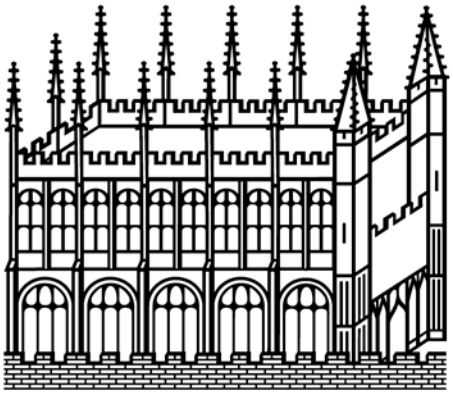

IDYLLS OF SPAIN

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OF SPAIN

AND SKETCHES
OF TRAVEL IN
THE PENINSULA

IDYLLS OF SPAIN

VARNISHED · PICTURES OF · TRAVEL · IN THE · PENINSULA.

BY

ROWLAND THIRLMERE

LONDON: ELKIN MATHEWS
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TO MY FRIENDS

PREFACE

In offering this little book of travel to the public I do not claim to have written an exhaustive survey of the Spanish provinces through which I have passed: that would be a labour, not of weeks, but of years. This volume has no pretensions, and I trust it will be understood that whatever has been set down in its pages consists merely of impressions that fixed themselves on my mind during a very hurried journey.

My love for Spain, however, has so developed, that I hope some day to give the world a deeper study of that beautiful country, and one more worthy of its fascinating people than this collection of sketches.

R. T.

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IDYLLS OF SPAIN

I

FROM LONDON TO SAN SEBASTIAN

BEFORE my departure for the South I dined at the restaurant attached to Victoria Station, consumed with regrets at leaving England in her April beauty. My *vis-à-vis* was an old gentleman whose face bore a strong resemblance to a collie's. In the midst of his sarcastic allusions to the barbarisms of civilization—which made him specially interesting—he accidentally disclosed the fact that he was a breeder of collies. Therefore I could not but reflect upon the extraordinary facility with which man becomes possessed of many of the characteristics of the animals of which he makes hobbies. It very often happens that the person who owns a bulldog has the lower jaw excessively developed,

and that anyone who takes pride in lap-dogs is a timid, inoffensive being. Collies are noted for a somewhat vicious habit of snapping, and my new acquaintance with the canine nose and still more canine teeth was certainly a snapper. He snapped at everything, even at himself. He was a pessimist of the first order, with an inordinate fondness for port and the greenest of green cheese. When I expressed a doubt as to the safety of railway travelling in Spain, he tossed his head with an affectation of supreme carelessness.

"Never mind," he said, his black eyes flashing, "never mind if a crash *does* come; better have it now when you're young. When you have passed the grand climacteric your views of life will change. You won't heed railway accidents very much when you arrive at the age of sixty-five. One of my friends is ninety-three to-day, and when I called to congratulate him, I found him in the nurse's arms being carried about like a baby. Now, I don't want to go on quite so long as that. After making a lot of money, one can't enjoy it; death comes, and then some fool very kindly squanders the results of life-long labour. Never be afraid to die young."

After this man had given me a learned lecture upon Silurian rocks, and spoken charmingly of the exquisite beauty of Cattleyas, he told me of his exceeding loneliness in the world. Thereupon I was seized with a desire to ask him to accompany me upon my journey to the Peninsula, but somehow I could not screw up my courage to speaking point; and so I reluctantly bade him good-night, stepped into the Dover train, and found myself in the company of two jolly Roman Catholic priests and a young couple who were setting forth on their honeymoon. The bride was rather plain; he was exceedingly handsome, six and a half feet in height and broad in proportion. She was tartly sweet, as a damson pinched by September frost; capricious as the wind in the month of May. I could not but feel a prescience of the heart-burnings which would inevitably afflict her when her adored one became tired of her jealous and exacting little ways.

The ecclesiastics were going to Lourdes and to Lisbon. They behaved like schoolboys until the Channel waves reminded them of the sterner facts of existence. At Calais the bride, still carrying a pathetic bunch of draggled roses and heliotrope, stepped into a *coupé-lit-toilette*, her

white, happy face a thing to remember and reflect upon. The Padres turned in with me.

"Well, and what shall we talk about?" said one, rubbing his hands and looking as much like Friar Tuck as it is possible for any mortal to do.

"Oh, I am not slow in observing character," said the other, who had a face like the portraits of Ignacio Loyola, "and I should therefore imagine that the most interesting subject one could possibly discuss would be yourself."

"Ah! ah!" laughed the first, "I did not know until you told me what a man of deep culture you are."

"Come, come," said his friend, "you're getting touchy. Let me remind you of what the Frenchman said—'Lead is never bright till it's cut.'"

Whereat Friar Tuck put on his skull-cap and collapsed upon his *oreiller*.

Paris was reached in a raw east wind, which subsided before sunset. About five o'clock I sallied forth into the brilliance of an exquisite afternoon. The incomparable city looked her best. The chestnuts of the Bois and the Champs Élysées were all in fullest flower, and their fallen petals littered the footpath. There is a sense of cleanliness, brightness, and gaiety in Paris which one seldom finds elsewhere. It is possible to

keep one's linen free from blacks in the comparatively smokeless air, and it is likewise possible to part with all one's money before one can say Jack Robinson.

The place has changed considerably since Sterne and La Fleur found amusement in its inexhaustible variety, but the inhabitants still retain the old-world sweetness and courtliness of manner, a virtue which fascinates the fair *Americaine* and the hyperborean princess.

As the train rolled through the broad lands of France I was awakened every now and again by the jolting of the carriages, and then it was that I heard the songs of the nightingales. Their dulcet cries seemed to be the very voice of spring, the delightful thanksgiving of the warm earth, filling my soul with the splendour and happiness of the South. All through the night they sang on, quite heedless of the shrieks of the Bordeaux express. And when the grey morning shed its faint, chill light into the compartment—where I had diplomatically arranged to be alone—the birds were still singing as if their hearts would break with inexplicable joy. The old Greek notion of sorrow in the melody of the nightingale is very pretty and poetical, but it will not do. Aëdon does not mourn for Itylus,

but is very content in her new condition. The day being too short to give full voice to her delight, the night also receives a gift of inimitable song.

Fair and flourishing is the aspect of France in the gracious vesture of spring. Here and there on the railway embankments beyond Bordeaux, I noticed the fleur-de-lys flaunting its purple splendour, and the apple trees and hawthorns were very brilliant in the sunlit dew of dawn.

At Biarritz a bewigged Russian princess alighted with her two poodles, and took away all the sunshine in her golden hair. It was therefore cloudy when we crossed the Spanish frontier. Here I caught my breath as Spain held out her arms to me again. Lofty Spain, the land of splendid contrasts and extremes; the wildest, the most primeval country in Europe; "the land of anomaly and paradox"—*la tierra de vicé versâ*. At that moment I experienced a sort of spiritual exaltation that sometimes takes possession of me when, in ascending a hill, I observe the blue of the empyrean touching the green of the summit.

I had plenty of time to indulge in sentiment, for here a stoppage occurred. The economical engine-driver had made a miscalculation in re-

gard to his supply of steam. So there we were under the bridge between Irun and Hendaya, the coal exhausted, the *vapeur* evaporated, and all the world looking on and laughing. A couple of hours later, in the company of three stout ladies of the Spanish *bourgeoisie* and a great northern grandee, with his English wife and English-speaking son, I entered the hotel omnibus at San Sebastian.

Thinking that we were all *extranjeros*, the three ponderous females began to vituperate in their shrillest and nastiest manner. They resented our presence in the vehicle,—that was quite evident. They dubbed me an insolent pig for having put my dressing-bag on the seat beside me; they referred to the grandee as an unmannerly dog because he had brought his hold-all into the omnibus, and they called his wife a brazen piece of impudence for keeping them waiting whilst she superintended the collection of her mountain of luggage. All these observations were vouchsafed with hardly a glance in our direction. Our appearance was criticised, down to the brown boots, and when the eldest and fattest hazarded the remark that most likely we were people escaping from our creditors—to which assumption my fellow-travellers' half-ton

of luggage lent some colour—I nearly choked with suppressed laughter.

The day was showery in Guipúzcoa and the highway was full of mud. The two poor, bony horses found the load a most difficult one to move, and finally, after frantic efforts to get over the bridge, they gave up the business in despair. Hereupon the *cochero* and the *portero* became wildly excited, and we were all in imminent danger of being precipitated into the Urumea. But the three corpulent *señoritas* never turned a hair; they manifested no desire to descend.

"Away with those horses to the Plaza de Toros," they cried; "or offer them to this English Quixote," one of them added under her breath, indicating my humble self, "and let him choose a Rosinante wherewith to perambulate Spain." This was too much for me, and too much for the "*señor viejo*," and we immediately and with one accord remarked in Castellano that the knightly admirers of such beautiful Dulcineas as those which we had had the good fortune to encounter thus early on our travels, were certainly worthy of better steeds than those attached to the omnibus. After which nothing more was said by the confused and discomfited *doncellas*.

Dinner at the Hotel de Londres was a very

tame affair. Opposite me there was an English couple of the type beloved of the French comic papers. These folk were evidently people of importance at home, where they had been careful to leave their manners with their respectable raiment. The way in which that woman shouted "*du pain*" filled me with horror and disgust. She had great protruding teeth, so white that one would have been thankful if she had not polished them quite so brilliantly. They were much too obtrusive. He was in holy orders. He rested his elbows upon the table and surveyed the company with sacred nonchalance. His mutton-chop whiskers were red as carrots, and he had a fishy eye. One certainly meets the most fearful and wonderful compatriots! A pessimistic Scotch spinster sat next to me, whose lady companion had the loveliest white hair I have ever seen and the sweetest voice I have ever heard, with the exception of the renowned Sarah's. With this couple I conversed whilst a Frenchwoman, who ate like a wolf, laughed every now and again as if she understood what I said. She then translated the supposed jokes to her daughter. Unfortunately, however, she always laughed at the wrong time, and her translations were enough to put Mark Twain for ever in the shade.

My clerical *vis-à-vis* was probably acting up to the maxim of "doing in Rome as Rome does," for after making all possible allowances, one must admit that *table d'hôte* in Spain is a trying function. The middle-class Spaniard has but the very vaguest ideas in regard to delicate behaviour at dinner. The ordinary individual of this grade uses his knife to peas, smokes between the courses, and sprawls over the table; whilst the more barbarous specimens think nothing of spitting on the floor during the progress of the meal. To see the faces of English ladies when they first experience these enormities would be a diverting spectacle were the cause of their horror less disgusting. It is, however, extremely difficult to curb one's temper after observing their looks of surprise and pain. But the French, with all their supposed refinement, run the Iberians very close, as many people who have travelled in France will admit.

At dinner it is also amusing to see the way in which a commonplace is received by the average travelling Briton. You say it is a fine day, and he freezingly agrees with you, turning very red, upsetting the salt, and mentally voting you an adventurer with designs upon his purse. Such a man sniffs at the *vino de mesa*, and pulls a very

wry face. Upon consulting the list, however, the prices convince him of the wisdom of giving the table wine a trial. He boldly takes the decanter and washes down course after course with strong liquor, tasting of the goat-skins in which it is transported from place to place. Very soon his flushed face attests that he has had more than is really good for him. It is then that he begins to consider his neighbour a very sensible fellow, and if he gets a little encouragement he will perhaps speak of his grandfather.

They have a biscuit in the north of Spain called "*El Ruiseñor*," or "The Nightingale." I once saw an old lady eat so many of these at dessert, that she had to be assisted out of the room; but it is only fair to add that she dipped each biscuit in the strong table wine. Yet, fortified as this *vino* undoubtedly is, the natives drink it with impunity, intemperance being a rare vice in the Peninsula—at least so far as liquor is concerned.

II

IN THE PROVINCE OF GUIPÚZCOA

SAN SEBASTIAN

THE situation of San Sebastian is so favoured by nature, that the town takes rank as one of the most beautiful in the world. In these fresh and sweet latter days of April, the province of Guipúzcoa wears a most enchanting aspect. On the surrounding hills the hawthorn is aflower in the lanes, and very sweet are the upland by-ways, flanked by cider orchards, in which the perfumed apple trees are glorious in white and crimson.

Wandering upon these heights, one sometimes chances upon a small company of white-haired Basques sitting on some mound beneath the spreading lilacs, solemn as Areopagists. These old peasants seem to appreciate the loveliness of spring. And he would indeed be insensible to beauty who remained unmoved by the sights and sounds of the delicious *primavera*, so like the English blossom-time, with the thrushes singing

lustily in the coverts, and the dew-spangled daisies winking in the grass. But the red-roofed houses tell one that this is not England, and a not altogether unpleasant nostalgia obtrudes upon the senses—a longing for the land of which our most impassioned singer has sung that—

> " . . . No southern shore may match the sons that kiss her mouth,"

the sweet dear north

> " Where the fire of hearts outburns the suns that fire the south."

When darkness comes on, and one gets tired of the well-lit café, whose gilding and glare seem to overwhelm the stranger more than the shadows of the deserted promenade, it is delightful to stroll along the Playa as far as the gardens surrounding the villas on the seaward slopes. It was so horribly lonely sitting in the café with the *Figaro* and the glass of grenadine; watching the faces of individuals who could never by any possibility be interesting. Now the wide blue vault of night, afire with stars, gains a yet more lovely significance as the nightingale's revolving ecstacy thrills through and through the heart. A pair of lovers in noiseless, hempen-soled *alpargatas* pass through the lights and shadows on the asphalt; a watch-

man with his lamp goes by; then all is hushed, save for the voice of the sea, until the *ruiseñor* offers thanksgiving again. Towering black against the sky, the Castillo de la Mota, crowning Monte Orgullo, frowns down upon the bay, which takes a golden half-circle of light into its breaking waves.

The bright-faced, happy people are nearly all abed. Thus alone with one's thoughts, one feels the necessity of some creature to whom one might speak. It is so beautiful, and yet so melancholy, this solitude of a strange city. If only the *sereno* would come up to one and chat, how the tension would be relieved! Our friends are hundreds of leagues away, though the friend of friends may be present in the spirit, and therefore the necessity for converse with some human soul fills the heart with strange disquietude.

In the morning it is the correct thing to visit the fortress. The most pleasant way lies through the little copse on the promenade, and so on past the Casino and the quay. Climbing some steps one finds oneself on the first turrets of the castle. From this point there is a charming view. To the left one sees in the distance the blue mountains of Navarra and Guipúzcoa. Nearer, and to the right, are the hills about Andoain and

Hernani, with their red-roofed farmhouses and cultivated slopes. This pleasant countryside is a source of perennial delight to the stranger. Victor Hugo has immortalized it, and our promising young painter, Frank Brangwyn, has limned the beauty of the bay of Pasajes in his most delightful manner.

The uplands about Renteria display their crops, vivid green in the sunlight; and, still nearer, are the villa-studded hills that border the town, on which eucalypti, poplars, elms, and beeches—all in their fairest vernal vesture—are tossing in the wind. The smokeless town, bright with tiles, paint, and stucco, and laced throughout with foliage, presents an exquisite contrast to the wonderful blue of the almost land-locked bay.

The tide is flowing before a strong north wind, and great white waves lash the walls of the promenade. Below us is the life and movement of the harbour, where merry fishermen and labourers in blue blouses are handling loads of silvery sardines. Gossiping women stand looking on. Here and there along the white boulevards flit dark-robed females on their way from mass, and little soldiers in red and blue stroll languidly along. All this is seen through the unquiet boughs,

which gleam golden-green in the sun. For this hill is well wooded, and not least fair of its many trees is a Cercis, whose countless pea-shaped, carmine blossoms spring out from the trunk and branches, striking an unusual note of colour.

Behind there are ruinous walls almost covered with a pretty cascade of starry periwinkle, and farther on, in places scarred and torn by shot and shell, where brave Englishmen gave up their last breath in an alien land, fighting side by side with comrades speaking an alien tongue, nature has planted white flowers of peace. Here one realizes the truth of the old aphorism, *Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori.*

III

IN THE PROVINCE OF GUIPŪZCOA

FROM BEASAIN TO CEGAMA

One day I became disgusted with the Biarritz "Hig-Liff" who run down to San Sebastian. These worthy people snatch a hasty lunch, peep at the Bay of Pasajes, then rush back again, breathless with affected terror at having braved the dangers of Spanish inns.

Months might be spent in this pleasant green country without discomfort, and without exhausting its interest. I wish I could have taken with me one or two of those stupid Englishmen who libel Spain, when we set off in a cool wind, one sunny morning, to catch the train for Beasain. It happened to be the 25th of April, which is the day of St. Mark; and it is a custom of the Spanish Basques to make special bread in honour of that Saint. An unshelled egg is placed on the top of the dough, and fastened thereto by a small band of paste. The cake is then baked. In the

carriage there was a man with a great package of these buns, who at once offered them to us, and told us how the custom of making this bread had its origin in remotest antiquity; he also gave us a learned discourse upon the curiously shaped cakes which are made at Hernani in September. It appears that by these the worship of Baal and Astarte is still to some extent perpetuated; for, as the generous fellow pointed out, the Romish Fathers, when "proselytising" the country, were careful to select the traditional feasts and celebrations of the Basque people as the occasions on which the Church should also observe its holy days with appropriate rejoicing.

Alighting at Beasain, we stepped into a *posada* almost the exact counterpart of a clean English inn. The landlady was a Mistress Quickly in the flesh. When Don Miguel made his appearance the worthy hostess flew to him, babbling the Spanish equivalent of "He hath eaten me out of my home; that glutton there," pointing to a guest calmly munching in a corner. The good soul was much exercised about a certain score, and her debtor was going away, God knows where. This individual lacked Falstaff's rotundity of person, but not the Falstaffian tongue. He rose from his seat, called the

woman pretty names, smoothed her iron-grey hair, and chucked her under the chin. The issue of their altercation I know not, for I became absorbed in the inevitable pictures which graced the walls: "The Chase of the Fox," "*Les cailles et leurs petites*," "*Les Vanneaux*," and so forth. Then an elderly pedlar who sat in the common room, worrying a leg of lamb and drinking the good red wine, became interesting to me by reason of his superb nonchalance. His was a sort of Red Indian phlegm. Had a petard exploded in the apartment it is doubtful whether he would have lost command over his imperturbability. Blue-clad peasants, lean, brown, and wrinkled, lounged about the door. There was a hum of voices from the inner room, whence a pretty *muchacha* emerged to serve us with the wherewithal to quench our thirst. And then we set out for Segura.

As I sat in the covered victoria during that charming drive, behind a pair of young frolicsome horses, that were evidently delighted with the jingling bells of their accoutrements, it was pleasant to listen to the conversation of my Basque companions. The sides of the vehicle were open to the air. The American-cloth cover

being looped up on either side, I had the most delightful glimpses of the scenery.

Every familiar landmark seemed to rouse some associations in the minds of my friends. They showed themselves to be the most ardent protectionists, and more than staunch republicans. With Don Carlos they had no sort of sympathy, though they hailed from a town in which his adherents are

> "Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks
> In Vallombrosa. . . ."

From politics their busy chatter turned to game, and we discussed partridge and *jabalí*, which is the Spanish equivalent of wild boar. They had obtained a special permit from the governor of the province, and were making up a party to go to the Navarrese forests—*una gran batida*—would I go? Alas, the exigencies of business prevented my acceptance, but when I heard certain thrilling descriptions of fierce encounters with bristly tuskers in the wild oak woods behind Tolosa—the selfsame woods which awed the susceptible spirit of Victor Hugo—I more than regretted the necessity of being compelled to decline.

In these woods of oak and chestnut, the *jabalí* sometimes attains a great size. His usual weight

is about fourteen stone, but boars of the true grey-brindled type, "*de los Castellanos*"—those patriarchal beasts that are protected from the cold by a reddish woolly fur beneath the outer bristle—often scale more than 300 lbs. *Jabalí* of the sierras always weigh more than those of the plain; some mountain boars are said to reach 400 lbs.

An idyll of the chase is what I should have dearly loved to write; but this I must leave to the future. Meanwhile I recommend my readers to study Chapman and Buck's "Wild Spain," one of the most delightful sporting books ever published.

We passed through valley after valley, where broad-chested peasants toiled, such as François Millet would have delighted to paint. These men slowly trudged behind their teams of oxen, their eyes intent upon the upturned clods. They seemed part and parcel of the very land, with no ideas beyond the immediate moment—no hopes, no ambition, and with, perhaps, but a brutish love. Here and there man and wife were digging the earth side by side, keeping time with every spadeful. Their blue smocks and scarlet head-dresses contrasted pleasantly with the hawthorn of the hedges, whose dazzlingly white efflor-

escence seemed greedy of the sun. All along the waysides shone golden bushes of broom, and the beautiful, fragile flowers of the flax fields bent before the fresh breeze.

Don Miguel, who is as romantic as he is polite, stopped the carriage and plucked me a handful of these blue blossoms, observing that they are almost like an English eye. And truly, their colour, as Longfellow evidently observed, is more like that of the human eye than any other floral hue, unless it be that of the speedwells, of which also there was no lack that bright morning.

At length we arrived at the feudal village of Segura, and after a glance at the old walls, and a brief examination of the lofty houses with their stone escutcheons, we proceeded on our way to Cegama through a multitude of yelping dogs. The peaks of the Sierra de San Adrian—the watershed of the Bay of Biscay and the Mediterranean—had risen into view at different points of the road, but now the deep indigo-blue mass of Monte Aitzgorri stood up before us, forming a great wall of rocks, snow-streaked ravines, and brushwood.

Cegama was eventually reached "without incident," as the Spaniards say when nothing

particular happens to them on a journey. Cegama is a little village, at that time smothered in apple blossom. The mayor came out to greet us, and to act as cicerone. He was a wheezy, short, portly, red-faced old gentleman, whose profession was evidently that of a carpenter. Although we had arrived when he was discharging his customary duties, and when his raiment was not as immaculate as it might have been, the natural dignity of this old son of the mountains did not desert him. Doubtless wishing that the road betwixt Cegama and Segura was a little straighter, so that he might have notice of such intrusions, the worthy *alcalde* tilted his blue cap, mopped his forehead, and determined to make the best of it. In the midst of all his confusion he did not forget that he was a Spaniard; his courtesy leaving nothing to be desired.

At the Casa Consistorial we found an annexe in the shape of an *alberga*, with the usual stables on the ground floor occupied by munching mules, and hens busy among the litter of bracken,

To mount the rickety stairs, and prowl into a kitchen bright with shining copper vessels, was quite exciting. It was a dread moment when we three hungry travellers hovered amidst many uncertainties. We were soon reassured, how-

ever. The floors of the house were so clean that without hesitation we might have eaten our lunch therefrom. Spotless, too, were the bedrooms, into which we also prowled; and then came a frightened maid to ask what our Worships wanted, telling us that she was our servant and that she had sixteen years.

"Can you prepare an *almuerzo?*" we asked. "We will try," she answered, her timorous eyes flashing, and the blood rippling under her dusky skin. "But my mother's house has not often had the honour of receiving such company, and I am afraid,—but will Your Worships excuse the poorness of the meal which we will endeavour to prepare?"

And Our Worships—who did not expect to find an Amphitryon *menu*—said they would excuse everything, and they strolled out into the pleasant sunlight, up the gleaming roadway, into the narrow path leading to the mountain. Whilst my friends examined a watercourse, I hunted about for ferns and flowers; chancing upon the familiar *Trichomanes*, the *Ceterach*, and the *Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*. Clear musical water babbled in the most delightful little runnel, on whose banks I found a lilac-hued ranunculus, some lovely orchises, and a few large masses of blue bugle, whose unusual

beauty positively amazed me. A troop of girls passed me on their way to dinner, with whom the ploughmen on the hillside exchanged noisy greetings. They were the operatives of Cegama's one and only factory.

Part of Don Miguel's business at this place was to visit the chicory mills, where there is no chicory, as he laughingly reminded me. There, in that remote mountain solitude, sallow-faced maidens were making up packages of so-called *café*, destined for the markets of Seville and Malaga. I think I dare almost venture to say that neither chicory nor coffee entered into the the composition of the fearful and wonderful mixture on which they were engaged. The crude brown masses of raw material littering the floors may have been wood-bark, carrots, or almost anything.

Our Worships were great people in the eyes of the Mayor, but our importance was definitely increased when we asked him to join us at lunch. Tired of the chicory mill, with its noisy water-wheel, we strolled back to the inn, along the white highroad, across which slender lizards darted like living shadows.

Soon we were in the presence of the frightened landlady and her still more agitated daughter; but

all was now ready for the Alcalde, for Don Miguel, Don Luis, and Don Rolando. The water for ablutions was in the tiniest of tiny basins, but that was the only thing which was not served in true Spanish abundance.

When the fragile, pale-faced hostess had closed the door upon the soup, Don Miguel quoted a fine old crusted French proverb about the quality of such dishes: "*Quand le diable est dans la marmite, le bouillon n'est pas bon.*" The soup was indeed poor, and the *olla* of boiled pork and chickpeas—the classic *puchero*—was infinitely trying. But who could describe the exquisite flavour of the incomparable dish of mountain mushrooms and new-laid eggs? This should have been served as an omelette, but came to table as a sort of jumbled up fricassée, the poor trembling creatures having broken the confection in taking it out of the pan. That dish was a dream, however, and the good souls were reassured when they saw how magically it disappeared. Then came some excellent *chorizos*, or sausages, flavoured with red capsicum, or, as the Spaniards say, *Pimienta de Guinea*. The flagon of good wine was not less memorable, and instead of lunching like peasants we feasted like princes. It was, as Don Luis observed, a

banquet of Lucullus, or Anacreon, the good hostess forgetting nothing, not even biscuits and "Old Brandy." Much chaff was exchanged in regard to the coffee, Don Miguel entreating Her Worship not to give us anything from *La Fábrica*, and his supplication was so favourably received, that we had the pleasure of drinking an aromatic fluid that might have pleased the Sultan of Turkey himself.

"Ah," said the *alcalde*, who had expanded generously, "there are more boys born in the village than girls, as food is scarce sometimes. With such ample fare as this there would certainly be more girls than boys;" on which remark we pondered deeply. At the conclusion of our meal the old fellow would have us visit the church, where he wanted to show me a fine monument erected to the memory of the patriot Zumalcarregui, the great Carlist, and one of Cegama's and the world's heroes.

In a delightfully comfortable sacristy, high up in the tower, the church possesses quaint records of births, marriages, and deaths. My two friends displayed much sentiment in a search for the record of their grandmother's marriage. Moved by the sight of honourable names, Don Luis became inclined to spread

himself out a little, when Don Miguel promptly checked him.

"Dry up, young man," he said. "Only imbeciles want credit for the achievements of their ancestors."

On leaving the chilly edifice we were crossed with holy water by the benevolent *alcalde*, and then all four proceeded to the ancestral halls of Don Miguel and Don Luis, outside which we stood at gaze, whilst the outraged heirs of faded splendour vented maledictions on the lazy tenants who had allowed the fine *casas* to get out of repair.

And then came a visit to the notary. Quickly as news flies in out-of-the-way places, the announcement of our arrival, nevertheless, had failed to reach the ears of the worthy lawyer when we presented ourselves at the door of his mansion; a fact, I believe, chiefly to be attributed to his wife's deafness. Our visit must have been something of a nuisance, for a man never feels at his best when he is clad in greasy and archaic garments, and displaying a chin graced by a three days' growth of bristle. La Señora, too, was anything but prepared for the entertainment of visitors; but she, like the Mayor, retained her composure, and made the

best of it. Her daughter, Doña Petra, however, managed to make *her* toilette before appearing in our presence. The friendly circle had assembled in the little living room. The polished floor and oaken panels gave quite a Rembrandtesque tint to the apartment. There was also a quiet, dreamy, old-world air about the house. The notary's wife took refuge in her knitting, as an Englishwoman would have done under similar circumstances. Petra produced a frosted cake, the equal of any Parisian gateau, and evidently considered a triumph of confectionery. This was set before us, with a flask of Cuban rum, and we received a pressing invitation to begin. But the abundance of the alberga had been too much for us already, and we said so.

"Cegama has but little to offer Your Worships," said Petra, "but perhaps you would like a little sulphur water?"

But Our Worships managed to avoid the necessity for partaking of the medicinal draught by keeping the more alluring liquor at a distance.

The notary had a keen ambitious face, despite the unfortunate beard. He asked us whether we would like to see his genealogical tree, painted by a son residing in Madrid. Having signified our willingness, we were conducted upstairs to a

room rejoicing in an exceptionally brilliant wall-paper. Here the precious record reposed on a fine chest of carved oak. The old Carlist notary fairly glowed with satisfaction when I exclaimed "Ignacio Loyola!" At this saint, the presumptive founder of the family, the pedigree stopped. At any rate the painter had not considered it advisable to go any farther back in his researches.

The notary was very naïve; he asked for our autographs, so I enquired whether he was a collector of such trifles.

"Yes, sir," he replied, "I am, and among others I have a most precious collection of anonymous ones."

Beaming with delight, despite his *déshabille*, he then produced a rare manuscript of the time of Ferdinand and Isabella, exquisitely written, and with beautifully painted initial letters.

"Señores," he cried, with much enthusiasm, "look at this; isn't it a beauty? I'm always collecting such things. I have just purchased by letter the manuscript of the Iliad, written by Homer himself—his own handwriting."

"Indeed," said Luis.

"Yes," cried the notary, "but the pity of it is the work is not written in Greek."

Hearing this, Miguel came to the rescue, for Luis and I were ready to burst.

"I say," enquired Miguel, "what document would Your Worship most like to have in your collection?"

The notary was quite ready. His wishes in that direction had already taken definite form.

"*Hombre!*" he answered, "why the telegram from Christopher Columbus announcing the discovery of the New World!"

More Gothic manuscripts were shown, and then the good old lady would have us examine her garden, which was just beginning to give a good account of itself. There, under the eyes of Mamma, Petra amused herself by a vague, but nevertheless desperate, attempt to capture the affections of Don Luis. Her eager face showed plainly that she was determined to make the most of those few minutes. Whilst the Señora exhibited the green peaches, Petra was giving Luis a rose and a yellow wallflower.

"Here, in this lonely place," said Mamma, apologetically, with the faintest glance in the direction of her daughter, "there is no movement, no life, no nothing. We are near the church, of course, and that is a comfort. We have a nice garden, and that is a blessing. My

husband and I are as solitary as a pair of old lammergeyers, with the white feathers of a hundred winters on their heads; but we are quite happy in a certain way. There is one thing to be regretted, however, and that is"—here she paused and sighed, glancing in the direction of her daughter—" my husband has so few opportunities of collecting documents." I thought she was about to speak her thought, but it passed through her heart unspoken.

" Are there no other young people in the village, Señora?" I asked.

" For Petra?" she queried. " No, not one." She again looked at her daughter, who was showing Luis her pretty teeth. " Luis and she used to know each other very well once," continued Mamma, with a little tremor in her voice, " but Tolosa is a long way from here, is it not?"

Poor Petra. The heart of a young girl, accustomed to such respectable poverty, is a seed which begins to swell as soon as a thought of love falls upon it.

I came away thinking of the French and English engineers who had lived in Cegama during the erection of the Northern Railway. Whilst there was work in the mountains there was life

in the hamlet. Was Petra then able to assess the value of love? Did she flirt with the strangers within the gates? Perhaps she may have turned her face to the wall and wept after the departure of some fair-haired fellow, who went southward across the barrier hills. I had evolved a sort of nebulous romance when I reached Beasain, the title being

"*Petra y las rosas de Cegama.*"

IV

AN EVENING AT ZUMÁRRAGA

BEFORE reaching Zumárraga the traveller is often moved by the loveliness of the highland scenery, and sometimes thrilled by the knowledge that the train is on the giddy height of a viaduct crossing a deep valley. One seems to be poised in the air. Far down below are deep glens, with their emerald velvet sward and bosky slopes. From the cultivated hollows, where the dark brown earth is freshly turned, the peasants lift up their faces and smile at the *viajeros*. The constant sun sheds happiness over meadow and mountain, and on the little healthy children playing in the fields. It is very beautiful this tumbled riot of hills wherein the kindly Basque has made his home. One learns to love the intelligent race even within the brief period occupied by a journey from Irun to Bilbao or Miranda.

On one of the *montes* near Tolosa the Romans

suffered a crushing defeat at the time they were endeavouring to subjugate the Cantabrians. Tradition tells us that the invaders were so impressed by the sublime heroism of those who opposed their advance, that they invited a parley, during which it was proposed that a given number of Basques should proceed to Rome, there to show their prowess before the emperor; and in case of their proving victorious against the opponents to be pitted against them, their rugged region should thereafter be left in peace. That the champions went to Italy and returned invincible is still a proud boast of these dalesmen; and here, in the midst of wild and pastoral beauty, they still remain, dauntless and unconquered, an indigenous and unadulterated people. Their liberties have been much curtailed, however, and there is a seething discontent in the bosom of these Iberians which may any day cause an explosion.

I shall never forget an evening at Zumárraga spent in the company of a Basque patriot, who was a man of culture and of noble birth. Forced by poverty to earn his living, he was serving as an engineer in South America. He told me he had written several novels, which had been published in Bilbao. He spoke of many strange

things concerning his country, not the least of which is the curious similarity of the Euskara language and the speech of South American Indians. For instance, the word *Suria* in the Indian dialects signifies "the sun," whilst in the Basque it has the same meaning. The Indians use the word *Ilargia*, which is almost equivalent to the Basque *Illa*, "the dead light"—*i.e.*, the moon. The Euskaldanac evidently have a very ancient language. Perochegui says that Adam spoke Basque, and that the idiom was brought to Spain long before the confusion of tongues at Babel. However this may be, one cannot but feel some surprise when confronted with the singular fact that at Eibar, during the ceremony which is performed on the occasion of the feast of the Resurrection, the Basques cry *sua, sua*—that is, "fire, fire"—and that the Indians of El Chaco use the same word, and employ the same gesticulations, whilst celebrating certain of their religious rites. One is insensibly led to the conclusion that Atlantis must indeed have been a geographical fact, and that the elephants' trunks carved on the columns of the ruined temples of Yucatan have a signification which is immeasurably deep.

To hear my Basque friend speak of the North

Americans was almost equally delightful. He had been to Chicago, and had returned with but a poor opinion of Brother Jonathan, the shape of whose nose, he said, was slowly changing, the lower jaw acquiring an almost bestial prominence, owing to the national habit of chewing gum and tobacco.

This interesting conversation occurred during dinner at Zumárraga's one and only hotel. Amidst his learned discourse my friend found time to say kind words to a pair of hopeful honeymooners who sat at the same table. The pretty bride had an Arab grace of movement delightful to behold. Her litheness and buoyancy were the very reverse of the gait and carriage of some of our English jointed dolls.

"Allow me to hand you this *dulce*," said the engineer, passing a conserve of honey and apples to the newly-married pair, "and permit me to express the hope that your mutual love may be equally sweet. Always remember this, that the heart is a treasury. If you empty it all at once you will find yourselves ruined."

The bridegroom drank our healths in good Rioja, and, when he had toasted the young couple in return, my new friend proposed that we should go out and sit among the working people.

"Come and see the real thing," he said.

So we sallied forth into the fragrant stillness of the night—a peace broken only by the loud call of the bell-frog—a strange, plaintive, metallic sound, half chirp, half wail, as if some laborious spirit was beating an immaterial anvil. There was a sense of mystery in this unfamiliar voice, a suggestion of unspeakable pathos; the passion of irrevocable fate fitting in with the vague beauty of the shadowy hills, over which rode the sad crescent of the last quarter of the moon, ruddy and sinister, amidst the silvery splendour of innumerable stars.

Inside the *taberna*, men in blue blouses were drinking wine and playing cards. Handsome men they were, every one of them. They were enjoying a game of *Mus*, and their faces were full of the varying expressions of the card-player. Wearing no braces, and using only light, easy-fitting garments, the Basque youth acquire a singular nobility of carriage, which accords well with the bronzed regularity of their features. They are broad-chested, massive-limbed, and lithe as panthers. The contrast between the Bilbao miner and his English counterpart is anything but favourable to my compatriots. Jerkin and breeches of blue cotton

jean, scrupulously changed once or twice a week, lend to the man a cheerful and artistic air of, at least, superficial cleanliness. This places the Basque hewer of iron ore far in advance of the British miner in the path of refinement. But in Zumárraga there are no miners, and those labouring men who were present in the little hostelry represented the industrial element of the village. But even the small number there assembled was rendered notable by the presence of a local poet or improvisatore, who, despite the soldier of the Civil Guard who was also in the room, let loose long tirades against the powers that be, and against the injustice of that monarchy which has interfered with the Basque *fueros*—the traditional privileges of Las Provincias Vascongadas, granted by ancient charters and ignored by Madrid. He then sang a song, which ran something after this style—

It was the Feast of Pentecost
Beside the inland sea ;
The bells were ringing " come to pray,"
He said, " We must not waste the day.
Dear love, O, let us to the wood,
For young and fervent is our blood ;
Or let us seek the river side,
To paddle in its flowing tide.

The sun shines warm and laughs the sea,
And I have thee, love; thou hast me.
The bells are ringing "come to pray,"
But, love, we will not waste the day,
We will not waste the day."

This was the introduction to more musical efforts. First there was the never-to-be-forgotten ballad of Don Rodrigo de Bivar, sung by a beardless youth; and then, under the kindly influence of some exquisitely-flavoured *moscorra*, or special cider, the whole company burst forth into immemorial song. The octaved unison of their national melodies pierced the ear with its inimitable stirring and pathetic ebb and flow. I felt irresistibly drawn to them, my heart beating as it were against theirs. Even the soldier, representing the government, surreptitiously joined in, the tears in his honest eyes, and the startled *sereno* (or watchman), pike in hand, peeped in at the doorway only to swell the number of patriots. The romantic figure of the Basque engineer-novelist, cup in hand, leading the fine songs, was a sight to see and remember. But above all I was most impressed by the bent frame and patriarchal hair of an old man, who passed through and through the ranks of the young singers as though a former century had suddenly become embodied, and was urging the

rising generation to remember its sacred trust. Ever and anon he raised his right hand, his wan lips sometimes moving in sympathy with the music, and sometimes framing the words, "*Que bueno es!*" By and by, when the excitement had subsided a little, the tears came into his eyes, and he went out of the door with drooping head and tottering steps. We followed him.

Far away in the depths of the valleys lights were twinkling. The bell-frog was still hammering away at his airy metal. But the sound that rivetted our attention and held us spell-bound was not that made by the batrachian. A nightingale had taken possession of a tall tree on the mountain slope and was filling the air with his exquisite plaint. I thought of Keats at once, and went to bed with the music of the finest poem in the English language humming in my brain.

"Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown;
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faëry lands forlorn."

V

ZUMÁRRAGA TO BILBAO

THE journey from Zumárraga to Bilbao is, in itself, well worth a visit to Spain. A narrow-guage line runs round the mountains, through long tunnels and over high bridges, in the most casual and careless way. But the succession of views which this railway unfolds is truly magnificent. Long before reaching Vergara one is almost paralysed by the proximity of the steep walls and the almost perpendicular green escarpments which lie beneath the *ferro-carril*. The train rattles along, performing the outside and the inside edge on the verge of these declivities with the skill of a practised skater, and a certain amount of nerve is needed when gazing at the yawning valleys below. But it is through a pastoral paradise that we travel, an Eden whose billowy woodlands and emerald green meadows are glorious in spring with the familiar blue bugle, and with those pretty orchises, the "long purples"

of Shakespeare. This chain of valleys contains some of the best blood and certainly some of the most intelligent people in Spain. Vergara, lying in a dale of delectable peace, her grey old mansions covered with armorial bearings, and adorned with curious corner windows, seems to be an ideal place for a poverty-stricken aristocracy.

After passing the pathetic cypress-fringed cemetery, where the tired ones of Vergara are at rest, within earshot of the happy voices of the lark and the nightingale, we came upon quiet old Palencia. Crimson snapdragons were flaunting on the walls of the railway station, and there was a crowd of cake-vendors awaiting our arrival there. We now began our lunch in the restaurant attached to the train. Lining the river below us was a row of tall antique *casas*, one of the most picturesque aggregations of buildings it has ever been our lot to see—their balconies all bright with many-coloured garments hanging out to dry. Then Málzaga was passed, its grey-green mountain torrent strong with flood. Then lovely Eibar, brown-roofed, strange and quaint, the delight of artists. Here they make the so-called "Arabic" damascened jewellery, the ornamentation being gold inlaid on steel and iron. At this place we fain would

have tarried, but time would not permit. The breathless train hurried us along through beautiful Ermua, whose green reposeful simplicity pleased us mightily. By and by we paused at Olacueta-Beriz, where our eyes were greeted by the sight of a splendid mass of grey mountain peaks sharply defined against the golden flowers of the uplands. Then on and on we hurried, past the high *peñas* which rise near Durango, and thence through verdurous, undulating country to Bilbao. The vines were all in leaf, and the green wheat was waxing rapidly in the warmth and moisture of spring. The apple-blossom and the broom made the journey doubly pleasant by reason of the pleasant thoughts to which they gave rise. It was indeed a charming little trip, but, short as the journey seemed, I was not denied a touch of human interest. Not soon shall I forget the tragic features of a woman who took the seat opposite me at the station of Durango.

"I have to go to Bilbao," she said, on entering the compartment, "the Good God has sent for me; meanwhile I will eat a little bread."

She began nibbling a crust, every now and then saying "*Jesus!*" and "*Dios mio!*" At first I thought she was mad, but I afterwards noticed

a crumpled telegram in her hand. I then knew that something had happened to her or to hers. Presently I mustered up courage to ask her what was the matter. Whereupon she handed me the slip of paper, which ran as follows: "*Vente enseguida urge.*" It was even as I had suspected. Her husband had telegraphed to her from the hospital of the Somorosstro Mines, where he was employed. Her face, which was like that of my old nurse, wore an expression of acute suffering, and something in her great black eyes told me that weeping and mourning are not the highest forms of grief. Beautiful Bilbao was also my destination; that fine industrial town set in a hollow of the Viscayan hills. The pleasant activity of its boulevards and the bustle of the shipping on the Nervion are always delightful to me. Yet I could not dismiss this woman from my memory, even when my warm-hearted compatriots held out their welcoming hands. In the streets the blue costumes of the workmen constantly reminded me of her and her maimed husband.

"I do not know what is the matter," she said on alighting, "but I hope he may yet be alive. We love one another so much, and he is still so young, and life will be nothing to me without him,"

VI

ARRIGORIAGA

One day I left beautiful Bilbao with the intention of indulging in a country stroll.

It was the thirteenth of April, and the rain-washed air was deliciously fresh and sunny. Proceeding by the Norte Railway, I alighted at the station of Arrigoriaga. There I chose a path which runs alongside the line in the direction of Orduña. Around me was a gracious profusion of mountains; the more distant of a cinereous hue, soft evanescent mist rising and falling about their slopes. Those in the immediate foreground were green with waving woods, and touched here and there with warm sienna where the mounds of débris from the iron mines showed through the leafage. On these heaps of refuse bronzed and perspiring labourers rested on their spades. The hills in the middle distance were beautifully blue, their orchards and velvety pastures having an indistinct loveliness peculiar to the season.

I sat down to take my fill of the drowsy quiet which possessed the air. A broad-winged hawk hung motionless above me, his dead-brown plumage half-refusing the sunlight. The spring had come to the earth, and the earth was very glad. The spring had come, and the wren in the thicket chirped her little lyric of love. The voice of the shy wren is far louder than one would suppose such a small body could possess. But she knows how to use it. There on a bush, her feathers all quivering, and her throat throbbing, she cried "Bob o' link! Bob o' link!" By and by the woods were made lovelier by a louder and mellower voice. A cuckoo had begun his familiar British song. My heart leapt out of my bosom, and was over seas in an instant in the green glens and glades of England, where there was also a waving of many banners and the piping of innumerable minstrels. There, in far away Vizcaya, I could almost see the uncertain glory of our British skies, and sniff the sharp, penetrating, uncloying odours of the awakening woods; the "ineffable, lyrical incense" which stimulates the spirit in April.

Spring is such a perfect time. The blood runs with a more delightful flow, the heart throbs with a warmer beat, the eyes see more clearly

when the buds burst out in the lengthening days. Even the oldest of us must feel the influence of that happy season, and thrill with a new sense of power at each renascence of the earth's activity.

Occupied with some such thoughts as these, I lay basking in the pleasant sunshine, when I heard steps approaching, and looking up I saw a little five-year-old girl toddling along the path upon the railway bank. She stopped to look into my face. What power there was in her gaze. I thrilled under it! She seemed to read my soul in an instant. She came over to my side, the embodiment of spring and purity, and of all Nature's matchless craftsmanship. Her hair was of the colour of the hazel-nut, and her eyes had the hue of a sunlit brook full of the dead leaves of autumn. She smiled, and it seemed to me that one of the loveliest creatures outside of Heaven had suddenly become my friend. The sun was strong and the light dazzled her, but it made her face all the more winsome, and her pearly teeth all the whiter.

"Take them," she said, without further introduction, handing me a bunch of columbines of a colour deeper than that of the April sky. "*Mires*

tu las cinco palomas?" she continued, naïvely. I was to notice the five little doves at the back of each flower.

"Dear child," I thought, "thou thyself art a columbine—*una pequeña flor*—and the five little graces that bedeck thee are beauty, innocence, truth, simplicity, and love."

I held out my arms and asked for a kiss. She timidly approached and threw hers around my neck.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Margerita," she answered.

She kissed me and then went her way, leaving me wondering at the new sweetness and poignancy which had suddenly crept into the scene. And what an exquisite silence that was which followed her departure! All at once I seemed to understand the subtle meaning, the heavenly sound of those beautiful words which fell upon the apostles' ears in far-off Palestine—"Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

The faint odour of the broom came to me on the breath of Spring; the sun was flashing its burning rays upon the yellow gold of a bush close at hand. Thereon I perceived a spider throwing out her fairy ropes with aim exact and

true. She had an Eden of a home among the fragrant yellow flowers, a home of love. Ah, yes!

"Flower o' the broom,
Take away Love and our earth is a tomb."

A young peasant swung past with lengthy strides, looking at me somewhat wistfully, as if he would have liked to add a few further words to his gruff "Good day." He was waiting for the train, and there was a rustic peace in the scene which to the uncontemplative might have been oppressive. I regretted afterwards that I did not make friends with him, for subsequent events proved that he regarded my silence as suspicious, and myself as a dangerous character.

Everyone speaks to everyone else in Spain. You say "Good morning" or "Good evening," whenever you enter a train or other public vehicle, and "*Adios*" when you leave. But it is sometimes difficult for a foreigner to understand the peasantry, because of the local *patois;* hence my disinclination to enter into conversation with this young man.

By and by I saw an eagle (*aguila perdicera*) questing on the side of the opposite hill. He suddenly spied his prey and dropped like a plummet, his dark brown wings collapsed, his

eyes on the game. I saw the gleam of his white breast, and heard the rushing sound of his descent, though I was quite four hundred yards away.

Becoming tired of my sunlit couch, I rose and made my way through the long lush grass to the summit of the railway embankment, where I found the selfsame youth in pleasant converse with one of his fellows. They had a pipe, on which they discoursed sweet and plaintive music beneath a flowering hawthorn. Their faces were guileless — their gaze generous and trustful. Their attitude was one of perfect repose: the scene was idyllic, Theocritan.

I strolled along, not venturing to interrupt the idyll by the utterance of a platitude, and occupied myself by gathering the birds'-foot trefoil and some precocious yarrow, whose long spindly stems I found here and there at my feet. I then sought out a little cluster of apple trees, and took a long, deep draught of their delicious perfume. I felt at peace with all the world, quite heedless of either Past or Future. The exquisite pleasure of the moment absorbed me; I was a lotus eater, a sybarite revelling in the supreme beauty of Spring. It was a scene in my life to be made ever memorable by its lyrical

colouring, and the intensity of my spiritual feelings.

When I reached the path again I heard a thud on the wet ground, as of a falling stone; then another, and another. Someone was directing artillery against me. Ere I had time to reflect, a small flint had grazed my temple, and a larger one had fallen on my right foot. I looked round, but being unable to see my assailants I made my way through the railway cutting as quickly as possible. Emerging from the shadow of the rocks I came upon a tall priest, duly capped and cassocked, who was feeding his goats on the grass and herbs growing on the embankments.

Quite breathless, I ventured a commonplace, endeavouring to appear composed.

"Ah! you English," said the *padre*, "you are always in such a hurry; the train is not due for a good half-hour."

I did not tell him of the outrage to which I had been subjected because I had sniffed at someone's apple blossom, but treated the matter with stern nonchalance. The priest was allowed to do all the talking during that half-hour. And I must say I heard news of gravity whilst sitting there endeavouring to cool. The pecca-

dilloes of one poor woman were incisively criticised, my friend stating that he had no sort of influence over her. All the refractory sheep of the fold passed under review, and very many black ones were shown in their true colour. What interested me most, however, was a description of the local game, following a lengthy dissertation on the excellence of goats' milk, which was described as being particularly good for all humours of the blood. The *Caza* most difficult of access in Vizcaya is the ibex, or wild goat (*Cabra montes*), of which there are many in the mountains. This noble game is found in other parts of Spain, the finest of its haunts being the Sierra de Gredos. The worthy *cura* said that he would love to shoot ibex, and regretted that his sacred office debarred him from openly enjoying the pleasures of the chase. He had not been a stranger to such pursuits in his youth, however, having had many a wild hunt in the sierras; and later on in life he had played the national game of pelota long after he had been installed in his first living. But now, he averred, his was a calm existence, *muy placido*; and at one period of his incumbency his parish had been still calmer. Now that the dynamite factory had begun work, and the paper mill was

turning out plenty of packages, there were more souls to save, and more responsibilities devolved upon him.

"I stick to my vocation," said he, "like the ibex sticks to its horns, but I am not of nocturnal habits like that animal; preferring rather to go to bed early and to keep out of mischief."

"But do you not find it very dull here?" I asked. "And what about preferment—that must be necessarily slow?"

"Ah! my friend," he replied, "I never think of bishoprics—by family and by attainments I am worthy of one, although I say it myself, but I have no influence, I am poor. But then I always try to comfort myself with the reflection that virtue that is not disinterested ceases to be virtue."

"Truly, a noble sentiment," I vouchsafed.

"O yes, here I am from year end to year end, with a church whose bell daily calls the attention of the world to the wretched architecture of the edifice. But then I must not complain; the humour of the country-side keeps me alive. Some of it is really good. Even this very day a little boy, whom I was examining in history, gave me a curious reply. I asked him who was the greatest conqueror the world has

known, and he glibly answered, "Don Juan Tenorio."

"Then, again, there was the carpenter's apprentice, who came to my place for night lessons with half-a-score of other dunces. He was a little free in his conversation and morals, and people looked askance at him. 'Come, my boy,' I said, 'brace yourself up and get to know something about religion, then I'll be able to give you a good character.' 'Ah, *cura*,' he replied, 'of what use is an excellent character if you cannot borrow money upon it?' Then, too, there was the little chap who said to his chum, when the latter boasted of his labours with dead languages, 'I would recommend you to begin with your own, old fellow.' Ah, there is your train. Go with God. Good-bye."

VII

PAMPLONA AND VILLAVA

THE proud pyramidal peak which stands sentinel over the little hamlet of Echari-Aranaz was taking the glory of the sunset as the train left the clear air, and the green undulating country, in which lies Alsásua. Beautiful indeed were the oak-woods in the valley of the Araquil as we slowly proceeded towards Pamplona. It was the close of a day such as that of which Herbert sang so exquisitely—

> "Sweet day so cool, so calm, so bright,
> The bridal of the earth and sky,
> The dew shall weep thy fall to-night;
> For thou must die."

The flight of the swallow is hardly more impossible to me than the ability to fix the true image of that lovely scene in the heart of another; nor yet its message to me—for all languages are not of the sort we find in books, and all thought cannot be crystallized into

language. I will, therefore, leave the indescribable pomp of this sunset undescribed. The sun had sunk, and the stars had come out, long before the electric lights of the city came into view, and the night had come down like a beautiful dream.

Pleasant was the familiar voice of the factotum of the *fonda* who greeted me at the station. Here I encountered my old friend X., after a separation of seven years, during which interval we had both changed so much that we did not at first recognise each other. It was my good fortune to be able to extricate him from a difficulty in regard to his baggage—the porter of the hotel being unable to speak either French or German, to say nothing of English.

X. was full of news. His latest volume of poems had just been issued, and I believe he had a copy in his dressing-bag, but he was too modest to show it. Afterwards, however, he sent me the book, and I revelled in his dainty verse for several days.

After ascending the hill on which the city is perched, and rattling over the pavement of the narrow streets, I heaved a sigh of profound content when the genial landlady of The Perla held out her left hand in welcome. Here, at any rate,

I was free from the eternal miseries of great hotels full of people, and yet so horribly empty: the torture of strange rooms and dubious beds. The Pearl is cosy and comfortable; the hostess is obliging, and the *chef* is an artist.

How I relished his asparagus and his stewed veal, washed down with divine claret of Logroño! After partaking of many other good things, I renewed my acquaintance with the little goddess of the household—a beautiful girl of fourteen. She had just been confirmed, and, modestly producing some photographs, she showed me how she looked in her exquisite white gown.

"I have a story for you," she said, with charming naïveté. "The wife of a very old man died one day last July. 'Poor Pedro,' said a friend, desiring to console him, 'what a great loss thou hast sustained.' 'Don't you believe it,' said Pedro, 'it is not so great a loss as you suppose, old fellow; for on my marriage day I had seven pesetas, and to-day I still have five; therefore my net loss is only two pesetas.' What do you think of that?" asked my little señorita.

"I cannot think of it at all," I replied. "When I am here I can think of nothing but you."

Whereat her woman's blood mounted to her

cheeks and she retired to bed. She, at least, was still unpractised in the sublime coquetry of the Spanish female.

In the morning I was awakened by the jangling of bells—church bells, sheep bells, cathedral bells, and the bells on the necks of the milch goats. Verily there is no lack of tintinabulation in Spain. The sun was hot in my balcony, and the great Plaza looked very bright and fresh. Boys with little *barquillos* (biscuit lotteries) were standing here and there in the shadow of the trees, and troops of dogs were quarrelling in the sun.

I sat down and basked like an adder, the heat comforting me like strong wine.

By and by the sound of music announced the approach of soldiers, and a regiment of infantry crossed the square, the men looking very picturesque in their grey caps, blue coats, and red trousers.

After breakfast I leisurely made my way across the Plaza, skirting a garden where that strange, almost leafless, *arbol de amor* (*Cercis siliquastum*) was displaying its wealth of peach-coloured blossom, which springs straight from the trunk and branches. Crotons glistened in the sun, and the dear old-fashioned tulip was flaunting its showy

blood-red cups, tall and gay in the freshness of the morning. Giant peonies hung heavily on their stalks, and pansies were thriving in purple patches beneath bushes in whose friendly shadows finches were twittering their matins. All green things looked bright and cheerful; for Pamplona, with her *agua rica*, spares not the garden hose.

Leaving the terrible odours of the streets in the older part of the town, I emerged into the open space without the walls, by way of the drawbridged *Puerta de Carlos Quinto*.

It was a feast day, and in the full blaze of the forenoon they were letting off rockets. Spaniards do not understand fireworks. They are pyrotechnic by nature, yet they are not able to master the art of pyrotechnics. They delight in discharging rockets in daylight—the more brilliant the day the better.

Down in the fosse men were busy spinning rope, and on the green grass fronting the ramparts peasants were herding sheep and cows in the fresh west wind.

The dry, exhilarating air was spiced with the perfume of the bean-fields, whose olive-green masses could be seen far off on the plain. The grey old walls of the citadel, on which so much blood has been shed, were all aflame with the

appropriate scarlet poppy. Farther on, where, perhaps, Ignacio Loyola once stood during the memorable siege in which he figured, the ramparts were gilded with masses of yellow wallflower.

I took the road leading to France by way of Mugaire, famed for its trout-streams. I had not gone far when I perceived a remarkable old man at the roadside. He was tending a flock of sheep—the stupidest and silliest animals in creation. The old fellow was erect as a wand and sprightly as a football player. As I passed he gave me good day. Shortly afterwards I heard him bellowing at the top of an unusually strident voice, "Come out of that, thou gourmand, has not the good God given thee plenty of fresh green herb (*yerba buena*), then why shouldst thou stray in the wheat?" And, to my surprise, the culprit sheep at once rejoined the flock, looking very much ashamed.

Half way to Villava there is a magnificent view of peerless Pamplona. A view that stamps itself indelibly upon the memory; a scene the proper appreciation of which thrills one with the conviction that something immaterial, eternal, abides within us. In the dry, clear air the special quality of Spanish landscape is there

seen to perfection. Bold and imposing is the *tout ensemble*. Itself somewhat colourless, proud Pamplona, the noble, the heroic, and leal city, stands on an eminence, its grey roofs, white walls, and ochre-coloured Cathedral towers sharply defined against the distant turquoise hills of Navarra. The more immediate mountains are of a darker, an indescribable blue. Truly a glorious prospect! To right and left of the city are hollows bright with poplars, red roofs, and running streams. Doves rise from the barracks and streak the air with burnished silver. All around me daisies powder the turf, which the earthworms have covered with a myriad tiny clay pellets. It is the dear little daisy of Burns,

"Wee modest crimson-tippéd flower,"

the

"Sweet nursling of another sky,"

and it fills me with a secret joy.

Red and piebald beetles swarm in the scant grass, and the busy ants are ten thousand strong.

Below me, through the spreading branches, I have the delectable prospect of the plain. The Arga, dreamily flowing through the flat, fertile land, is here and there shaded by innumerable poplars, which whip the air and flick

the blue water with indigo shadows. Farther out, the river, like a broad riband, takes the sky into its heart, assuming the same ethereal hue as the heavens. The plains are full of fresh young wheat, brilliantly green. Long seams of yellow mustard intersect the square cornfields, and patches of blue flax shine here and there like a lovely mist. The distant Pyrenean spurs are still touched with snow, and the low hills to my right are bare and ugly with the crude colour of the upturned earth of the leafless vineyards. All is practically unchanged from the Middle Ages.

Clouds of dust rise in front of me as I cross the bridge to watch a fisherman tempting the *pescado*. I do not venture to approach him to enquire what manner of fish he tries to deceive. It may be *truta* or *sábalo*, *lisa* or *alosa*; it may even be *escarcho* or *yáculo*. I do not care to know. He stands among the poplar shadows, where the long grass shines like silk. In that cool shade his sport must be a veritable pleasure, the refreshing picture of the broad river ever before him. I wonder whether he has ever heard any whisper of good old Izaak Walton, or of Taylor the Water-poet—has any breath of their fame ever floated as far as Pamplona?

Does that fisherman sometimes sing with our classic angler?—

> "I was for that time lifted above earth,
> And possessed joys not promised in my birth."

The bridge spanning the Arga is also a feast for the eyes, its curves being all that could be desired. The Spanish *puente* is always made for the painter, and to be a perpetual delight to all lovers of beautiful form.

The noon waxes hotter and the cicalas begin to chirp on the wayside. I therefore hurry forward to order my luncheon, taking a brief glance at the typical village of Villava; a congeries of tumbledown yellow-brick mansions once tenanted by hidalgos, but now the abode of the poorest of the poor.

So dry and dusty and miserable the place looks, that it gives one the impression of being burnt out; a city of the moon—all its passion vanished, all pomp and splendour for ever fled. Not least of the pathetic evidences of a bygone lustre are the numerous escutcheons which grace the walls, graved with the crests and quarterings of knights whose swords and lances were ever at the service of their lieges.

After luncheon I turn back, and at the door of an *alberga*—the half-way house—I join a knot

of peasants and am invited to partake of a draught of wine.

I am much amused at a scrap of conversation I hear at this place.

"Give me a cigar," says one young sottish lout with a lurch.

"Impossible," says another of the company. "I have only the one I am smoking, and another dozen which I shall smoke after finishing this."

Here I learn that quite forty per cent. of the land of Spain is uncultivated, and that the portion under cultivation is capable of being much more productive than it now is. I also discover the fact that a vineyard labourer receives better wages than a man on a corn farm, or *cortijo*.

A great heap of pigskins filled with wine lies at the gable end of the house, looking like a mass of carcases; the sun's hot rays fall full upon these antique receptacles, causing them almost to expand.

As I proceed in the direction of the city, one or two men shoot past on their bicycles, waving me a salutation. A pert chaffinch drops into the road and revels in his dust-bath. A marsh-harrier skims past, her eyes fixed hungrily on the ground.

A skylark is singing far above me, his loved

ones in sight in the wheatfield below. With ever-fresh insistence, Watson's lines recur to me:—

"Thy spirit knows nor bounds nor bars,
On thee no shreds of thraldom hang.
Not more enlarged the morning stars
Their great Te Deum sang.

"But I am fettered to the sod,
And but forget my bonds an hour
In amplitude of dreams a god,
A slave in dearth of power."

Sweet scents arise from the rejuvenated earth, but, predominating over all other odours exhaled by flowers this glorious May morning, the breath of the beanfields makes each moment fragrant with an indefinable, an almost unearthly sweetness. There is a special quality in this delicious air which exhilarates the soul, and constrains one to exclaim, "To live this single moment thus would be reward enough for an infinity of ills!"

A ramble through the Taconera, where the pansies are a sight for the gods, completes my morning exercise. I retire to my room for a siesta. There my slumber is undisturbed save by the mysterious *frou-frou* of silks when Madame V—— passes my door, on her way to give my friend X. his first lesson in Spanish.

VIII

PAMPLONA II

At vesper time I made my way to the Cathedral. The coolness of the great temple was very refreshing after the heat of the Plaza. The air was heavy with the stale fumes of incense. A lighted chapel tempted me down one of the long aisles. In it there were many candles burning, and the altar was heaped with flowers. Seeing two female figures kneeling on the marble steps facing the lights, I stepped back into the deep shadow of an arch. The trains of their long black dresses reached half-way across the floor of the chapel. They were evidently mother and daughter, mourning for husband and father.

I stood there a moment impressed by their absolute silence, and their attitude of profound sorrow. All at once a young man emerged from the darkness of the aisle, and stood in the stream of light that issued from the *capilla*. The shadow of the *reja* fell across his face. Stooping to the

ground he unfastened his shoes, and, slipping them off, he crept towards the two worshippers. With the subtle instinct of love, one of the women turned her face slightly towards him as he approached, and as quickly turned it away. But a hand was held out behind her back and the creamy fingers were seized by the man and passionately kissed. He had given her a letter. He then quietly withdrew from the *capilla*, and with one longing, backward glance, and a heavy sigh, he disappeared; a shadow among the shadows. "How delicious it is to be young and to be in love," was my reflection, at the conclusion of this interesting scene.

In the evening I went to the theatre. The entertainment was so poor that it would have merited the contempt of a marionette or of a Punch and Judy man. It was a farce entitled *Ole Sevilla*, by the "renowned author," Don Julian Romea. There is, however, one consolation left to the victim of third-rate Spanish actors, and that is the study of the audience. In the *palcos* there were several handsome girls in white and pink, whose necks and hair glittered with diamonds. They evidently found the piece diverting. In this most stupid farce an unlucky Englishman was held up to ridicule, as is usual

in the modern Peninsular drama. Why we, as a nation, should be singled out by Continental peoples as the type of everything that is stupid, and vulgar, and ugly, passes all comprehension. But the stigma is on our good name, and we seem likely to retain our character of rich fools until the millennium. The only good thing on this poverty-stricken Pamplona stage was a Sevillan dance, which lasted barely five minutes. This just redeemed the function, giving it one little note of life, one gleam of piquant humanity.

The "celebrated low comedian," Don Valentin García, was the worst hand at buffoonery I have ever seen in my life. The rest of his Compañia Comico-Lirica were equally hopeless. Altogether *Ole Sevilla* was the vilest thing I have ever seen on any stage. But the aristocrats of Pamplona (and all the people are aristocrats in that city) sat through the idiotic performance with every manifestation of lively approval.

The impecuniosity of Spain is nowhere quite so apparent as in her provincial theatres. Save in Madrid and Barcelona there is usually a great lack of scenery, and a complete disregard for spectacular effect. Costume plays, which go so far towards educating a nation, are very rarely beheld. Glaring anachronisms are perpetrated

in the most unblushing manner. The prompter is nearly always to be heard above the harsh, crude voices of the male actors. The women are the better artists; the men being on a much lower level in regard to intelligence, grace, and delivery. Then, too, the underbred deportment of these fellows grates on one's nerves. There is no fallacy more apparent in the Peninsula than the tradition of universal Spanish politeness. It is true that the average university man knows his manners, and that the lower classes display the instinctive courtesy of a Latin people; but the *bourgeoisie* have but little real refinement, and men of this class fall far short of one's ideal formed by an acquaintance with the character of the mediæval Spaniard. Hence it is that such a play as that to which I have alluded becomes the apotheosis of vulgarity and the bounder.

There was a great stir on Sunday, or, as the Spaniards say, *Domingo*. It was the festival of the children's patron saint, and the procession was worthy to be named with the ostentatious displays of the late Sir Augustus Harris.

First came the mounted men of the Civil Guard, in their picturesque three-cornered hats, and swash-buckler costumes of black and red,

tricked out with gleams of white. Following these men there was a long string of anæmic boys representing the able-bodied urchins of Pamplona. Each of these weary-eyed little fellows bore a guttering candle or *vela*. Then came a host of girls, with a tiny maiden in the centre attired as an angel. There was much pathos in the sight of this poor creature, with her crumpled wings and her proud smile of real happiness. Next came the young men of the city with more candles and banners. They preceded the image of the child Jesus. Its beauty affected me strangely—actually making the sobs rise in my throat. Immediately behind this idol there was the effigy of the patron saint, heralding a crowd of ecclesiastics in gala vestments, who formed the bodyguard of a gorgeously-dressed Virgin. The Mother of Christ was standing in an attitude of prayer, her hands raised to Heaven. The long brown hair that touched her waist shone in the sunlight like spun silk. Thus upborne above the heads of the crowd this queenly image was most impressive and lifelike.

The large *plaza* was full to overflowing with reverent people, and there was a great noise proceeding from the places where they were

discharging rockets. The dusty square, usually so colourless, now wore an aspect of extraordinary brightness. Every housewife had draped her balcony with shawls, flags, and beautiful table-cloths. In nearly every balcony there was a pretty woman. The *plaza* was thus invested with a peculiar interest. But what most excited my curiosity was the appearance of an ancient dame, who emerged from the French window of a romantic old *casa*. The shutters of this dwelling had been closed for months, and now they were at last thrown open. From my station in the second storey of the hotel I gained a glimpse of the severe interior of the mansion, with its draped furniture, and covered chandeliers. The old lady who had come out into the balcony was at least eighty years of age. She was clad in the customary black of saints' days and holy days. There she stood, one thin, trembling hand on the railing, the other on the shoulder of a maid. When the children passed, her blanched, wrinkled features tried to work themselves into a smile. For it was the sixth of May—the day of the innocents—the gala day of those who were not disillusionized. Standing there, near the faded glories of her home, listening to the blare of the heralds' trumpets, the

cheerful strains of the reed band, the swish of the rockets, and the loud jangle of inharmonious bells, I could not but regard her as almost a living image of that effete Church whose proud ministers were marching past at the rear of the procession in all the pomp of Romish pageantry, the sun blazing upon the golden threads of their copes and chasubles.

When the people had all left the square for the Cathedral,—whilst a pathetically brief sunset was touching the sky with incomparable splendour,—I saw the *criada* close those dusty shutters of the escutcheoned *casa* once again. When they were securely fastened I turned away to seek out my friendly Tauchnitz, thinking how typical was that ancient Duchess of the bygone greatness of Spain. Not only did she serve me as a sentient manifestation of the decay of a once all-powerful faith, but also as an emblem of a country the magnificence of whose wasted efforts would be beyond the power of my pen to describe, even were I gifted with the *cacoethes scribendi* of a Lope de Vega.

IX

SAN MIGUEL AND IRÚRZUN

FAR away in the Navarrese hills lies the tiny hamlet of San Miguel. It is set in a dale which forms one of the links in a chain of valleys extending from Tolosa to Irúrzun; another of the links in this *cadena* being the watering place of Betelú, famous for its mineral springs.

I have friends at San Miguel, and it was in order to pay them a brief visit that I alighted at the railway station of Irúrzun on the fourth of May. As there was no diligence I had to foot it up the hill to the alberga, where I engaged a mule. I then ordered lunch. The upper guest room was black with the smoke of ages. Hanging to its rafters were the inevitable algarrobas, capsicums, heads of maize, and strings of garlic. On the hearth a wood fire was fitfully sputtering, and sending out streams of pungent smoke into the apartment. I was informed that I might have pork chops. I therefore entered into a

contract to consume a certain quantity of that delicate comestible. The day was sultry, and my throat was parched. As the landlady of the inn did not appear to be Argus-eyed, I took advantage of her absence when she went downstairs to greet another guest, and stepped into the pantry in the wake of the girl who had gone to draw me a cup of wine. She was a buxom creature of twenty summers, and appeared much diverted at my inadequate Spanish. For it was indeed inadequate to express all the extravagant compliments which I felt constrained to shower upon her. In that stolen interview of one minute, however, I learned that her name was Juanita, and that she had a lover. I was also enabled to select the least fat of several terrible pork cutlets, which were soon frizzling under Juanita's dainty fingers.

In my absence another traveller had arrived. The newcomer was a Frenchman, and he took a seat near me with exaggerated deference. Very soon a fearsome liquid was set before us, which was supposed to be soup, but which appeared more like the water in which dishes had been washed. In this *potage* great hunks of bread were swimming. The Frenchman, who did not appear anxious to enter into conversa-

tion, had one helping of this precious concoction and then he began to gesticulate. With a nod of comprehension the old hostess withdrew, and returned with another platter of soup.

"*Non, non*," cried the Frenchman, in his own language, "it is fish I require."

"More bread in it? ah! yes, I understand," said the Señora in Castilian. She re-entered her larder and came back with a large roll.

"*Non, non*," shouted the bewildered guest. "See, I will show you." With this he proceeded to sketch a fish.

"Very pretty picture," said the Señora, approvingly. Then turning to me she observed—

"*El es pintor*."

"*Evidentemente*," I replied, not wishing to disclose the fact that I was an Englishman.

"Good to eat," screamed the Gaul.

"Yes, yes, good to eat," laughed the hostess.

"*Donnez-moi du poisson*," he insisted.

"*No comprendo*," she purred, still smiling the pitying smile which so greatly annoys the misunderstood.

"He requires *pescado*," I broke in.

"*Pescado* we have not here," she said laughingly, "there isn't such a thing; but there are some excellent pork chops for the Señor."

And he had to be content with these dainties, to which was added the universal *gazpacho*.

It was at this selfsame *fonda* that a man complained of fleas in his bed. "Ah, yes," said the landlady, "you told me yesterday, and I've sent for my daughter who lives at Alsásua; she catches them better than any of us in the house."

By and by I left the inn and mounted my mule, which set off along the white *carretera* at a breakneck speed. This most extraordinary animal kept up the pace for a good four miles, and I was reluctantly led to suspect that Antonio, the ploughboy, had given the poor creature something to *make* her go. At any rate, Antonio had not the satisfaction of seeing me thrown, which untoward occurrence might perhaps have afforded the villagers a somewhat unusual amusement. Hence it was that my impressions were a little chaotic on my outward journey to San Miguel through really fine scenery.

I arrived at my friend's house hot, and dusty, and tired. There I was refreshed with thin *cerveza* and regaled with accounts of the winter shooting. Bears had been rather numerous, owing to the severity of the frost, and several

had been killed. The wolves had shown some temerity, too, and not a few had paid for their rashness. I found these mountaineer acquaintances in a rather melancholy humour, but they smiled when I told them of the ride I had had, and laughed outright when I reminded them of my previous visit, on which occasion Antonio rode the *mula*, and I bestrode a steed kindly lent me by a sergeant of *caballeria*. That was a visit paid during winter, and it was dark when we had set off from San Miguel to Irúrzun. Hearing a dismal howling in the hills I had incidentally asked the plough-boy whether there were wolves about, never dreaming that such would be the case. To my surprise he said—

"*Hay muchos lobos por aqui.*" (There are many wolves hereabouts.)

Then it was that the Bucephalus which belonged to the polite sergeant found out how pressing was my errand to the railway station. Of these and many other matters we spoke, and I bade farewell, leaving the mule to be sent after me in the custody of an urchin.

I set forth on foot, pencil and paper in hand. To my right brawled the clear stream, and beyond its further margin the steep slopes were covered with brushwood, in all the fairy hues of

spring. Patches of velvety sward of the most vivid of emerald greens were dotted with sheep and tiny white lambs. Thrushes were singing lustily in the coverts which fringed the green mountain beck. Yellow-hammers flitted from bush to bush on the wayside, and many unfamiliar birds were roused as I examined the hedgerows. This pastoral scene was a realization of Arcady. It was so quiet, so sunny, so green, and so refreshing. Loitering along the highway, I passed an agreeable half-hour in a sort of day-dream. I was roused by the approach of a paralytic, whose poor, thin hands trembled in the sunlight.

"*Adios*," he said, trying to touch his blue *boina*.

An impulsive pity took possession of me, and putting my arm through his, I asked him how long he had been afflicted.

"Seven years, *hijo mio*," he replied. "Once I could play pelota with the best of them—Dorroggoyen wasn't in it with me—yes, and I used to play the giddy goat as well, but now it's an age since I was able to set a bad example. I had a son once. He loves me no more. I gave him all in his youth, and when I am old he gives me nothing. The keenest ploughshare that cuts into the heart is a child's neglect. I am only fit for

a box, to be put in the earth. *Adios, hijo*, enjoy your youth. I myself will soon get the full measure of life's greatest boon, the treasure of sleep."

He then went on his way, and there, in the midst of the wild beauty of spring, a prescience of age touched my heart with a hand of ice. A sense of the futility of life cast over the landscape the shadow of an invisible cloud. The mention of that unfilial ingratitude reminded me of the expression of one of my Lancashire friends: "The cat takes mice to th' kitlings, but I'll be damned if ever I knew t'kitlings bring owt to t'cat."

Muscular brown cattle were feeding on the scrub of the hillsides, and the faint tinkling of their bells revived me. It was a note of life, of hope, of virile humanity. Away I sped at a smart pace, past fields of wheat whose vivid green refreshed my eyes, tired with the glare of the highway. Soon I overtook a peasant in blue trousers and shirt, a brown plaid slung over his shoulder.

"Good day, brother," he grunted, as he stolidly trudged along. "What are you doing in this land? What is the name of your *pais?*"

I then came upon other country people, on

their way to market. They were guiding mules, over whose backs were slung panniers of bleating lambs.

At this part of the valley there was little of interest to the botanist; clumps of green hellebore and a few scabious being the chief blossoms under the hedges. Some poisonous plants attracted attention, however; one with a brown and green flower being especially noticeable.

The sun had deserted the valley, where wrens were warbling their joy, like fairy bells imagined in childhood. A flood of light was climbing the eastern slopes. The evening magic touched the oaks on the summit with a splendid glow. Down below, the bronzed peasants were still hard at work guiding the slow-moving cattle over the brown soil, filling and emptying their primitive basket-waggons of fertilizing matter.

Midway between San Miguel and Irúrzun there is a tiny brown hamlet with an almost windowless church. This unpretentious building is surrounded by sturdy old houses devoid of glass. The north wind blows keen and cold from the high peaks behind Tolosa, and balconied windows are not in favour in these parts. Navarra lies about two thousand four hundred

feet above the level of the sea, and the rarefied air of winter bites cruelly. There are no gallants, and but few guitars, in this neighbourhood. Gardens exist only in the imagination of the people, and even the nightingale, so ubiquitous in Spain, prefers a happier spot. Stern and ancient and ugly the village stands, in the midst of fertile meadows, the river running hard by. As I passed, thinking of its tragedies and its comedies, women were going to a field for water, their steel-rimmed pails poised upon their heads. They were heavy, uncouth creatures, brutalized by the weary toil of uneventful years. Nevertheless there was that in their carriage which suggested the nobility of poverty—the inherent goodness of those who come closest to Nature, the tillers of the soil. There was, too, a hint of hidden suppleness that could readily respond to the jerky music of the *jota*. And, moreover, the steady light in their lustrous eyes told of a wealth of love lavished upon the idols of their hearts.

On the highway directly opposite the village a stone states that the distance to Pamplona is four leagues, and glad I felt that it was not my fate to have to do the journey to that city entirely on foot. Here the stream is pretty

wide, and a delightful picture now presented itself. A young peasant with bright black eyes deserted the road to guide his two oxen and lumbering wain through the river. He began to ford the stream, but drowsy with the heat of the afternoon, he stopped to gaze into the languid current swirling about his bare legs. The grateful beasts lapped the cool water in great content. It was an exquisite scene—Arcady again. The rich, deep brown of the roofs of the old farmhouses contrasted pleasantly with the pink and white of the apple blossoms in their orchards. Acres of yellow crowfoot and white daisies shone in the meadows. The lithe, blue-clad figure of the lazy youth and his dun-coloured cattle were mirrored in the stream, in a drooping attitude of perfect indolence. Pranking the rocks on one side of the water was a fine yellow acacia; the other was enlivened by bushes of golden broom. These were likewise reflected in the grey-green serenity of the river. The *tout ensemble* was exquisite. It was a picture that will never fade from my memory.

On my left, light grey rocks rose in tremendous precipices, barren and bleak even in the sunlight, but tragic and terrible when the sun forsakes

them. These desolate escarpments are the haunt of the peregrine falcon and the griffon *buitre*. This vulture works much mischief among the kids and lambs. I could see the great birds wheeling aloft in endless circles, in the evening's clear opalescent light. In the interstices of the crags I found the pretty cinquefoil, and a sort of cranesbill which was more violet in hue than its English cousin.

Serranos with tragic countenances brought down their noisy sheep. Like all dwellers in valleys, they find their environment of mountains somewhat too inevitable. Those exquisite glimpses of faint blue horizons, and vague purple distances—behind which Fancy pictures, not perhaps cities of faëry, but the ideal place, the desired habitation—are denied to dalesmen, save when they choose to climb to some Pisgah-peak. The old man in his declining years smokes his pipe contemplatively, his eyes resting upon the barrier hills. To him appears no beautiful, misty view, with a suggestion of the Infinite—the delectable land, the ultimate bourne. The mountaineer is therefore more or less liable to become soured, morose, hypochondriacal; although true, honest human sympathy never ceases to live in his

bosom. The conditions under which we exist have more effect upon our development as men, both mentally and physically, than we imagine. What should we become were we condemned to spend the remainder of our existence in a brown house without a pane of glass in that quiet hamlet near Irúrzun? Thus thinking of the rugged features of these poor shepherds, scored with furrows made by the ploughshare of monotonous lives, I became myself somewhat sad. In this frame of mind I arrived at a roaring weir with its line of plentiful white froth, foaming at the foot of the immense rocks which form the doorway to the chain of valleys. These rocks are known as *Las Dos Hermanas*—the Two Sisters. Rising nearly a thousand feet from the valley, these perpendicular pinnacles of tertiary conglomerate are really awe-inspiring. Touched here and there with ferns, flowering heath, and evergreen shrubs, they present a most solemn and fantastic appearance. The one which lay on my right is the favourite nesting-place of the wide-winged griffon vultures, which are always to be seen about it. Even as I gazed, one great bird descended into a mountain pasture like a plummet, and, snatching a hare, bore the poor creature aloft to a ledge on the inaccessible pre-

cipice. This must have been a lammergeyer, however, as it seemed to be of an extremely large size; moreover the bird had a white head, which the sunlight showed off to great advantage. I very much regret my inability to obtain more accurate information in regard to the vultures of *Las Dos Hermanas*, but it seems certain that the patriarchal *buitres*, having their eyries in these rocks, are griffons, and that lammergeyers occasionally visit the place.

These *peñas*, or peaks, are indescribably grand. Thoroughly to appreciate their inspiring solemnity, one must leave the spot whence one can see the *col* on the greater Sister, and passing the quiet grey canal with its lines of beautiful poplars, take up a station beyond the little factory and near to the turbulent river. The bed of the torrent is now seen to advantage, full of white rocks pranked with black velvet moss, round which the water whitens in spume. From this standpoint the grandeur of *Las Dos Hermanas* appears most striking. The two pinnacles become invested with a sort of mysterious human interest. Strange and weird are these giant cliffs, the guardians of an Arcadian solitude. The little cottages which cower at their feet seem to be endeavouring to sink into the earth,

oppressed by the enormous bulk of the rocks. How wild and free the existence of the vultures on those giddy heights! How many and sad have been the vicissitudes in the lives of the peasants that have been witnessed by those huge *buitres*! Returning at eventide to feed a downy fledgeling with pellets of half-digested food disgorged from his carrion crop, growling, like an animal, his savage song of tenderness, what news the male gives to his mate!

On my previous visit the night wind whistled round these bleached summits in the solemnity of darkness like eerie voices,—as if legions of shrieking spirits rode the blast which roared through this gateway of the north. Now there was no breath of wind to stir the white dust of the road. It was here that I met an English youth two years before. My cavalcade was perambulating the highway on the outward journey to San Miguel, and we came upon him at the foot of the cliffs. He was gazing at the "chimnies" with hungry eyes. He was a footballer by build, and his ears proclaimed him a Rugby "forward." We said very little to each other, both of us being pessimistic and morose. He, too, had had to load a cargo of the delectable pork cutlets of the *alberga*. He was at the

station of Irúrzun when I returned at night with a bruised shin.

"I have vomited blood," he said, "excuse me taking you round to the back, but you ought to see what a quantity I have parted with. I really must be in a bad way. I wish I could get some brandy."

Moved by his solicitations, I commenced my duties as physician, and found that his blood resolved itself into the juice of innumerable blackberries.

Occupying myself with this amusing recollection, I made my way through the swine which snuffed about the road, past the deliciously-scented beanfields of the valley of the Araquil.

In the main street of the *pueblo* I was amused by a parrot perched in a window, which mocked the squalling babies and the young goats. The cries of the latter are even more plaintive than those of the human animal. It was the true village of North Spain, with the murmur of everlasting gossip, the faint flavour of onions and garlic, the aroma of cooking oil, and the free-and-easy sense of comfortable poverty. Little boys were running to play *pelota* with tiny fives' bats. There were no beggars visible, and the tall, fat *cura* swept through the one and

only street like a monarch, his black habiliments sombre against the grey dust. Here the *cura* reigns supreme, touching the hearts of the men through those of the women; proud of his parish and of his power, and happy in his despotic celibacy.

The hills of Zuasti, of Echari-Aranaz, and of Huarte-Araquil, so sharp and severe in their outlines during the heat of noon, were now vaguely beautiful even as a dream. The loud rattle of the *grillos*, or mole-crickets, was hushed. At the end of the great valley the mountains about Alsásua were lost in a riot of purple cumuli, rolling towards me on the wings of the west wind. More clouds came flying over from Tolosa, leaden-hued and massive in the growing dusk, suggestive of Wellington and war: for our never-to-be-forgotten soldier-hero once passed through this hollow of the Araquil, leading his men to splendid victories.

Violet shadows began to fill the valley, and the frogs of Aristophanes set up their noisy evening chorus.

"Will you have a drink of wine, *amigo*," said a sweet-souled peasant, standing at the door of his white-washed cot.

I could not refuse such kindness. Taking

the little skin filled with the generous liquor of Navarra, I drank to his welfare, and lingered in pleasant converse. His ambition was to be the *capataz* of a good vineyard—to give orders, not to be ordered. It was a modest wish, and I should have liked to have heard more of his aims and hopes. But the smoke and steam of the advancing train streaked the exquisite hues of the gloaming, and I had perforce to go. I shook the hand of this courteous fellow with the usual compliments, but my "*Gracias*" and my "*Adios*" did not convey to his heart what I should have liked to have said. He was a labourer, an uneducated peasant—but his rounded temples, his truthful impulses, his expressive eyes, his manly bearing, told me that he had the large and beautiful soul of a Burns. He was no doubt a songless singer, weighed down by want and the imperative demands of half-a-dozen dirty children. Perhaps not altogether a songless swain. Surely he might have been able to give me a taste of his quality, in the way of improvising a graceful *malagueña*—one of those spirited, semi-Moorish, extempore songs that never fail to stir my blood like wine. Only a Navarrese peasant! But men are brothers the wide world over, and that

peasant of Irúrzun is my brother. His was no mean gift—no mere politeness. His goodness made a deep impression on me—it touched my heart; and my most charming memory of this little excursion is that unsolicited kindness, that fraternal chat in the purple twilight, heavy with the sweet incense of the dewy beanfields.

X

PAMPLONA TO RIVAFORADA

At cockcrow on Monday, May 7th, 1894, I left dear old Pamplona, and rolled down to the station in the rickety omnibus. My leave-taking was confined to one domestic, and his flattering attention in getting up so early was duly rewarded. I remember hearing of an irritable old fellow who was so annoyed at the charges made for lights in France that he began to formulate a scheme of revenge. As the time approached for his departure from Bordeaux, a brilliant idea struck him. To each of the expectant domestics assembled on the stairs to make their cringing adieux, he would present a *bougie*. This plan was duly carried out, and the menials, who graced the scene of his farewell, were said to have made quite a respectable funeral procession, holding the unlighted tapers of the Englishman's *éclairage* item.

The spectacle of the grey, shadowy hills, changing colour at the approach of dawn,

effectually banished the drowsiness inseparable from such early rising. The train moved with slow, deliberate motion, so that I could distinguish the voices of the birds in the trees by the railway. They were at matins, and when the sun appeared, and stood a moment tip-toe upon a dim-blue peak, the sweet choristers broke forth into more strenuous song. The vapours disappeared as if by magic, and the blood of a new morning ran through the veins of the chilly earth.

As we rolled down into the flat, hedgeless country, the hills about Pamplona lost the vague blue of dawn and much of their sharpness of contour, becoming mere shadows on the horizon, eventually losing themselves in a silver-grey mist.

Here and there slender pillars of smoke, and patches of green turf, made the furrowed plain bright and homely. Sleek donkeys were feeding on the crisp grasses of these bright oases, and peasants lounged about in the fresh, sweet air, accompanied by their faithful *podencos*. The chestnuts at the tiny wayside stations were full of massive foliage, pranked with showy pyramids of red blossom. Through the openings between these trees there were delightful

glimpses of the country. The beauty of these long, level expanses of land in the wine districts of Navarra is really remarkable. Miles upon miles of flower-flecked plain stretch out to the horizon. The beholder inwardly cries with King Richard:—

"A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!"

To ride across those smiling tracts, of apparently illimitable extent, would indeed work magic in the blood. Our systems crave the exercise; they call out for it, and become intolerably insistent.

Far, far away, what appear to be fairy cities catch the unclouded splendour of the morning. One of those would be our goal:—

"I and my mistress, side by side,
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So one day more am I deified."

We would ride until our souls "smoothed themselves out,—long-cramped scrolls freshening and fluttering in the wind. . . ."

By and by we passed out of Navarra into Aragon, where the lean peasants were at work in the early day. They are bronzed by the torrid sun, dried up and prematurely aged in these parched plains, where the tillage is still that of the ancients. "Thou shalt eat thy

bread by the sweat of thy brow"—that text seemed to be burning about them in letters of fire. And their labour, — what of that? Their daily toil in the mile-long furrows? What does it bring at the close of the day, after the heavy tribute exacted by the State on agricultural produce has been taken into account? And my labour,—what of that? Is it fruitful, is it sweet? Alone at that hour, with the pageant of wild Nature around me, the thought of the meagre achievements of my own life wrung a pang of terror from my heart. An inner voice cried out upon the futility, the hopelessness, of the work accomplished in hours of uncongenial pursuits, and I felt the conviction strike home unerringly that I had been planting good seed in a sort of Sahara, destined never to be fruitful.

Approaching Castejon, we passed through immense wheatfields, irrigated from the bountiful waters of the great river. Here the country looks almost virginal in its primitive simplicity and rustic quiet. The soil appears dry, clayey, and unkindly, but from the heavy grey clods the withered toiler draws his sustenance, making even the stones bring forth fruit.

After describing curves for hours, with heavy, somnolent movement, the train brought us where

certain Navarrese peaks started once more into life, purple in the intenser light. The sun was now high in the heavens, and little yellow-brown *pueblos*, perched here and there on slight elevations, basked in the serenity of the forenoon.

Crossing the sandy river Aragon, we came upon the broad Ebro, glittering in the sunlight. Then we beheld Castejon with its welcome *café au lait*. Breakfast over, I returned to the carriage and found that I had a companion. He was an old man with an intolerably uninteresting face. I should have liked a typical Spaniard, witty, vivacious, and sharp as a dagger point. This person was a nondescript. His grey eyes were keen and penetrating, however, and his mouth was very firm. I set myself the task of discovering his talents. I mentally vivisected him, and after carefully weighing all the pros and cons, I finally voted him a blank and a bore. We sat in absolute silence, he engrossed with the view, I scowling like Mephistopheles and the average Englishman. All at once I saw his countenance lighten. Both eyes and mouth softened wonderfully. He smiled. It was a gleam of sunshine on a leaden sea. A little child was waving a tiny hand at the train. That infantile salute had moved him. He was

a father, a grandfather perhaps, and he was thinking of his children. His eyes turned upon me, and behold, what a transformation! It was the look that must have been in the eyes of Christ when He bade His apostles let the brown infants of Judæa approach Him to receive the divine blessing. He had the fine, nervous hands of an artist, with delicate, long taper fingers. They settled the question. I spoke. His voice did the rest,—it was a revelation of exquisitely cadenced timbre. He was a German, but he answered me in Castilian, the conversation was then continued in English. He stumbled over every *r* in the regulation manner, but his knowledge of our literature made up for his defects in pronunciation. He turned out to be a painter in search of the picturesque. Needless to say, he had found it, and was satisfied with it. I was much astonished when he said that he loved Ruskin.

"Yes," he added, "and the truest thing the master has ever said is that 'the object in all Art is not to inform, but to suggest; not to add to the knowledge, but to kindle the imagination.' And the object of Nature in creating these great plains, for instance, is the same. Think it out, my friend."

And I did think it out, finding myself in perfect agreement with him, for he had the sincerity and directness of Ruskin himself, which is saying a great deal.

Beyond Castejon, we passed through low ranges of dreary clay-coloured hills into a kind of desert, a black and stony place, an Arabia Petræ, and at length arrived at the railway station of Tudela, where a hundred women or more were chattering on the platform backed by green groves alive with twittering birds. Here the German artist left me, with the memory of compassionate eyes, and a beautiful, sympathetic voice.

I did not wonder at his proposed stay at this place when I saw the glorious picture of Tudela's long and lovely bridge spanning the broad Ebro, its seventeen arches of different styles all faithfully reflected in the still water. On both sides of the river diligent housewives, in red and blue garments, were washing clothes. As they paused to glance at the train, the Ebro, enamoured of their graces, duplicated their figures in the untroubled stream.

These women looked so placid and so very commonplace, that the uninitiated would never suspect the existence of that inner fire which

breaks out in their bosoms, and boils through their blood, at the first burst of Oriental melody from the guitars of their kindred; those weird and savage strains, tinged with a delightful melancholy, that make each fat woman almost the embodiment of exquisite movement, as she undulates in the mazes of a *malagueña*, or the brisk whirl of a *bolero*!

Through the arches beyond the bridge I could see a wonderful perspective. Each Gothic, each Saracenic, each Roman curve, framed a view in which distance was idealized, and the plain made tender and beautiful as a vision. Idyllic repose was the dominant note of this charming scene. An antique repose, that was perhaps irksome to Tudela's celebrated Jew—a serenity of life which doubtless led that honest Benjamin to travel, and to seek distraction in a noisier world. But since his time Tudela has greatly changed, and many generations have passed away.

An old Spaniard had taken the German's corner, and it was not long before he found his tongue. He descanted on the bygone glories of the place, and of the famous garrison soldiers—the Almogávares—of the king of Aragon, who were formerly quartered here. He had an un-

appreciative wife—poor wide-eyed enthusiast! She was sitting by his side, the embodiment of an unknown quantity. She had a face like a purple pumpkin, and a smile like that of a butcher when he is selling a piece of tuberculous meat. And alas! that it should be told—he had a still more unappreciative sister-in-law, who was the other unit in his undesirable bodyguard. There is only one thing worse than the nagging mother-in-law, and that is a sarcastic *cuñada*.

"You must discount what he says of Tudela," said the wife, with her slaughter-house grin.

"Yes, one hundred per cent.," said the acidulated sister-in-law, with sexton-like solemnity: "and believe me," she added unctuously, "he knows as much as I about the winged serpent that was killed by Guzman the Good."

Shortly after leaving Tudela, new effects of colour began to dazzle my eyes with unaccustomed vividness. Here great *olivares* all aflame with scarlet poppies, burning brightly beneath the grey-green foliage; there a long cool light of pale yellow in the fields. Patches of poppies besprinkled the railway slopes with indescribable brilliance on a level with our heads. Against the magic-hearted sky of Spain these

scarlet flowers have a wonderful value. Stragglers came down even into the cinders of the track, and whole armies of them rioted in the vineyards, amidst the light gold of the wild mustard.

At Rivaforada there was a suprise in store for me. When the train came to a stand-still in the station, I alighted a moment, and at last beheld a realization of my ideal of captivating southern loveliness. One is continually reading about the beauty of Spanish women, and to do the country justice, one not infrequently encounters magnificent specimens of the opposite sex. Yet even the most juvenile *débutante* uses the puff and powder to such an extent that her freshness is spoilt, although the regularity of features and sparkling eyes may not be marred. Hence it was that I positively thrilled when I beheld a dark beauty of seventeen, leaning out of a bedroom window of the station-master's house. She was ravishing, inspiring, altogether unique,—a gloriously perfect Juliet. Imagine, if you can, how beautiful she looked in the splendid glow of noon! Refined features, of the purest Grecian type; exceedingly long dark lashes, ever and anon veiling the most wonderful of all possible midnight eyes: black

eyebrows drawn straight as a line across a low forehead, and great masses of raven hair—almost purple in the shadows—piled high upon a shapely head, that was set upon ivory shoulders such as Juno might have envied. In these heavy locks there was a pomegranate blossom, and another in the bosom of her low-necked black dress. The creamy whiteness of her skin was heightened by a hint of crimson in her cheeks, and the desirable richness of her scarlet lips outrivalled the pomegranate flowers.

She had an excellent foil in a red-haired Hebe who had alighted from the train. This wench, whose bare head bore a remarkable resemblance to a disorganised omelette, was conversing with my goddess, who played with a rose and ogled the passengers. On the principle that you cannot gaze too hard at a Spanish lady, I stared for all I was worth, and catching the maiden's eye, ejaculated one intelligible and comprehensive word, "*Hermosísima!*" In a momentary lull of the platform chatter, she heard my compliment and hid it in her heart a moment. Then it came out on her lovely face like a miniature morning. She did not take long to make up her mind, but immediately threw me her rose and an imaginary kiss. I caught the flower and put it to my lips

in an affected transport of delight. Then the porter shouted with raucous insistence—

" Señores viajeros al tren !"

Dread cry! The signal for the eternal separation of two hearts united for one never-to-be-forgotten moment of mutual admiration!

O, that I could have stayed at Rivaforada a year, a month, a week, nay even an hour; so that I might have stood beneath the window, like the red-haired Hebe, listening to the laughter of the swallows, and the delicious accents of that peerless girl of Navarra! For be it known that Castilian falls from the lips of a lovely woman like immaterial nectar, like the language of visions. Sweet and radiant maid of Rivaforada! She will never know, she cannot know, her mind is not large enough to allow her to know, how beautiful she seemed to me. And lovely indeed she was, set in that framework of roses; the cinnamon-breasted swallows, as if enamoured of her charms, fluttering under the eaves above her head, each tiny voice like an audible caress. She was a memorable morning clothed in radiant flesh. She was for the moment steeped in and etherealized by the luminous mist of the imagination, and the rose she threw to me conveyed to my heart the love and

sympathy of Spain. She was the embodiment of Spain as I love to think of the country. The very wind was full of her, and sweet with her presence, as I received it on my forehead when I craned my neck for a final farewell, and as Rivaforada faded from my eyes, and we got farther and farther away from my goddess—away into a sun-baked desert in which the black sheep were cropping the scanty herbage—the barren, loveless landscape became voiceful, and the palpitant air became articulate with one exquisite and all-powerful word—AMOR!

XI

RIVAFORADA TO ZARAGOZA

After leaving Rivaforada I found myself once more in a vine country, backed by ranges of lone hills—the abode of the vulture and the eagle—whence the wolves sweep down even in April.

It is astonishing how the vine can extract nutriment from such a torrid and unkindly soil. The vineyards always look so green and so prosperous. Their tender leafage flutters in the wind, cool and fresh even in the burning afternoons of August. With roots deep down in the soil the vine thrives when every other plant is burnt up.

At Rivaforada my compartment had been invaded by a couple of travellers. One was a hunchback woman of some three-and-twenty summers, and the other her husband, a man of thirty-five or thereabouts. I hardly noticed the grey-green oliveyards and the succession

of toneless landscapes betwixt Rivaforada and Gallur, because I was so engrossed in observing the touching love and devotion of the husband for his crippled wife. Thereupon I conceived a Spanish poem, which I take the liberty of submitting to my indulgent readers. It is supposed to embody the thoughts of my *vis-à-vis* for his unfortunate *esposa* :—

Á UNA ESTROPEADA.

La flor de la uva blanquizca
Es poco de ver :
Porque la flor es pequeña,
Así eres tu ;—
La gente mirándola dice
"¡ Es nada, es nada, la flor !"
La gente mirándote dice
"¡ No me gusta—ni para amor
Ni para nada !" ¡ Dueño
Yo soy de tu alma, querida,—
Eso conozco sin duda,—
Y digo que todo tienes
Dentro de tu corazon ;—
Si, todo lo bueno tienes
Que hay en la flor de la uva ;
Poder de fijar en mi alma
Que un hombre es casi divino,
Que divina y mas eres tu !

These stanzas remind me of the remark of a candid friend to whom I once read a precious epic. " My dear boy," he said, with grave earnestness,

"I'll tell you what to do with your verses—use them to put your creditors to flight."

It was really touching to see that fine athletic fellow tending his crippled spouse. The quivering muscles of his lower limbs, plainly outlined through the thin texture of his clothes, suggested to me that he was probably a skilled *garrochista*. He looked as if he was capable of turning over many a lively two-year-old at the *tentaderos*; and as a matter of fact, he turned out to be quite an authority on bulls, an adept in the use of *Jerga*, the slang of the *toreros*, and full of information in regard to his favourite breed of animals—*El raso del Portillo*, a herd which is pastured in the broken *dehesas* about Valladolid.

"The best fighting bulls come from Andalucia," he said, "but the oldest breed is that of Portillo."

Valladolid was his native city, and he told me fine tales of the *tentaderos*, or trials of young bulls, in which he had taken an active part.

At Gallur I observed some enormous beetles revelling among the white acacia blossoms, and a congregation of sober, white-breasted martins on the housetops. Then, approaching Luceni, I heard a nightingale's mellow gurgle in the

reeds, the poignancy of his plaintive "jug-jug" entirely lost in the dazzling sunshine.

The poet Espronceda, one of the most musical of Spanish writers, has a lovely sonnet to the nightingale, beginning—

"Canta en la noche, canta en la mañana,
Ruiseñor, en el bosque sus amores,
Canta, que llorará cuando tú llores
El alba perlas en la flor temprana."

The Luceni nightingale sang so sweetly that he might have been the reincarnation of Espronceda. He was an old bird, and had had much experience, for they say that old nightingales sing the sweetest.

The colours of the country having now become cold and monotonous, my eyes seized greedily upon the red parasol of a little girl who was standing on the platform at Luceni nursing a pretty *nene*. We are told that red is a wholesome colour, a mental tonic, and so I think it is. At any rate, I felt better for the brightness of that parasol.

Here at Luceni an amusing scene occurred. A stout person of some forty summers (though I should have been the last to have admitted to her that I considered her more than twenty-five) was waiting on the platform for the train.

When we arrived, another equally stout female, a veritable *moza de cántaro*, put her head out of the window of the next carriage and waved a salutation. The train drew up.

"Ah!" said the first, with an accent of horror.

"No, no, sister," protested the second, pointing to a man in the corner, "you can just stow your '*Ah*,' because I can assure you that during five hours of travel with this gentleman, whom I have not the honour of knowing, he has not committed the slightest indiscretion."

But a sister's heart is not always a running stream of clear and pure tenderness, as the subsequent remark of the first stout female amply proved.

"Well, well," she said, with a sigh in which all her envy seemed to disappear, "it strikes me as being an extraordinary thing that there should be such imbecile fellows in the world."

Beyond Pedrola, immortalised by Cervantes, I noticed the familiar wild thyme and a bright blue orchis, decking the railway embankment. We were in the heart of Aragon; the costume of the men giving us a distinct confirmation of that fact, especially the black and uncomfortably hot kerchief swathed around the head. In the green wheatfields white butterflies were sporting,

even as they fluttered in the fields over which our unforgotten boyhood threw an indescribably beautiful glamour.

To the north of these green patches of fertility frowned a range of ugly, desolate hills, terrible and tragic even in the gleam of the sun. The houses that here and there studded those melancholy heights seemed to be specially designed for the romancer. In the middle ages the novelist did not look to his word-painting; he did not examine the landscape with an analytical eye. Cervantes, for instance, took it for granted that his readers knew their country, and that they possessed the ability to conjure up mental images of the scenery in which figured his immortal madman. But, I may safely say, that if he had filled his pages with William Black's beautiful detail, we should have found his descriptions of Spanish landscape as applicable and true to the present as to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Gazing at the plain, and its bleak hills, I reflected that if Don Quixote were to come tearing over the wheatfields, lance at rest, he would hardly cause surprise; so mediæval, so undisturbed seemed the country-side. There, in the *patio* of one of those strange *casas* on the crests of the hills, he still probably

mops his heated forehead, lingering over a goblet of wine and water, and little ghostly children perhaps still point and jeer at the noble Knight of La Mancha.

Leaving Alagon, these eastern hills lining the Ebro became still more weird and wonderful in their gruesome nakedness. They are nightmare heights, like those one slides down during the most awful dreams; frightful wastes, such as the morbid fancy of Dante would have peopled with lost souls; sterile, strange, and ghastly elevations, beautiful only after sunset, when compassionate evening swoops down and wraps them in intangible raiment, tinctured with colour more beautiful than ever issued from the vats of Tyre.

To the west, however, I descried other hills, blue and tender in the distance. On the intervening alluvial lands, horses were drawing the ploughs and harrows of the peasants, teams of oxen becoming less frequent the nearer we get to the capital of Aragon. What a pleasure it would have been to have alighted to make enquiries about the great bustard,—the *abutarda*. Sensational accounts of this big game bird, so common in Andalucia, had made me long to see a *bandada de barbones*. This, however,

is a felicity still in store, and I do not yet know whether the great bustard is to be seen in the plains of Aragon.

At the base of certain mud-coloured cliffs I saw a little town of exactly the same hue as its surroundings, endeavouring to hide itself like a hare in the bracken, or a partridge in the stubble. I shuddered when I thought of the uneventful, cheerless, squalid lives of its inhabitants. I also thought of the vanished villages, over whose sites we had doubtless passed that morning, and smiled when I remembered the towns still sleeping quiet in the unquarried stone, wondering whether any city that may hereafter arise in Spain will prove more interesting than Zaragoza —grand old Zaragoza—whose pinnacles, temple domes, and Moorish towers, rose solemnly before me as we crossed the Ebro once more.

XII

ZARAGOZA

I

In the fierce glare of the afternoon sun I made my way to the river Ebro. The dust of Zaragoza is insufferable at all seasons, but at this time it was especially unbearable. But the broad stream shone like a vision, and cool airs rose therefrom and fanned my brow. I loitered long on the pebbly shore, contemplating the Moorish masonry of the antique water walls, now fast falling into decay. Several men were fishing in the turbid stream, investing the scene with life and colour. A few labourers were busy among some heaps of broken brick, and beyond these men, there were some little children playing on a strip of green grass. I sat down and began to think of the mutations of empire, and of the unsatisfactory brevity of life. I thought of the Caliph Almuctaman of Zaragoza and of his friend Rodrigo Diaz, El Cid Campeador, who

so valiantly defended this city against Alfabig, the Caliph of Denia. In this way I passed an agreeable half-hour. I was just about to rise and return to the hotel when I heard someone approaching my little turf-clad hillock. Looking round I beheld three women advancing across a patch of shingle. One was very old,—weighed down by the weight of at least ninety winters. Her thin white locks had succumbed to the attacks of the strong wind, and were blown about her withered face in picturesque disarray. The contrast between the tawny hue of her features and the snowy beauty of her hair was very striking. A pair of brilliant black eyes, flashing in shadowy caverns, at once took my gaze and held it. The breeze was likewise busy with her rusty tattered frock, and scarlet shawl. Her two companions were both very young and of the ordinary opera, or gitana, type of loveliness. Their dark greasy curls were plastered low down on their brown foreheads, great gold earrings dangling beneath the lowest love-lock, almost touching their shoulders. Their somewhat sensual faces wore a stereotyped smile, which served to display the incomparable whiteness of the teeth of the Zincali.

"*Buenos dias, hijo mio*," said the old gypsy with the peculiar accent of her people, "what are you doing here by the side of my *len?*"

"*Muy buenos, gitanilla*," I answered, "what should I be doing but taking the sun?"

"The *kan*, the *kan*," she cried, holding up her scranny right arm, on which the blue veins showed like cords amidst the freckles. "The *kan*, giving life and strength to all young and growing things. But I am old, old, old; an old withered woman of the Calés. *Ay de mí! Ay de mí!* Soon comes the *rach*—the endless sleep!"

The two girls giggled behind her back, and I held my peace, not knowing what to say.

"I am old," she continued, her quavering voice thrilling with extraordinary passion, "I am indeed old, and these *chicas* are my great-grandchildren. I had *otor hijos*, some of them were stabbed, some of them are with the Flamencos. But my spirit is still young; I am still a child playing by the Ebro."

This strange prelude was sufficient to rouse my interest, more particularly when I saw two great tears rise in her still beautiful eyes—eyes which in themselves were enough evidence of the undying youth of her soul.

"Come, cheer up, mother," I rejoined, "our souls are always young."

"Do you think so, my son?" she asked, huskily, laying one hand upon my arm and looking straight into my face. "Do you in truth think so?"

"Yes," I answered, "I do think so."

"*Bueno*," she continued, "but I am myself doubtful about the dwelling after death. I am afraid it may be very damp and cold, and therefore I am sticking on to the old *ker* in this *foros* as long as ever I can. But when I see the children playing in the sun, among the flowers of spring, my heart beats more quickly, and I wonder whether I shall ever be a child again, to play games with my companions who have been brave, and have gone before. *Ay de mí!* How sweet the world is, and how sweet is youth!—see how the *pani* of the *len* gleams in the sun. See, see! he's got a *macho;* look, look!"

She pointed to a man on the shore who was drawing a fish from the water. She was much excited and fairly screamed with delight.

"Poor old creature!" I muttered in English.

"*¿ Qué es eso?*" she shrilled. "*¿ V. no es Catalan?*"

"No, gitanilla," I responded, "*¡Gracias á Dios, yo soy Inglés!*"

"*¡Inglés!*" she cried. "From the land of the Gorgios? You are not a Busno? Tell me, then, O tell me, where is he?"

"Of whom do you speak, mother?" I asked.

"Of my friend the great Englishman—the strong man, the man of many tongues—the lion-hearted Englishman, who was brave as ten men; who was even as my brother. Of whom else should I speak?"

"Pardon her," broke in one of the girls, "she is sometimes mad, and when she is mad she speaks *calo* to strangers. Excuse her, sir, and let me tell you *La Buenaventura*, I only ask *diez céntimos*."

"*¡Diez céntimos!*" I laughed. "*Quieres diez céntimos, para echarme tus patrañas?*"

Hereupon the ancient dame interfered.

"Mad!" she shrieked, in a paroxysm of ungovernable fury, shaking herself loose from the girls' supporting arms. "Who says I am mad? That is the way with the young—and a nice way it is, too. Shelve the grandfather and the grandmother—put them away in the corner—they are old—no use any more. But can't we, don't we feel just as they feel? Only our

joints don't work, miserable creatures that we are! As for his fortune, I will tell the *bahi*. It is written all over and about him. It is shining all around him, but you cannot see it, you daughters of goats; nor can he see it, but I can see it. Old eyes can see farther into the Strange Land than young eyes, because old people are nearer to it."

"*Son patrañas*," I said, laughing.

"*No son patrañas, buen mozo*," she replied, gravely, "*sino verdades, y más verdades que ese sol tan claro y tan hermoso que ahora está brillando!*"

"Excuse her, sir; her mind wanders," murmured the other girl, apologetically. "We bring her down here every day when there is sun. We must now leave your Worship; we must return to the *gitaneria*."

But the old woman was not to be quieted. "He came to our *ker*," she shouted, "the snowy-haired Gorgio: he ate out of our pot in the beautiful chestnut woods, and in the dusky *chaparrals*, when the smoke rose straight up to the frosty sky, and the sharp evening wind was keen in our nostrils. He said sweet, kind things to his brethren the Calés. He was a *pal* to my *ro*, to my dear *ro*, who could run with the marvellous speed of a partridge, who

could use the *cachas* better than any other man; whose head was curly as a poodle's, and whose strength was that of ten men. Ah! that good friend who looked at us with great, compassionate eyes, and read to us out of a sacred book many strange tales of the land of my fathers; tales of Sebleko. *Ay de mí—chachipé—chachipé!*"

This long string of reminiscences did not lack a semblance of coherence, and it touched me by reason of the old gypsy's emotion.

"Who was this man, little mother?" I enquired.

"Don Jorge, Don Jorge!" she eagerly replied. "Did you know him? Have you news of him? Everybody knew him in these parts—that is to say, all my people knew him; for he loved them, and I worshipped him, though he said that he had not the blood of Egypt. But there, there, you are but a babe, you cannot have known him. What do I say? He will now be dead, or very old—very, very old, like me!"

"Was his name Don Jorge Borrow?" I asked.

"It was Don Jorge," she said, stamping her foot angrily, "I never heard any other name. He must have had the true *errote*—the pure

black blood in his veins. He spake our tongue. He was no half-caste—no Flamenco."

"You evidently knew him well," I said.

"Very well," she continued, "and so did my *ro*, my good husband—he with the *ojos escritos*, full of strange signs of Egypt. *Ay de mí*, he had a lovely *aquia!*"

"Don Jorge has been gathered to his fathers this many a year," I said. "Speak of him again, gitanilla—tell me more of him."

But I had spoken too abruptly. She was for the moment like one stunned. She would say no more about her old friend. Her toothless jaws became set with a surprising firmness, and she began to regard me with a gaze that was indescribably strange.

"Take no heed of her, she is mad," whispered one of the girls; "but she is quite harmless."

"Away with thee and thy whispering," shrieked the great-grandmother. "I know all that you say and all that you would say. You tell *La Buenaventura!* You! You know that we shall eat *menudos de gallina* to-day—that is all you know. At my age the people of Egypt know many things. I will tell this young Gorgio the *bahi* myself. I will tell him not only what

will befall him, but what has already befallen him."

Thus saying, she seized my hand, and by some weird powers of cheiromancy she was able to sketch briefly, but graphically, the story of an unequal and somewhat unsatisfactory life. Then she proceeded to map out a future for me which was, to say the least of it, most interesting. I am incredulous in such matters, and her words failed to convince me of any real ability to prophecy. Nevertheless, I was forced to admit that what she said was fraught with wisdom.

"Thou art ambitious," she muttered. "Women like such men, their blood is reddened with more iron than exists in that of the ordinary individual. Their hearts, too, have more heat. To grow powerful and wealthy you must play a bold game. Gold is tested by men—men are tested by gold. Do not act the bird-catcher among your fellows—the bird-catcher, with his ever-tinkling *cencerro*, and his lantern that puts the larks into such a fright that they may be picked up like potatoes. You look as proud in your clothes as a newly-moulted bird in autumn, but who would hold up his head if he could hear all that his friends say about him; or who could hold up his head if his friends heard all that

he says about them? Beware of the *querelar nasela.* Thou feelest the *barban* on thy face, but know thou this—there is more in the wind than thou wottest of! There, I have told thee *la bahi! Vaya—vaya!* I go back to my *ker.*"

These were her concluding words as she turned away, a strangely impressive figure against the brightness of the river, and the silvery sheen of ths sunlit poplars. I crossed the palms of both girls with *pesetas*, and sat down again in an atmosphere of mystery.

Pan had not piped to me from the reeds of the Ebro, but the enigmas of the world had been brought before my mind with renewed and tremendous insistence. A nightingale in the *lombardos* began to tell me many strange things about ancient peoples, buried faiths, and beautiful loves of old time, as the three women slowly passed the marshy place where the bull-frogs were croaking, and crossing the heaps of refuse, gained their homeward path. A boy who had been fishing wished me a very good afternoon, as he picked his way through the mud-stained pebbles in his thin alpargatas. A carter came and tipped a load of refuse somewhere behind me—a volley of oaths, directed at a patient mule, contaminating the pure air. Bugles

sounded from the great rambling barracks across the wide stretch of water, and bells began to toll in the city—boom, boom, ding, ding, clang, clang—as if the world was coming to an end, and the careful priests were anxious to apprise everybody of the fact. But I sat on by the river, the kindly, withered face of the old gitana filling my thoughts, the sunny landscape still seeming to possess her antique figure.

XIII

ZARAGOZA

II

(A Reminiscence)

It was the 11th October, 1890. I was standing on Pamplona's one and only railway platform. The sleepy train crawled into the station, and there was a mad rush of people for the carriages. In they swarmed—priests, friars, soldiers, and scores of *paisanos*—shouting, laughing, swearing, groaning, and, I regret to add, expectorating.

It was my lot to occupy a very dusty first-class compartment. But in its seclusion I was moderately comfortable, being clear of the dirty, confused, hustling hordes who had taken possession of the remaining portion of the train. In a corner of the *coche* there was a young man of some thirty summers, slight as a reed, with great luminous black eyes, and pointed Velazquez beard. I saluted him on entering, as the custom is, and very soon we were engaged in earnest conversation, discussing the fate of a luckless American lady, who, from a very proper

motive of curiosity, had taken second-class circular tickets at Irun, as she and her pretty little daughter "wanted so much to see the country and the real people." In a second-class carriage, that stifling October day, she certainly did see the people, and despite the discomforts of the journey, she obstinately refused to change her quarters.

Between Pamplona and Castejon there is a stretch of fine agricultural country, at this season very dry and desolate, the prevailing hue being the reddish brown of the bare earth. This was now almost burnt to a cinder. Here and there, however, I noticed magnificent verdurous oases, where the bright green vines crept up the hillside to meet the wonderful azure of the Spanish sky. Whilst gazing on one of these islands of greenery, in one of those half-melancholy, half-joyful moods in which a man travelling alone so often finds himself, I was startled by a question from my Catalan friend in the corner. He had told me that he was a native of Barcelona, and that he was a *littérateur*.

"Perhaps you are a student?" he asked, his sallow face all aflame. "Do you believe in creation out of nothing?"

"I cannot grasp the idea," I replied.

"How could the universe be created out of nothing but space?" he cried, ignoring my answer.

"That I know not, señor. I am no logician, and by no means argumentative."

"But look here," he said, coming a little nearer, "we two are alone together, so let us be frank with each other—speak our real thoughts."

"Well, I am with you," I responded. "Let me tell you that, to my mind, creation is not confined to matter. Mind has its great creations, and they exist only in the mind."

"Now we are progressing, my worthy Englishman," said the Catalan; "that is the true note. Don Quixote, I suppose, is a real creation, because he exists in your imagination, Cervantes having planted him there?"

"Precisely."

"Then the *leit-motif* of this or that opera; the historical pictures of Pradilla and Plasencia, the portraits of Madrazo, the landscapes of Hoes and Vayreda—all these, I suppose, are real creations?"

"Yes, in my opinion, they are real creations," I said, feeling that I was getting a little beyond my depth. "But they are scarcely creations

out of nothing. Music I consider to be a creation out of nothing, but the works of your most eminent painters cannot be thus described. They are the presentments of people, things and scenes that have had, or now have, an existence."

"Pardon me," shouted the Catalan, "they most certainly are creations out of nothing. Take Pradilla's masterpiece. That is now *un fait accompli*. History suggested it, but history did not create it. That picture is now a living fact, a tangible idea, which previously had no existence."

"Do not try to draw me into an argument," I said, feebly; "these matters are too deep for one with my limited understanding."

"No, señor, we will not be disputatious," he continued, "for I also am neither philosopher, logician, nor metaphysician. Where the splendid Plato failed, why should we small flies venture to singe our wings? No, what I want to get at is this: Do you believe that the creative efforts of man can become more than ideas without the assistance of matter already in existence?"

"I do not."

"Not even the best, the most spiritual work of the great musicians?"

"No; because earthly scenes, earthly desires, loves, aspirations, and recollections suggested the music."

"Then we are in harmony,"—he shouted, "in perfect accord; therefore let us remain silent and think of the potentialities of our lives."

I was very much astonished at all this, but I managed not to manifest any surprise. We were advancing into the flat country. Down on the hazy horizon, the distant Pyrenees, and the mountains of Navarra, were decking themselves in dim blue raiment. Despite the aridity and barrenness, a wonderful beauty hung over this brown and dusty land—the loveliness of clear, dry air, whose changing hues are almost jewel-like in character.

The central tableland of Spain is practically disafforested. Almost every inch of land in the wine and corn districts appears to be grubbed up, and turned over. A sort of Department of Woods and Forests is supposed to exist, the officials being known as "*Ingenieros de Montes.*" But these gentlemen do not trouble themselves to see to the planting of trees on the waste places of the earth. If they did, the blessing of a little more humidity would come, perhaps, to this *tierra caliente.* Hence it is that the few

poplars to be seen on the banks of the rivers make a fine effect in the display of colour. In autumn their leaves are intensely yellow, and they show up splendidly against the prevailing browns and blues; yet they do not altogether satisfy an English eye, accustomed to the glorious leafage of Britain. In Roman, and in Gothic times, the central part of Spain had a wealth of woods and coppices, equal to those which flourish in the Basque provinces to-day; and doubtless the climate of this portion of the country was then more agreeable than it is at present.

Approaching Garinoain, the charming little town appeared to be almost faint and drooping in the heat. Set like a gem in a parched wilderness of ploughed land and stubble, this *poblacion* struck me as being remarkably picturesque. Its gardens gave delightful glimpses of green leaves, suggesting coolness and all manner of luscious fruit; only suggestions, however, for the inhabitants who crowded the platform seemed to be perspiring to death. A worthy Navarrese, whom I addressed on the subject, assured me that the time to see Garinoain is the *primavera*—the *primavera* with its expanses of green wheat, and fresh vine leaves,

touched here and there with flames of lovely flowers.

Just before sunset I took advantage of a stop at one of the larger stations to visit the American lady and her daughter. Madame had had the misfortune to get sandwiched between two extremely fat priests, with unshaven chins. Her daughter sat *vis-à-vis* with her. The poor child was in tears. I asked both ladies to alight and promenade on the platform, but Madame refused. Her daughter, however, was only too glad to get a breath of fresh air. When I took little Lucy back to the stuffy carriage the tears had all dried. Madame flashed a look of gratitude. Her face, which formerly displayed a really good complexion, was now quite spoilt. It was of a uniform deep crimson, and the lady being stout, the perspiration was running down her cheeks in streams. She really presented a pitiable spectacle. The horrors of that journey—the garlicky atmosphere, the fumes of strong cigarettes, the buzz of guttural voices—were almost enough to have conquered the most obstinate, but she refused to admit that she was wrong in her selection of a carriage, and declined to be conquered. I therefore left her to complete her penance.

The train had now moved off again. The sunlight, streaming in the windows of our carriage, was touching the trembling birches with a sudden flood of gold. High overhead, the scarlet and crimson banners of the evening announced the coming of the first bright star. Shafts of brilliance pierced through the rosy clouds to the ever-darkening blue above. Lower, and yet lower, sank the sun; the great globe quivering in its descent, till at last its rim touched the extremity of the plain, and, poising a moment upon the horizon like an enormous wheel, seemed to run along the land with the train. Then the huge ball began slowly to disappear; inch by inch the light sank behind the land; lower—lower yet—until the last thread of golden splendour vanished. Dim grey smoke rose from distant villages, lying in the vast sea of palpitating purple, silent save for the bark of the watch-dog warning the beggars from the farms. Fleecy mists rose from the silent marshes. An owl flew past; a bat fluttered aimlessly along in the growing dusk. A human voice was heard far off in a belt of trees, singing the old sweet song of love—the love that never changes in the heart of man, but keeps its place through the centuries: that voice pierced my soul!

I looked at my companion. The Catalan philosopher seemed to have stolen some of the fire of the sunset, and drawn it into his eyes. They sparkled with an unearthly glitter, beautiful to behold. His soul was swimming in them, almost bursting the slender bonds of the flesh. He had evidently been watching my face, where I am too often apt to show my emotions. He held out his hand.

"I know what you are thinking," he said, huskily.

"The sunsets of Spain are lovely," I replied, in my stilted English manner.

"Yes, but your thoughts ran deeper than that shallow phrase." "Ah, my dear fellow," he continued, "your heart is uttering a song of praise for the wonderful loveliness of the world."

I pressed his hand warmly, and in pleasant converse we travelled down into a land of night and peace, lit only by the mysterious beauty of the silent stars.

It was quite dark when we entered the province of Aragon. Passing Tudela, my companion assured me that Rabbi Benjamin was an impostor.

"He pretended to have discovered the tomb

of the prophet Ezekiel," said the Catalan, "*un cuento para niños.*"

At half-past ten we crawled into Zaragoza, having been just eight hours on the way from Pamplona, a distance of only 181 kilometres; and here my Catalan friend said farewell.

The landlady of the Fonda de la Perla had warned Madame V——, the American lady, that the hotels at Zaragoza were all full. For my own part, the chance of having to spend the night on a couple of chairs had no terrors, but I shuddered at the thought of the dismal prospect before the two ladies. The frightful bustle on the platform was not reassuring, and I began to fear that the worst predictions of our Pamplona hostess were about to be realised. And verified they were to the utmost, as we found out to our cost.

Madame V—— had found a cavalier in the shape of a polite apothecary from Betelú, in the mountains of Tolosa. This man had travelled down in the same carriage with her, and had helped to make the journey less disagreeable by discussing all manner of subjects, Madame V—— being able to speak Spanish.

He and I made all speed to secure seats in the omnibus—sent as a matter of form by the pro-

prietor of the Fonda de Europa. On arriving at the hotel, the proprietor calmly told us there were no beds to be had in any of the *fondas;* that people were sleeping in the saloons, every chair being appropriated, and that the only *habitaciones* he knew to be vacant were to be found in the Calle San Lorenzo, where the *cochero* was instructed to leave us with the compliments of his master. This landlord was an Italian, and very polite.

"The rooms are good," he said, "and the people of the house eminently respectable. You will be well disposed there, I can assure you, and so good-night. *Adios—Adios.*"

I noticed a sly twinkle in the apothecary's eye as the omnibus drew up at the corner of the ancient Plaza de San Lorenzo, before a massive Moorish door of wrought-iron, dark and forbidding, and immensely strong. After much banging and bawling, a section of this door opened inwards, disclosing a haggard female standing in a pitch-black courtyard, faintly illumined by the tallow dip that she held in her hand. A bouquet of odours saluted us, to describe which would be impossible; for they are peculiar to the Calle San Lorenzo. If I recollect rightly, we threaded a tortuous passage, and then

descended, by some stone steps, to a long corridor, passing through this into a sort of kitchen, where another woman was peeling onions.

Here we left the two ladies with the old dame, and proceeded to examine the corridor. It was lined with tiny alcoves, each curtained with the blue and white print of draught-board check, that was once so popular among poor people in Great Britain. I felt that we were in a sort of prison. The old apothecary was delighted. He pointed out the probability of the alcoves having once been the sleeping-places of slaves, appertaining to the house of some noble who flourished in the time of the Banu Hud dynasty. He suggested that perhaps they were the cells in which Moorish monarchs had formerly placed their prisoners. The air in this corridor was horrible, almost fœtid. Each alcove contained a sleeper, and each sleeper was snoring. The absence of oxygen had made the poor occupants so torpid, that they were entirely oblivious of the noise we made. A chorus of bull-frogs was nothing to the deep diapason of these slumberers. It was a truly dreadful situation.

"Where are the rooms which you propose to give us?" I asked, pathetically.

The wrinkled hag smiled reassuringly.

"Rest content," she purred. Your Worships shall be well bestowed."

I did not like her mischievous and thievish look, but followed the rest when she led the way out of the carbonic acid gas of the corridor into a slightly purer air. With great *aplomb* she threw open the door of a crypt-like bedroom, where the faint odour of a cesspool was distinctly noticeable to my keen sense of smell.

"There,"—she said, "there is an excellent habitation for Your Worships; those *camas* are entirely at your disposition, my good *huéspedes*."

Madame V—— turned pale. The Basque from Betelú shook his head, and I, unable to contain myself, burst into loud laughter.

"We cannot all sleep here," said the apothecary.

"Why not?" cried the wrinkled old woman, shrilly, "is the place not good enough for you? *Caramba!* I very nearly secured an Archbishop as a lodger to-day. You ought to be thankful for a roof over your heads at a time like this."

"But, my good woman," pleaded the Basque, "the customs of English people are so different from——"

She did not allow him time to finish the sentence.

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed, in real surprise and anger, "do you mean to say you can't all sleep here, as comfortably as possible? There is the young gentleman and his——(a pause)—mother; and his sister; and you, sir, old enough to be his grandfather, and who ought to have more sense than you have."

Whereupon the good apothecary began to rattle off excellent Castilian at the rate of a hundred and fifty words a minute. The coachman, who had been waiting for his fare, had followed us into the bedroom, and he assured us that no other accommodation was to be had anywhere in the city. I therefore said that we men would give up the room to the two ladies, return to the *fonda* with the *cochero*, and find a corner somewhere. But the woman of the house became highly indignant, and even threatening, on learning the nature of this proposition.

"Here are four beds," she protested, "and they must be occupied. If you two men do not sleep in this house, I shall reserve the right to put other people in the room."

"We will pay you what you like," I said, angrily, "only we must ask you to be good enough to allow these two ladies to remain here alone."

Somewhat mollified, the woman began to grumble about the iniquity of leaving beds unoccupied when there was such need of them.

"What a shame it is," she continued, "that two such agreeable gentlemen should have to go out into the night, at such an hour."

"Our minds are made up," I said, "and you will do your best to make our friends comfortable."

We were bidding the ladies good-night when Madame V—— suddenly burst into tears. Her daughter, too, broke down. The poor child entreated us to take her out of the house, and the mother implored us not to leave them there alone.

"Take us anywhere—anywhere," she murmured. "We shall die of fright if we remain here; we *dare* not stay without you."

The situation was becoming grave. The old landlady, catching the drift of our conversation, imagined that discredit was being thrown on her "four beautiful beds."

I turned to the coachman, gave him a dollar, and asked him if he would drive me to some other place, so that I might make more enquiries about rooms; but he flatly refused to take me a yard.

"The streets are obscure," he cried, "and there are *mala gente* about."

So I dismissed him with a threat, and after a word to my friends, I went out into the street. The narrow Calle San Lorenzo was pitch dark. The municipality had used up all the gas in the illuminations, in honour of the twenty-five prelates attending the Catholic Congress. I stumbled on through several narrow streets, in hopes of chancing upon some friendly light, betokening at least shelter within. But every window was black, and the city was almost silent. I began to retrace my steps, with the determination to insist upon the ladies taking up their quarters in the vacant bedroom, and to mount guard, with the apothecary, outside the door. Hearing someone approaching, I paused. The clash of a sabre echoed in the silence. The man was an officer. I saluted him, and implored him to help us. He was almost intoxicated, nevertheless his politeness did not desert him.

"The lady and child may have my room," he said. "I shall be glad to be of service."

But, under the circumstances, to accept his hospitality was impossible. I hurried back. By the time I arrived at our prison the ladies were almost in hysterics. When I proposed having

chairs placed outside the door of the bedroom, the landlady would not hear of such a thing.

"The people sleeping in the corridor would not like it," she protested; "there might be a row."

"If you leave us again," said Madame V——, "I shall die. I am sure we are in a den of thieves and murderers. Let us all go into the bedroom and sit down for the night."

We entered the *habitacion de dormir*. The faint smell, rising from a mysterious cesspool somewhere in unknown depths, came in at the window I threw open. In the majority of old Spanish houses there is a death-trap of a cesspool, and, even when this is absent, there is some other institution equally offensive. The municipalities pay more attention to the erection of statues, and unnecessary buildings, than to the sanitary economy of their cities.

We sat down on the beds and looked at each other. The poor little girl was so tired that she immediately put her head on her mother's shoulder, and fell asleep. Madame V—— was also exhausted.

I carefully examined the room. There was a little alcove in one corner, full of mattrasses. This seemed to offer some privacy. Once more

I issued forth into the corridor to seek the landlady. I begged her to remove the mattrasses, and to improvise a curtain. At first she was obstinate, but a *douceur* made her compliant. Thereupon a bed was made in the *alcoba*, and a curtain was nailed up before it. Into this friendly shelter the ladies retreated, bubbling over with suppressed laughter, whilst we left the room to examine the contents of the larder, where we found absolutely nothing but onions. As the bread did not come till morning, we had all to retire to bed quite supperless.

After a decent interval we returned to the *habitacion de dormir*, and tip-toed to the beds farthest removed from the recess.

We all had a sense of humour, and the situation was really irresistibly comic. The Basque apothecary's Christian name was Plácido. Never was a word so wrongly bestowed! He was an excitable chatterbox, carrying on a whispered conversation whilst undressing.

"You know these delicate situations better than I," he said, evidently taking me for a sort of Lawrence Sterne, "and therefore I ask you this: Of how much clothing do you think it advisable to divest oneself?"

To this I signalled an answer, but being

unable to grasp my meaning, he repeated the question in a louder voice. Whereat there was a sound of musical laughter from the alcove. Paying no heed to this, he carefully undressed, and went to sleep quite unconcernedly. I lay down on the bed, placing my revolver under the pillow. This was in the days when I thought revolvers were necessary in Spain. I do not carry one now. Plácido soon began to snore; the noise he made being a sort of *basso obligato* to the corridor chorus, dimly heard through the thick oaken door. It was a dismal sound, enough to have aroused the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. Madame V—— declared she was almost terrified, but I know that she did little else but laugh, until the mosquitoes began to assert themselves. We two carried on a conversation in quite loud tones; for Plácido was at last perfectly placid, and slept on undisturbed by our laughter.

I was just settling down to sleep myself, when all at once I heard a dreadful scratching on the wall-paper, which was puffed out by the damp. It was the march of an army of insects. In order to breathe even moderately fresh air that stifling night, it was necessary to have the window open. Naturally enough the mosquitoes entered, their "ping, ping" being heard every

instant. They alighted on my nose, reminding me of that portion of Mercutio's speech where he tells us of Queen Mab—

> "Drawn with a team of little atomies
> Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep.
> Her waggoner, a small grey-coated gnat,
> Not half so big as a round little worm
> Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid."

At that time, mosquitoes had a special liking for my blood, for I had not then contracted the habit of smoking regularly. They came at me in clouds, but I fought them blindly, using a damp towel as an engine of battery. They, at least, were enemies that I knew. But at last some great mysterious creatures simultaneously dropped on my bed from the ceiling—one or two falling on my face. This was too much for flesh and blood to submit to. I leaped out of bed, struck a light, and began the work of destruction. In that battle, I should not care to say how many insects perished.

"Are they mosquitoes?" asked a laughing voice. "How you alarmed us! We thought a robber was in the room."

The head of Madame V—— was obtruding from the curtains. The mention of the *chinchas* was enough to send her almost distracted. No

sooner had I told her of their presence than she found several in the alcove. All night long she was battling with the enemy.

My candle was kept lit, with the result that many strayed revellers peeped in at us through the thick iron bars of the open window. One young man made feeble jokes about the apothecary, who was lying with his mouth wide open: he finally threw in a bit of charcoal, which, hitting Plácido on the forehead, effectually roused him.

In the morning I was awakened by a fearful commotion in the bedroom. Utterly worn out by such an exhausting *vigilia*, I had overslept myself. The apothecary had already risen, and had withdrawn from the apartment. Madame V—— was also astir. There I beheld her, seated on a chair in the middle of the room, the landlady applying a raw onion to some dozen wounds on her forehead. The tears were streaming down her cheeks, not from the application of the onion alone, but partially from shame at the humiliating spectacle she presented. Her plump and pretty face was swollen until it was almost unrecognisable. She was the picture of desolation.

I lay still, in silent horror, furtively feeling

the marbly lumps on my own forehead. By and by the landlady retired for some fresh water. Then came the last act of the tragedy. Madame V—— seized a hand-mirror, and, in her gestures like no one so much as Miss Achurch, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, she began to analyze the bites. There was no denying the fact that her face was ruined for at least a week. The tears welled out afresh. She rose, and came up to my bed. I feigned sleep. She gently shook me, and implored me to look at her.

"Don't be bashful," she said, "this is no time for bashfulness; besides, I am old enough to be your grandmother. Do you think, Mr. Thirlmere, that my face will ever be right again?"

"O, yes," I said, consolingly, "to-morrow you will be as fresh as a daisy."

"You know you are fooling me," she cried. "What *shall* I do—whatever shall I do? I have a letter of introduction to the Bishop of ——. I could never present myself before the dear Bishop in this plight, could I?"

"Now, come here, my good dame," said the landlady, re-entering. "Let me apply these cold water bandages."

And here I draw a veil over the sad finale.

Bribes and entreaties at length obtained for

our American friends a share of a bedroom at the Hotel Universo, whilst the Basque apothecary prevailed upon "Pepito," the head-waiter of the Europa, to let us have his bedroom in the Calle Estevanez, No. 9, *piso segundo;* which don't go to seek, as there is also a *No.* 9 *duplicado* and a *No.* 9 *triplicado*, and the multiplication of numbers will vex your spirit.

Pepito's real name was Jose Calés; there was quite a gipsy flavour about the word Calés, which took my fancy. The Calle Estevanez lies off the Plazuela de Sas, and in the sanctity of No. 9 we quite forgot the discomforts of the preceding night.

The Catholic Congress, which terminated on the 11th October, filled the dull old town of Zaragoza with unaccustomed liveliness. The twenty-five prelates and the distinguished laymen, who took part in the principal functions, held their meetings in a boarded enclosure of the Gothic Cathedral of "La Seo." When their sittings ended, the great ceremonies of The Temple of the Pillar—in connection with the feasts of the Rosary—took place. The Virgin of "El Pilar" has a large following of devotees, and consequently, the city was filled to overflowing.

On Saturday evening, October 11th, the services began in the Temple, the Cathedral, and the various churches. Streams of worshippers attended the masses, at which many great dignitaries officiated. It was a memorable sight to see the blind, the sick, and the lame, kneeling behind the altar of the Virgin in the temple of "El Pilar," craning their necks through an aperture to kiss the sacred stone, which is supposed to possess so many marvellous attributes. Impressive processions, a military mass, and great bull-fights, wound up the *fiestas;* these costly celebrations serving to fill the popular mind with a sense of the splendour and power of the Romish Church.

Plácido de Barrena y Urdapilleva—in other words, my friend the apothecary—took me to see a bull-fight. It was my first. I will not attempt to describe what has been already so often described. It was a *Corrida de Novillos;* of young weak bulls known as *toros flojos*. These poor animals had their horns covered up with thick felt. Dreadful tortures were inflicted upon the *Novillos* by a howling mob of young men, who were possessed of the tauromachian disease in its worst form. I remember that I said a quiet prayer when the first bull emerged from

the *toril*. He came towards me, across the arena, in huge bounds, as if he would leap the barrier, as so many of his unhappy kindred have done at similar functions.

Leaving this exciting scene, we saw a magnificent procession of cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and other dignitaries, winding along the streets just as dusk was coming. The light of the tapers grew clearer every instant, and the air was full of incense. These props of the Church were taking the image of the Virgin from the Cathedral of the Pillar to the Seo; they were afterwards to hold a banquet, something like that at which the Jackdaw of Rheims assisted. The Plaza de la Constitucion was full of merry people. Quacks and fortune-tellers plied their trade in front of the overflowing Europa Hotel, whilst crowds of superstitious peasants scrambled over one another on their way to kiss the sacred stone. But are not all these things writ in the chronicles of the Catholic Congress, and in the sacred journal of *El Pilar—Semanario Católico ?*

It was the second week of October, yet the wild strawberries from the pine forests were to be had in abundance. The figs they gave us at dessert, however, were not so juicy as they are

in the late summer. We had splendid fare at *table d'hôte*, where I sat next to a bishop of most courtly manners. Mr. Barrena, the apothecary, was at my other hand at every meal, telling me funny tales, in which Queen Isabella and her many Marquises did not escape criticism.

I remember our last night. Our excellent dinner, our walk through the Square; the bad water served by the waiter, who wanted to go to England to see the Queen, and to procure a situation at some place where he might be near his friend,—who was assistant cook at some London club;—the quiet talk at our lodgings, and the sweet, refreshing slumber that followed an eventful day. I recollect, too, the pleasure I experienced on the morning of my departure. How Plácido de Barrena y Urdapilleva—whose shyness had been slowly leaving him, and whose intelligence had been displaying itself gradually, like an opening rose—all at once flashed on me as a man of culture.

We were lazily drinking coffee, and eating grapes in our beds. The *camas* were ranged side by side in a little alcove of Pepito's tiny room. Plácido had been giving me a disquisition on the subtleties of the character of Mary, Queen of Scots, whom he considered a martyr of

Holy Church. I knew him already for a well-read fellow, but I was certainly not prepared for his lucid criticism of Elizabeth's great mistake. From this subject he wandered on to the living poets of Spain.

First came José Zorrilla, the author of the play *Don Juan Tenorio*. Zorrilla, he said, was the special representative of the old school in Spanish poetry.

"He is too romantic," he continued; "he looks after the 'effectismus' too much. One must forgive him many faults, however, for the sake of his great epic poem *Granada*: this is Zorrilla's most celebrated work, after *Don Juan Tenorio*, which you know is performed everywhere on All Saints' Day."

From Zorrilla he passed on to Ramon Campoamor, the best of all living Castilian poets.

"His verses resemble Heine's," said the apothecary, "but he is gayer than the German lyrist. He has, of course, the Spanish character, and that accounts for his vivacity and sparkle. Read his *Dolores* collection, and you will be charmed with the poems."

"And what about Gaspar Nuñez de Arce?" I asked.

"Well," said Plácido, ruminatively, "he is

also a good writer; but he displays too many of the defects of the older Spanish poets. He is too inflated. Nuñez de Arce finishes my list of first-rate Castilian versifiers. The Galicians, however, have a writer of whom they are justly proud. Rosalía de Castro has shown us what delicious modulations may be found in the harsh dialect of the north-west. The Catalans have Jacinto Verdaguer, who is a priest. His works are translated into many languages, but unhappily not into English. His mystic poems are charming, but the epics *Atlantida* and *Canigó* are more celebrated than his shorter and more lyrical efforts. Cataluña also boasts of Francesch Matheu, who is out and away the best love poet in Spain. You must read his fine book *La Copa*. The great eastern province has also produced Apeles Mestres, who is essentially modern in feeling. The fault I find with this man is that his imagination is too powerful, and runs away with him. His work may be placed between German and Scandinavian poetry."

Although I did not quite understand my friend's remarks on the position of Apeles Mestres in contemporary verse, I was, nevertheless, impressed by his acquaintance with the *belles lettres* of Spain. How many men in the

street could give me such an unassuming, and yet perfectly comprehensive critical estimate of the living poets of their country? Plácido de Barrena y Urdapilleva had not lived his lonely life at Betelú in the mountains for nothing.

I said farewell to this pleasant fellow with real regret, promising to visit him some winter, and to accompany him on a bear shoot. Zaragoza was still brilliant with the splendour of a great military mass when at last I tore myself away.

Passing down to Barcelona, it was a lovely sight to see Lerida gradually rise out of the pearly grey of the morning, as the train approached. When we paused at the station, the antique town shone like an enchanted vision. A stern old building on high ground was bathed in a deep flush of rose, like some ideal castle in a fairy picture.

XIV

ZARAGOZA TO BARCELONA

I LEFT Zaragoza at dead of night, bound for beautiful Barcelona. At the station, the Salas de Espera were crowded with pilgrims newly returned from Rome. Rembrandtesque groups occupied the chairs, the couches, and covered the whole of the floors. They were chiefly natives of the north-western provinces, who had had the misfortune to excite the superfine contempt of the railway officials. They were *Gallegos*, which in Spain is a synonym for "louts." In the opinion of the porters none but Gallegos would thus lie about like dogs.

"They are brutes," was the general verdict of the Aragonese. And yet, to me, these poor pilgrims seemed to be well-mannered, sweet-tempered, docile creatures, who did not object to being led by the nose like their own oxen, and tyrannized over by their spiritual advisers. Their priestly leaders had given them a fine

dance across Spain and the deceitful Mediterranean, in order that they might make themselves sure of heaven by kissing the big toe of the "*Papa.*" This ceremony duly performed, and the second sea-sickness over, they were yearning for home. One of their special trains came groaning into the station, and, as usual, a porter yelled, "*¡ Señores viajeros al tren !*" adding, as a sort of afterthought, "*¡ y los Gallegos tambien !*"

I felt genuinely sorry for those sturdy northerners, tumbling over each other in their mad rush to secure good seats. They exemplified so well the infinite confusion of the sad story of humanity. Apparently they were not of the proper caste to be included under the term "*Señores viajeros.*"

But, after all, it must be confessed that the wits of the *Gallegos* are very often engaged in wool-gathering.

There is a little story to the effect that, one night, in the Madrid opera-house, two aristocratic young ladies from the north-west were listening most intently to the grand choruses in *Tannhaüser.*

"Are you *filarmónicas ?*" asked a gallant, upon entering their box. "You seem absorbed in the music."

This *caballero* was somewhat surprised at the reply.

"No, *señor*," said the elder sister, "we are *Gallegas*."

Such tales are innumerable. Galicia and the Asturias constitute the Hibernia of Spain; and beneath the uncouth exterior, and the amazing ignorance of the highlanders,—who act as hewers of wood and drawers of water in the capital,—there is all the unconscious humour of the Celt, united to the sterling qualities of the sterner Gael. Spurned by the blue-blooded Castilian and Navarrese, the Galician is nevertheless happy in his bondage, and happiness is surely the mother of wit and humour.

The fellow who one day told his master that, at the moment of losing a packet of valuables, the light was so intense, that in order to see anything it was necessary to close his eyes, was perhaps not quite so stupid as he appeared.

The sun was high in the heavens long before the express had passed through the flat, almost desert land, that extends from Zaragoza to lofty Lerida.

I awoke as we steamed into the latter station, and found it pleasant to issue from the stuffy

sleeping-car into the sunbright freshness of a new day.

"Alight and wash your face, *señor*," cried an old woman, as she saw my head appear at the window. And, fearing that I was hopelessly besmirched, I promptly did her bidding, retiring to an open-air toilet chamber, beside the shrubs of the platform.

"God will repay you, sir," said the good soul, on receiving the gratuity which I willingly gave for the luxury of exquisitely clean towels and pure water, in which the sun's rays were focussed. "May you soon come this way again! I see you are only a *pájaro de entrada*."

With her blessing ringing in my ears, and feeling that all my senses were baptized anew with the auroral beauty of the world, I re-entered the train.

We moved out of the station into a fertile smiling country. In the north, dark Pyrenean peaks were superimposed upon a belt of opalescent cloud. Still farther away, in the same direction, other mountains faintly shone, covered with eternal snow, white as the Jungfrau's silver horn.

Away we sped, the train rocking violently,—through fields of barley, whose ripples would

have gladdened the soul of Keats; then snorting through a landscape rich in warm brown hues of upturned earth. Away to the east we rushed, past clumps of golden iris, brightening the margents of little fretful brooks; through vast stretches of waving wheat, which the spring had splashed with the splendid scarlet of the abundant poppy. The Spanish May is indeed made memorable by the fragile beauty of this gaudy flower.

One of my fellow-travellers was a geologist, and an authority on dinosaurs. He was a stout, wheezy fellow, the embodiment of good humour. His voice had the drollest of all possible inflections. It gave one the amusing impression of a faint escape of gas from an unlighted burner.

"What would you have done, *señor*," he asked, "had you been a prehistoric savage, and had had the misfortune to meet a dinosaur?"

He rubbed his hands in a sort of ecstacy at the idea of my having a rencontre with one of these gentle antediluvians.

"I should have run away, *señor*," I replied, "and pray, what would *you* have done?"

"I also should have run away," he said; "but the necks of those graceful creatures had

a knack of going round corners, and they could almost be in two places at once. I frankly own that a huge thirteen metre megalosaurus, of the Jurassic continent, must have been a terror!"

This pleasant old Falstaff told me that all the dragon stories were true in substance and in fact; that dinosaurs survived the prehistoric age, and, breeding in caves and lonely places, made things pretty lively for our remote ancestors. He had a theory that dragon stories ran in the blood—that there was something of animism in them—something traditional, remote, primeval, whose origin was lost in darkest eld. The savage mother, nursing her savage babe, whispered terrible tales of the dragon. These thrilling stories were taken in with the maternal milk, becoming a part of the youngster's life, to be in turn handed down into our own time.

"Look at your legend of St. George and the Dragon," he cried, "the monster slain by England's tutelar saint was probably a pterodactyl of the mesozoic period. Then there is the tale of Perseus and Andromeda, and many others."

I did not argue with him. It is much more interesting, and agreeable, quietly to listen to people than to dispute their statements. In his

valise the geologist had a marble statuette of a modern athlete.

"Is it not wonderful?" he asked. "It was chiselled from life."

"It certainly is wonderful," I said. "The muscles of the back are splendidly carved."

"A young Basque pelota player was the model. Tell me, do you think there is any racial degeneration here? I'll wager something that Amadis de Gaul could not have been in it with Chiquita."

"Yes, but Chiquita is a specialist," I rejoined. "*He* does not represent the nation. Pardon me if I tell you that, as a race, you are physically degenerate. Your upper, and especially your middle classes, are not to be compared with ours. I think your peasants are finer than the British, but the urban population of tauromachian Spain is too much addicted to coffee, to *aguardiente*, and to tobacco; and so it is effete. Your countrymen love to huddle together in towns and villages; as a body they seem to hate a rural life. That which is beautiful in your statuette is beautiful not so much to my eyes, but to my imagination. For in that marble I see an augury of future blessings for your great nation. The interest which all classes

now show in *pelota* will react upon the people; making them more manly, more robust, more natural; and thus lead them to vie with each other in all healthy activities."

I had had this on my mind for quite a long time, and I was glad to rid myself of the burden. My delightful friend received the frank expression of my views in silence, and, all the rest of the way, he gave me no opportunity for the exercise of candour, overwhelming me, as he did, with exquisite descriptions of the *marismas* of Andalucia, with their colonies of rare wild-fowl, not least beautiful of which are the herds of crimson flamingoes.

We were moving rapidly eastward through patches of purplish-white buckwheat, past tiny cottages nestling close to the railway, each little habitation proud of its shady fig-tree and blossoming vine. In the plains the vines were also blossoming; the little, thick stumps that stud the red fields being covered with exquisitely tender young leaves. In Spain the vine of the *campo* is invariably cut down year by year. The few new branches that bring forth fruit, hang close to the ground, consequently the grapes become much soiled during thunderstorms. When we recollect that the fruit is thrown

into the *lagares* without any attempt at selection, we cease to wonder how it is that the generous red wines of Navarra, of La Mancha, of Aragon, and of Cataluña, usually lack that special delicacy of bouquet and flavour which the French vintages possess. A wasteful process of pruning also results in a curtailment of the crop.

There is nothing like the quantity of fruit grown that might be produced on this fertile soil. The explanation is that wood is dear, and that it would not pay the people to stake the vines. Hence the general superiority of French vintages, which manage somehow or other to keep in the front rank, although of late years their reputation has been somewhat tarnished by the reports of enormous importations of Spanish wines at Bordeaux, and other French ports, for treatment and re-exportation as the genuine home-made article.

In all good French vineyards each bunch of grapes is carefully picked, and only the good fruit placed in the winepress; all the astringent stalks being excluded. In Spain the method is very different. Except in the Jerez district, the bunches are generally crushed *en masse*; good, bad, and indifferent grapes are trodden down by boys such as that wild young Bacchus whom

Velasquez painted, surrounded by a crowd of sensual boors. By the way, that picture in the Madrid Museo is one of the truest paintings I have ever seen; it is so typical of the people, and is, in its way, as true to-day as it was in the time of its creator.

This being the ordinary treatment of the *uva*, the *vino de mesa* generally in use has but little charm for an English palate. Nevertheless, excellent wine is made in Spain, for which good prices are asked and readily given. There is the Rioja Clarete of the Compañia Vinicola, and the claret of the Marquis de Riscal, which latter is a most delicate and excellent liquor. One may get "Riscal" in England both privately and publicly, as witness the wine cards of the famous Palmerston Restaurant in Broad Street, the Café Monico, De Keyser's Hotel, &c. Then there is the Lecanda wine of Valladolid, the Rioja of the Marquis de Reinosa, to say nothing of the well-known Valdepeñas, which is, however, somewhat out of date. English travellers should insist upon getting these various brands when making journeys in Spain, because the several manufacturers have copied the French methods, and their vintages are good. The ordinary table wine should be avoided, as

my experience teaches me that it is too strong and acrid for a British stomach. The sweet wines of the South and East are also excellent. Writing of these nectars, I may mention my discovery of *Malvasia*, the historical *Malvoisie* of our ancestors. The word *Malvasia*, which is purely Catalan, had its origin in this way:—A number of Sitgians crossed the Mediterranean to assist Andronicus Paleologos, the Byzantine Emperor of Greece, in his wars with the Turks. (The Catalan kings were called Counts of Athens in the twelfth century.) These warriors brought back from the island of Xio a strong, sweet wine, the secret of whose manufacture they likewise managed to obtain. This ardent liquor is now made at Sitges, a lovely little town on the Mediterranean, forty-two kilometres from Barcelona. It is prepared in some special way, with the help of herbs—mallow being one of the chief factors in its flavouring, hence the name *Malvasia*. *Malva* is the Spanish equivalent of mallow—plural *malvas*, the French *mauve*. The termination *ia* signifying "treated with." In making such fine, sweet "ladies'" wines as this, great care is exercised. The mass of selected berries, all bursting with generous nectar, is allowed to remain in the press untouched by

hands or feet; the grapes thus crush themselves. The juice flows gradually into the vat, and consequently no astringency of bruised seed or stem is imparted to the *must*. I have tried *Malvoisie*, and I vote it a liqueur. Our forefathers must have had the most remarkable internal economies to have been able to cope with this strong, sweet wine. It is delicious, nevertheless, with the very faintest volatile odour of rum in the bouquet. The salt sea air perhaps gives the grapes a certain character, which, with the Malva treatment, imparts to the wine that peculiarly subtle flavour for which it is noted. At good hotels the cost is four pesetas, or say three shillings per bottle, but any enterprising merchant will be able to buy it in Sitges at very low rates. Indeed wine is cheap everywhere in Spain, outside the limits of municipal *octrois*. The stoniest parish can boast its pleasant cluster of vines, and the poorer the soil, the better they seem to thrive.

The stout Spanish geologist had much to say about wines, and in turn I regaled him with a glowing account of Lord Bute's vineyard in South Wales, whose Castell Coch, 1881 vintage, realised one hundred and fifteen shillings a dozen at Birmingham in 1893. I also spun a fine

yarn about the Marquis's other vineyard of *Gamay Noir* grapes, which in 1893 gave forty hogsheads of wine of the best quality.

"Well, I declare," said the geologist, "viticulture seems to be the trade of Marquises, both in England and in Spain. But then they are good-for-nothing fellows, and the manufacture of wine no doubt keeps them out of mischief."

In asking pardon for this long digression, I frankly acknowledge that such episodes are not attributes of a really good style. But Spain and grapes suggest one another, and so do Gibraltar and Spain. There was a second old gentleman in the carriage who had Gibraltar on the brain. In one breath he said the fortress was worth nothing—"*no vale nada*." The next moment he was pathetically imploring me to restore it to his country.

"Give it back to us if you are a fair-minded man," he cried, holding out both hands with almost tragic entreaty.

He looked as if he would have credited me with the powers of a plenipotentiary had I handed him the latch-key of my chambers, saying that it was the *llave* of the Rock, and that the place was entirely at his disposition.

It is a fact that our possession of Gibraltar is

a secret thorn in the side of all Spaniards. They resent our presence there, just as we should resent a French fortress and the French flag at the Lizard.

We were now passing through an almost Flemish landscape of flat cornland, where the wheat was burnt to gold under the rows of poplars. We passed Bell-Puig and entered the *llano*, or plain, of Urgel. Don Salvador Casañas y Pagés, a recently-elected Cardinal, is the *Obispo* of this district, and he also wields virtual power over the interesting little republic of Andorra, away in the Pyrenees. He is considered and treated as a Royal prince, having almost a feudal authority over his diocese. I was thinking how beautiful looked the plain of Urgel, and the ancient fort of Tarrega, glowing red in the morning sun, when a passage of arms between my two companions distracted my attention.

"Competition is so keen that I am sometimes afraid of brain fever," said the gentleman who wanted me to give him back Gibraltar.

"O, pray set your mind at rest on that point," snapped the geologist, "for you will never have such a fever."

After this verbal affray there was a fairly

long pause in the conversation. Meanwhile the country had become more undulating, with glimpses of little towns faintly shining far away. In the clear, dry air of magnificently rural Spain we could see leagues and leagues to northward, the high Pyrenees making a glorious background, their blanched crests looming through the clouds. All this flat land is but sparsely wooded: the wasteful process of disafforestation is still going on throughout the country, from North to South. We need not be surprised that the climate of the high tablelands is so terribly dry at all seasons. Only in the South does the *carbonero* spare any tree; the *alcornoque* (cork) woods of Andalucia being exempt from the general extirpation.

Beyond Cervera I caught sight of the grey old castle of Santa Fé, set in a hollow of the plain, and idealised by the magic beauty of the morning. Tennysonian music suddenly awakened from its sleep in some mystical convolution of the brain, and my lips silently repeated the poet's loveliest lyric—

> "The splendour falls on castle walls,
> And snowy summits old in story."

Those words were vitalised at once—the picture was before me. Reflections on the events that

have occurred at Santa Fé in bygone days, gave place to beautiful memories of Coniston Mere, where "the long lights shake across the lake," when the clouds race up from the sea. The poem still lit my imagination when we had reached the foothills of the celebrated range of Montserrat. These mountain spurs were in places golden with the *planta genista*, and in others sombre and solemn with plumy pines. The lower branches of these trees had been lopped off for firewood, leaving nothing but funereal tufts of dark feathers on the tops of the red trunks. Emerging from their Plutonian shade we entered a stony grove of evergreen oak, in which I saw many unfamiliar birds. Farther on there was a charming little scene, where, beneath a hawthorn hedge, there was a group of pretty children, and a black cat sunning himself among blossoms of the wild strawberry. Here in these forests strawberries are plentiful, and they last nearly all the summer. I have eaten them both in May and September, this fruit forming the chief spring and autumn dessert of many a Spanish *fonda*.

The bare country about ugly Calaf was bright with the glorifying touch of the *primavera*. During the military manœuvres in the autumn, Calaf is

always a dusty wilderness; now, however, a flood of tender green overspread the plain. In these half-desolate, savage, yet strangely beautiful tracts of sun-scorched land, I sometimes endeavour to find out the secret of their fascination for my soul. Here, in the wild plains of the north-east, as in the wide *despoblados* of the south, perfumed with rosemary and thyme, I am thrilled by primeval feelings. Sometimes they appal, at others they amaze, and occasionally they fill me with joy. But they never fail to exert a subtle fascination upon my heart, the secret of which I cannot discover. As well might I try to dig man's immortal spirit out of a poem with a spade, or attempt to plumb the Atlantic with a metre measure. This feeling is the same in the flowery *manchones*, or fallow lands, of Andalucia, as on the wild moors of Britain.

When the train began to shriek through cool tunnels the clouds were gathered above us, giving an impressive and threatening aspect to the landscape. It was now that I descried another old feudal castle crowning a giddy peak. As we came nearer to this oldtime stronghold, I grew much interested in it. Our way led through a long valley full of pines and cork trees. When

we reached the point at which I expected the ancient ruin to come into further and better view, I found that my castle had vanished into thin air. To me it was a veritable *chateau en Espagne*.

We flew past Rajadell in full summer weather, under a blue and cloudless sky. The water of the brooks was like *crême d'homard*, it was so thickly turbid with the red soil of the vineyards, which had been carried away by the heavy rain of the night. In these vineyards the snapdragon flaunted its showy purple, and harebells, bright as the Catalan sky, were dancing in the wind as merrily as if their home had been a Scottish brae. Now I spied a snug little farmhouse, with the inevitable girl going to the well with her large, cool, brown *cántaro;* then a long stretch of uninhabited land.

All at once the barren pinnacles of Montserrat appeared before me. They are peaks of noble and satisfying aspect, crowning a stupendous ridge whose height, weirdness, and perpendicular precipices make it one of the wonders of Spain. Manresa is in these mountains, and here we halted in order that we might devour some of the *tortillas* for which that station is deservedly famed. I found my omelette to be light, deli-

cious, and wholesome, and I was astonished to learn how hungry I was when I saw the fat lady of the restaurant splitting rolls, and shovelling *tortillas* between the halves.

We were still hard at work satisfying our appetites when the train moved off, and we crossed the ruddy river Llobregat, mentioned not seldom in Napier's "Chronicles of the Peninsular War." This stream was simply a great torrent of mud, and it seemed to me that, in its whirling waters, the very life-blood of Spain was being poured down into the sea. The country, being everywhere so bare of trees, seems always to be losing its soil during the heavy storms. These tempests, of course, are largely caused by the extreme heat, engendered by the disafforestation of the great plains. If Spain could see her way to planting trees in the desert, and irrigating the *secanos*, what latent wealth would be disclosed!

Picturesque Monistrol now became visible, set in a red ravine in the great, grotesque mountains of Montserrat. A funicular railway, and certain other signs of popularity, showed that this was a favourite holiday place. Crowds of operatives thronged the station of Monistrol, for this is part of the manufacturing district of

Cataluña; Manresa, Sabadell, and Tarresa being other industrial centres of no small importance.

At Monistrol I also saw a leper. As I passed him on the platform I perceived a faint and disgusting odour. He was a very young man, his black eyes full of the unspeakable pathos of suspended passion. His hands were pallid, scaly, and hideous. He had eaten too much of that horrible food *bacalao*—a badly-cured, evil-smelling salt fish, imported from Scandinavia, which constitutes one of the principal articles of the Catalan workman's dietary. For this young man there could be no more love, no more joy; he was damned and done for. The sight of him was bad enough, but the reflections which he gave rise to were more than painful.

Here an American joined us and lit the eternal cigar. The Americans will never smoke pipes until, some fine day, the Prince of Wales stands on the steps of Marlborough House, and takes his pipe into the carriage with him. Then every man Yankee will set up a briar.

This man was an unfortunate exception to to the general body of his globe-trotting compatriots. He was a cad, and a very rude cad into the bargain. He was liberally besprinkled

with jewellery, which prompted one of my companions to whisper,—

"Is it not very like a brass knocker on the door of a pigstye?"

This purse-proud globe-trotter had been having a bad time on the London Stock Exchange. His strictures on the tactics of company promoters gave me the idea of writing the following exercise in Spanish :—

CANCION DE LA BOLSA.

Como un pajarero
Con su cencerro—
¡ Falaz campanilla !
Sobre la vega
Anda furtivamente
Por la noche oscura,
Brillando su sorda linterna
En los ojos de las alondras,
Llenándolas de estupor ;
Y así con las sonrisas
De su maestro el diablo
Cogiendo sus víctimas
Así como fresas,—
Viene el aventurero
Entre nosotros.

Pensamos todos
Que el es amigo,—
Un buey inocente,
Tocando su cencerro
Cuando comiendo
Yerbas del campo.

Luego súbitamente
El nos deslumbra
Con sueños placentéros
Del Dorado nuevo:
Halagado y temblando
Caímos en sus manos,—
La alegria nuestra
Perdida por todo.

¡ Ojalá ! que fuere
Un buitre de los montes,—
Un Quebranta-huesos,—
Enormemente fuerte,
Que pudiese descenderme
En las calles de Lóndres,
Arrebatar tales hombres
En mis garras tan agudas,
Y de pronto remontarme
Alto en el cielo,
Para matarlos enseguida
Encima del tejado
De la Catedral insigne
Del inmortal San Pablo !

Having crossed the watershed, with wild shrieks and at a furious pace we swept down into the land of the agave and the prickly pear. We could now see the Mediterranean, and the white sails of fishing boats skimming across its blue waters.

The vines crept higher and higher up the hills, as the landscape grew still more diversified and picturesque. The jungle that adorned the

sides of the railway was starred with pink convolvulus. Everywhere there were signs of abundant life. All over the country folk were busy with the sweet, fresh labours of the spring. How suggestive were the swathes of grass in a perfumed hayfield beyond Sabadell! The faint, familiar scent of this early hay lingered about me even when we had glided through rose-gardens into beautiful, peerless Barcelona; and as I passed through the crowded streets of the city, my mind was busy thinking of other hay-fields under a northern sky.

XV

BARCELONA

THERE had been heavy rain, and the splendid masses of larkspur in the park were somewhat bedraggled, and splashed with mud. The continual breath of roses made the air heavy and relaxing; whilst the still more penetrating odour of the orange blossoms sweetened the atmosphere so much that one's mind became full of an indescribable imaginative tumult, and one's senses seemed to faint in a riot of recollections and anticipations. The quintessential fragrance of old romance pulsed through the delicious air; for the exquisitely fragrant petals of the *azahar* flowers were drying in the intermittent bursts of sunlight, and, to my mind, there is no bloom in this glorious world with so powerful and so poignant a sweetness as that possessed by the bridal orange-blossom—the *azahar* of the Moors.

By a singularly happy chance I found two perfectly congenial friends in Barcelona. One

of them a man of brawn, height, and matchless symmetry—a very Hercules in bulk and strength, and an Admirable Crichton in soul. The other of a less robust type in point of physique, yet developed in both mind and body far beyond the ordinary man. Let me bestow familiar names upon these two companions. Henceforward the former shall be known as Hercules, the latter as the Nightingale.

The Nightingale is endowed with an indescribable personal charm, which is, perhaps, in some degree attributable to his Scandinavian ancestry. To his Viking forefathers may certainly be traced that bright impulsiveness, that wide generosity, and that boyish *abandon* which go so far towards making him such an agreeable companion. His charm is quite independent of the mellow, organ-like voice given him by Nature—a voice the like of which I have never heard before. Its tones bring tears into women's eyes and shake the hearts of men—its strength absolutely compels homage. For when the Nightingale sings, all the passion of the ages seems to be thrilling in the palpitant air, which becomes articulate with our own personal yearnings and aspirations hitherto unexpressed; so that one regards him with reverence,—as one

who can pour forth those thanksgivings which in us are for ever repressed.

Real feeling is so contagious that, thus walking in the Park, we were all three wrapped in one common joy—the simple bliss of existence. Are there not moments in the most dreary lives —brief interludes—when glimpses of perfect happiness come to us unsought and uncraved? Moments when we are fain to acknowledge that to have lived, and toiled, and suffered, only for such hallowed instants full of the true apprehension of beauty, is not to have existed in vain? Moments when we realise that such divine emotion as then thrills us bespeaks the divinity within these corporeal frames, moving with mechanical preciseness amidst a thousand uninteresting and uninspired nonentities? At such times the soul strives to release itself from its temporary abode, yearning for an ampler vision of the Elysian fields of the imagination, and our sensuous delight gives a silent denial to the philosophers who tell us that happiness is always in the Past or in the Future.

Present bliss made perfect the accord which subsisted between our trio on the day we walked in the perfume of the *azahar*, and in thorough sympathy of thought and emotion we were

silent. It was a Tennysonian-Carlylesque, an eloquent, delectable silence; somewhat new and strange to us, for we were constantly chattering, and blurting out crude thoughts one to another. But now there was a hint of strange, unearthly beauty—"the light that never was on land or sea"—radiating and pulsating in the clear rain-washed air, and shining upon the dripping petals of the great southern roses. This spiritual apprehension, as of a Heaven at our very hand, checked the too impulsive tongue and kept us reverently silent.

Success is written on the foreheads of both my friends. Hercules is most deft with his net of language, in which he is indolently quick to seize the butterfly ideas that flit through and through his well-stored mind. The Nightingale has more than one fortune in his clarion voice, and a great store of hope and courage in his sea-blue Viking eyes. In the company of these men I always feel full of a wild, ungovernable, preposterous hope. "Some day," I flatter myself, "I shall be like them. I shall be tall and massive and awe-inspiring to my fellows. Some day I, too, shall sing like the Nightingale, and bring beautiful women to my feet with moistened eyes." But all the time I know that not in this

existence shall these gifts of strength and song be vouchsafed to me.

When abroad I love to hear the sound of my own language, and, like Hazlitt, I prefer company when I am making a foreign trip; but I differ from the great essayist when I say that I also appreciate a companion when journeying in my own country. These two men are just to my taste; they would be equally delightful companions on the slopes of Skiddaw as in Barcelona. When with them I forget the world of mean, cheating, gossiping, pharisaical creatures, and for the moment move in an atmosphere of noble ambition, warmed by the sun of perfect friendship.

Leaving the Park we made our way to the Puerta de la Paz, where our boatman, "Media Luna," had his little yacht in readiness for us. We set the lateen sail and began a zigzag course towards the mouth of the harbour. "Half Moon," wrinkled and bronzed by the burning noons of Cataluña, essayed his little jokes, whilst we silently absorbed the satisfying tranquillity of the afternoon.

"Ah, *Señores*," said Media Luna, "do you know how I got this name—this dog's name that sticks to me, like the tick to a sheep's

back? It was in this way: I was gardener to the fat old Mayor of G——, who had two wooden legs, God rest his soul, poor man. He had a fat wife, who used to touch up her house with rubbishy rags like a *milano real* decking her nest. His Worship was in the habit of taking a little too much cognac after his *comida*. I was passing through his garden one winter evening, just to say Goodnight to a little serving woman in His Worship's kitchen, when I saw by the dim light a wheelbarrow in the summerhouse. I at once felt sure that I had left it there. So I took hold of the handles, and was about to pull it out of the arbour, when to my horror I realised that the wheelbarrow had resolved itself into His Worship the Alcalde, who was seated on a *silla*—taking the air. 'You miserable blockhead,' he shouted, 'what the devil do you want with my legs?' You see he had had much cognac. 'I thought you were a wheelbarrow, Your Worship,' said I, all in a shiver. Whereon he struck me with one of his crutches and told me to go and live with my father the devil, saying that I was worse than a wild he-goat. It was really too bad altogether. So, on my dismissal, I excused myself to my friends by saying that the light was bad, there being

only half a moon. Hence the nickname, 'Media Luna,' which has been my especial property ever since that unfortunate day. *Ay de mí*—some men have all the luck—look at Guerrita, Lagartijo, and Mazzantini; but you see *I* am doomed to catch mackerel and sardines because I hurt His Worship; whilst the gardener who succeeded me has now a great business in G——, having as many bottles of wine in his stores as I have hairs in my head. It really is enough to make one join the ranks of the *mala gente*. There certainly would be some satisfaction in the life of a Vizco el Borje, with brigand adventures and plenty of gold, even if the hangman's rope waited for me at the end of it."

By and by, when we had cleared the offing, and passed the fishing boats returning to the port, the Nightingale suddenly threw off his cap and burst into passionate song. He sang Schubert's lovely lyric *Pause* with so much expression, that the tears came into the eyes of the material Media Luna. I shall never forget the meaning which was thrown into those two beautiful lines—

"Ist es der Nachklang meiner Liebes Pein?
Soll es das Vorspiel neuer Lieder sein?"

It was music with the eternal in it. The very sea caught the rapture of his trembling voice, holding the melody to its bosom for a short space; then the music passed along the sheeny surface of the water. With our glasses, we could see fishermen away in the distance raise their heads in pleased surprise at hearing such delightful and unaccustomed sounds, made almost wonderful by the reverberating property of water. For my own part my feelings bordered upon ecstacy, and I was lifted out of myself, and all at once placed in possession of a new dominion of thought, when the Nightingale began Wolfram's fantasie from *Tannhaüser* —the incomparable "Romance of the Star." Then followed a sweet, strong Danish ballad, which was given in a fine frenzy of lyric enthusiasm—a ballad full of the Viking spirit, and stimulating suggestions of wild daring and derring-do. These songs were not lost when they died on the calm air, after making our languid hearts flutter with unwonted emotion. The Nightingale's glorious notes are still in my heart, and photographed on my brain; perhaps I may not be considered too preposterously hopeful when I say that I look for their survival, even after the dissolution of this corporeal frame.

Whilst our open-air concert was in progress a wide-winged yacht passed us, her sails much larger and loftier than those on our own little craft. As she swept by, with the graceful ease of a perfectly-equipped vessel, Media Luna told us that in his opinion a yacht in motion was one of the three most beautiful things in nature.

"And what are the other two?" we asked.

"O, that's soon answered," he said. "A horse at full gallop and a pretty girl dancing."

The grey-green water was now pleasantly ruffled by an easterly wind. Media Luna had been long engaged in trying to capture the wily mackerel. His volleys of Catalan expletives, fired at the unsuspecting *escombros*, were wonderfully interesting. With the freshening of the wind came the reward of his patience. A fat fish was drawn into the boat. Its pretty iridescent skin gleamed like a sullen sunset. We had seen it coming up from the depths, a vague phosphorescent light. After a brief struggle at the bottom of the boat, Hercules took up the mackerel and told us of that bloody fiend, the brave but cruel Italian, Roger de Lauria, Admiral of Spain. When the Count de Foix threatened to equip a fleet of three hundred sail, to wage war in these Catalan waters,

de Lauria haughtily said that, without the permission of his king, no galley would be permitted to navigate the Mediterranean, let alone a squadron. "Why," cried this arrogant sailor, in an outburst of almost hysterical pride, "the very fishes themselves must wear the armorial bearings of my liege, when they wish to raise their heads above the sea."

De Lauria was then in the service of Alfonso el Sabio, King of Aragon—the monarch who told one of his courtiers that if he had been of God's privy council when the world was formed he could have advised Him better. This was in the days of feudalism, when the Divine right of kings and princes was more than a name. Alfonso firmly believed that rank carries with it special privileges from above. He once said that God gives nobility only to the nobles, and reputation only to the reputable. That his ideas were shared by his servants may be seen when we consider the character of de Lauria. Whilst Media Luna drew in a score or so of slippery mackerel, Hercules told us many a tale of that inhuman admiral. Away up in the north we could see the scene of one of his greatest engagements. Far beyond the most outlying skiff, where the sea was tinted like the breast

of a stock-dove, de Lauria once gave the fish a splendid banquet. After taking Roussillon, the French traversed the Ampurdan and laid siege to Gerona. De Lauria, seconded by the *hijos-dalgo* of Castile, gave battle to the invader's fleet not far from Rosas, somewhere off San Pol, or perhaps San Feliu. He was in command of eighteen Catalan galleys. It was a bloody fight, waged on a moonless night. The commanders of the French and Provençal vessels were terror-stricken when they received Roger's challenge. They tried to throw the Spanish squadron into disorder by speaking the same language, and hoisting the same signals. One of their devices was to use the enemy's rallying-word, "Arragon," whenever the Spaniards came to close quarters. When de Lauria's vessels hoisted lanthorns on their poops, the Frenchmen as instantly replied by exhibiting similar lights. The Catalan bowmen, who were said to be the most formidable in Europe, got into the midst of their opponents at last. They beat down the oars of the Provençal galleys, and precipitated the tired slaves into the sea. In this midnight battle more than five thousand men perished. At its conclusion, de Lauria ordered three hundred of his captives

to be strung together on a cable, and thrown into the water. Two hundred and seventy had their eyes scooped out of the sockets. In this condition they were landed and conducted to the sentinels of the French camp in Gerona.

Thus ended my friend's account of this memorable battle. His discourse was followed by a discussion on the savagery of ancient and modern sea-fighting. We then put our vessel on a shoreward tack, and descended to the consideration of matters more immediate. We spoke of the unkindness of the Spaniards, who have so little confidence in women that they keep them imprisoned in their houses, like slaves in Eastern harems. It was agreed that gentlemen are to be found in Spain, but that the *bourgeosie* is not to be compared with the same class in England. Yet, after all, Spain is the land of gallant men, and of true friendships. The Spaniard is always loyal to a sympathetic friend, even a *raterillo* will keep faith with those who trust him. Always loyal and always polite, peasant and peer alike impress one with a warmth of kindliness that more than atones for the lack of certain British peculiarities.

The rottenness of the Barcelona municipalism was next criticised, and we wondered when

a new Lycurgus would arise, to snatch the citizens of the fair city from a degraded state of effeminacy, luxury, and slothful subordination to men who accept bribes as they would drink water. We spoke of the great gardens of Sarriá, whence tons of dew-drenched roses are carted to the unique flower market in the Rambla. What traveller in Spain has not fallen in love with La Rambla de los Flores? Whenever mention is made of these rose gardens, Hercules instinctively thinks of that honest nobleman, Don Bernardino de Sarriá, a redoubtable Catalan who fought under the banner of Don James of Aragon, and who ranked as one of the most valiant cavaliers of the eleventh century.

But at length we diverted the conversation from quaint mediæval lore into a more delightful channel. We induced Hercules to grow eloquent upon the loveliest of all possible flower girls, the sweet Trinidad, who lives at Los Cortes de Sarriá. This selfsame damsel—"*La Florista Morena*," as she is familiarly styled—pinned the gardenias in our buttonholes in the morning, making the shady Rambla livelier and lovelier by her musical little laugh. She is the pride of her old parents, and her beauty is a sight to see. Chaffing one another about this

girl, we disembarked, Media Luna humming "*Donde vas con manton de Manilla*," an air from the operetta *La Verbena de la Paloma*, the diva in which was just then taking the city by storm: and well she might, for rarely have we beheld a fairer creature than this dark-eyed singer, clad in her long-fringed white mantle, moving about the stage with the grace of a panther. Half Moon was very happy, although his catch of fish was not satisfactory. He advised us to go to the breakwater to watch the yachts come in, for it was a Regatta day. Arriving there, we had the harbour behind us. Beyond its masts lay Barcelona the beautiful, with her picturesque water front of the Paseo de Colon. On that fine promenade the date palms made pretty, feathery masses of green, which heightened the effect of the many-coloured funnels and hulls of steamers. Fishing-boats were landing their freight at the Puerta de la Paz, and there was much animation on the quay. The dim, blue, pine-studded hills made an exquisitely soft background to the city, their summits lost in great masses of white cloud. A new, strange beauty had descended upon the great southern town of clear skies and sunny weather—the tender, gracious loveliness of cloud and mist, heightened by a gleam

of gold in the rainy blue. From our station on the breakwater the effect was most surprising. The statue of Columbus, standing upon a golden sphere, at the summit of his magnificent monument, was pointing to the west with an air of proud command;—to the once visionary west, where the sky was now beginning to let a newer and ruddier light filter through the heavy cumuli. Immediately below us was the grey Mediterranean, the complement of the lowering heavens:—

> "The sea, that harbours in her heart sublime,
> The supreme heart of music deep as time,
> And in her spirit strong
> The spirit of all imaginable song."

Far out on a line of light we could see a fleet of mackerel boats returning homewards, and, beyond them, three wide-winged yachts were moving gracefully before the dying wind.

Among the great stones at the base of the breakwater, where we were sitting, there was a man seeking shellfish. This rough sea-wall is a sort of lovers' walk, and sweethearts passed us silently, two by two. One girl had fair, oaten-coloured hair, and a northern face. At sight of her my melodious friend took from his pocket-book a photograph. This he regarded

with a long and most enraptured gaze. Still among the disillusionized, he is, therefore, much swayed by the shy delight of love letters. I recall what he said at that moment,—"To be loved by a true girl, to have a faithful friend, and to possess perfect health, are the three best things beneath the sun." And so they are.

Away up in the clearer air of the north, little towns on the coast now took the gleam of capricious sunlight, and changeful lights raced each other across the sea. Hercules talked of Maupassant—how he was quick to seize the essential fact, and how he pourtrayed the fact in brief and luminous sentences, with just the right, the inevitable words. I suggested that we should endeavour to describe the stone on which we were seated, in some special manner of our own, and not in the style affected by Flaubert and his pupil. Here is the result :—

Myself. This stone is interesting. It is stained by time with all the antique hues that Beauty loves. It is even more than interesting, it is wonderful.

The Nightingale. I agree with you. In ages long past, perhaps this hard mass had gracious life. Think what that reflection leads us on to !

Hercules. May we not also say that it still has

life, independent of the tiny creatures on its surface? As every atom of its mass is in motion, the stone itself must surely have a certain sort of life?

Myself. Why not? Just think! There, in that moving mass of molecules, there may exist the blotted record of a million lives.

The Nightingale. Yes, indeed,—all that remains of certain insects, animals, grass, and flowers of a thousand years of the Earth's prime.

Hercules. Moreover, may there not also be hidden from us, in its adamantine heart, the blessed prints of some sweet baby's feet: a child that may have grown to man's estate and experienced feelings such as fill our own hearts this beautiful evening?

XVI

ARGENTONA

At eleven o'clock, one fine May morning, we stepped into a luxurious American saloon car at the railway station of Barcelona. We were bound for Argentona, a retired place among the Catalan hills.

Our way lay along the coast, and the sea was visible during the whole journey. The peasantry and factory operatives were sitting on the shore, enjoying the fresh, sweet air; for it was *Domingo*, the day of rest. The hot sun hung like a ball of fire over the long expanses of sand, and over the gently heaving Mediterranean. The train moved slowly on beside the water, and a soft, vague, saltish smell — the scent of drying seaweed, mingled at times with the strong, heavy perfume of flowers. People were bathing in the bright blue water. The contrast presented by their beautiful figures, and the deep colour of the ocean, was very lovely. At sight of their

naïve and natural enjoyment, dim suppressed feelings of savagery awoke within us; the desire for a more ample, a less fettered life, took shape for a moment, and we felt almost inclined to jump from the footboard of the carriage on to the sands, there to divest ourselves of our hot apparel, and to plunge into the undulating water.

Golden poppies danced on the strips of turf bordering the beach, and here and there shone marguerites, white as milk, among the harsh sea-grass. Fishermen were drawing in their huge seine, a curious multitude of holiday-makers looking on. Slowly the circle of the great net lessened, until the water became literally alive with shoals of silvery sardines. Then, with one strong and united effort, the mass of gleaming fish was landed, and sturdy bare-legged youths and old, swarthy *marineros*, began to fill their baskets with the catch. Rough jokes were freely indulged in. We saw two men engaged in a duel with cuttle-fish. Each antagonist was trying to besmear the other with the ink of the polypi. It was a fine affray, and the ending was dramatic. The smaller fellow closed with his opponent and forced him to his knees: he then crowned him with a huge octopus. No doubt these

polypi were afterwards sold for food, as cuttle-fish is a staple article of diet in Cataluña. You cannot fail to recognise the leathery segments of octopus when you discover them in your luncheon dish of rice and mixed meats. Unshelled mussels, too, enter into the composition of that extraordinary *olla*, and also the entrails of fowls.

Alighting at the station of Mataró, we found the tartana which was to whirl us through the dusty streets, and over the still dustier highway, to Argentona, the hamlet beloved of the nightingales.

Argentona lies at the feet of certain ruddy hills, covered with vines and umbrella pines. These trees are not devoid of beauty, although their size is neither large enough to be imposing, nor small enough to be insignificant. From the bosom of the hills Argentona looks down on a fruitful land, and on a smiling sea. One of the elevations is crowned with a most romantic little tower, perched on a cliff that seems hardly fit for anything larger than an eagle's eyrie. As the carriage approached the hotel, our gaze was constantly directed towards that feudal building, strange romances filling our minds,—all steeped in mediæval splendour.

When we reached the hostelry, we found our friends sitting in the grateful shadow of some fine plane trees. Our new quarters had the honour of being not only the *fonda*, but also the *Alcaldía Constitucional* of Argentona. The worthy mayor himself looked after our comfort.

A delightful hour was spent before luncheon in friendly gossip under the planes, whose silk-covered seeds began to be troublesome as the wind freshened in the early afternoon. The hedge of hydrangeas, not yet in flower, bordered upon the *carretera*, or King's highway, and up and down this road passed the happy youths and maidens of Mataró, with jokes, and smiles, and respectful greetings.

Our English entertainers and ourselves were the only visitors at Argentona—that is to say, the only paying or profitable visitors. We occupied a unique position. We were swallows that had arrived too early at a place where the landlady was thoroughly convinced of the truth of a certain threadbare Aristotelian maxim; but, as we seemed to be the precursors of pleasant times, the hotel people beamed on us, as such folk know how to beam when their guests pay them well. Later in the year Barcelona's citizens flock hither, to get a cool whiff of wind

during the August heats, and then the detached ball-room is bright with southern beauty, and the balconies are sweet with the presence of dark-eyed maidens, who lean over the balustrades sighing for the summer moon.

After a good lunch, beginning with savoury sardines and Sevillan *Reinas*, and ending with strawberries, all washed down with *vino rancio*, (an old red wine that would have gladdened the heart of Horace), we strolled forth into the sun. Passing through a potato field, we reached the country house of one of our acquaintances, who was then absent in the capital. This place was in the charge of a too-confiding dog. The poor, lonely animal seemed overjoyed to get our company, and he uttered no protest when we made free with the wealth of roses in which the châlet was smothered. There were roses red, white, and purple — roses pink, yellow, and orange. The garden beds were full of them, the hedges were aflame with them; they shone in shady corners, and in the full blaze of the sun. The skies appeared to have rained roses on and around this summer resting-place. We might have been in Cashmere. If a company of odalisques had sallied forth from the darkened rooms of the *casa* we should not have been

surprised. Before us was a realisation of some of the ideas of light-hearted and musical Tom Moore, a glowing illustration of Swinburne's alliterative line,—"*Red with the rain of the roses over the red rose land.*"

Leaving this perfumed garden, our way led us through sandy lanes, whose banks and hedges were a perfect revelation of floral beauty, In the heat of the afternoon an intense calm had fallen upon the idyllic scene. The birds were silent, the frogs were asleep, even the cicalas had succumbed to the drowsy influence of the siesta-time. Peace, older than the wrinkled hills, possessed the landscape.

The pink convolvulus wreathed itself around the trunks of ilexes, catching the lower branches as if eager to climb to the sun. Pendulous white acacia blossoms swayed in the breeze, carmine thistles pranked the fields, and scarlet poppies glowed in the corn. There were great bushes of dog-roses, with woodbine rioting through them, as the honeysuckle loves to do in England; and the beauty of the scene was enhanced, and made still more interesting, by the quiet, pensive loveliness of that sacred flower, the Rose of Sharon, which showed its pale petals in many a shadowy place along our pathway.

We lay down on a couch of sweet alyssum, and began to weave day-dreams. The shadows of a great evergreen oak flickered upon our faces. By and by a sonorous voice chanted—

"An earth-born dreamer, constrained by the bonds of birth,
Held fast by the flesh, compelled by his veins that beat
And kindle to rapture or wrath, to desire or to mirth,
May hear not surely the fall of immortal feet,
May feel not surely if heaven upon earth be sweet;
And here is my sense fulfilled of the joys of earth,
Light, silence, bloom, shade, murmur of leaves that meet."

Nothing seemed left to be desired—nothing! Was this calm, this blithe repose, this exquisite forgetfulness, this lotos-eating, the secret of the beauty of Hellas? Was this delicious languor, this perfect indifference to time, space, and being, a foretaste or a realisation of Heaven? Under so serene a sky, surrounded by such satisfying beauty, it seemed that we would live for ever. I could think of others as dead, but I found it impossible to imagine my own body's inevitable annihilation. We are told that the conception of absolute non-existence is an effort beyond the power of our intellect. This is indeed true, for no one can think of himself as absolutely blotted out of life. "That the *Ego* can cease to exist while the world lives on, is an idea which cannot enter into our region of thought, bounded as it is on

all sides by the limitations of the *Ego*." Therefore, when I tried to think of personal extinction, I was confronted by a great void, at the edge of which my fancy paused, confessing itself unable to go farther. But this fruitless effort to anticipate time had, at least, one good effect. For there, in an alien country, far removed from those English scenes which stir my heart so much, I became all at once possessed of a newer and stronger apprehension of the wonderful beauty and power of the world.

Meanwhile the gentle wind, the hot sun, and the moisture left by the night's showers, worked their will upon an expanding pomegranate flower. It was in a hedge across the road. Like sleepy Sicilian shepherds, we lay and watched this lovely blossom almost perceptibly unfolding its petals. Delightful indeed it was thus to drowse, whilst Hercules discoursed upon multifarious themes with that placid insistence which becomes him so well. But for his lazy chatter how should we have known that the key-note of Mazzini's political doctrine may be summed up in one intelligible dictum:—that men must feel a sincere reverence for the past when they seriously hope for good in the future. This, it appears, is at the base of all the great political economist's ideas.

Whilst discussing Mazzini and Italy the day began visibly to wane. A most romantic nightingale awoke in a neighbouring grove of pines, breaking the stillness with his vociferous, reiterative plaint. His song reminded me of some pretty passages in Damaré's piccolo music, "Echoes from the Wood." He seemed to be a very Catullus of a bird, and his gusts of passionate, lovesick, vehement yearning took our fancy more than a little. I, too, was at that time in a lover's humour, so for the nonce I spoke my passion vicariously through the throbbing throat of Philomel. I found it very pleasant to lie on the turf, half asleep, and allow the nightingale to flute my messages of affection. We are always, though often unconsciously, sending telepathic signals to those whom we love. The beloved is often nearer than we imagine. Somehow I felt the presence of my heart's desire; and it was to her who was there in spirit, though materially severed from me by so many miles of shimmering sea—to her whose soul was side by side with mine in that lovely waking dream,—that the *ruiseñor* had so much to say on my behalf. Listening intently to his simple melody, all at once I heard him give utterance to a pretty piece of piping very much different from his customary

song. It was almost a laugh—birds must surely sometimes laugh—but, before long, this mirth had ceased, and my little Catullus had descended the scale of feeling until he finished his singing with a sob. *Vox et preterea nihil!* Yet his voice stirred me to the depths of my heart, giving rise to many pleasurable and many painful reflections. The last vocal transition from gay to grave especially reminded me of the fact that birds, like men, have their comedies. At times the very air sparkles with their wit and humour. Yet again, like men, they are afflicted with weary hours of melancholy, when their shady temples are full of the sinister gloom of tragedy.

And we, alas, were not to be entirely exempt from sadness, even in the intense repose of that halcyon afternoon, for when an incautious reference was made to an unhappy event long-buried in the past, one of our number arose and slowly walked away. In a moment we knew our error, and how one word had stirred the smouldering ashes on the pyre of true love, but we could do nothing but look our regret.

After dinner we took the hillward path. The pretty mallow, and the undying blooms of the yellow helichrysum, graced the wayside. Climb-

ing higher we were ravished by the pomp of glorious masses of golden broom. Never losing sight of the little tower far away on the summit of one of the hills, we entered the grounds of a country house, which might have been the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. There we halted to regain our breath, before the brilliant yellow of a mimosa, which almost put the broom to shame.

In the party was a man whose heart had never been unlocked by the key of a woman's love. He laughed immoderately whilst our married couple discussed conjugal respect. Their deliberations had been started by some reference to the nightingale's protestations of love.

"Ah, my dear," said Señor M——, "recollect what the troubadour William de Mur asked of Giraud, whose knowledge he had heard extolled: 'Which ought to use the most ardent endeavour to please, the lover already rewarded, or the lover in the state of uncertainty?'"

"The former, undoubtedly," cried the Señora, who is not *Flamenca* in tastes like so many of her friends, but a high-bred womanly woman. "I am sure Giraud must have replied that the lover already rewarded ought to be the most attentive of the two."

"Yes, I believe he did," continued Señor M——, "but William de Mur pointed out at once that the most scrupulous devotion on the part of the rewarded lover is contrary to fact in both animals and human beings. He instanced the case of the nightingale, which, while pursuing his mate, exerts all his skill, and sings with the most enchanting sweetness; but when possession comes, his notes grow careless and less impassioned. Thus with mankind."

"My husband is making out a bad case for himself," laughed the Señora, "but I must again remind him of Giraud's further reply: 'Merit cannot be weakened by possession, nor true tenderness be lessened by reward.' To my mind nightingales are absolutely incapable of sentiment. One ought never to be so solicitous to please as when treated with tenderness and love."

Thus chattering we continued on our way upwards, between banks of roses, beneath the captured sunlight of the laburnums, past hedges of flowering laurels, and sweet-smelling box and myrtle, until we arrived at the artificial lake. Here, at the end of the sheet of water, a little eight-year-old friend peeped in the glassy wave to mark the lethargic gold fish making their

languid volutions. Fairest flower in all the Eden-like scene was this beautiful blue-eyed girl, the reflection of whose laughing British face looked up from the shadow-netted water. The clove carnations at her throat, and her sunbright curls floating in beautiful disarray, helped to make as pretty a picture of transient beauty as human eyes could wish to feast upon. "*Wie rührend! wie rührend!*" were the words that involuntarily framed themselves on my lips when she smiled and took my hand, bidding me walk with her.

Those who love the works of the late John Addington Symonds may perhaps remember that in his book on Davos there is a description of a gymnastic festival at Zürich, when all the clubs of Switzerland united to make a grand display. Symonds was present, and he evidently enjoyed himself. One day he was watching some thousand or so of fine athletes performing their exercises. The sight of so much manly beauty and proud vigour appears to have almost thrilled his frail body with a sudden accession of strength. At his side, however, there was an old German from Munich who was very differently affected. He wept copiously, ever and anon sighing, "*Wie rührend! wie rührend!*" To many, such an exhibition of weakness would seem well-nigh

inexplicable. But I do not find this feeling, as of a far too fleeting youth, at all difficult to understand. Our flesh is indeed grass; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; and, alas that it should be said, a thing of beauty is not a joy for ever! Who is there among us who has not at some time or other suddenly found himself confronted with the appalling fact that his youth is irrevocably gone. The fairy vision that he unconsciously imagined to be still about him has disappeared. Some trifling act, a word, a mere glance perhaps, reveals the awful chasm that separates him from younger and stronger men. These rude awakenings, these paralysing shocks, come like bolts from the blue. By the momentary blaze of mental lightning we divine our irreparable loss, and the deprivation that must inevitably be borne by others; and it is in the glare of this inward light that the spirit cries out in agony, "*Wie rührend! wie rührend!*"

But the golden-haired child perceived no trace of this mental disturbance when she saw my face near hers in the water mirror. Nevertheless some shadow of my feeling must have been apparent, because a certain Spaniard of our party gave us a long quotation from Campoamor, which was not altogether inappropriate to my

mood. At the farther end of the *estanque* there was a cluster of native girls, who made a lovely Grecian group under the roses and the arbor-vitæ. They were very young, and very charming. Their incomparable teeth flashed in the sun. Spanish women do not ruin their *dientes* with tea and other hot liquids: the hard bread of the Peninsula polishes the enamel to a pearly lustre. One of these Catalan maidens was tall and statuesque, a marvel of easy grace and natural refinement. Fondly imagining that his arrow of cunning insinuation would strike my breast, our Madrileño friend chanted rather than recited the following lines:

"Ve un hombre amante á una mujer muy bella;
Mas, por fatal disposicion del hado,
Ella es más joven, y él
Calla su amor, porque le apartan de ella
Treinta años, en que el triste ha derramado
Un mar de llanto y hiel."

But the poet of the party was worse than the man from Madrid. He was simply lost in admiration of the girls, calling our attention to their vivacious eyes, which reminded him of dewy sloes with the bloom rubbed off. He quoted Winckelmann: "In the conformation of the face the Greek profile is the first and principal attribute of a high style of beauty." He

waxed eloquent about their reflections in the little lake, and spoke of the Bath of Psyche, and other works of art. Meanwhile the *muchachas* looked on in mute amazement. "Life is made poetic and bearable only by the play of the imagination," said the poet, in a warm outburst of quite unappreciated flattery. "I imagine that I see a Tennysonian woman, I will therefore approach the nymphs, and speak to the tall one." He was as good as his word. Stepping up to the group, he cried—

> "At length I saw a lady within call,
> Stiller than chisell'd marble standing there;
> A daughter of the gods, divinely tall
> And most divinely fair."

This was too much for the maidens, who turned and fled. As they rushed through the *trigo* fields, running as fast as partridges, they doubtless repeated the equivalent of that well-worn and somewhat applicable Castilian phrase, "*¡ Que locos los ingleses !*" Following their footsteps, and laughing at their hysterical shrieks of amusement, we traversed the cornfields, passed through a narrow by-way—a veritable *camino de perdices*—and finally came out at the mineral spring. Here several worthy folk were taking the waters, and a pair of pretty girls were filling their cool,

earthen pitchers—the porous, amphora-shaped *cántaros*—which keep their contents icy-cold even in the fiercest sun. These people moved away at our approach, with gentle greetings and pleasant looks of welcome. Then the moon arose, and all at once a thousand frogs began to croak. The voices of the *ruiseñores* were entirely lost in the harsh clamour. We hurried back to our hotel in the perfumed gloaming. Subtle scents that had not been perceived by day were now rising from the damp hedgerows. Certain blossoms give off their odour only in the night, and all sweet flowers have a special time for the distillation of perfumes, so as to attract their friends, the fertilizing flies and moths. Thus it follows that a flower, like a human being, is not always at its sweetest.

When we reached our quarters we repaired to the ballroom, where we gladdened ourselves for a brief hour with English music and Highland dances. Delicious it was to have our spirits refreshed with melodies of home, away there amid the ruddy vine-covered hills of Spain. Afterwards, when all the others had retired, I betook myself to the balcony, to watch the Pleiades slowly fall, like great drops of dew, from branch to branch of the plane trees. There I sat for

hours in a strange reverie, striving to grasp the meaning of life, and to answer that unanswerable word, "Wherefore?" Calderon's famous line became at last the dominant thought, the inevitable conclusion—"*La vida es sueño*," for life is indeed a dream.

THE END.

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