wife and loveliest children. He came here twenty years ago, a pale, slight, ethereal youth of eighteen, looking as though he had dropped from the stars, or some far-off paradise. People still wonder whether he did so or not.—Look señor," pointing upwards. "Did you ever see such outlines, such a vision of beauty? Is it not the very spot for such a soul as Señor Ancora's?"

We were standing in the cloister garden, where orange trees and graceful shrubs grew in wild profusion and exquisite contrast. In the centre of the garden a fountain threw up its spray and plashed with cool musical sound. Surrounding us were the wonderful cloister bays with their round arches resting on the white marble columns, all enclosed in an outer pointed arch. Above them rose the cathedral against the

deep blue sky. Outline above outline; Romanesque and Gothic; the lantern crowning the whole. The shadows of the marble columns upon the ancient cloister pavement were sharply defined.

"No wonder you love it," we said to the sacristan. "Rather we wonder you do not apply for permission to live in the chapter-house, and take up your abode here altogether."

"Ah, señor, like Ancora, I also have my domestic ties: a wife and children to think about. But, alas, my wife has no soul, and cannot even understand my love for the cathedral. That indeed ought to have been my wife, and I should never have married commonplace flesh and blood. Here I have been day after day for thirty years, in constant attendance, and I grow to love it more and more, and daily discover fresh beauties. There are no cloisters in the world like these. There is no vision on earth to be compared with this, as we stand here and look upwards and around. None."

As we stood listening to the sacristan's enthusiasm, a pale, refined, grave-looking ecclesiastic passed out of the beautiful doorway leading from the church, and with silent footstep walked through the cloister to the chapter-house. He was dressed in a violet silk robe or cassock, over which was a white lace alb. As he went by he bowed to us with great gravity, but said not a word. There was a sorrowful, subdued look upon the clear-cut features, the large grey eyes.

"That is one of our canons," said the sacristan, after he had disappeared into the chapter-house; "the one I like best. He too loves this wonderful building."

"He is sad-looking. One could almost imagine he had mistaken his vocation, or gone through some great sorrow in life."

"You are right, señor: right in both instances. He was a man of noble family, never intended for the church. Engaged to a lovely lady to whom he was devoted, she died the very day before they were to have been married. He remained inconsolable, and at last took orders. At one time he had an idea of becoming a monk; but he is very clever, and was persuaded to take up a more active life in the church. As you saw him now, so he always is; grave, subdued, gentle and kindly. No one goes to him for help in vain. Here he is venerated."

We felt drawn towards this refined ecclesiastic and wished to know him, but no opportunity presented itself. The cloisters seemed to gain an added charm by his presence. His dress and appearance exactly suited them, giving them an additional touch of picturesque romance and human interest. The whole scene inspired us with a strange affection for Tarragona, and there are few places in Spain we would sooner revisit.

A little later, when we were going round the precincts, they seemed suddenly to swarm with a small army of boys. These were turning out of the new seminary, a mongrel building designed on old lines, therefore neither one thing nor the other. We entered, and turning to the left, found ourselves in modern cloisters echoing with the shouts of boys at play: cloisters attractive only from the fact that they enclosed a small, very ancient church—the church of San Pablo—a rare gem in its way; with a square-headed doorway and Romanesque capitals, and a small turret holding the bell, above which was a thin iron cross. It was a lovely building, and lost in admiration we stood gazing. The boys who came round us without the least shyness could not understand it.

"What do you see in it?" asked one of them. "We should like to knock the old barrack down. It takes up our play-room. A wretched old building, neither use nor ornament. But we can't get rid of it. It won't burn; it is so solid that we can't demolish it; and we daren't use dynamite. We have to put up with it."

"And you would rather put up with the grapes and the oranges in the market-place?" we suggested.

"We should like to put them *down*, señor. Only try us."

Having invited the challenge, it had to be accepted: and the whole troop tore off with one consent to drive bargains with the fruit-women. One boy, however, remained behind; a fair, thoughtful lad of about fifteen, with large, dreamy, beautiful brown eyes.

"Why don't you join them, and take your share of the spoil?" we asked him.

"Señor, I would rather study this old chapel than eat all the grapes in Catalonia," he replied. "My father is the sacristan of the cathedral. He loves old buildings too, but not as I do, I think. I have made up my mind to be an architect, and when I can do as I like I will build great churches on such models as these, like the mighty men of old."

So the father's love had descended to the son, and in the latter may possibly some day bear good fruit. The boy looked a genius. We turned away, and he turned with us.

"What is your name?" we asked him.

"Hugo Morales, señor. Will you let me show you my favourite spot, señor," he said; and forthwith led us to a short street of steps, something like the streets of Gerona, ending in a lovely old arched passage, through which one caught a glimpse of ancient houses beyond. Above the archway rose a wonderful old house with an ajimez window of rare beauty, and other Gothic windows with latticed panes and deep mouldings. Then came the overhanging roof covered with pantiles. The tone was perfect. Next to this was a small church with a Norman doorway, crowned by a graceful belfry in which a solitary bell was hung. If not the most ancient, it was certainly the most picturesque bit in all Tarragona.

"And you really love it?" we asked this singular boy.

"With all my heart," he answered. "I often come here with my books and do my lessons sitting on that old staircase that you see on the left. The house is empty and no one interferes with me. But I must be off home. A Dios, señor."

SAN PABLO: TARRAGONA

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"Good-bye, Hugo. Keep to your ideals and aspirations."

"No fear, señor. I mean to do so."

And away he went, none the less happy for sundry coins that rattled musically in his pocket and would probably be spent in something more lasting than fruit and flowers; whilst we went back to our beloved precincts and studied the outlines of the Middle Ages.

One sunny afternoon we hired a conveyance and started for the Roman Aqueduct. It was the only conveyance of the kind to be found in Tarragona. The owner, who drove us himself, called it a victoria, and seemed proud of it. Large and heavy, it might have dated from the days of the Cæsars. Its proper place undoubtedly was the Museum of Roman Antiquities to which we had just paid a visit; and so perhaps there was something à propos in the idea of its conveying us to a Roman aqueduct. Our driver was dressed in a smock frock, and in the high seat in front of us looked perched up like a lighthouse upon a rock—or a modern Cæsar in a triumphal progress.

We rattled through the streets, and soon found ourselves on the broad white road that in time, if we persevered, would take us to Lerida the chivalrous and true. Not the least intention had we of paying that interesting old town a second visit, but the very fact of knowing that our faces were set that way, brought our late experiences vividly before us.

We wondered how it fared with our much-tried landlord; whether the waiter was yet out of hospital, and he and the Dragon had made up their differences or agreed to differ. Though the well had been dragged, it was possible that the skeletons were still there; perhaps had risen to the surface to refute the old saying that dead men tell no tales. We thought of our polite captain, and almost wished we might come across him in Tarragona. He would be sure to know our silent but interesting old canon of the violet robe, and would open many doors to us. Above all we wondered how Alphonse fared. By this time his wife would be resting in her grave; and he, poor lonely wayfarer, would haunt the sad precincts of the cemetery, and dream of his early days and of walking through the world with the wife of his youth. No doubt he was right and would soon follow her to the Land o' the Leal, hailing the hour of his release.

But all this had nothing to do with our present journey. On each side of the road we found a rich undulating country. We were in the neighbourhood of vineyards, and the wine, when pure, is some of the best that Spain produces. Here and there stood a picturesque farm-house, with whitewashed walls and green venetians, and heaps of yellow pumpkins, cantaloupe melons and strings of red peppers dangling from the balconies: the usual thing in Spain and Italy and the countries of the South. On a hillside, an occasional village slept in the sunshine; a quiet little place, apparently without inhabitants or any reason for existence.

AN OLD NOOK IN TARRAGONA.

Presently we caught sight of the wonderful aqueduct built by the Romans so many centuries ago, yet still almost perfect. In the days of the ancients it brought the water to the city for a distance of twenty miles. Those were the days when the Tarragonese called themselves lords of the earth; when Augustus reigned in his palace and the amphitheatre was the scene of wild sports, and temples existed to the heathen gods. The

portion of the aqueduct visible from the road was as it were a gigantic bridge with two tiers of arches. It had all the tone of the centuries, all the solidity which had kept it standing firm as a rock. Nearly one hundred feet high and eight hundred feet long, it spanned a green and lonely valley or ravine covered with heather. The people call it el puente del diablo, and may be forgiven for thinking that more than human hands helped to perfect the work.

We went to the topmost height and walked over the giddy stoneway to the very centre. There we sat down and felt ourselves masters of the world. Wild flowers grew in the cracks and crevices, and ferns and fronds, and H. C. stretched over the yawning gulf for one almost out of reach, until we gave him up for lost and began to compose his epitaph. But he plucked his flower, and after looking at it with a sort of tender reverence, placed it carefully in his pocket-book.

"Who is that for?" we asked, for there was no mistaking his soft expression.

"The fair Costello. That exquisite vision that we saw in the opera-house at Gerona. The landlord gave me her full name and address before we left. I am thinking of proposing to her. Her presence haunts me still."

We knew how much this was worth; how long it would last.

"You would bestow it more worthily on Rosalie. There are many fair Costellos in the world—there can be only one Rosalie."

"Do you think so?" replied this whirligig heart. "Certainly Rosalie's eyes were matchless; I tremble when I think of them. And then we got to know her, which is an advantage. After all it shall go to Rosalie. The fair Costello might have a temper—there's no knowing."

ROMAN AQUEDUCT, NEAR TARRAGONA.

We were undoubtedly in a situation favourable to romance. The scene was magnificent. Surrounding us was a wide stretch of undulating country. The land was rich and cultivated; towns and villages reposed on the hill-sides. Far off to the right the smoke of busy Valls ascended, and through the gentle haze we traced the outlines of its fine old church. Following the long white road before us, the eye at length rested on the blue smoke of quarrelsome, disaffected Reus, which prospers in spite of its Republican tendencies. Here more distinctly we traced the fine tower of the old church of San Pedro, in which Fortuny the painter lies

buried. Distant hills bounded the horizon, shutting out the world beyond.

But there was no more interesting monument than the aqueduct on which we stood. Its rich tone contrasted wonderfully with the subdued green of the ravine, the deep shades of the heather, so full of charm and repose to the eye tired with wandering over the glaring country and straining after distant outlines. We stayed long, enjoying our breezy elevation; going back in imagination to the early centuries of mighty deeds—those Romans who were in truth masters of the world. At last, feeling that our driver's patience was probably exhausted, and treading carefully over the granite passage of the viaduct, we made our way to the prosy level of mankind.

The driver had drawn under the shade of some trees, and was holding a levée. Half a dozen other drivers were grouped round him, and the bullock-carts with their patient animals were waiting their pleasure, one behind another. They were all laying down the law with any amount of gesture and loud tones; all more or less angry, each convinced that he was in the right.

Our coachman, as owner of a superior conveyance and a man of substance, was evidently acting as a sort of judge or umpire, and just as we came up was delivering his weighty opinion. But it appeared to be the case of the old fable again, and in trying to propitiate all he pleased none. A pitched battle seemed averted by our arrival, which put an end to the discussion. As strangers and foreigners were objects of interest, we had to run the gauntlet of their scrutiny. But they were civil; and curiosity satisfied, mounted their heavy waggons and set off down the road towards Reus at break-neck speed, raising more dust and noise than a hundred pieces of artillery.

Fortunately we were going the other way. As the driver mounted his box he shrugged his shoulders.

"It is always the same," he observed. "These men of Reus are the most revolutionary, most disaffected in all Catalonia. They always have a grievance. Whatever is, is wrong. If it isn't political, it's social. If it's not taxes, it's the price of wheat. Their life is one perpetual contention, and every now and then they break out into open revolt. Only the other day an old man of Kens, a distant connection, on his death-bed declared to me that he had made all his miseries, and if he had his time to come over again, would make the best of the world and look on the bright side of things. Just what every one ought to do. Enjoy the sunshine, and let the shadows look after themselves."

So our driver was a philosopher after all, and had more in him than we had imagined. With Cæsar's opportunities he might have proved another Cæsar. Whipping up his horses, he began his return journey up the long white road.

Making way, the outlines of Tarragona came into view, bathed in the glow of the declining sun. The effect was gorgeous; and we fell into a dream of the centuries gone by, when the Romans marched up that very same road with their conquering armies, overlooked the very same sea that now stretched to right and left, blue and flashing, and made themselves aqueducts. In this vision of the past we saw them building their mighty monuments, looking about for fresh worlds to conquer; and we heard the famous decree of Augustus closing the Temple of Janus as a sign that quiet reigned upon the earth and the Star of Bethlehem was rising in the East—divine signal and fitting moment for the coming of the PRINCE OF PEACE.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LORETTA.

Our ubiquitous host—Curious mixture of nations—Francisco—His enthusiasm carries the point—French lessons—English prejudice—Landlord's lament—Days of fair Provence—Francisco determines to be in time—Presidio—Tomb of the Scipios—Fishing for sardines—Early visit to cathedral—Still earlier sacristan—Francisco's delight—Freshness of early morning—Reus—Bark worse than bite—Where headaches come from—An evil deed—Valley of the Francoli—Moorish remains—Montblanch—The graceful hills of Spain—Espluga—Francisco equal to occasion—Beseiged—Donkeys versus carriage—Interesting old town—Decadence—Singular woman—Loretta's escort—Strange story—Unconscious charm—What happened one Sunday evening—Caro—"The right man never came"—Comes now—How she was betrothed—Primitive conveyance—Making the best of it—Wine-pressers—Loving cup—Nectar of the gods—Fair exchange—Rough drive—Scene of Loretta's adventures.

OUR landlord was a curious mixture of three nations: French, Spanish and Italian. He was small, dark and wiry, and seemed to possess the power of being in half a dozen places at once, yet was never in a hurry. One moment you would hear his voice in the bureau, the next in the kitchen, and two moments afterwards you might behold his head stretched out of a second-floor window watching the omnibus as it turned the corner on its way from the station: watching and wondering how many passengers it brought him. If he did not succeed, it should not be for want of effort; but he had been there long, and apparently did succeed, flourish and prosper. He was a very attentive host, anxious that we should see and appreciate all the marvels of Tarragona. Having lost his wife, the hotel had to be managed single-handed. One son, a boy of fifteen, was being trained to succeed him. He also spoke French, Spanish and Italian admirably, and his ambition now was to go to England to learn English. So far he resembled our Gerona guide José, but the one had grown to manhood, the other was a stripling, though a bright and interesting lad.

"You have not been to Poblet," our host remarked one morning, as he waited upon us at our early breakfast in the salle à manger. A great condescension on his part; everyone else was left to the tender mercies of the waiter who was more or less a barbarian.

"No," we replied; "but we were even now debating the possibility of going there this morning."

"It is quite possible, señor. You could not have a better day. The weather is perfect. The train starts in an hour, and the omnibus shall take you down. I will pack you a substantial luncheon, for you can get nothing there. My son shall accompany you to carry the basket."

The boy, who happened to be standing near his father, grew elated.

"Oh, señor, say yes," he cried. "A day at Poblet will be splendid. I shall have a whole holiday, besides getting off my French lesson this afternoon."

"You shall talk French to us, Francisco, which will be better than a lesson. We decide to go. Pack an excellent luncheon for three, not forgetting a bottle of H. C.'s favourite Laffitte."

"Of which I have an excellent vintage," replied our host, who seemed equal to any emergency. "Frisco, take care that you are ready."

"No fear about that," replied the boy, whose eyes sparkled with anticipation. And he went off to put on his best Sunday suit. The landlord on his part bustled off to the kitchen, where we heard him giving orders to the uncertain chef. Presently he returned.

"You will allow me to put the smallest suspicion of garlic in your sandwiches," he suggested

insinuatingly. "It is the greatest improvement. The English have an objection to it, but it is mere prejudice."

A prejudice we unfortunately shared, and our host went back lamenting our want of taste.

The little incident brought back vividly days when we sojourned in fair Provence, and from the cottage doors, mingling with the pure air of heaven wafted across the Mediterranean, there came the everlasting perfume of garlic. Hotels, houses, cottages, all seemed full of the terrible odour. The worthy people of Provence, with their dark skins and slow movements, were indefatigable in trying to win us over to their side. It was almost impossible to enter a public conveyance without putting one's head out of window: and stronger than all the impressions made upon us by the charms of Provence, its ripening vineyards, its wines, all the beauties of sea and sky, mountain and valley, were our garlic reminiscences. In Catalonia we had it to a less extent, but it was an evil to be avoided. So our landlord went back depressed to his kitchen to conclude the packing of the hamper.

Francisco appeared in his Sunday's best long before the omnibus. At least half a dozen times he came up to our rooms to remind us that it would only rush round at the last moment and would not wait. Going off for a month's holiday could not have excited him more. With an agony of apprehension he saw us walk to the end of the road and look down upon the blue sea that stretched around in all its beauty and repose. Already there were white-winged feluccas gliding upon its surface, their lateen sails spread out, enjoying the cool of the morning.

The cliff was almost perpendicular. To our left a sentry paced to and fro, to overlook the Presidio, a large convict establishment below us on a level with the sea. If any convict had attempted to escape—a very improbable event—he would quickly have been marked by the lynx-eyed sentry, who was relieved every two hours.

Side by side with the Presidio were the remains of the old Roman amphitheatre, dating back to the days of the city walls, the house of Pontius Pilate, and all the vestiges of the past. Close to us rose the old Roman Tower, from which very possibly Augustus had looked many a time upon the undulating hills and far-stretching sea, feeling himself monarch of all he surveyed.

But long years before, the Phœnicians—that enterprising people of Tyre and Sidon, of whom so little is known, yet who seem to have possessed the earth—had made a maritime station of Tarragona. What it actually was in those days can never be told; no archives contain their record; but in beauty and favour of situation the centuries have brought no change.

The scene on which we looked that morning linked us to the past. Four miles to the east, under the shadow of the hills, and within sight of the quiet bays, reposed the Roman tomb of the Scipios, who, in conjunction with Augustus, had so much to do with the making of Tarragona. It is a square monument thirty feet high, built of stone, guarded by two sculptured figures, with an inscription blotted out long ages ago. A lovely spot for the long sleep that comes to all. The hills are pine-clad, the bays sheltered; the blue sea sleeps in the sunshine; no sound disturbs but the plashing of the water that does not rise and fall as other seas that have their tides. Fishermen live in the neighbourhood, and you may see them setting their nets or fishing from the shore for sardines; with this exception the little place shows no sign of life and is rarely trodden by the foot of strangers.

We felt its influence as we waited for the omnibus. There, at least, to our right was something neither Augustus nor the Scipios had ever seen—the small harbour with its friendly arms outstretched, embracing all the shipping that comes to Tarragona. The east pier was partly built with the stones of the old Roman

amphitheatre, a certain desecration that took place about the year 1500. A crowd of fishing vessels is almost always at rest in the harbour, and larger vessels trading in wine and oil.

We were not allowed to look upon all this unmolested. Francisco constantly came to and fro to remind us that time was passing. At last we turned at the sound of rumbling wheels; the omnibus came up. Our host had neatly packed a luncheon-basket, and away rolled the machine through the prosy streets. We had turned our back upon all the wonders of Tarragona.

It required no slight courage to abandon our beloved cathedral for one whole day. True, before breakfast we had gone up and looked upon the magic outlines: that marvellous mixture of Romanesque and Gothic that here blend together in strange harmony. Early as it was we had found the sacristan, and he, in full measure of delight, had taken us through the quiet aisles and arches, twice beautiful and impressive in their solitude, and thrown wide the door of the matchless cloisters. They were lovelier than ever in the repose that accompanies the early morning light. But neither light nor darkness, morning nor evening, could abate the enthusiasm of the sacristan.

All this was left behind as we rattled down the steep streets. The station was on a level with the sea, and in front of it stretched the harbour with all its shipping. The train was in waiting, and to Francisco's evident pride and enjoyment we were soon whirling away in a first-class compartment. He had never travelled in anything beyond a second.

The freshness of early morning was still upon everything, and our interesting journey lay through scenery rich and varied. Before reaching Reus, the train crossed the river, then came to an anchor. We found the station crowded with country people going to a neighbouring fair. The town rose in modern outlines, above which towered the hexagonal steeple of San Pedro. It was evidently a bustling, prosperous town with manufacturing signs about it. Everything seemed in direct opposition to Tarragona. The one ancient and stately, with its historic and cathedral atmosphere in strong evidence; the other given over to manual work. The one quiet and conservative, the other quarrelsome and republican. It was from Reus that our carters with a grievance had come the day we visited the aqueduct: and back to Reus they had all gone to continue their warfare.

We recognised two of them on the platform, on their way to the fairs. They also recognised us and touched their large round hats with a broad smile plainly meant to intimate that their bark was worse than their bite.

It is in Reus that many of the French imitation wines are made and sent over the world, passing for Mâcon, Chablis and Sauterne. Much imitation champagne and many headaches come from here. Enormous wine-cellars, in point of size worthy of Madrid or Barcelona, groan with their manufactured stores. Reus has many branches of industry and might be a happy community if it would subdue its revolutionary discontent. It has yet to redeem its terrible murder of the monks of Poblet in 1835.

To-day, however, the crowd in the station were bent on pleasure or business and the warring element was put aside to a more convenient season. They scrambled into the train, and away we went up the lovely Valley of the Francoli as far as Alcober: a favourite settlement of the Moors, where many Moorish remains are still visible. The fine Romanesque church was once a mosque, so that it is full of the traditions of the past. Onwards through lonely, somewhat barren country to Montblanch; another old town apparently falling into ruin, with picturesque walls, towers and gates. Onwards again under the very shadow of the Sierra de Prades, rising in clear undulating outlines against the blue sky; a stately, magnificent chain of hills. Where indeed do we find such beautiful and graceful hills as in Spain?

Finally Espluga, the station for Poblet. Here Francisco alighted at express speed, basket in hand. We followed more leisurely, trembling for the Laffitte, but the boy was equal to the occasion. In spite of enthusiasm, he had an old head upon his young shoulders, and even now would have been almost equal to managing the hotel single-handed.

No sooner out than we were besieged by a man and a woman; the latter begging us to take her donkeys, the former praising his comfortable carriage. Discretion and the carriage won the day. A long donkey-ride over a rough country did not sound enticing. As it turned out we chose badly.

Poblet was some miles from Espluga, and we had to pass through the town on our way to the said carriage. It had been taken on trust, neither carriage nor donkeys being at the station.

The town lies at the foot of a towering hill. From the station you cross over a picturesque stone bridge dark with age, spanning the rushing river. Standing on the bridge you look down upon a romantic ravine and valley, through which the river winds its course. On the further side you enter the town: a primitive out-of-the-world spot, as though it had made no progress in the last hundred years. The people correspond with their surroundings. The streets were narrow and irregular, and the virtue of cleanliness was nowhere conspicuous. Our landlord had well said that if we did not take our luncheon with us, we should take it with Duke Humphrey.

Nevertheless, there was that in Espluga which redeemed some of its disadvantages. Groups of houses with picturesque roofs and latticed windows: houses built without any attempt at beauty, yet beautiful because they belonged to a long-past age when men knew nothing of ugliness and bad taste. No one had thought it worth while to pull down these old nooks and remains and rebuild greater, or even adorn them with fresh paint. Consequently we saw them arrayed in all their early charm. It seemed a very sleepy town, with little life and energy. People plied their quiet trades. Everything was apparently dying of inanition.

Our donkey-woman was an exception: comely and wonderfully good-tempered, with a surprising amount of energy. Not having succeeded in hiring her donkeys, she was not to be altogether outdone by the carriage-man, and insisted upon accompanying us through the town, to carry the basket and show us the way. The man had disappeared to make ready.

"You have made a mistake, señor, in not taking my donkeys. They are beautiful creatures; six grey animals, as gentle as sheep. As for the carriage he praises, I pity you. The road is fearfully rough. When you reach Poblet, you will have no breath left in your body. All your bones will be broken."

This sounded alarming; but we discounted something for disappointed ambition.

"Are these donkeys all your living?" we asked, already feeling a certain regret that we had employed the man and not the woman.

"Not quite, señor. And then, you know, we live upon very little. You would be surprised if I told you how few sous a day have sufficed me. Hitherto I have lived at home with my mother and sisters, who do washing. We have had that to fall back upon when my donkeys are not hired. It is lucky for me, since few people come at this time of the year: very few at any time compared with what you would imagine. The world doesn't know the beauties of Poblet. It languishes in solitude. You will see when you get there. My beautiful donkeys!" she continued. "I love them, and they love me. I have some strange power over all animals. They seem to know that I wish them well. The very birds perch upon my shoulders as I go along, if I stop and call to them."

"Where have you learned your charm?" we asked, much interested in the woman. The loud voice of the station had disappeared, and she now talked in gentle tones.

"Charm, señor? I never thought of it in that light. If it is a charm, it was born with me. It is nothing I have learned or tried to cultivate, for it comes naturally."

"Can you transfer the power to others?" asked H. C. "Really," he added in an aside, "if this woman were in a higher station of life I could quite fall in love with her. She must be made up of sympathy and mesmerism. What a mistake it was to hire that wretched scarecrow of a driver. Don't you think we might take the woman as a conductor and so combine the two?"

We ignored the question.

"No, señor," replied the woman of strange gifts; "I cannot give my power to anyone. But why do you call it a power? It is merely an instinct on the part of the animals, who know I wish them well and would take them all to my heart, poor dumb, patient, much-tried creatures. Shall I tell you how I came to keep donkeys? It was not my own idea. I did not go to them: they came to me. It is ten years ago now, when I was eighteen. I went out one Sunday evening in August all by myself. We had had a quarrel at home. My mother wanted me to marry a man I hated, because he was well-to-do. I said I would never marry him if there was not another man in the world. My sisters were all angry, and said that with one well married they would soon all get husbands. I was the youngest. At last I burst into tears, and told them they might all have him, but I never would. And with that, between rage and crying, I went off by myself out into the quiet country. I took the road to Poblet, and wandered on without thinking.

"At last I came in sight of Poblet, and felt it was time to turn back. I had recovered my calmness, for I reflected as I went along that they could not make me marry the man, and that their vexation was perhaps natural. We were poor and struggling: he was rich compared with us. Well, señor, just as I turned I saw a beautiful grey donkey with a black cross on its back coming towards me across the plain. I thought it singular, for it was all alone, and I had never seen a donkey alone there before. There was something strange-looking about it. Evidently it has strayed, I thought, and must just stray back again. But with my love for animals I could not help stopping and watching. It came straight up to me, and put its nose into my hand, just as if it knew me. 'Where have you come from?' I said, patting its head. 'Your owner will be anxious. You must go straight home.' But there it stood, and there I stood; and for at least five minutes we never moved.

"Then I felt it was ridiculous, and set off home. Will you believe, señor, that the animal followed me like a dog. I could not get rid of it. When I arrived home the donkey arrived with me. What could I do? There was an empty stable next door, and I put it in there, thinking it would be claimed and perhaps I should get a small reward. The animal went in just as if the stable had been always its home. As I was leaving, it turned and looked at me, and said as plainly as possible, 'I hope you are not going to let me starve.' I went in and told them what had happened. 'It must be your lover who has taken the form of a donkey,' laughed my eldest sister. 'He knows you are fond of animals, Loretta, and has arranged this plan with the devil to make you like him.' 'I should soon prove the greater donkey of the two, if I allowed myself to marry him,' I retorted."

"Was the donkey never claimed, Loretta?"

"Señor, you shall hear. To sum up the story, the donkey never was claimed. We made every inquiry; we did all we could to find the owner; it was in vain; he never turned up, and to this day the donkey remains mine. People said he was a supernatural donkey, but of course I know better. The next thing was, how to

make him earn his living, for I was determined never to part with him. Then the idea came to me to convey people to Poblet. The story got known, and sometimes at the station there would be quite a fight for Caro, as I called him. There is still. It gave me a start, and now in that very stable I have six beautiful donkeys that could not be equalled. And they all love me, and answer to their names, and come when I call them. Whichever I call comes; the others don't stir."

It was a singular but by no means impossible story. As H. C. had said, there was a certain mesmeric influence about the woman to which the sensitive animal world might very probably respond.

"And your lover? You did not take compassion upon him?"

"No, señor," laughed the woman, with a decided shake of the head; "but one of my sisters did; the eldest, who had been the most angry with me. And for the first six years they led a regular cat-and-dog life. Then he tumbled over the bridge into the river and was nearly drowned. He was saved, but his leg was broken and had to be taken off, and after that somehow his temper improved. My sister laughs and says she loves him better with his one leg than ever she did when he had two. She is welcome to him."

"But you," we observed, feeling the question a delicate one, "why have you never married? By your own confession you are twenty-eight."

The woman laughed and blushed. "The right man never came, señor, and I was in no hurry. I was quite happy as I was. Five men in this town asked me to marry them. I did not care for any of them. 'Will you love my donkeys?' I said to each. Not one of them said Yes; so I said No to all But now I have said Yes at last. And there he goes," she added.

A tall strong man with a plain but amiable and honest face crossed the road, and catching sight of the donkey-woman sent her a beaming nod and went on his way.

"You have chosen well, Loretta. He will make you a good husband."

"I think so," returned the woman, and evidently her heart was in the matter. "When I asked Lorenzo if he would love my donkeys, he said: Yes, a dozen if I had them. So I took him to the stables, and called Caro, and it came and put its nose into his hand just as it had done to me that very first evening at Poblet. 'You're the man for me,' I said: and that was our betrothal."

"And suppose Caro had turned his back upon him?" we inquired. Loretta blushed.

"Señor, I should have been angry with Caro: and I should have had compassion upon Lorenzo. But Caro had too much sense, and knew Lorenzo was to be its master. He is a carpenter, señor, and has a good trade. There is your carriage already waiting."

ON OUR WAY TO POBLET.

"Ah, Loretta, you should have told us this story before. We should not have refused your donkeys. It would be an honour to ride the wise and gentle Caro."

"Another time, señor. You will be coming again, then you shall have Caro, though twenty others fought for him. No one comes to Poblet once without coming a second time. You will see."

As Loretta had said, the carriage was waiting. The carriage, save the mark! If we had regretted the donkeys before seeing it, what did we do now? It was nothing but a country cart covered with a white tarpaulin, and a door behind about a foot square, through which we had to scramble to find ourselves buried in the interior. The whole concern was only fit for a museum of antiquities, like the Tarragona victoria. But the thing was done, and we had to make the best of it.

Passing through the streets, we came upon more men pressing out the grapes. It was a much larger affair than that of Lerida, and the juice poured out in a rich red stream. Four strong men were at work.

We stopped the cart, struggled out of what Francisco called the cat-hole, and watched the process. It was a case of mutual interest. The men had their heads bound round with handkerchiefs. The thoroughfare was the end of the town, wide and cleanly. Altogether this was an improvement upon the Lerida wine-press, and when these men offered us of the juice in a clean goblet, we did not refuse them. This attention to strangers was evidently a peace-offering; a token of goodwill; and the loving-cup was cool, refreshing and delicious. Such must have been the true nectar of the gods.

"Almost equal to Laffitte," said H. C. "I don't know that I ever tasted anything more poet-inspiring. Let

us drink to the health and happiness of the fair Loretta. Lorenzo is a lucky man."

With some genuine tobacco and a few cigars such as they had never seen or heard of, the men thought they had made an excellent exchange. We left them as happy as the gods on Olympus.

Soon after this we found ourselves in the open country. The roads were of the roughest: hard and dry, now all stones, now all ruts: some of the ruts a foot deep, into which the cart would sink to an angle of forty-five degrees. There were no springs to the cart; never had been any. It was stiff and unyielding, and evidently dated from the stone age. We did not even attempt to keep our seats, but flew about like ninepins.

"The Laffitte will be churned into butter," groaned H. C. spasmodically, feeling a general internal dislocation. "Butter-wine. I wonder what it will be like. A new discovery, perhaps."

But the luncheon-basket was in comparative repose. How Francisco managed we never knew; habit is second nature; he neither lost his seat nor let go the basket. Never in roughest seas had we been so tossed about. The next day we were black and blue, and for a week after felt as though we had been beaten with rods.

At last after what seemed an interminable drive, but was really only some three miles, we turned from the main road and the common—evidently the scene of Loretta's donkey adventure—into a narrow, shabby avenue of trees. At the end appeared the outer gateway of the monastery, where we were too thankful to dispense with the cart and its driver.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE RUINS OF POBLET.

A dream-world—Ruins—Chapel of St. George—Archways and Gothic windows—Atmosphere of the Middle Ages—Convent doorway—Summons but no response—Door opens at last—Comfortable looking woman—Ready invention—Confusion worse confounded—True version—Francisco painfully direct—Guardian gets worst of it—Picturesque decay—Gothic cloisters—Visions of beauty—Rare wilderness—King Martin the Humble—Bacchanalian days—When the monks quaffed Malvoisie—Simple grandeur of the church—Philip Duke of Wharton—Cistercian monastery—History of Poblet the monk—Monastery becomes celebrated—Tombs of the kings of Aragon—Guardian sceptical—Paradise or wilderness—Monks all-powerful—Escorial of Aragon—The great traveller—Changing for the worse—Upholding the kingly power—Time rolls on—Downfall—Attacked and destroyed—Infuriated mob—Fictitious treasures—Fiendish act—Massacre—Ruined monastery—Blood-red sunset—Superstition—End of 1835.

ONCE within the gateway we were in a dream-world; a world of the past; a world of ruins, but ruins rich and rare.

From the outer gateway a long avenue of trees and buildings led to the monastery. Far down you looked upon a second gateway with a wonderful view of receding arches and outlines. Between the two gateways on the left were the workshops of the artisans of the days gone by, now closed and desolate. Just before reaching the second gateway, on the right, we found the small fifteenth-century chapel of St. George, with the original stone altar and groined and vaulted roof. On the left within the gateway was an

ancient hospital and chapel, both crumbling into picturesque decay: and on higher ground, the palace of the bishops, where they lived and ruled in the days of their glory.

Exquisite outlines of crumbling archways and Gothic windows surrounded us. Over all was a wonderful tone of age, soft and mellow. Towers and steeples rose in clear outlines against the sky, outlines still perfect and substantial. But the outer buildings, which had been palatial dwellings, were mere empty shells overgrown with weeds, given over to the bats and the owls. A wonderful bit of moulding or fragment of an archway, Roman or Gothic as might happen, showed the beauty and magnificence of what had once been, and would still exist but for the barbarities of man. Some of the outer walls might have defied a millennium of years. It was a dead world of surpassing beauty and refinement: a series of crumbling arches and moss-grown fragments of gigantic walls. We had it all to ourselves; the perfect repose was unbroken; no restless forms and loud voices intruded; no jarring element broke the spell of the centuries. We were in the very atmosphere of the Middle Ages. In days gone by the monastery must have been of regal splendour, as it was unlimited in power.

At last we reached the convent doorway and a bell went echoing through the silence. No one responded, and we began to fear that perhaps the custodian had gone off like our night porter in Lerida, taking the keys with him. A second summons produced echoing footsteps, and the door was opened by a comfortable looking woman, who was neither a ruin nor a fragment nor specially antique.

"Excuse me for keeping you waiting," she said. "I am not the guardian, only his humble wife. In fact he calls me his chattel. I object to the term. We did not expect any one here to-day, and he has just gone out to do a little commission."

But we discovered that this was a stretch of the imagination. In reality the old man, seized with a fit of laziness, was only then dressing. He appeared on the scene almost at once, somewhat to his spouse's confusion. But she made the best of it, and patting her capacious apron and stiffening her neck, walked off with a proud step and a jaunty air to her special quarters.

"We have had no one here for a fortnight," said the guardian. "I began to think we might advertise ourselves as closed for the winter season, like the seaside casinos. Quite worn out with doing nothing, I thought I might as well spend the morning in bed for a change. Of course just as an umbrella brings sunshine, so my staying in bed brought visitors."

"But your wife said that you had gone out to do a commission," cried Francisco, with all a boy's direct statement of the truth.

"Did she indeed now," replied the old guardian calmly. "That was over-zeal on her part; done with a good motive, but still wrong. I shall have to chastise her."

"How shall you do it?" asked Francisco. "Beat her?"

"We don't beat women, young señor," replied the guardian severely. "My chastisement takes the form of admonition."

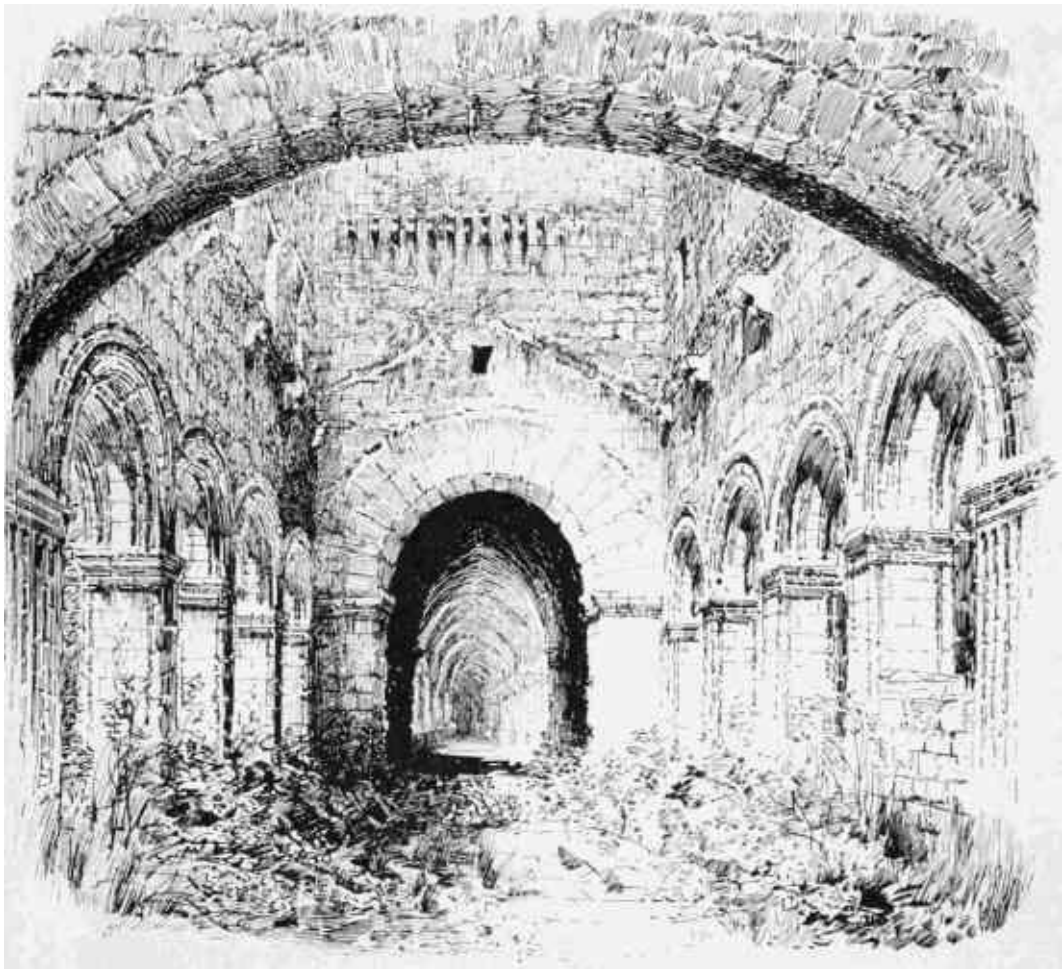
"When I wanted punishing, my father used to beat me with a cane," returned Francisco. "I don't think admonition would have done me any good at all. I don't suppose it will do your wife any good. On the very next occasion she'll tell another white lie. Much better give her a caning and have done with it."

"Did your father ever cane his wife?" asked the old man drily.

"She would have been much more likely to cane him," returned Francisco emphatically. "Does your wife beat you?"

The old man felt he was getting the worst of it; was being driven into a corner by this enfant terrible; and took refuge in silence.

This interesting conversation took place just inside the doorway, where we found ourselves lost in the beauty of the scene. A court with round arches on either side resting on pillars with small capitals. Above them the walls were in their rough, rude state, full of picturesque decay, but here as in many parts of the interior much had been restored. Nevertheless, so much of the original remains that the restoration does not offend. It has been well done. Before us, at the end of the short entrance-court was a large and splendid archway, and beyond we had a distant view of the Gothic cloisters.



ENTRANCE TO CLOISTERS: POBLET.

The interior was so immense, the passages were so intricate, we could never have found our way without the custodian. Nothing could be lovelier than the half-ruined cloisters. The large exquisite windows were of rich pointed work, seven bays on each side, pillars and tracery either almost all gone, or partly restored. In one corner of the quadrangle was a hexagon glorieta enclosing the fountain that in days gone by supplied monks and bishops with water. Weeds and shrubs and stunted trees grew about it; a rare wilderness. Above rose the outlines of battlemented walls; of ruined pointed windows, lovely in decay; of crumbling stairways, rich mouldings and pointed roofs. The cloister passages opened to enormous rooms. On the east side was the chapter-house, supported by four exquisite pillars, from which sprang the groining of the roof; the doors and windows were specially graceful and refined; the floor was paved with monumental stones of the dead-and-gone abbots, many of the inscriptions effaced by time.

Near this was the large refectory with pillars and pointed vault. Up the staircase, which still remains,

we passed to the palace del Rey Martin; King Martin the Humble as he was called; and large and baronial in days gone by the palace must have been, its very aspect transporting one to feudal times. Below the palace were enormous vaults where the wine was once stored: great vats and channels, and a whole series of processes to which the wine was subjected. Those must have been bacchanalian days, and supplies never failed. All the rooms—the Chocolateria, where the abbots took their chocolate, the Novitiate, of enormous dimensions, the Library, the room of the Archives, the room that contained the rich monastery treasure, another that had nothing but rare MSS., some of which are scattered but many more destroyed—all these rooms seemed countless, and each had its special charm and atmosphere.

It was impossible to enter the refectory with its vaulted roof lost in the semi-obscurity which reigned, without conjuring up a vision of monks and abbots who in past centuries feasted here and quaffed each other in draughts of rich Malvoisie. In the palace del Rey Martin, we imagined all the regal pomp and splendour in which the king delighted. In the wine vaults we beheld the wine running in deep red streams, traced it to the refectory table, and noticed the rapidity with which it disappeared before the worthy abbots. In the vaults it passed through every stage, from the crushing of the grape to the final storing in barrels.

On one side of the cloisters was the partly restored church, high and wide, with a magnificent nave of seven fine bays, so slightly pointed as to be almost Romanesque. We were lost in wonder at the size of the building, its simple grandeur, even as a partial ruin. Open to it from the north side is the great sacristy, saddest room of all. For here we find a solitary tombstone on which is inscribed the name of Philip Duke of Wharton, who came over to the monastery, a lonely exile, and died at the age of thirty-two, without friend or servant to soothe his last moments, knowing little or nothing of the language of the monks who surrounded him. Most melancholy of stories.

In the church, on each side of the high altar were remains of once splendid tombs. They are now defaced, and the effigies have altogether disappeared. Here was once the tomb of Jayme el Conquistador, which we had looked upon that very morning with our amiable sacristan on the left of the Coro in Tarragona cathedral. Its ancient resting-place in the great monastery church is now an empty space.

The aisle behind the high altar contains five chapels, and behind these outside the church lies the cemetery of the monks, a beautiful and ideal spot with long rows of round arches one beyond another, so that you seem to be looking into vistas of countless pillars. Above the arches and pillars are walls of amazing thickness, with windows and projections, all ending in moss-grown, crumbling outlines. Below, small mounds and tombstones mark the resting-place of the dead. Here they sleep forgotten; no sign or sound penetrates from the outer world, and those who visit them are comparatively few.

The whole monastery is nothing but an accumulation of crumbling walls still strong and majestic, of church and cloister, of palace and palatial courts, of refined Gothic windows with broken tracery, of ancient stairways and flying arches. Over all was the exquisite tone of age.

It was originally a Cistercian monastery, dating from the middle of the twelfth century. Its abbots were bishops, who lived in great pomp and almost unlimited wealth and power. "Which they used according to their lights," said our custodian; "sometimes wisely, sometimes wastefully. I should like to have been cellarman to the old abbots in the days when the vaults were full of wine and a few quarts a day more or less were never missed."

"Is there any legend connected with its origin?"

"Indeed, yes, señor. When was there ever an old institution in Spain without its legend? As the señor

knows and sees, the monastery dates back to the year 1150. But long before that, in the days of the Moors, a hermit named Poblet took refuge here that he might pray in peace. An emir found him one day, captured him and put him into prison. Angels came three times over and broke his chains. The emir grew frightened, repented, set the hermit at liberty, and gave him all the surrounding territory in this fertile valley of La Conca de Barbera. In 1140 the body of Poblet was miraculously discovered. It was nothing but a heap of bones, and so I suppose they were labelled, or how could they have identified them—but I don't know about that. The bones of course became sacred and had to be duly honoured. So Ramon Berenguer IV. built the convent of El Santo; the bones were interred under the high altar, and the king gave enormous grants to the clergy. The place grew celebrated above all others in Catalonia; it become a sort of Escorial, and here the kings of Aragon for a long time were buried."

"And the bones of the hermit—where are they?"

"Nobody knows," replied the guardian, shaking his head wisely. "They may pretend, but nobody knows. Is it likely? And what does it matter for a few human bones? Just as if they could work miracles or do any good. A poor old hermit, with all our weaknesses upon him!"

"Then you don't believe the legend?"

"Not I, señor. I believe much more in the jovial times the old abbots indulged in. At least we have a capacious refectory and inexhaustible wine vaults to prove what fine banquets they had in the Middle Ages. We have come down to poor times, in my opinion. The world in general seems very much what this monastery is—a patched-up ruin."

"If the world were only half as beautiful," said H. C., "we should spend our years in a dream."

"It would not be my sort of dream, señor," returned the old guardian drily. "I have been here for twenty years, and confess I would give all the ruins in the world for a good and gay back street in Madrid or Barcelona. To you, señor, who probably come from the great cities of the world and mix with gay crowds—well, I dare say you think this paradise. To me it is a dreary wilderness."

It was not to be expected that the old custodian would appreciate all the beauty and refinement, all the ecclesiastical, regal and historical atmosphere that surrounded it with a special halo. And perhaps twenty years' contemplation of the outlines would have made many a better man long for a change of scene. Custom stales and familiarity breeds contempt. But not twice twenty years could have made us unmindful of the singular beauty of Poblet.

MONKS' BURIAL GROUND: POBLET.

We had got round to the lovely cloisters again, and Francisco declared it was time to display the luncheon-basket. So there, in the silent cloisters, surrounded by all the tone and atmosphere and outlines of the early centuries, we spread our feast.

The old guardian was equal to the occasion and produced table and chairs. Those he placed in the quadrangle, under the blue skies. The lovely glorieta was on one side of us; on the other, by looking through the broken tracery down the silent passage, we caught the outlines of the great church; a wonderful view and vision.

Our host, better than his orders, had packed up two bottles of wine, and H. C. in the largeness of his heart presented the guardian with a brimming bumper of choice Laffitte, that nearly half emptied one of the bottles. Like a true courtier, he bowed and drank to our health and happiness, and when the wine had disappeared, patted his fine rotundity with affectionate appreciation.

"Señor," he cried, "this is better than anything I ever tasted. A bottle of this a day would reconcile me even to the solitude of Poblet. Surely the old abbots never had anything equal to this—even when they drank Malvoisie. It has set the blood coursing through my veins as I have not felt it for twenty years. For such as this some people would sell their souls."

The excellent fumes must have penetrated even to the guardian's private rooms, for at this moment, with an air of great innocence, the wife appeared upon the scene. Francisco declared she had heard the cork drawn and arrived for a share of good things. With true gallantry, but a sinking at the heart for the diminishing Laffitte, H. C. poured out another bumper and offered it to the lady, whose proportions matched her husband's. It was accepted with a reverence, and if appreciation were a reward for the empty bottle, H. C. had his to the full. Then the comfortable pair retired to the cloister passage, where the

guardian had his own table and chairs and display of photographs, and there they sat down and contemplated life under Laffitte influence. Judging by their expressions they were in the enjoyment of infinite beatitudes.

RUINS OF POBLET.

It was a calm, quiet, delicious hour, far removed from the world. For the moment we were back in the centuries, picturing scenes of the past. Days when Poblet rose from small things to great; when its abbots became mitred; when they could ask nothing of the kings of Aragon that was not immediately granted. The kings delighted to honour them. Wealth flowed into the treasury; power multiplied. At last they ruled as despots. The kings built them a palace within the hallowed precincts. Side by side dwelt humble monk and crowned head. Humble? Where the regal will clashed with the monkish, the king went on his knees and gave way. It became the Escorial of Aragon, a thousand times more beautiful and perfect than that other Escorial reposing on the hill-slopes of Castile. Here it pleased the kings to be buried, and close to the monks' cemetery reposed the dead who had held the sceptre. No special tomb or carved sarcophagus marked their rank. In death all should be equal. Or if there were tombs decorated with gold and enriched with sculpture, they were placed in the great church. What more indeed could they want than these wonderful arcades reposing under the pure skies of heaven.

But the monks grew stiff-necked and proud; waxed rich and powerful, grasping and avaricious. Since kings bowed down to them, they were the excellent of the earth. Humility fled away. They were paving the road to their own downfall. At last they would only admit those of highest rank into their community. Of course they upheld the kingly power whilst trying to make it subservient to themselves. The throne was their stronghold: Republicanism meant confiscation. The revolutions of the world have attacked the

religious orders before all else with hatred and violence.

Time rolled on. Ferdinand VII. died, and in the War of Succession they became politically unpopular. Socially they had long been disliked for their oppression of the peasantry; but strong and rich, the feeling had to be cherished in silence. The monks were Carlists to the backbone.

At length, in the year, 1835, Poblet was attacked by the peasantry, who came down like a furious avalanche upon the building that for its beauty should have been held twice sacred.

By this time, too, a change for the better had come over the monks. Much wealth and influence had gone from them; they were quietly doing good. But the traditions of the past are slow in dying. The mob believed the monastery was a vast treasure-house; untold riches lay buried in fictitious graves, hidden in tombs and hollow pillars. It was now that the men of Reus proved capable of fiendish acts of excitement. The monks were driven from their refuge and many were cruelly massacred. The pent-up fury of ages was let loose like a torrent. No power could stay the thirst for so-called revenge. It was their hour; a short-lived hour; but how much was accomplished! The monastery was ruined. The mob, infuriated at finding no heaps of gold, no hidden treasures, tore down pillars, defaced monuments, desecrated the church, left the beautiful traceried windows in ruins, and then set fire to the building.

The sun had risen on as fair and peaceful a scene as earth could show; it set on the saddest of devastations. Yet, thanks to the solid masonry, much escaped. For the monks it was lamentation and mourning and woe. It has been recorded that the sun went down in a deep-red ball, reflection of the blood of the martyred monks. But the people are superstitious. We have seen it ourselves sink over the Spanish plains also a fiery-red ball, intense and glowing, when the world was at peace. Yet, it must have been a special sunset on that memorable day of 1835, for it is recorded that long after the sun disappeared clouds shot to and fro in the sky like swords of flame. But this, too, we have gazed upon in days of peace and quietness.

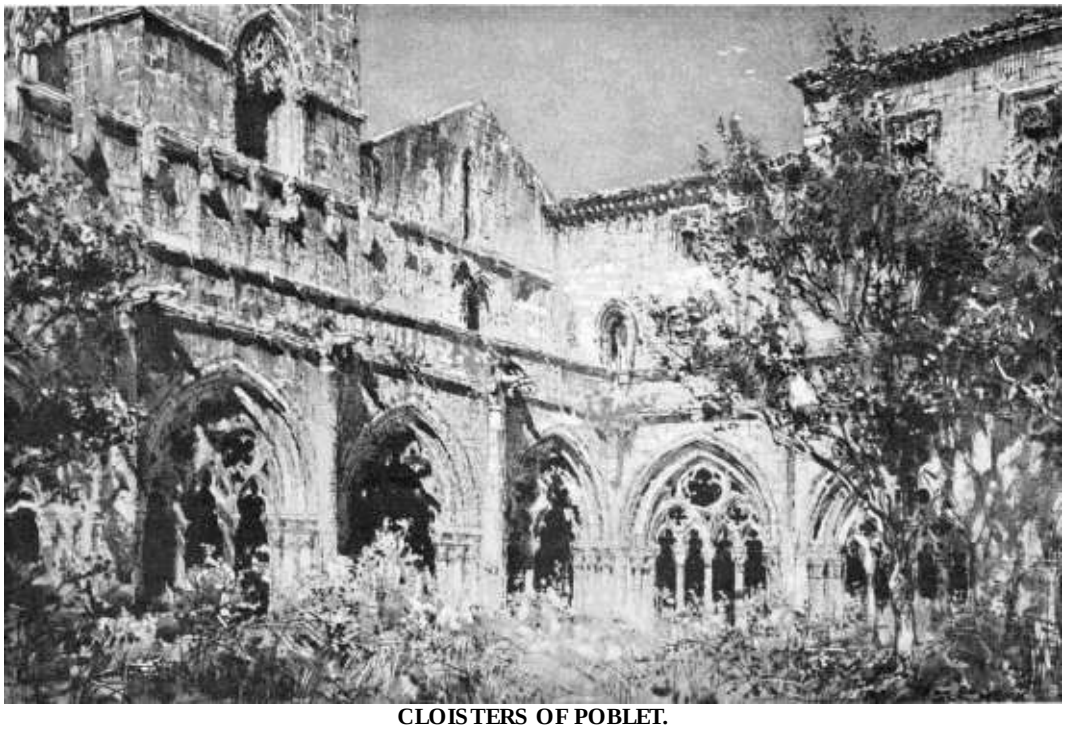
CHAPTER XXIX.

LORENZO.

Day visions—All passes away—End of the feast—Francisco gathers up the fragments—Ghosts of the past—Outside the monastery—Oasis in a desert—After the vintage—Francisco gleans—Guilty conscience—Custom of country—Dessert—Primitive watering-place—Off to the fair—Groans and lamentations—Sagacious animal—Cause of sorrows—Rage and anger—Donkey listens and understands—A hard life—Washing a luxury—Charity bestowed—Deserted settlement—Quaint interior—Back to the monastery—Invidious comparisons—A promise—Good-bye to Poblet—Troubled sea again—Suffering driver—Atonement for sins—Earns paradise—Wine-pressers again—Rich stores—Good samaritans—Quaint old town—Bygone prosperity—Lorenzo—Marriage made in heaven—House inspected—On the bridge—At the station—Kindly offer—Glorious sunset—Loretta's good-bye—"What shall it be?"—Flying moments—As the train rolls off.

ALL this passed before us as a vision whilst we sat in those wonderful cloisters. We imagined the scene in all its ancient glory. We saw monks pacing to and fro in their picturesque Benedictine dress. The proud step of a mitred abbot echoed as it passed onwards in pomp and ceremony and disappeared up the staircase to the palace of King Martin the Humble: far more humble and conciliating than the uncrowned

kings of Poblet. We heard the monotone of the Miserere ascending through the dim aisles of the great church, the monks bowing their heads in mock humility. We saw Martin the Humble take the throne-seat to the right of the altar as though he felt himself least of all the assembled. And we saw that solitary death-bed of Wharton the self-banished whilst yet in his youth, and marvelled what silent, secret sorrow had bid him flee the world. Everything had passed away; kings and monks, wealth and power, and to-day the silence of death reigns in Poblet.



CLOISTERS OF POBLET.

When our modest feast was over, and H. C. had tried for the third time to extract a final drop of Laffitte from the second empty bottle, we left Francisco to gather up the fragments, and without the custodian—who was now taking a refreshing sleep after his appreciated bumper—wandered about the ruins as we would, realising all their beauty and influence, all the true spirit of the past that overshadowed them. Every room and court was filled with a crowd of cowled monks and mitred abbots. Up crumbling and picturesque' stairways we saw a shadowy procession ascending; the ghostly face of Martin the Humble looked down upon us from the exquisite windows of his palace, shorn of nearly all their tracery.

It was difficult to leave it all, but we wanted to see a little of the outer world. Francisco committed his basket to the guardian—now wide awake—and in a few moments we found ourselves outside the great entrance, facing the crumbling dependencies. Beyond the gateway we turned to the left and passed up the valley. It was broad and far-reaching, and the monastery looked in the centre of a great undulating plain. From the slopes of a vineyard on which we sat awhile, it rose like an oasis in a desert, its picturesque outlines clearly marked against the blue sky. An irregular, half-ruined wall enclosed the vast precincts. In the far distance were chains of hills. There was no trace anywhere of a monks' garden, but in their despotic days they probably had all their wants supplied in the shape of tithes. The landscape was bare of trees, yet the rich soil yields abundantly the fruits of the earth. In the vineyard nearly all the grapes had been plucked; but Francisco wandering to and fro found a few bunches and plucked them. Warmed by the sunshine they were luscious and full of sweet flavour. We felt almost guilty of eating stolen fruit.

"Are we not very much like boys robbing an orchard, Francisco?"

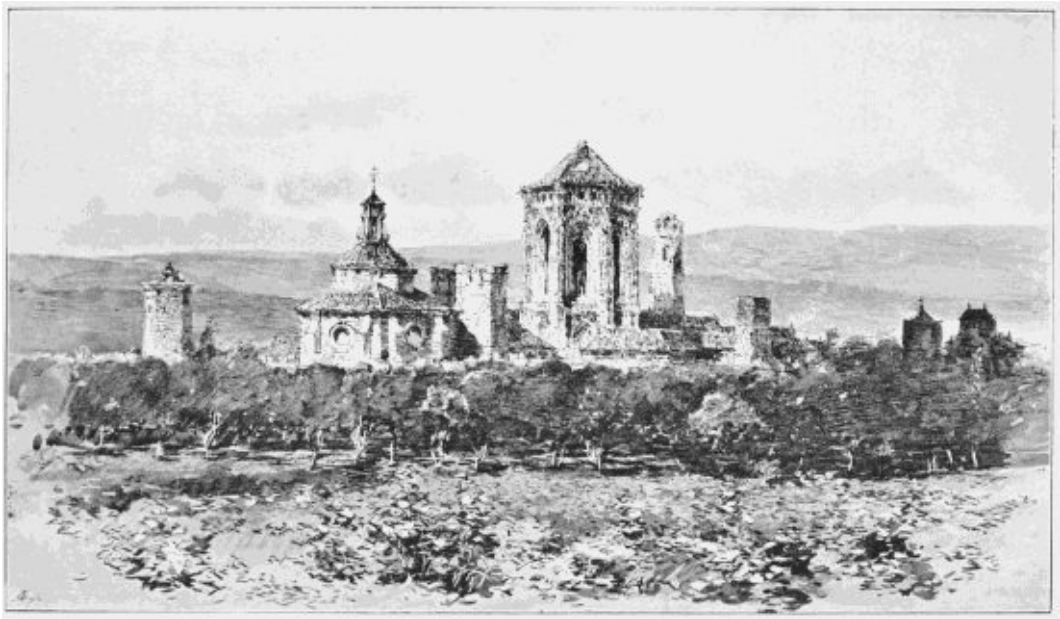
"No," laughed the boy, "though I'm afraid if we were that would not stop me. What we are doing is quite allowed. It is the custom of the country. Anyone may take the overlooked bunches in a vineyard just as

they may glean in a corn-field. If I had not picked these, they would have withered. The owner, if he came in at this moment, would wish us good appetite and digestion and probably hunt for another bunch or two to present to us. Not a bad dessert after luncheon."

Higher up the road we found a settlement, where in summer people flock to the hotels to drink the waters and enjoy the country. To-day all was closed for the approaching winter. A few years ago the place had no existence beyond a few scattered farm cottages with latticed windows and thatched roofs, surrounded by small orchards. These still exist. The place looked light and primitive, as though life might here pass very pleasantly. It was too far from the monastery to intrude upon its solitude, and the whole settlement seemed deserted. Not a creature crossed our path until on the down-hill road on the other side we came upon an old woman struggling with an obstinate donkey. Approaching, we heard groans and lamentations: now the animal was threatened, now implored. He was equally indifferent to both appeals. Looking very sagacious, his ears working to and fro and his feet well planted upon the ground, as wide apart as possible, he would not budge an inch.

The old woman would certainly never see eighty again. She was wrinkled and shrivelled and looked a black object; her old face so tanned by the sun that she might almost pass for a woman of colour. Her black hair was wiry and untidy, and a rusty black gown hung about her in scanty folds. We stopped to inquire the cause of her sorrows.

"Ah, señor, this wretched animal will one day be the death of me. But no, you wretched brute," suddenly turning to rage and anger, "I will be the death of you. I know that one of these days I shall take a knife to its throat, and there will be an end of it. And there will be an end of me, for I have no other living. All I can do is to go about gathering sticks and begging halfpence from charity. But this miserable donkey is worse than a pig. A pig will go the wrong way, but my donkey won't go at all. Sometimes for an hour together he doesn't move an inch. I have known him keep me a whole afternoon within ten yards of the same spot. I have beaten him till I'm black and blue"—the old woman had evidently got mixed here—"until my arm has ached for a week and I hadn't a breath left in my body; and all he does is to kick up his hind legs and bray in mockery."



POBLET, FROM THE VINEYARD.

All this time the donkey was switching its tail as though it understood every word that was said and thoroughly appreciated its bad character. And apparently to emphasise the matter, at this moment it suddenly gave a bray so loud, long and à propos that we were convulsed with laughter, in which the old

woman joined. The donkey looked round with a ridiculously comical expression upon its face that was evidently put on.

"Ah, señor, it is all very well to laugh, but I am a poor wretched old woman," said this sable donkey-owner. "I never know one day whether I shall not starve the next. My husband died forty years ago. I have one daughter, but she left me. For twenty years I have not heard of her. Mine has been a hard life."

"How often do you wash?" we could not help asking out of curiosity.

"Wash, señor?" opening very wide eyes. "I am too poor to buy soap, and water is scarce. And I am so thin that if I washed, my bones would come through the skin. Señor, if you will bestow your charity upon me I promise not to waste it upon soap."

We were near the river. The clear, sparkling water flowed on its way to the sea. Near the bank were whispering reeds and rushes. We felt sorely tempted to lift the old woman with our stick—she could not have weighed more than a good fat turkey—drop her into the stream, and for once make her acquainted with the luxury of a cold bath. But we reflected that she probably had no change of things, and her death might lie at our door. So we bestowed upon her the charity she asked for and left her. Prayers for our happiness went on until we were out of sight, and up to that point the perverse animal had not moved.

We now turned back on our road, and appeared to have the whole country-side to ourselves. As we passed the thatched cottages every one of them was closed and silent. No blue curling smoke ascended from any of the chimneys.

"Is it always so quiet and deserted?" we asked Francisco, who had knocked at three or four cottages without success. He was anxious to show us the interiors, which he said were curious: great chimney-corners with the chain hanging down to hold the pot-au-feu that was always going: peat fires that threw their incense upon the air: enormous Spanish settles on which half a dozen people could sit easily and keep warm on winter evenings: wonderful old clocks that ticked in the corner. We saw all this in the fifth cottage. Its inmates had flown, but forgotten to lock the door. The fire was out, and the great iron pot swinging from the chain was cold.

"No, señor. I have often been here and never found everybody away like this. One might fancy them all dead and buried, but they are at the fair, I suppose. The harvest is all in, fruits are all gathered; there is nothing left on the trees"—with a melancholy glance at the orchards—"and for the moment they have nothing to do. So they have gone in a body to amuse themselves and spend their money."

We got back in time to the monastery, and again the woman opened to us.

"This time he really has gone off for a commission," she laughed, as the colour mounted to her face at the remembrance of her late transgression. "I really had to make an excuse before," she added. "It might have been one of the directors, and I should not like them to think the old man was getting past his work."

The guardian came up behind us at the moment, a bottle of wine in his hand for their evening meal.

"Ah, señor," shaking his head mournfully, "it is not equal to yours. Until the flavour and recollection of yours have passed away, I shall find this but poor stuff. I must make believe very hard, and fancy myself living in the days of the old monks, drinking Malvoisie."

We promised to send him a bottle of Laffitte the very next time any one came over from the hotel, and he declared the anticipation would add five years to his life. We took a last look at the lovely cloisters, and

then with a heavy heart turned our backs upon Poblet. Seldom had any visit so charmed us. Never had we seen such ruins; such marvellous outlines and perspectives; never felt more in a world of the past; never so completely realised the bygone life of the monks: all their splendour and power, wealth and luxury, to which the kingly presence gave additional lustre. They were days of pomp and ceremony and despotism; but the surrounding atmosphere of refinement and beauty must have had a softening and religious effect that perhaps kept them from excesses of tyranny and self-indulgence: vices that might have made their name a byword to succeeding ages.

Our primitive conveyance was in waiting. Once more we found ourselves tossed upon a troubled sea where no waters were. We passed through the plains in which the magic donkey had appeared to Loretta, now empty and gathering tone and depth as the day declined.

Our driver was not communicative. Apparently all his energy had spent itself at the station in claiming our patronage. He now even seemed unhappy, and in spite of the abominable drive he was giving us, we ventured to ask him if the world went well with him.

"I can't complain of the world, señor," he returned, in melancholy tones. "I have food enough to eat, but alas cannot eat it. I suffer from frightful toothache. At the last fair I mounted the dentist's waggon; boom went the drum, crash went the trumpets—I thought my head was off. He had pulled out the only sound tooth I possessed. 'Let me try again,' said he. 'No, thank you,' I answered. 'You have given me enough for one day, and if you expect any other payment than my sound tooth you will be disappointed.' Unfortunately, señor, he *had* more than the tooth, for he had carried away a bit of my jaw with it. Since then I have no comfort in life. The next time the fair comes round I suppose he will have to try again. The priests tell us a good deal about the torments of purgatory, but they can be nothing compared with this toothache. After this I shall expect to go straight to paradise when I die—priest or no priest."

The silence of the unhappy driver was more than accounted for, and we gave him our sympathy.

"Thank you, señor," he answered. "It is very good of you. But," comically, "my tooth still aches."

We had reached the outskirts of the little town and dismissed the conveyance, of which we had had more than enough. It rattled through the streets and we followed at leisure. The men at the wine-press were just giving up work. Inside, in large rooms, they showed us wide tubs full of rich red juice, waiting to be made into wine.

"You have enough here for the whole neighbourhood," we remarked.

"It is all ordered, señor, and as much again if we can get it. We are famed for our wine. May we offer you a really good specimen bottle, just to show you its excellence? It would be a most friendly act on your part—and a little return for your splendid tobacco and cigars."

"By all means," cried H. C., before we had time to accept or decline. "We are all as thirsty as fishes—and as hungry as hunters."

"It is last year's wine," said our cellarman, returning with a bottle and drawing the cork. Then he hospitably filled tumblers and with a broad smile upon his face waited our approval. We gave it without reserve. It was excellent.

"And as pure as when it was still in the grape," said the man. "Take my word for it, señor, you won't get such stuff as this in Madrid or Barcelona. It goes through your veins and exhilarates you, and if you drank three bottles of it you might feel lively, but you would have no headache."

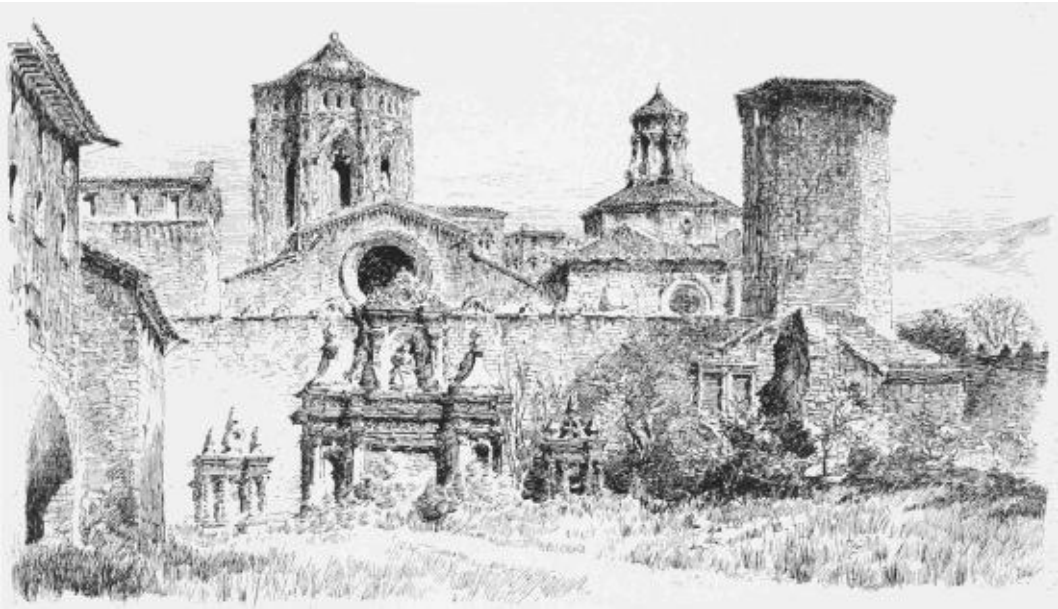
We owed the wine-presser a debt of gratitude. His invigorating draught was doubly welcome after our late experience, and we went our way feeling there are many good Samaritans in the world.

We had some time to wait in the little town, and made closer acquaintance with its curious old streets: the overhanging eaves and waterspouts that stretched out like grinning gargoyles; the massive walls of many of the houses, and casements with rich mouldings that suggested a bygone day of wealth and prosperity.

In our wandering we came upon the man Loretta had pointed out as her future husband. He was almost in the very same spot we had last seen him, and his head was now adorned with a white cap. We stopped him.

"So, Lorenzo, you are going to espouse Loretta."

"With your permission, señor. I hope you are not going to forbid the marriage?"



RUINS OF POBLET.

"Quite the contrary. We offer you our congratulations, and think you a very lucky man, Loretta a fortunate woman."

"Thank you, señor," replied Lorenzo, laughing—he seemed made up of good-humour. "I think it promises well. You see we are neither of us children, but old enough to know our own mind. Loretta is twenty-eight, I am thirty-two, and as far as I can make out, we have neither of us cared for anybody before. Our marriage was evidently made in heaven. And then Mr. Caro settled the matter by accepting me as his master."

"And you love the donkeys, we hear?"

"I love all animals in general," returned Lorenzo, "and of course Loretta's donkeys in particular. If she could have an additional attraction in my eyes, it is her power over the dumb birds and beasts, which proves the goodness of her soul. I cannot approach her in that respect."

"And when are you going to be married?"

"Has Loretta not told you that?" said Lorenzo, the colour flushing to his face. "We are to be married to-morrow morning. Everything is ready. Loretta has her wedding-gown, and our rooms have been furnished

some time. They are over my workshop, so that I shall be able to hear her singing whilst I am planing and sawing below. Here it is, señor; will you not come in and look at it? I think," a bright light in his eyes, "we shall be very happy. After we are married to-morrow we go to Barcelona for a few days, where I have a prosperous brother who will take us in. Then we come back and settle down to our life. Yes, I think we shall be as happy as the day's long, señor."

We had no doubt about it. Happiness in this world is for such as these. Excellent natures, saved from the great cares and responsibilities of those in a higher walk; working for their daily bread, which is abundantly supplied; contented with their lot; knowing nothing of impossible wants and wishes; loving and shedding abroad their love. It is such natures as Loretta's and Lorenzo's that are the truly happy. Their very names harmonized. But they are rare amongst their own class; one might almost say rare in any class; the exception, not the rule. It was good to come upon two such people, and to find that a kindly fate had reserved them for each other.

We left Lorenzo in his workshop, a strong, manly fellow, using his plane with a skilful hand, and went our way.

Right and left Loretta was nowhere to be seen. Perhaps she was arranging things at home for the last time. The last evening in the old nest. She might be contemplating her wedding-gown, lost in thoughts of the past or dreams of the future. But she was not one to look on the sad side of life, or to spend time in melancholy introspection.

From the picturesque old bridge beneath which the river ran its swift course, the scene was wild, picturesque and lonely. With all our loitering we had an hour to wait for the train. At the station we found Loretta, apparently anything but low-spirited. She was accompanied by a well-dressed woman who looked as if the world went well with her. Loretta saw us and came forward.

"Señor, you are back from Poblet. Tell me, did I exaggerate its beauty? Will you not come again, if only to ride the gentle Caro?"

"Poblet far surpasses anything we expected from it, Loretta. But why did you not tell us that to-morrow was your wedding-day?"

"I did not like to," she returned, laughing. "And yet I am too old to be silly about it. How did you find out, señor? Surely the old guardian at Poblet knows nothing? I have not been near him for three weeks."

"We met Lorenzo, and he told us. Loretta, you are a happy couple. He will make a famous husband, and you a model wife."

"Ah, señor, I shall try my best; but sometimes I think I am not good enough for him. He is such a brave man, my Lorenzo."

"Why are you here, Loretta?"

"To escort Lorenzo's cousin, señor, who came over to see me to-day for the last time before my wedding. She lives in Tarragona. We have been great friends, and she has long hoped Lorenzo and I would marry."

She carried in her hand, this cousin of Lorenzo's, a glass water-bottle of rare and exquisite shape. We could not help admiring it in strong terms.

"It is not to be bought anywhere," she said. "It is old and they do not make them now. Señor, it would give me real pleasure if you would accept it. I do not mean in Spanish fashion, but truly and sincerely."

This was very evident, but the gift had to be refused, however kindly offered.

We walked up and down the platform in face of one of the loveliest sunsets ever seen. In spite of its gorgeous colouring there was a great calmness and repose about it. Wonderful tones from crimson to pale opal spread half over the sky. Every moment they changed from beauty to beauty, and lighted up the outlines of the town into something rare and ethereal. We have already said there is no country like Spain for the splendour of its sunsets, and especially in their afterglow. They are truly amongst her glories.

At last the train came up and shut out the heavenly vision. Loretta approached and said good-bye.

"You will come again, señor, and ride Caro. I shall be married then, and both Lorenzo and I will escort you to Poblet. It will delight us to serve you. We will make it a holiday. But do not tarry. Caro is not as young as he was, though I believe donkeys live for ever."

"Now, Loretta," we said, whilst the train waited, "it is our ambition to send you a wedding-gift. What shall it be?"

"Señor, you are too good. What have I done? I could never——"

"Loretta, the train may start at any moment."

"Señor, I have all I could wish for, excepting——" She hesitated.

"Loretta, the moments are flying."

"Señor, it is too great an object. I have not the courage——"

"Loretta, the guard signals. Another moment and you are lost."

"Well, then, señor, I long for a clock for our mantelpiece. We had made up our minds to wait, and——"

"Loretta, the clock is yours. It shall be pure white. A golden Cupid shall strike the bells. In his other hand he shall hold a glass which turns with the hours, running golden sands. Fare you well, Loretta."

The engine whistled. The carriage moved. Our last look was a vision of a comely woman standing on the platform, a tall erect figure gazing after the train, the reflection of the afterglow lighting up her face to something beyond mere earthly beauty.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GARDEN OF SPAIN.

Charms of Tarragona—Dream of the past—Quasimodo comes not—Of another world—Host's offer—Francisco inconsolable—A mixed sorrow—No more holidays—List of grievances—Fair scene—Luxuriance of the South—Hospitalet—Pilgrims of the Middle Ages—Amposta—Centre of lost centuries—Historical past—Here worked St. Paul—Our fellow-travellers—Undertones—Enter old priest—Draws conclusions—Love's young dream—Impressions and appearances—Not always a priest—Fool's paradise—Youth and age—Awaking to realities—Driven out of paradise—Was it a judgment?—Calmness returns—Judging in mercy—Nameless grave—"Writ in water"—Withdrawing from the world—Entering the church—Busy life—Romances of the Confessional—"To Eve in Paradise"—Tortosa—Garden of Spain—Vinaroz—Wise mermen—Cradle of history and romance—Gibraltar of the West—A race apart—Benicarlo—Flourishing vineyards—"If the English only knew"—Eve recognises priest—"I am that charming daughter"—Lovely cousin engaged—Count Pedro de la Torre—Mutual recognitions—Congratulations—Breaking news to H. C.—Despair—"To Adam in Hades"—Gallant priest—Saved from temptation.

WITH sorrowful hearts we turned our backs one morning upon Tarragona.

Though bound for Valencia, Tarragona the delightful possessed charms Valencia could never rival. Not again should we meet with such a cathedral, such cloisters, or even so original and enthusiastic a sacristan. We were leaving all that wonderful historical atmosphere that made this exceptional place a Dream of the Past, and great was our regret.

We had stood near the tomb of the Scipios and fancied ourselves back in the days when our own era was dawning. Before us the ever-changing yet changeless sea looked just as it must have looked when they, loving it, decided to sleep within sound of its waters. In a last moonlight visit to the cathedral we had waited and listened in hope of hearing Quasimodo's footsteps, seeing his quaint and curious form approaching.

He never came. No unseen talisman whispered to him our desire. Perhaps it was as well. A second experience is never the same as the first. The subtle charm of the new and the strange, the unexpected, the unprepared, is no longer there. Quasimodo now dwelt in our minds as a being spiritual, intangible, of another world. That he belonged to the highest order in this, is certain. The influence of his music haunted us, haunts us still. In waking and sleeping dreams we live over and over again the weird charm and experience of that wonderful night; see the moonbeams falling in shafts of clear-cut light across pillars and aisles and arches; hear and feel the touch, as of a passing breath, of the ghostly visitants from Shadow-land. All the marvellous music steals into our soul. There can be but one Quasimodo in the world. We doubt if there was ever another at any time endowed with his marvellous faculty. It was pain and grief to feel that we should see and hear him no more.

Our very host added slightly to our reluctant leaving by declaring that if we would only stay another week he would charge us half-price for everything: nay, we should settle our own terms. Francisco was inconsolable, but perhaps a little selfishness was mixed with his sorrow.

"No more holidays," he cried. "No more excursions to Poblet; no escape from French lessons. And yet, señor, there are other places besides Poblet, and every one of them would have delighted you. Think of all the lost luncheons; all the first-class compartments that will now be empty. There are lovely excursions, too, by sea." The boy's catalogue of grievances was as long as Don Giovanni's list of transgressions.

But time the inexorable refused to stand still, and when the final hour struck, the relentless omnibus carried us away.

Francisco accompanied us to the station, having an idea that without his help we should inevitably go wrong. He was a witness to the abominably rude station-master, who in this respect has not his equal in Spain, according to our experience. Finally we moved off.

At the moment we felt a distinct mental wrench. Tarragona was indeed over. To our right was the harbour with its little crowd of fishing-boats; out on the sea lovely white-winged feluccas glided to and fro. The whole journey was one of extreme beauty. Very soon we had the sea on our left, and often the train skirted the very waves as they rolled over their golden sands. The coast was broken and diversified, now rising to hills and cliffs, now falling to a level with the shore. Where we passed inland the country was rich and fruitful, showing more and more the luxuriance of the South.

Many of the towns had historical interests or remains to make them remarkable. At Hospitalet we found ourselves on the site of a House of Refuge for pilgrims from Zaragoza who in the Middle Ages were wont to cross the mountains in caravans after visiting the scene of some miraculous pillar or image. Near this we skirted a fishing village, where the train was almost washed by the sea that, blue and flashing, stretched far and wide. The little fleet was moving out of the small harbour as we passed, each followed by its shadow upon the water. Picturesque Amposta was the centre and atmosphere of the lost centuries. It existed long before the Romans, who, on taking it, made it one of their chief stations. Here came Hercules, and after him St. Paul, who did much work and ordained a bishop to carry on his labours. Later came the Moors, when it reached the height of its glory. In 809 Louis le Débonnaire, son of Charlemagne, besieged it, was repulsed, returned in 811 and conquered. The Moors quickly retook it, but the disorganised inhabitants had become nothing better than pirates. So in 1143 the Templars came down upon them, and inspired by the late victory at Almeria, aided by the Italians, conquered in their turn: only to be turned out again the following year by the inevitable Moors.

Everywhere the eye rested upon a lovely scene of river, sea and land, intensely blue sky and brilliant sunshine. In our carriage we had a very interesting bride and bridegroom. She seemed to worship the very ground he trod upon, and both were evidently in paradise. At the same time he accepted the worship rather too much as his due—gracefully and graciously, but still distinctly his right. They were in the mood to admire lovely scenery, and undertones of delight were frequent.

Presently an old priest entered the carriage, sat himself down beside us, and they quickly fell under his eye. He looked on with a smile of amusement at the silent unmistakable worship. We thought he drew his conclusions as one who observes a scene in which he has no part or lot.

"Love's young dream," he said to us under cover of the rattle of the train. "My experience tells me it is only a dream, varying in length according to the constancy of the dreamers. You think I have no right to give an opinion? Then, señor, I should tell you that, like the world in general, you judge by appearances and judge too hastily. That is the difference between impressions and appearances. Of first appearances beware; of first impressions be assured. They have never failed me."

We agreed with the old priest, but made no remark.

"You think I have no business to judge of these matters?" he continued with a smile; "and you are mistaken. I was not always a priest clad in black robe and beaver hat, separated from the world by the barrier of the Church. In early life I took up law, pleaded, and generally won my cause. Then I pleaded my own cause with a beautiful woman, won her and married her. I, too, dwelt in my fool's paradise; thought the world all sunshine, the hours all golden. I was young and in those days handsome. Never can I reconcile the ugly, grey-headed man one becomes in age, with the charm and elegance of one's youth. But time has no mercy. However, the fact remains that in those days I was young and handsome."

The old priest was handsome still; but again we were silent.

"Then one fine morning I awoke to realities," he went on. "The angel with the flaming sword had come

and driven me out of my paradise. Yet I had not transgressed. It was the woman, whom I fondly hoped heaven had given me as a life-long companion. She was beautiful; there was an indescribable charm about her; but she was frivolous and inconstant. She left me one day with one whom I had thought my friend. He was rich and free to roam. I heard of them in other countries: wandering to and fro like spirits ill at ease.

"Finally they went to Rome. Was it a judgment upon the wife who had proved faithless to her husband, the man who had betrayed his friend? Both took the fever at the same time and died within a week of each other. They were buried side by side in a small cemetery near to the Eternal City. Some years after I went to Rome. I had lived down my life's tragedy and could gaze upon their graves with calmness. As I did so, and realised the certainty of retribution, I prayed that I might judge in mercy. They had blighted my life, but looking on those nameless graves I felt for the first time that I could forgive. Yes, the graves were nameless, for no stone had been placed over them. This I did. By way of inscription I merely recorded the initials on each: and the text 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.'

"That very same day I was wandering about the English cemetery in Rome, and came upon the text 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water;' doubtless the expression of one whose life had been a failure or disappointment. 'My friend,' I thought, 'you are not to be pitied half so much as those whose names are writ in Sin.'

"It was about this time that I determined to enter the Church. Since that terrible blow I had grown to hate the world, withdrew more and more from society. I had no near ties on earth. Again and again I thanked heaven that no child had been born to me. As soon as I had made the resolution I put it in force, and cannot say that I ever regretted it. Gradually all morbidness left me. I lead a busy life; I delight in society; people consider me a very jovial old priest. But I never lift a finger to promote a marriage; I never solemnise one without a sigh and a wonder as to what will be the end of it. And let me tell you a secret. I never hear in the confessional that love is on the wane between husband and wife, without pouring out upon them the sternest vials of my wrath, threatening them with all the terrors of purgatory if so much as a breath of inconstancy of mind or thought is whispered. Oh, if I were not pledged to silence, what Romances of the Confessional could I not tell you!"

We had listened without interruption. Sitting side by side it was easy to talk without being overheard. The train clattered and beat and throbbed on its way. The happy pair were at the other end of the carriage. H. C., who sat opposite to us, instead of giving his undivided attention to the scenery, was composing a sonnet to the fair lady, which he headed, "To Eve in Paradise"—a questionable compliment. Tortosa, with its narrow streets and gloomy palaces, its strong walls, ancient castle and bridge of boats, all visible from the train, had passed away. One lovely view gave place to another.

"It is indeed a rich country through which we are travelling," said the priest, "the very Garden of Spain, which appears to me to find its culminating point round about Valencia. Our whole progress is marked by historical footsteps. I never visit Tortosa without thinking of St. Paul, and a little of his amazing energy seems to fall upon me. He becomes a real presence to me. An influence he must and will be in all places and in all ages. Then comes Vinaroz with its crumbling walls—one of the loveliest spots in the whole province. I always think its people are like mermen, neither one thing nor the other. They fish the sea and plough the land by turns. Both occupations yield them good fruit, so perhaps they are wise. The fish are abundant, the lampreys excellent. It was here the Duc de Vendôme died from a surfeit of fish, of which he was passionately fond. But for this, Philip V. would probably never have entered upon his long and eventful reign. Look at those white-winged boats gliding upon the blue waters! Where is there another sea like the Mediterranean? It is the very cradle of history and romance; scene of half the mighty events of the

world. Were I an idle man I would spend my life upon its surface."

"What is that distant object?" indicating an enormous perpendicular rock some five miles away, that stood a picturesque, castle-crowned islet, round which the sea was breaking in faint white lines.

"We call it Gibraltar of the West," replied the priest. "An interesting place to visit, and larger than you would imagine, with its 3000 inhabitants. They are curious people: in some things almost a race apart. It is neither an island nor yet part of the mainland. You cannot gain entrance by water, though surrounded by the sea. The only passage to it is a narrow strip of sand reaching to the shore. It was here that Pope Benedict XIII. took refuge after the Council of Constance had pronounced against him. And here comes Benicarlo with its old walls," he continued, as the train drew up at the small station. "The ancient town is worth a visit. Its people, poor and wretched, might be flourishing and well-to-do, for the neighbourhood is wonderfully productive. The vineyards are amongst the best in Spain; the luscious wines are sent to Bordeaux to mix with inferior clarets, which find their way to the English market. Ah! the English little know what adulterated articles are sold in England that the French would never look at."

At this moment our fair Eve, who for the last few minutes had come out of paradise, looked attentively at the priest, hesitated a moment, then spoke.

"From the singular likeness," she said, "I think you must be related to the Duke de Nevada in Madrid? Forgive me if I am mistaken."

"Señora," replied the old priest with a polite bow, "Juan de Nevada is my elder and much-loved brother, though we seldom meet—for Madrid is the one place I never visit. I am gratified that you see in me the least resemblance to that truly noble and great man."

"Have you never heard him speak of the Señor de Costello?" continued the lady.

"Without doubt," returned the priest. "They are neighbours in Madrid. I have heard him mention a very charming daughter, and also very charming cousin who lives in Gerona."

"I am that charming daughter," laughed the fair Eve; "but the term applies much more correctly to my lovely cousin. Her beauty has created a furore in Madrid. We are great friends, and she stays with us part of every year. She has just become engaged to your brother's eldest son, and therefore some day will be Duchess de Nevada—though I trust the day is far distant. You have doubtless heard of the engagement?"

"Indeed, yes," returned the priest. "Only last week I wrote my nephew a long letter congratulating him upon his good fortune. But how comes it, madame, if I may be so indiscreet, that my fair travelling companion should not herself eventually have become Madame de Nevada?"

"For the excellent reason that sits opposite to me," quickly replied this lovely Eve, laughing and blushing in the most bewitching manner. Upon which she introduced her husband to the priest as Count Pedro de la Torre.

The name explained what had puzzled us for some time. We were haunted by a feeling of having met this young man in a previous state of existence, but now discovered that we had really met him in Toledo. He was amongst the group who had sat that first night of our arrival at the other end of the table, smoking and drinking wine and coffee. He it was who had come forward to speak to the man in the sheepskin, and then handed him a bumper of wine. He had left the very next day, and we had seen less of him than of the others.

We recalled the circumstance to his memory.

"I recognised you at once," he said, "but thought you had forgotten me. That man in the sheepskin was my father's head huntsman, a privileged being who was born and brought up on the estate, gave us our first lessons in sport and looks upon us as his own children. My father's place—my own, I fear, before long—is near Toledo. If you ever visit it again we should be delighted to show you hospitality. We live with my father when not in Madrid. He is old, in failing health, and could not bear the idea of my leaving home. On my part I was too glad to remain in the dear old nest."

"And we see that we have to offer you our congratulations," bowing as in duty bound to his lovely partner.

De la Torre laughed. "You make me your debtor," he replied. "But however profound your congratulations, they can never equal those I offer to myself. I am indeed far more blest than I merit."

"Wait until I show you my true character," laughed madame, "take the reins of government into my own hands, and leave you with no will of your own—a henpecked husband. At present I tender you a velvet hand; presently it may turn into——"

"If it changed into a cloven foot," he interrupted gallantly, "I should still say it was perfect."

"Ah, you are in paradise," cried the old priest with a sigh; "in paradise. Try to remain there. Do not summon the angel with the flaming sword. Be ever true and tender to each other. Talk not of cloven feet. Let it ever be the velvet hand, the glance of love, the gentle accents of forbearance. You have every good gift that heaven and earth can give you. Be worthy of your fate."

We interpreted as gently as possible to H. C. the sad news of the engagement of the beauty of Gerona, the lovely Señorita de Costello. It was a great shock. He turned deathly pale and remained for a time staring at vacancy. Then with a profound sigh he tore up his half-finished sonnet, "To Eve in Paradise," and began another self-dedicated, "To Adam in Hades." He keeps it in a sacred drawer, enshrined in lavender and pot-pourri.

"All this rencontre is very à propos," said the old priest. "Again the world is smaller than it seems. And we are getting on. Here is Castellon de la Plana already, with its fine fruit and flower gardens and picturesque peasants. Alas, we see less costume everywhere than of old. The taste of the world is not improving."

Very pleasantly passed the remainder of the journey, through a country beautiful and fertile. Everywhere we saw traces of vineyards and cultivated lands. Here and there oxen were ploughing. Often we saw them thrashing out the rice. Many an old and picturesque well stood out surrounded by trellis-work covered with vine-leaves. But the vines were not festooned after the picturesque manner of North Italy, where you walk under the trellis and pluck the grapes that hang in rich clusters. Here the vines are trained on sticks or grow like currant bushes, and as in Germany, lose their beauty.

A single field will produce at the same time fruit-trees, almond or olive, corn and grapes, all mingling their beauty and perfume. We passed a multitude of orange and lemon groves with all their deep, rich, sheeny verdure. Nuts and olives, almonds and carobs abounded. Many a palm-tree added its Oriental grace to the landscape. The whole country seemed to revel in sunshine and blue skies. At Saguntum, that town of the ancients, the heights were crowned by walls, fortresses and castles, imperishable outlines grey with the lapse of centuries.

As it chanced we were all bound for Valencia. Our interesting bride and bridegroom were staying there one night and continuing their journey the next day. The priest was to spend a week there.

"I have a proposal to make," said de la Torre, as we neared the capital. "We telegraphed for rooms and ordered dinner in our sitting-room. You three gentlemen must join us. It will only be adding three covers—an effort the chef will be equal to."

"Let me add my persuasions," added Countess de la Torre graciously and gracefully. "Remember we have been united a whole week and are quite an old married couple. You would give us great pleasure."

But this, strongly supported by de Nevada the priest, we felt bound to decline. It would have been cruel to intrude so long upon a tête-à-tête which just now must form the delight of their existence.

"I must be obdurate," said the priest. "In the first place your delicate paradise food—which no doubt consists of crystallised fruits and butterflies' wings—would be wasted upon three hungry travellers dwelling without the enchanted gates. But let us compromise. We are all staying at the same hotel. We three unappropriated blessings will dine together, and after that we will come and take our coffee and Chartreuse with you, remaining exactly one hour by the clock: not a moment more."

So it was settled.

Soon after this all the church towers and steeples of Valencia came into view. Across a stretch of country, we saw the blue sea sparkling in the evening sunshine. In the air, above the rush of the train, there was a sound of ringing bells.

"It must be a gala day," said Madame de la Torre, listening for a moment to the swelling clamour.

"It is for your arrival, madame," returned the priest gallantly. "They wish to do you honour."

Our fair Eve laughed. "Monsieur de Nevada," she cried, "you were never intended for a priest. It was a mistaken vocation. You ought to have married, and your wife would have been your idol."

Under the circumstances it was a somewhat unfortunate speech. The drama in de Nevada's life had taken place long before her birth. She evidently knew nothing of the story. But the priest had outlived his sorrow, and was of an age to sit loosely to the things of earth. A momentary shadow passed over his face, gone as soon as seen.

"Madame," he laughed in clear tones, "if I were forty years younger and Mademoiselle de Costello were not Madame de la Torre, she would almost induce me to forget my vows. As it is, all is well. I am saved from temptation. Valencia at last! Never did journey pass so quickly and pleasantly."

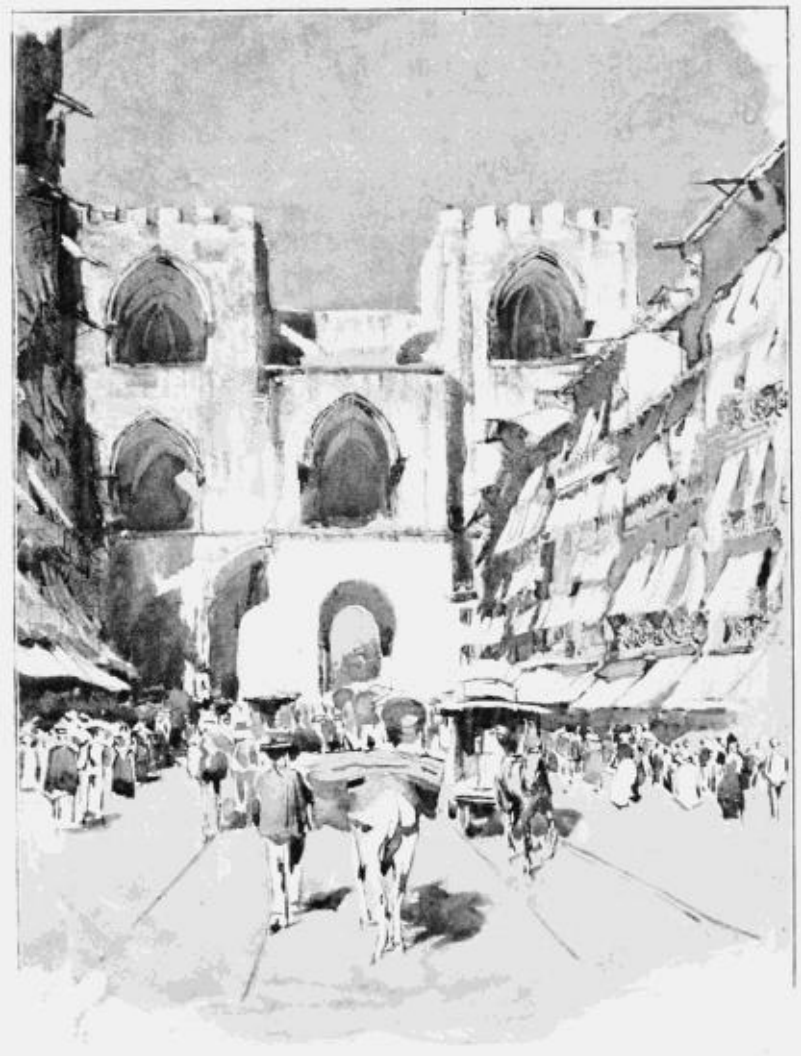
A well-appointed omnibus was in waiting. We filled it comfortably, and in a few moments found ourselves at the Hotel España. The manager settled us in admirable quarters, and having some time to spare before dinner we went out to survey the fair city by evening light.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

First impressions—Devoted to pleasure—Peace-loving—Climate makes gay and lively—New element—Few traces of the past—Old palaces—Steals into the affections—City of the Cid—Ecclesiastical attractions—Archbishopric—University—Homer must nod sometimes—Comparative repose—De Nevada carries us off—Admirable host—Conversational—Grave and gay—Mercy, not sacrifice—Library—At Puzol—Exacting a promise—The hour sounds—Count Pedro appears—Fragrant coffee—Served by magic—Specially prepared temptation—Perverting facts—Land flowing with milk and honey—Inquiring mind—Mighty man of valour—Cid likened to Cromwell—Retribution—Ibn Jehaf the murderer—Reign of terror—The faithful Ximena—Cid's death-blow—Priest turns schoolmaster—"Beware!"—Earthly paradise—Land of consolation—System of irrigation—Famous council—Poetical Granada—No appeal—Apostles' Gateway—Earth's fascinations—Picturesque peasants—Pretty women—Countess Pedro shakes her head—Leave-taking—Next morning—Quiet activity—Market day—Splendours of flower-market—Lonja de Seda—Vanishing dream—Audiencia—San Salvador—Antiquity yields to comfort—Convent of San Domingo—Miserere—Impressive ceremony—City of Flowers—Without the walls—Famous river—Change of scene.

VALENCIA proved more modern and bustling than we had imagined. After the quiet streets of Tarragona it appeared to us the most crowded place we had ever been in; tramcars ran to and fro; there was much noise and excitement. Half the crowd was composed of the student class. All seemed in an uproar, but it was only their natural tone and manner. The Valencians, especially the lower classes, are devoted to pleasure; the work of the day over, they live for enjoyment.



ANCIENT GATEWAY: VALENCIA.

Involuntarily we were reminded of our old days in the Quartier Latin; but there, excitement often meant revolutionary mischief. The Valencians are peace-loving, and their climate forces them to be gay and lively. Though passionate and hasty, like a violent tornado the rage soon passes. This evening, in spite of

much movement, a constant buzzing of voices, an excitement that filled the air, everything was in order. Laughter and chatter abounded, far more so than we had found in most Spanish towns. Until now the character of the Spaniard on ordinary occasions had seemed rather given to silence: in Valencia we came upon a new element, approaching the French or Italian.

The city has lost much of its ancient interest. As late as 1871, the wonderful old walls, massive and battlemented, were pulled down to find work for the poor. Twelve gates admitted to the interior: and what the walls were may be judged by the few gates that remain.

Within the city the air is close and relaxing, the skies are brilliant, the sun intensely hot, the streets narrow and densely packed with houses. This was designed to keep out the heat, but also keeps out air and light. The houses in the side-streets are tall, massive and sombre-looking, and here some of the wonderful old palaces remain. The principal thoroughfares are commonplace; one has, as it were, to seek out the beauties. It is in its exceptional features that Valencia shines, and gradually steals into your affections. Not, however, as Tarragona the favoured. The pure air, stately repose and dignified charm of that Dream of the Past is very opposed to the noisy unrest and crowded thoroughfares, constant going to and fro, and confined atmosphere of this ancient city of the Cid.

Nevertheless it has its ecclesiastical attractions in the way of churches: some with interesting towers, though few with fine interiors. It is an archbishopric, therefore has a cathedral. It possesses a university, and most of the crowd we saw evidently thought that the bow cannot always be strung and Homer must sometimes nod. They fill the cafés and theatres, go mad with excitement in the bull-ring when the Sunday performance is given, and occasionally have a free fight amongst themselves; when some of them get locked up by way of warning to the many rather than as a punishment to the few. After such an outbreak, never very desperate, peace reigns for a time: peace that is never seriously broken.

A STREET IN VALENCIA.

It was a relief that first evening to return to the comparative repose of the hotel. When the hour for dinner had struck, de Nevada in clerical garments came to our rooms and carried us off to his own sitting-room where dinner was served. We seemed fated to fall in with the clerical element in Spain, and as yet had certainly not regretted it. De Nevada was evidently well known and highly considered by the hotel people, who exerted their best efforts in his favour, which also fell to our portion. His conversation was a mixture of grave and gay, with much wit and humour. He had outlived his sorrows, it may be, yet their influence remained. Every now and then a chance word or allusion seemed to vibrate some long-silent chord in heart or memory. A momentary shadow would pass over his face as a small cloud passing over the sun for an instant overshadows the earth. It was over in a flash, and he would at once be his genial, jovial self, full of strong spirits toned down by excellent breeding and the thought of what was due to his cloth. Probably we saw more of his inner character than if we had dined with the de la Torres. We had him to ourselves, his undivided attention, and amongst various topics he gave us a great insight into many of the by-ways of the Spanish Church. "It is a subject in which I am deeply interested," he said. "I am writing a book thereon, and devoting considerable space to the vexed argument of the Inquisition. It has never been properly handled, and I am not afraid to say that it was a serious blot, if not on the characters, at least on the judgment of Ferdinand and Isabella. Souls were never yet gained nor religions established by cruelty and torture. It is partly for that reason that I am here. The Archbishop has a magnificent library, and I want a week of reference amongst the books. We are as brothers, and I should take up my quarters in the palace, only that I like to be independent. To-day he is at Puzol, where he has a country house. When here I generally dine with him; was to have done so to-morrow night; but it is an informal engagement, and if you will promise to meet me again at the same hour, we will dine here together. And now the hour sounds for the de la Torres. Let us be punctual, as we must be so in leaving. Did you ever see so

charming, so devoted a couple? Who would not dwell in such a fools' paradise?"

He sent our maître-d'hotel to inquire if it would be agreeable to them to receive us, and in response Count Pedro appeared upon the scene. All our rooms adjoined.

"We are more than ready," he cried. "I am quite sure," laughing, "that you think we spend all our time sitting hand-in-hand and looking into each other's eyes. My dear Nevada, we are quite a sober couple, with a great deal of matter-of-fact sense about us."

"Which only proves how difficult it is for people to know themselves," laughed the priest. "But now for the sunshine of madame's presence."

In their sitting-room all banqueting signs had been removed. On the table steamed fragrant coffee, with a decanter of Chartreuse, side by side with cigars and cigarettes. The most fastidious woman in Spain will never object to smoking in her presence. Countess de la Torre had exchanged her becoming travelling-dress for a still more becoming evening costume. She looked dazzlingly beautiful, her pure white neck and arms decorated with jewels. As she rose and received us with a high-bred, bewitching grace, we thought we had seldom seen a fairer vision.

"Ah!" cried de Nevada, glancing at the table. "Your feast of orange blossoms and butterflies' wings was served by magic. In fact I am not aware that we are told Adam and Eve in Paradise ate anything. Life was eternal and needed no renewing."

"You forget," laughed Madame de la Torre. "They ate fruit, or how could Eve have tempted Adam with an apple?"

"I have always held that as a specially prepared temptation," said the priest. "They had never eaten anything until then, and the danger lay in the new experience."

"Monsieur de Nevada, you must go to school again," laughed Countess Pedro. "Or you are wilfully perverting facts to suit your purpose. I shall have to inform against you to the Archbishop. We are going to see him to-morrow morning. Are you not in his jurisdiction?"

"No, madame," replied the priest. "I hold no preferment in the province of Valencia. This Garden of Spain blooms not for my pleasure. Yet, how can I say so, for who enjoys it more when fate brings me here?"

"It is indeed the Garden of Spain," said de la Torre. "I often wished we were as favoured in the neighbourhood of Toledo—though we have little to complain of."

"Valencia is a land flowing with milk and honey," said de Nevada. "You must not hope for two Canaans so near each other."

"Tell me," said Madame de la Torre, as she poured out coffee with a graceful hand, "why this town is called Valencia del Cid. I thought the Cid had only to do with Burgos. I fear I am exposing my ignorance."

"It would be difficult to know what the Cid had not to do with and where he did not go," returned de Nevada. "He was a mighty man of valour, according to his lights: also a great barbarian. In those days we might all have been the same. In my own mind, I have always likened him to the English Cromwell; and if Cromwell was in any way better than he, it is that he lived six centuries later. They were equally determined and unscrupulous. What a wonderful passage is that in the history of England! But the Cid had

much to do with Valencia. He came here in 1094, and after a siege of twenty months took the town. It is remarkable how retribution follows a man, as surely as shadow follows the substance. 'Be sure your sin will find you out.' Never was truer proverb What says Shakespeare?" continued the priest, turning to us:

"'Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
The fateful shadows that hang by us still.'

"I don't know that I quote correctly, and my English is barbarous," he laughed. "Never could I master that fine language; perhaps for the reason that I never dwelt long enough in your country. Few and short have my visits been. It was in 1095 that the Cid took Valencia. Ibn Jehaf the murderer was on the throne, having killed Yahya, whom Alonso VI. had placed there. This act brought the Cid down upon them. The first thing he did was to burn Jehaf alive on the great square that you will see to-morrow when you go to the Archbishop: act worthy of the tyrant. He ruled here for five years. His will was law; it was a small reign of terror. Then he died, and his faithful wife Ximena endeavoured to hold the reins. Those were not times when a woman could rule easily, and in 1101 the Moors brought hers to an end and banished her from the province. It is said that when the Cid captured Valencia he took his wife and daughter to a height to show them the richness of the country; and promised his favourite daughter that if she pleased him in her marriage that fair prospect from the boundaries of the Saguntum Hills on the north to the confines of the sea on the east should be her dowry: a promise never to be fulfilled. Within three years the daughter died unwedded; a death so violent that it is said to have struck a death-blow to the Cid, and to have brought home to him many of his perfidious acts. Certain it is that he was never the same man afterwards. Another two years brought his own life to a close. But, madame, you are beguiling me into a history, and turning the old priest into a schoolmaster."

Our fair hostess laughed.

"You make me your debtor," she replied. "I shall take greater interest in what I see to-morrow, and look at everything through the eyes of the past. Has the Archbishop any relics of the Cid?"

"Not only of the Cid, but of many other historical persons and events," said de Nevada. "You must especially notice the library with its fine collection of books. I may be there at the moment, and if so will promote myself to the honour of Librarian-in-chief to Countess Pedro de la Torre."

"Beware!" laughed madame. "Countess Pedro has a thirst for knowledge. Your office will be no sinecure."

"My labour of love will at least equal madame's diligence, though the climate is hardly favourable to very hard work," smiled the priest. "Even Nature conspires to indolence in the people. The ground brings forth abundantly, and almost unaided. The Moors thought it an earthly paradise—as it is. I am not sure but they considered it the scene of the first paradise. Heaven, they said, was suspended immediately above, and a portion of heaven had fallen to earth and formed Valencia. To the sick and sorrowing it is a land of consolation. In its balmy airs—far more healing than those of Italy—the former recover strength; in the brilliance of its sunshine, the blueness of its skies, the splendour of its flowers and vegetation, the troubled mind finds peace and repose."

"Its system of irrigation—to descend to the commonplace," laughed de la Torre—"is perfect. Does the council still sit in the Apostles' Gateway?"

"Indeed it does," replied the priest. "And far from being commonplace, the idea to me, surrounded by its halo of the past, is full of picturesque romance."

"What is that?" asked madame. "It is dangerous to make these remarks before an inquiring mind."

"The matter is simple," said de Nevada. "Valencia is the most perfectly irrigated province in Spain, not excepting Granada. Especially is that the case in the surrounding neighbourhood. You must have noticed narrow channels running through the fields as you passed in the train. The system presents infinite difficulties. Not one of the least is that all shall share alike in the fertilizing streams. In Granada a good deal is done by signals, and occasionally in the night-silence you may hear the silver bell sounding upon the air and carried from field to field: token that the dams are opened and the water flows. In Valencia they have nothing so poetical. The tribunal was instituted centuries ago by the Moors. It has been handed down from generation to generation and still continues. Being perfect, the system works well. Every Thursday morning seven judges sit in the great doorway of the cathedral, and hear all complaints relating to irrigation. These judges choose each other from the yeomen and irrigators of the neighbourhood. They pronounce sentence, and against that sentence there is no appeal. The judges are integrity itself. It is their motto, and it seems as impossible for them to go wrong as for a Freemason to betray the secrets of his craft. I think the system might with advantage be adopted by other tribunals."

"I should like to see and converse with these judges," said madame, "and decorate them with the order of the Golden Fleece. Surely they deserve it?"

"That order, I fear, is reserved for those of higher rank," replied the priest. "Yet I have often myself thought they should wear an order of Distinguished Merit: a sort of Cross of the Legion of Honour—after the French idea—open to all ranks and classes. But as you proceed on your journey to-morrow evening, you will not be here on a Thursday. The judges are indeed to be condoled with."

"I have slightly changed our plans," said Count Pedro, "and we leave the day after to-morrow by the early train. It will be less fatiguing for Isabel. We shall also see more of the country. I never tire of gazing upon the beauties of nature, and fortunately my wife is in sympathy with me. Seas, mountains, forests, vast territories, cultivated plains or sandy deserts, all alike fill me with a delight and rapture nothing else can equal. I hope to spend some of the first years of our married life in becoming intimate with the best points of many lands."

"You will find few more charming spots than Valencia," returned the priest. "Its rich plains never fail. No sooner has one harvest been gathered than another appears. Did you notice the peasants in the fields as we came along, sitting at work with their knees up to their ears? How picturesque they look walking down a road in their short white linen trousers and jackets and scarlet mantles, coloured handkerchiefs wound round the head like a turban, and blue scarves tied round the waist. I have watched them many a time. You will see nothing of this in the town itself."

"I don't quite like the type of face," objected de la Torre. "It is too African. The sun has grilled them to a colour that is almost mahogany. And they are superstitious and revengeful."

"But their imagination is lively and keeps them in almost constant good humour," returned the priest, "so they seldom think of revenge. How well they sing their *fiera*, how jovially they dance the *rondella*. It is quite a pleasure to look at this abandonment of happiness, this existence utterly free from care. Believe me, they have their virtues. And how pretty the women are! Few women in Spain equal those of Valencia. They are singularly graceful and their walk is perfect. Notice a congregation of women in church. You will hardly find elsewhere an assemblage so conspicuous for beauty of face and grace and nobility of form."

Countess Pedro shook her head. "Oh!" she cried, raising her clasped hands. "I shall have more and more to tell to the Archbishop. Monsieur de Nevada, you are not supposed to know that female beauty exists, and here you are describing it with an eloquence which comes from the heart."

RENAISSANCE TOWER: VALENCIA.

"With humble deference to your opinion, madame, I disagree with you," laughed the priest. "All things beautiful are to be appreciated; above everything else a beautiful woman, the noblest work of God. We worship the stars in the heavens, though we can never attain to them. Do you imagine that I could be in this room and remain insensible to such charms as few women possess?"

Our fair hostess blushed with pleasure. No woman is insensible to a compliment of which she can easily judge the sincerity. Every woman also likes to be praised before the husband to whom she is devoted. The age of de Nevada permitted him to be candid in expressing his admiration, whilst the in some sort family connection that would take place at the marriage referred to, had paved the way to an immediate and friendly intimacy.

In spite of the priest's emphatic determination to leave punctually, the hour had long struck when we reluctantly took our departure. Both de la Torre and his fair wife were charming, refined and intellectual, and the moments had passed all too quickly.

Next morning the crowded streets had thinned. Most of the people had disappeared, reserving themselves for the evening. Yet there was a constant, quiet activity going on, which gave the city a lively and prosperous air. It was market-day; the most picturesque market we had yet seen in Spain; thronged

with buyers and sellers, piled up with all the fruits and vegetables of the South. Figs, grapes and pomegranates abounded at very small prices. The market-place was full of colouring, in part due to the bright handkerchiefs and scarves worn by men and women.

All was as nothing compared with the splendour and perfume of the covered flower-market. For a few halfpence one carried away sufficient to decorate a palace. For ninepence one woman offered us a bouquet more than a yard round. We had never seen anything like it and wondered if it was meant to grace some foreign Lord Mayor's banquet. This sum was asked with some hesitation, seeing that we were strangers: she was prepared to take half the amount. The roses were far lovelier than those that grow in the gardens of Italy and find their way across the Channel. We gave a few halfpence for a large handful of tuberoses and pinks, and the woman was so charmed at the liberal payment that she presented us with a great bunch of sweet verbena. We possess some of the leaves now, and the scent—rare above all other scents—hangs round them still. Each morning we renewed our purchase. The flowers were always there. For them it was market-day all the year round.

The market-place was a charming three-cornered square; on one side a Renaissance church that for its style was really picturesque and formed an admirable background to the women and stalls. The interior, all gilt and glitter, set one's teeth on edge, but that did not alter the outward effect.

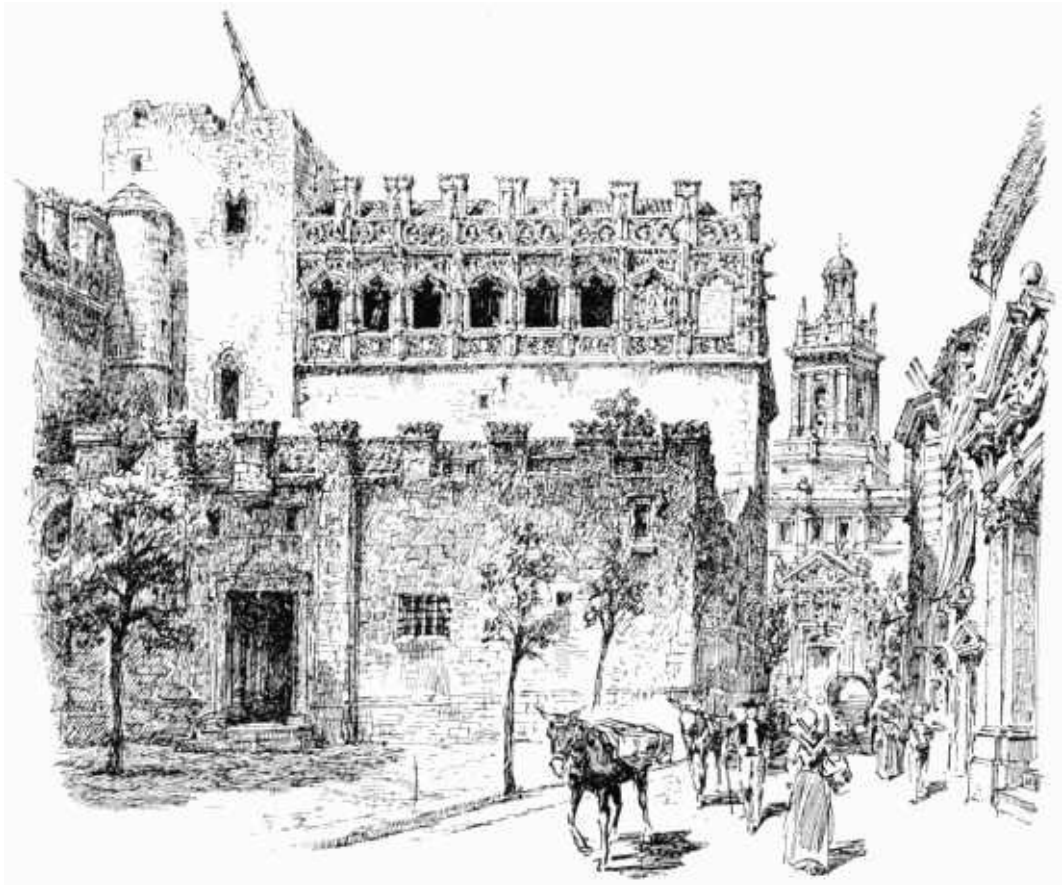
Opposite was a far lovelier building—the Lonja de Seda, or ancient Silk hall—of exquisitely beautiful and refined fifteenth-century Gothic.

The immense rooms were ornamented with fluted columns without capitals, that spread out like the leaves of a palm-tree and lost themselves in the roof. Behind it was an old garden, with wonderful architectural surroundings. A long stone staircase ended in a Gothic doorway of graceful outlines and deep rich mouldings. Windows filled with half-ruined tracery looked on to the garden with its trees and flowers. The upper part was an open Gothic arcade with rich ornamentations and medallions, above which rose a massive square tower with a round Norman turret.

This dream-building was vanishing under the hands of the restorer. The court was filled with workmen, and the exquisite tone of age, the rounded, crumbling outlines were beginning to disappear. We were just in time to see it at its best.

MARKET PLACE, VALENCIA.

From this we made our way to the cathedral, of which little need be said. After the architectural dreams of Catalonia, it was terribly unsatisfactory. The interior gave out no sense of grandeur, repose or devotion. On Sunday, during service, it gained a certain solemn impressiveness from the kneeling crowd, but that was all. Begun in the thirteenth century, and originally Gothic, few traces of the first building remain. Certain portions of the exterior are beautiful and striking; especially the magnificent north doorway—the Apostles' Gateway; deep and richly ornamented, though many of its statues have disappeared. It is here that the Tribunal of the Waters sits in judgment, to which we have heard de Nevada allude.



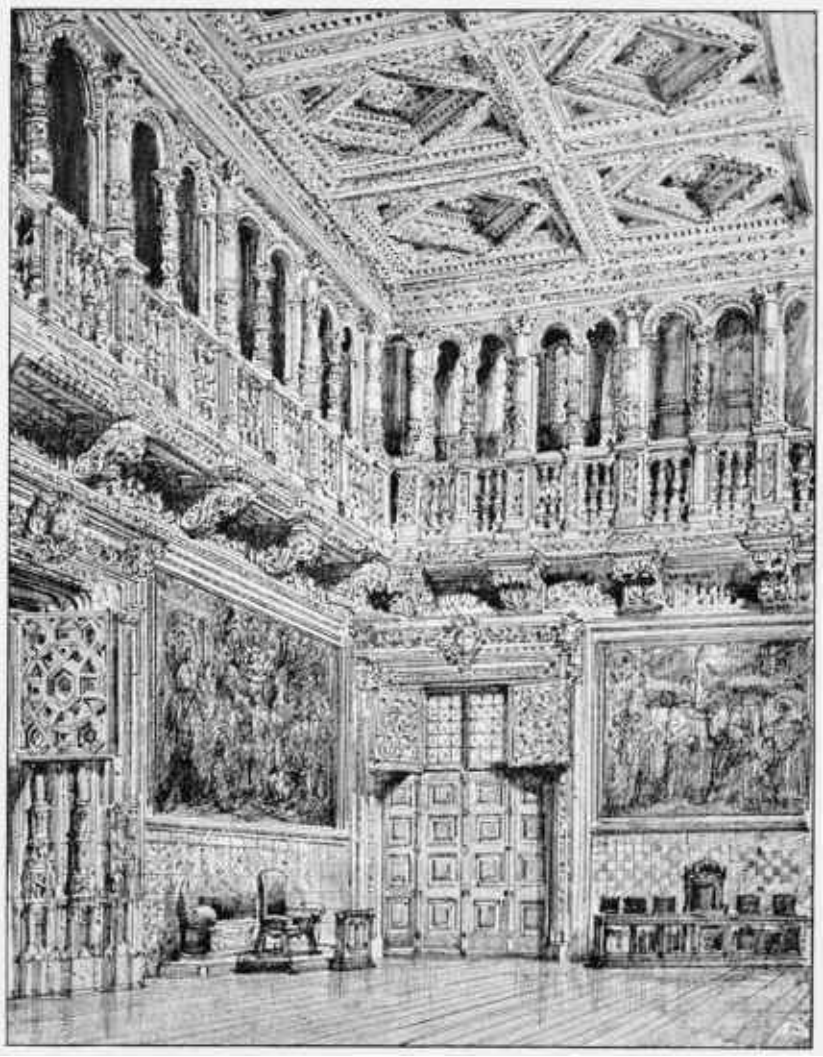
LONJA DE SEDA: VALENCIA.

Near the cathedral was the Audiencia, or Court of Justice, one of the most perfect buildings in Europe. Though the ground-floor has been divided into public offices, the elaborately carved and gilt ceilings remain, decorated with splendid honey-comb pendentives of the Moorish School. The first floor is given up to the matchless Salon de Cortes, where justice is administered; its walls covered with curious frescoes of the sixteenth century, chiefly portraits of the members of the Cortes assembled in session. The rich carving of the room is in native pine, and was finished in the sixteenth century, when art was still at its best. A narrow gallery runs round the room supported by slender columns. Below this are coats-of-arms and busts of the kings of Aragon, with appropriate historical incidents. The ceiling is also elaborately carved in lozenges encased in square panels. Not the smallest fragment of the room has been left undecorated, and its refined, subdued tone is lovely in the extreme. Here we found the sword and banner of Jayme el Conquistador, which the Valencians place amongst their chief treasures.

The churches are numerous, but not specially interesting. San Salvador possesses a rude expressive sculpture of the thirteenth century, a curious image, supposed to have been carved by Nicodemus, and said to have miraculously found its solitary way from Syria across the seas.

Not far from this is the Church, given to the Templars by James I. in 1238, when already a building of some antiquity. Here was the remarkable tower of Alibufat, on which the Cross was first displayed. But like the people of Zaragoza, who pulled down their leaning tower, so the Valencians demolished the tower of Alibufat to widen a street. We have seen that even their ancient walls were not spared. They have no respect for antiquity; no love for the past. A modern spirit possesses them; a love of pleasure and comfort; a desire to get money for the sake of indulgence. Gay, lively, full of excitement and impulse, everything yields to the passing moment.

Next we come to the once vast and splendid Convent of San Domingo, in the days of its glory one of the richest and most powerful convents in Spain, but now shorn of all its ecclesiastical element. Outlines alone remain: the chapter-house and cloisters of late Gothic still beautiful and refined. In a small chapel supported by four slender pillars San Vincente Ferrer took upon him the vows of a monk.



SALON DE CORTES: AUDIENCIA.

Of the religious ceremonies the most imposing is the Miserere which takes place every Friday in the church of the Colegio del Patriarca. High Mass is first given at nine o'clock. The music both at this and the Miserere is magnificent. Many of the rank and fashion of Valencia are constant in their attendance. Ladies assemble in a great crowd, each wearing a black mantilla. As they kneel in penitential attitude the scene is full of devotional grace and charm.

The space above the high altar is covered with a purple pall which looks black and funereal. Chanting commences: slow and solemn and in the minor key.

Suddenly, in the midst of the sad cadences, the picture above the altar descends by machinery, and in its place is seen a lilac veil. There is a slight movement, a half-raising of the head, amidst the congregation; an attitude of expectation. The mournful but exquisite music does not cease. It is soft and subdued, appealing to the senses. Presently the veil is withdrawn and gives place to a grey veil. This in turn passes away and a black veil appears, representing the veil of the Temple. It is torn asunder, and an image of the Saviour on the Cross is disclosed.

The upturned heads gaze for a moment; on many a countenance appears the emotion actually felt. Imagination is stirred by the dramatic representation. A murmur escapes the kneeling multitude; the music swells to a louder strain, the voices gain a deeper pathos. Then voices and organ gradually die away to a whisper and cease.

Silence reigns. For a moment there is no sound or stir. Then all is over; the Miserere is at an end. Quietly the fair penitents rise from their knees and stream out into the streets, which gain an additional

charm as they pass onwards with their perfect forms and graceful walk.

In spite of the somewhat claptrap element, the Miserere is impressive from the beautiful and refined music, the kneeling crowd, the deep obscurity that gives it mystery. It is even worth a day or two's delay in this fair City of Flowers and other delights.

For in our mind we always associate Valencia with the perfume of flowers. Roses for ever bloom, and like silver in the days of Solomon, are accounted as little worth. But if they were plentiful as to the Greeks of old they would only seem the lovelier.

Some of the streets are very picturesque, with long narrowing vistas of houses and balconies, casements and quaint outlines, all in the strong light and shadow of sunshine, with perhaps a church tower and spire rising above all at the end, sharply outlined against the intensely brilliant blue of the sky.

Making way, we reach the gates of the city, which are still its glory, though so few remain of the twelve that once admitted to the interior. Some still retain their towers and machicolations. Outside these runs the famous river with its ancient bridges. Crossing one of them, and proceeding a distance of three miles down a straight, not very interesting road, you reach the famous port of Valencia: one of the finest ports in Spain, one of the largest harbours. After the close atmosphere of the town, the scene is agreeable and exhilarating.

CHAPTER XXXII.

OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

Port and harbour—Sunday and fresh air—In the market-place—De Nevada protests—A curse of the country—In the days gone by—On the breakwater—Invaded tramcar—De Nevada confirmed—Another crusade needed—Plaza de Toros—In Sunday dress—Domestic interiors—When the play was o'er—Bull-ring at night—Fitful dreams—Fever—Maître d'hôtel prescribes—Magic effect—Depart for Saguntum—Before the days of Rome—Primitive town—Days of the Greeks—Attacked by Hannibal—Rebuilt by the Romans—Absent guardian—The hunchback—Reappears with custodian—Doors open—Moorish fortress—Fathomless cisterns—Sad procession—Weeping mourners—Key of Valencia—Miguella—Time heals all wounds—Proposes coffee—Proud and pleased—Scenes that remain—In Barcelona—Drawing to a close—Sorrow and regret—Many experiences—Our Espluga friends—Loretta's gratitude—In the Calle de Fernando—A last favour—Glories of Spain—Eastern benediction.

OUR first visit to the port and harbour was on a Sunday. Labour was suspended, and vessels of all countries were flying their flags. From the end of the long breakwater we breathed freely. Before us stretched the wide shimmering sea, blue as the sky above. A very few white-sailed boats were gliding about—only in summer are they found in large numbers. On such a day as this, hot, glowing, glorious to us of the North, the soft-climed Valencians would not venture upon the water. An occasional fishing-boat strayed in and out, but all else was at peace. The whole place was deserted. There was a strange calm and quiet upon everything; almost an English "Sabbath stillness" in the air.

We wondered, but soon discovered the cause. This might have dawned upon us had we called to mind yesterday's experience.

We were walking through the market-place with de Nevada the priest, when a large placard caught our

eye, announcing a bull-fight for the next day, Sunday: the last of the season.

"I have never seen one," said H. C. "We must go to it."

"Surely you would not visit the barbarous exhibition?" said de Nevada. "In this matter I have nothing of the Spaniard in me. I hold bull-fights as a curse of the country; training up children to cruelty and laying the foundation of a host of evils."

But his words had no weight with H. C.

"I think everyone should see a bull-fight at least once in their lives. If I know nothing of its horrors, how can I join in a crusade against them? Once seen, I will write a scathing poem on the entertainment which shall be translated into Spanish. All my graphic power of description shall be exerted, and it may go far to put down the evil. I might also appeal to the people's superstition, which seems almost the strongest element in their nature. You will come?" turning to us.

But we had had our experience once for all years before, in the bull-ring at Granada, accompanied by eight naval officers whose nerves were in excellent order. When the play was half over, and men shouted and women shrieked and waved, and there was universal applause and uproar, sick of the horrors, we left the building: to the surprise and no doubt contempt of the assembly.

Thus H. C.'s appeal fell upon deaf ears.

And when it came to the point he also would not go. So it fell out that we were both sitting on the breakwater, gazing upon the shimmering sea, revelling in the serene stillness of the atmosphere.

The scene changed. We had to return, and seeing an empty tramcar, found ourselves enjoying the world from a solitary elevation: a short-lived pleasure. From a side-street there suddenly poured forth a crowd of men, who swarmed in and out and up the sides: and stillness and solitude were over.

They were mad with excitement, and being already late, feverishly anxious to make way. One might have thought them intoxicated, but it was excitement only. They raved and shouted; their eyes flashed and glistened; they anticipated the horrors of the bull-ring; speculated as to how many bulls would be killed, whether the toreador would escape. For the moment they were as wild animals, and de Nevada's protest in the market-place wanted no better confirmation.

H. C. shuddered. His poetical mind had received a shock in coming into contact with this coarse and savage element.

"I am glad I decided not to go," he said. "De Nevada is right. Bull-fighting should be put down, even though the people rose up in revolt. It needs a Crusade as much as ever the cause for which the Templars went eastward."

The Plaza de Toros was thronged with a crowd of men, women and children, who could not pay the fee or were too late for admission. If unable to enter, it was something to look upon the outer walls, whilst the thunders of applause helped them to realise the scene.

The tramcar waited some twenty minutes, and we remained studying the crowd of eager faces that surged to and fro. From the bull-ring—one of the largest and finest in Spain—arose that constant roar and tempest of voices.

We were almost prisoners, wondering how we should escape, when a city tramcar came up, stood side

by side with ours, and we made the exchange. This slowly moved through the crowd and turned into a quieter thoroughfare, and the raving followed us far down the road.

The car travelled slowly round the town, through the Cathedral Square, in and out of ancient gateways. Street after street, comparatively deserted, wore its Sunday dress. Flowers abounded. We were on a level with first-floor windows, and from many an open casement came a glimpse of domestic interiors: the scent of roses; fair ladies dressed in rustling silks and sheeny satin; ripples of laughter and conversation; occasional streams of melody from a fair performer. Absorbed, we did not observe the car gradually getting round to its starting-point, until we once more found ourselves in the centre of the crowd outside the bull-ring.

They had not moved an inch. The spectacle was just over, the great doors were thrown open, and a cortége passed out: cart after cart with dead horses and bulls, the latter decorated as if for a prize show. A deafening roar, louder than ever, went up from the people. Finally came the vehicle with the toreadors and matadors dressed in all their fine colours, flushed with their performance, calmly taking the hurrahs. The very horses seemed maddened as they tore out of sight. Then the crowd began to disperse. Strolling out after dinner, we found ourselves once more in front of the bull-ring, looking in the darkness like a second Roman Coliseum. The square was deserted, its crowds having gone home to live the horrors over again in their dreams. Silence reigned. But the time would come round for fresh spectacles and more horrors.

And so it goes on from one generation to another.

That night our own dreams were fitful and broken. We had watched the sunset from the tramcar, full of splendour and colouring. As the sun went down, a chilliness had risen upon the air, and suddenly we shivered. Then it passed away, but there was no rest on retiring. Fever came on, and in semi-delirium we imagined that we were taking part in a bull-fight; warring with infuriated animals. There was no repose and no escape. Deafening shouts rang in our ears, but still the combat went on; seemed to have gone on for years, and must go on for ever.

The agony was terrible. Molten lead coursed through our veins. We tried to rise, but chains bound us down. The night passed. In the early morning the fever abated, and presently we awoke from a short, unrefreshing slumber; rose as one who has gone through a long illness. When H. C. appeared and said it was time for the flower-market and the Lonja, he went alone.

Our maître-d'hôtel, who felt he could not be sufficiently attentive to friends of de Nevada and the de la Torres, brought us strong tea; and on hearing an account of our night, suddenly departed, to reappear with a white powder procured at a chemist's.

"A touch of the fever, señor, caught last night at sundown," he remarked. "It is taken in a moment, but seldom shaken off so quickly. This powder will go far to put you right."

We took it in faith, and found it chiefly quinine. The effect was excellent. Though still weak, we were capable of an effort, and when H. C. returned with hands full of roses, carnations, orange-blossoms, sweet verbena—for which he had extravagantly paid threepence and made the flower-woman's heart sing for joy—we were able to carry out our programme and start for Saguntum.

A short railway journey landed us amidst the ruins of this ancient city, where we were in the very atmosphere not only of Rome, but of days and people long before.

The small, primitive town at the foot of the height was full of quaint outlines. Large circular doorways

led to wonderful interiors; immense living-rooms in semi-obscurity; rich dark walls whose colour and tone were due to smoke and age. Here women were working and spinning and sometimes bending over a huge fire, deep in the mysteries of cooking. Beyond these dark rooms one caught sight of open courts or gardens, where orange and other trees flourished. Some of the women were busy making cheese, which here is quite an article of commerce and goes to many parts of the country. We had the place to ourselves. The women stopped their cheese-making and spinning to assemble in groups of twos and threes and stare after us. Human nature is curious and inquisitive all the world over.

But the charm and attraction of the place are the ruins that crown the heights; walls and towers now crumbling and desolate, witnessing to the strength and power of Saguntum in ages gone by. It was founded nearly 1400 years before the Christian era by the Greeks of Zante, when the Phœnicians were still monarchs of the land. Why they permitted the Greeks to erect this stronghold does not appear. When a wealthy frontier town allied to Rome, it was attacked by Hannibal. The defence was brave, determined and prolonged; but Rome would not come to the rescue, and the town perished amidst frightful horrors. This chiefly led to the Second Punic War, by which Saguntum was revenged and Hannibal and his armies were routed out of Spain: reverses they never recovered. In time it was rebuilt by the Romans, and in the course of centuries fell under the dominion of the Goths and the Moors.

Saguntum—Murviedro, as it is often called—is now a magnificent ruin. The climb to the castle is long, steep and rugged, and on reaching the gates we found them closed. There was no guardian to admit us; the ruins were uninhabited. After our feverish night, a return to the town for the keys and a second long climb seemed too much of a penance. Yet the interior must be seen.

Fortune favoured us. We found a man near the gates cutting away the rank grass and weeds: a strange uncanny creature; terribly hump-backed; with a pale long-drawn face from which a couple of dark eyes looked out upon you with a strange inward fire that seemed consuming him. He was almost a skeleton, as though he and starvation were close companions.

We made known our trouble, offering a substantial bribe if he would go down and bring up the keys. The man's eyes sparkled. Without hesitation he laid down his great shears and put on the coat he had placed under the walls.

"If the keys are to be had by mortal power, señor, I will not return without them," he said; his voice was shrill with the sharpness of habitual suffering.

"Go, then, and success attend you. We await you here."

We sat down between the great gates and the ruins of the Roman theatre, and watched our messenger's long thin legs rapidly flying over the ground. Then he disappeared behind the houses.

We waited and wondered. Presently he reappeared followed by an old woman dangling great keys. His eloquence had prevailed. Perhaps he had promised to share the bribe, or hoped it might be doubled. Panting and breathless, they reached us.

"Ah, señor, this is unheard-of," said the old woman. "No one enters without permission from the commandant. If he knew, it would be as much as my place is worth—not that it is worth much. But he is away to-day; gone to Valencia to the marriage of a friend. So I have some excuse; and he will never know. I will admit you. The times I have opened these gates! I am sixty-five, señor, and have been up and down, through summer and winter, through storm and tempest, ever since I was fifteen. Pretty near the end now."

Inserting the great key into the rough, rusty old lock, the rude doors opened and admitted us.

RUINS OF SAGUNTUM.

We found the fortress distinctly Moorish and very interesting. The old woman, well up in her work, knew the history of every portion. Amidst the ruins of the castle were some Moorish cisterns she declared to be bottomless, where blind fish for ever swam. Below what was once the governor's garden, she led us to gloomy dungeons where heavily chained prisoners were confined for life, and she described many a horror that had taken place in the past. Everything testified to the strength of Saguntum of old.

From the walls the views are magnificent. Stretching across the wide plain, one caught faint traces of Valencia and the shimmering sea; at our feet was the little town, and beyond it the hills rose in gentle outlines.

As we looked we observed a procession set forth upon the long white road. Harsh, discordant music from brass instruments rose upon the air. Then we saw that it was a funeral. The coffin was being slowly borne on men's shoulders to the cemetery. The latter was near the town, enclosed in high walls, above which appeared the dark pointed tops of the melancholy cypress. A group of mourners followed the coffin; women bowed and weeping, men subdued: quite a long stream of them. Near us stood our curious messenger.

"Who is it?" we asked.

"A sad story, señor. A youth of seventeen, who caught the fever and died. A week ago he was as well as you or I: full of energy and enterprise: talking of what he wanted and what he would do in the future. His ambition was to emigrate, and for long he had been trying to get his parents' consent. But he was their only child, and they were loath to part with him. Ah! he has taken a longer journey now; emigrated to a more distant country. And there will be no coming back to Murviedro."

"And the parents?"

"Poor things! They are heartbroken. There goes his mother, supported by two women friends. One can almost hear her weeping. Oh that horrible music! It goes through my spine as if it would tear it asunder. When I am buried I hope they will have no music. I think I should turn in my coffin. Is it not a splendid view, señor? This fortress may well be called the key of Valencia. The key of the province, you understand, not of the town. We command the best of the country. You should see it in summer, when every

tree is in full leaf and every flower in bloom, and the branches droop with the weight of their fruit. A land of abundance, is it not, Miguella?" turning to the old woman, who stood looking at the sad cortége with weeping eyes.

"Ay, Juan, it is so," she returned with tearful voice. "Abundance of everything. But fate is cruel, and strong youth must die, and old people like you and I who half starve, for all the abundance, must still cumber the earth."

"Speak for yourself, Madre Miguella," returned the man sharply. "Whatever you may be, I am not yet old and I don't see that I take the place of a better man. I shall be forty-one next New Year's Day. A hard life I have of it; few pleasures and little food. I am not formed as other men; no woman looking at me would take me for her husband. For all that, I am not tired of life, and have no desire to be in the place of that poor lad. It will come soon enough, Madre Miguella, without wishing oneself there before the time."

"Santa Maria! what a clucking about nothing!" retorted Miguella. "If I called you an old man it was only a form of speech. I had in my mind's eye the strong lusty youth who has gone to his burial. Compared with him I should call you old and of little worth. After all, I was only thinking of the uncertainty of human life. You won't deny that, friend Juan."

"I suppose I can't," replied the contrite hunchback. "Poor lad! I could almost have found it in my heart to die for him. He was always good to me; never mocked at me; gave me many a centimo from his little hoard; often shared his dinner if I met him on the road. I have lost a friend in him."

Miguella was shedding tears afresh at the recital of the lad's virtues.

"Poor boy!" she cried. "But he's better off. He hadn't time to grow hard and wicked. The angels make no mistake when they come for such as him. I wish his poor mother could see it in that light."

"Give her time, give her time," returned the hunchback. "If you lost your leg, you would not all at once grow reconciled to a wooden one. Nature doesn't work in spasms, Miguella.

BARCELONA.

By-and-by, the poor mother will come to see mercy in the blow, but she can't do that whilst the sound of her boy's voice rings in her ears, and she still feels the clasp of his arms round her neck. She wouldn't be a mother if she did."

Time was on the wing. The sun was declining, the shadows were lengthening when we turned from the

ruins and once more stood outside the walls. Miguella locked the doors with a firm hand and possessed herself of the keys. We took care the bribe should not be halved. It was a gala day for them, poor creatures. Juan's face lighted up with infinite contentment.

"Lucky for me that I came up weeding, señor. For a whole week I need feel no hunger, and may give my poor body a little repose."

"But life is not quite such hard lines with you, Miguella?"

"Not quite, señor, though hard enough. Yet I have many mercies. I earn a little money by making cheeses; and in summer, when visitors now and then come to Murviedro, I take a trifle and put by a peseta for a rainy day. Heaven be praised I have never been in actual want; and Juan knows that he has never in vain asked me to lend him a centimo. Though I find his accounts very long reckonings," she quaintly added with a smile.

"Miguella, you have been as good as a mother to me," returned Juan. "I never knew any other mother; have ever been a waif on the earth, without kith and kin either to bless or ban."

We all went down the rugged steep together. At the bottom, Juan bade us farewell and turned to the left towards his humble cottage. Miguella escorted us up the quaint, quiet street. We passed through a picturesque gateway, and just beyond this was her small house.

"Señor, if you would allow me to make you some coffee to refresh you for your journey, I should be happy," she said. "I am famous both for my cheese and my coffee."

To refuse would give her pain; the train was not due for an hour and a half; a cup of Miguella's coffee was not to be despised. She turned with a glad smile, opened her door, and invited us to enter.

It was a surprise to find her cottage the perfection of order, for the Spaniards are not famous for the virtue. She placed chairs, and bustled about her preparations. In a few moments a peat fire with sticks was blazing on the hearth, water was put on to boil, and a brown earthenware coffee-pot was placed on the embers to warm. In her own domain Miguella became a handy, comely old woman, who moved about without noise and must have been a good helpmeet to the husband she had lost a quarter of a century ago. Whilst the water was boiling, she took us into an inner room and showed us her arrangements for making cheese. It was an interesting sight, and the old woman went up still further in our estimation. Everything was spotlessly pure and clean. A grey cat followed her about like a dog and seemed devoted to her.

"She is getting old like me," said poor Miguella, "but she is a faithful animal, and never by any chance puts her nose into a pan of milk. I might leave it all open; nothing would be touched. It is only ewes' milk, señor. Would you like some in your coffee?"

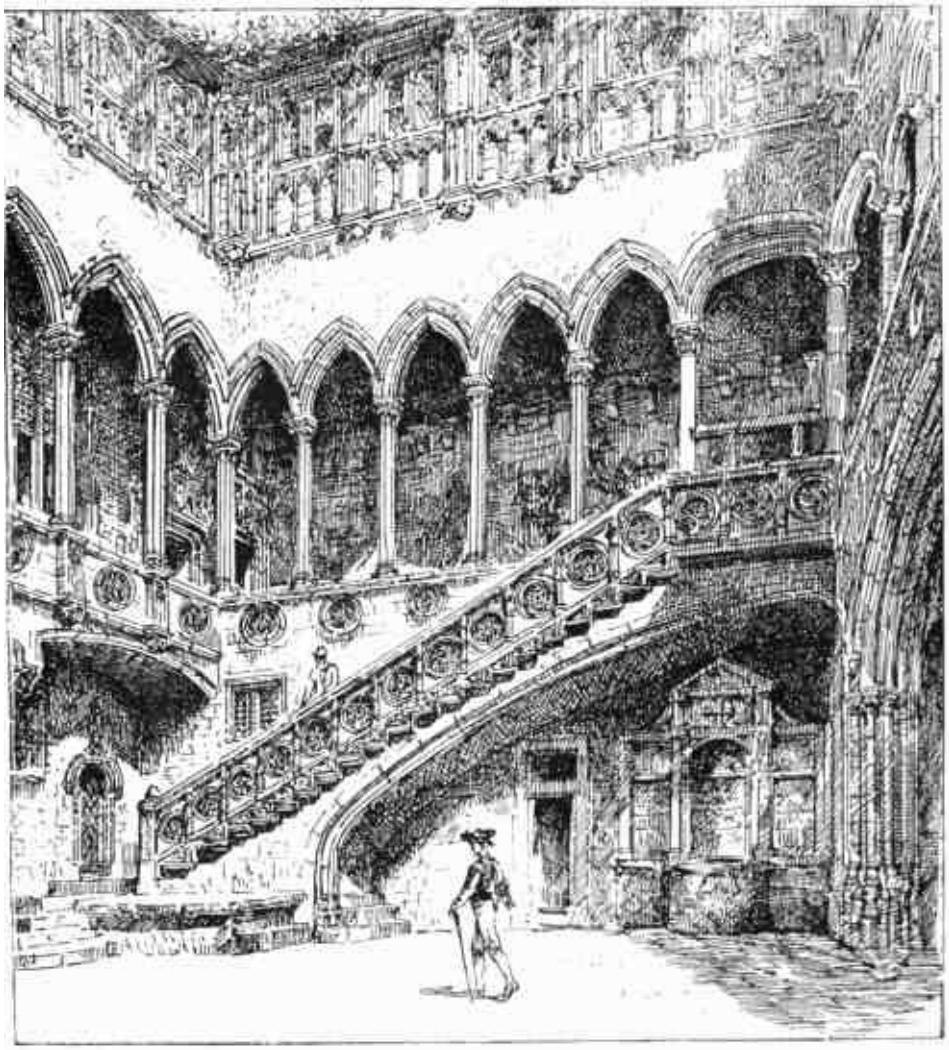
We thought black coffee more stimulating.

She placed it on the table, hot and fragrant. Miguella had not overpraised the cunning of her hand. With a slight diffidence meant for an apology, she took out one of her fresh little cheeses, and with home-made bread, placed it also on the table. The coffee she served in white cups of coarse porcelain, which we duly admired, and she brought forward plates of the same material.

So Miguella, in largeness of heart gave us hospitality, and our simple collation was so perfect that a king need have wished no better. She had put on a white apron to serve us becomingly, and from her chimney-corner, where she added fuel to her fire, surveyed the appreciation of her labours with pride and

pleasure. To us, the incident—not an every-day one—had borne a certain interest and charm. We had gone back for a moment to primitive days, "when Adam delved and Eve span." The best of Miguella's nature had come out simply because we had been a little kind to her: and we wisely reflected that too often the greatest enemy to mankind is man.

Our last glimpse of Miguella was of a comely old woman standing in her doorway to watch us depart. The glow of the setting sun was upon her face, which was softened and refined by her abundant neat grey hair. She looked pleased and happy. No doubt she would return to her chimney-corner and cheese-making, and ponder over the day's small adventure. Juan would be no loser. Many a centimo would find its way from her pocket to his, and he would think her more motherly than ever.



COURTYARD OF AUDIENCIA: BARCELONA.

On our way to the station we saw the sad funeral procession approaching. Most had dispersed, but some six or eight women were returning with the poor mother, who still looked bowed and broken. As Juan had wisely said, time would lessen the blow, but for the present no silver lining was visible in the heavy cloud overshadowing the life.

We watched them disappear through one of the large round doorways into the home now desolate for ever. Then we went on, and presently the train came up, and Saguntum passed out of our lives, though not out of memory. Miguella and Juan, the ancient ruins and outlines crowning the heights, the quaint streets with their picturesque interiors, the sad procession winding slowly down the long white road, the bowed mourners and the weeping mother: nothing could ever be forgotten.

Some days after this we were walking in the streets of Barcelona. We had said good-bye to Valencia and our present sojourn in Spain was drawing to a close. With sorrow and sighing we remembered the motto of the wise king: THIS ALSO SHALL PASS AWAY. Oft quoted before, it is ever present with us and we quote it once more. We had gone through many experiences, made many acquaintances who had become friends. In imagination a small crowd of companions surrounded us, every one of them with a special niche in our heart and memory. Sauntering through the now long familiar streets, we had wandered instinctively into the neighbourhood of the cathedral. As we stood in the courtyard of the Audiencia, admiring for the fiftieth time its pointed arches, clustered columns and fine old staircase, two people entered, breaking upon our solitude. Their faces were radiant with happiness. At the first moment we hardly recognised them; the next we saw that it was Loretta and Lorenzo.

"Still in Barcelona! How is this, Loretta?"

"Señor, we have prolonged our stay. There was no special reason why we should not do so. Work is provided for, and the donkeys are in good keeping. We shall never again have such a holiday. It comes only once in our lives."

"It is quite unnecessary to remark that you are happy, both of you."

"Señor, I ask what I have done that heaven should have bestowed such favour upon me," returned Loretta, her face glowing with fervour. "I feel as though I could take the whole creation under my wing and love it for the sake of the love that is mine. I tell myself that I have not half cared for my dumb animals, though harsh word to them never passed my lips."

"Loretta, we have found your clock," passing from the sublime to the commonplace. "Come both of you and see it."

It was in the adjoining Calle de Fernando, not many yards from where we stood. We were just in time: the clockmaker was about to pack up and despatch it. Its design might have been made to order. A clock of white alabaster, pure as the heart of Loretta. Cupid with bow and arrows slung behind him struck the hours on a silver bell. The hour-glass was missing, it is true, but the sands of Loretta and Lorenzo were none the less golden. So the clock instead of being forwarded to Espluga, was sent to their address in Barcelona.

"My happiness is now complete," cried Loretta. "Yet one thing is still wanting. I would that you, señor, should come as speedily as possible and ride Caro to Poblet, and that Lorenzo and I should wait upon you. Ah, do not delay."

"One of the most romantic episodes I ever heard of," cried H. C., as Loretta and Lorenzo walked away arm in arm in their great happiness, and we turned to contemplate once more the magic interior of the cathedral that has no rival.

"It is indeed. And if these dream-churches and ancient towns are her glories, does Spain not possess yet other glories in the exalted lives of Rosalie and Anselmo, the simple hearts and annals of yonder couple, and all who resemble them? May their shadows never grow less and their faces never be pale!"

"Amen," answered H. C., as the happy pair in question turned a corner and "passed in music out of sight."

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FOOTNOTES:

[A] The rose.

[B] If the reader feels any interest in Sebastien, he will be glad to hear that a petition sent to the landlord in the form of a letter proved as effective as the proposed deputation. He was promoted to the dignity (and fees) of second waiter in the dining-room: and on the first of last May was united to his beloved Anita. The sun shone and the skies were blue; the world smiled upon the young couple. The bride in her white veil and pale silk dress (the gift of her late employer, Madame la Modiste) must have appeared ravishing; and few bridegrooms in Manresa could have looked handsomer or more manly than Sebastien. We imagine how his face beamed, his eyes sparkled, his heart overflowed. His master—not to be outdone by Madame la Modiste—gave them a wedding breakfast, and the walls rang with the shouts that went up when the health of the happy pair was drunk. One can only wish them the serene bliss and success they deserve.

[C] The following letter from the old canon, one of many, may be transcribed for the benefit of the reader:

"You will be anxious to hear how our patient has been progressing since I last wrote to you. Better and better. There is nothing but good news to send you. I think I may almost affirm that Eugenie is now 'clothed and in her right mind.' The cure is effected. For many months she has not looked upon the wine cup, and declares that all desire for it has left her. I believe it has. As you know, the very day after our first and last evening together I sought her out, told her I was her father's friend, explained to her the atonement that was in her power. The poor creature, overcome with misery, sorrow and remorse, burst into such tears as I have never seen shed, and yielded without a murmur to my wish. I would give her no time for reconsideration, and that very day she took up her abode in my house. She never leaves it except in company with Juanita or myself. There has been no trouble from the beginning. It almost seemed as though the calm and peaceful atmosphere of our little household at once exorcised the evil spirit within her. Her better nature has triumphed, and I am persuaded that she will not fall away again. I do not intend that she shall. As long as I live this is to be her home. She asks nothing better; declares that for the first time in her life she has found peace and happiness. Her gratitude to you is unbounded. If I only mention your name, tears spring to her eyes. I believe she would lay down her life for you. She begs that you will one day come again to see, not the old Eugenie who accosted you in the church; she is dead and buried; but the new Eugenie who lives and has taken her place. She wonders what influence gave her courage to speak, and declares it was some unseen spirit or power which compelled her to go forward whether she would or no. The moment she saw you this spirit took possession of her and she was passive in its hands. Never before had such a thing happened to her. I put it down to other and higher influence. These things do not happen by chance. Heaven may spare my life for some years. During that time Eugenie's home is assured. She is now as a daughter to me; shares my modest repasts; occupies herself in the affairs of the house; spends much of her time with Juanita. She reads much, and is studying science with me. Her intelligence is of a high order, and she has a wide grasp of mind. By-and-by she may outrun me. Truly it is a pearl of price we have rescued from the fire. And I too have my reward. The house is brighter since she came to it. Even Juanita, who once only smiled, now laughs on occasion. She has taken a great affection for Eugenie, and when I am no longer here will transfer her services to our protégée. Heaven be praised, I am able to leave them independent of the world. And I have enlisted my nephew's sympathy in the matter. Eugenie is to be much with them when I go hence, but this is to be her home; hers for her life. Yet who can tell? She is young. If you thought her beautiful then, what would you say now to that calm, radiant face, those clear, steadfast eyes? One day she will probably marry again; and in a second and more worthy choice find all the happiness and protection that she missed in her first terrible and headstrong mistake.

"And now, the old question. When are you coming? Juanita bids me say that all the resources of her simple art are waiting to be put forth in your favour. She declares she never was happier than that evening when she waited upon us and dispensed her simple luxuries. Eugenie says she shall never be at perfect rest until you have witnessed her transformation. For myself, I have a new work on Natural Philosophy to show you. I long once more to pace together the aisles of our beloved cathedral. At my age I live from day to day, grateful to heaven for each new day in this bright world. But it behoves me to sit loosely to all things. The end may come at

any hour, it cannot be very far off now. The old man longs to welcome you yet once again. Deny him not."

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