Marcos and Tomas.

with the countenance of a Chinaman; and as he trudged along in sandalled shoon, greasy trousers, and battered wide-awake, with an ash-plant thrust up the back of his round jacket, and depending like a tail from his waist, he presented an utter contrast to the popular notion of a Spanish muleteer. In truth, with all his good qualities, he was decidedly the untidiest specimen of his class we ever met with, and we used to feel occasionally, that he somewhat compromised our respectability. Tomas, with a more polished exterior, was not by any means so useful and serviceable on the journey as his wealthier partner, being too fond of taking his ease, and sparing himself trouble, and while Marcos would walk on cheerfully "from morn till dewy eve," with now and then a lift on one of his donkeys, the other rode most of the distance between Toledo and Gibraltar.

We could not converse much with them, but through the medium of Purkiss every now and then a joke passed between us, to which they always gave a hospitable reception, a very slender amount of wit being quite sufficient to produce peals of laughter. Their ideas of geography must have expanded largely during the last five weeks, and they have probably ac-
Enter Cordova.

quired juster notions of the size of the globe, than they ever possessed before. Like ourselves, they thoroughly enjoyed the repose of Seville, and, a few days before us, started in great force, taking the high-road to Cordova, there to await our arrival by rail.

Nothing could be more unpromising than the weather. For days it had rained almost incessantly, and we drove from the Cordova station in the midst of a downpour, to be turned out of the fly some two hundred yards from the hotel, which, from the narrowness of the street, is unapproachable in a carriage. We had, in consequence, to undergo "a trial by water," and while making our way there through a labyrinth of alleys, the eaves on each side discharged their twin-torrents on our unlucky heads with overpowering violence.

Having entered Cordova in darkness and rain, we were naturally very eager next morning to catch a glimpse of a place so interesting and famous, which is said in the tenth century to have contained nearly a million of inhabitants, three hundred mosques, and nine hundred baths. The hotel, though dismal-looking to a degree, and anything but clean in some of its arrangements, is centrically placed
Mezquita.

on high ground, and on one side commands an extensive view, the distant mountains beyond the Guadalquivir, and the densely-packed area of the town, forming quite a panorama, in pleasing contrast to the flat plains around Seville. The air too, here, has far more elasticity and freshness, nor did we suffer so much from mosquitos, which during our stay at Seville had, in spite of the cold, plagued us day and night.

The principal "lion" of Cordova is the Mezquita, or Mosque, which, built in the eighth century by the Caliph Abd el Rahman and his son, for Mahometan worship, was converted, on the capture of the town by Ferdinand III. in 1235, into a cathedral. Its reputation for sanctity was inferior only to that of the sacred tower Kaabah at Mecca, while it claimed an equality with the celebrated El Aksah at Jerusalem. Thousands of pilgrims used to go there annually, a circumstance that will account for a good many of the six hundred inns the town is said to have contained in Moorish times. Fergusson speaks of it as the most interesting building in the whole of Spain, architecturally considered, being the first of any importance undertaken by the Moors, and having been enlarged and ornamented by successive Caliphs,
Court of Oranges.

it exhibits specimens of the various styles adopted in Spain from the earliest ages, until the erection of the Alhambra, during the decline of Moorish Art.

Surrounded by massive walls of considerable height, it presents externally no striking feature, except a tower, which has shared a far worse fate than the Giralda at Seville, having been recased throughout in 1593, an operation that would make it impossible for its original builder to recognize his own workmanship. Its situation, as we approached it, is very inferior to that of Seville Cathedral, which stands out so boldly on its platform of granite. Here too, the principal entrance lies through a Court of Oranges, which, however, is far finer than its namesake at Seville, the dimensions being larger, the cloisters more distinct and spacious, and wearing altogether much more the sequestered air of a religious retreat. The area of the court is filled with fruit-laden orange-trees, the most antique and venerable I ever remember to have seen; and their number, size, and position, so near a place of worship, quite recall the groves of idol-worship among the Jews. Between their stems you catch a glimpse of a marble fountain in ceaseless flow. In summer this
BIBLIOTECA DE LA ALHAMBRA

MEZQUITA, CORDOVA.
must be a delicious spot, a place to walk and sit in for hours; but on the day we first visited it, a considerable effort of imagination was required to realize such a season; for the recent rains had carpeted the court with greenish slime, and the air was loaded with chilling damp that forbade us to linger; while the tribe of mendicants, which are ever lying in wait at church-doors, were here more than usually importunate and cross, as if, poor creatures! they were pinched by the untowardness of the weather.

The interior of the Mezquita disappointed me grievously, the bare whitewashed walls, and low roof, hardly thirty feet high, producing none of those solemn impressions which may be called the attributes of a cathedral; while the eye is distracted by a forest of short columns extending in all directions, which look as if they had dropped from the clouds, without arrangement, or subordination of parts to any principal object. As may easily be believed, such a building fails to kindle the least spark of awe, or devotional feeling. It should however be remembered, that the Cathedral authorities have interfered with the original design, by introducing, in the sixteenth century, a double choir of a totally different style, which, by blocking up a consider-
able portion of the central area, has robbed the building of its principal characteristic—space,—the ground-plan covering, it is said, a larger surface than any church in the world, except St. Peter's. Before this alteration, the interior must have presented a singular appearance, the *coup d'œil* embracing an uninterrupted view of more than 1200 columns, while the lowness of the roof would increase enormously the apparent extent of the area from which they spring. A connoisseur in marbles would find these columns a perfect study, consisting as they do of polished jasper, porphyry, verd-antique, and other choice sorts, some of them unknown to modern lapidaries, all being in single blocks. There are hundreds of verd-antique. Their history must be a curious one, if Ford's account be true, that some of them were brought from France, others from Seville, and Tarragona; while many came from Constantinople and North Africa. Ferguson states they were transported to Cordova, from the Roman remains at Merida, and its neighbourhood. Some idea of the *Mezquita*'s size may be suggested by the fact, that it contains fifty-two aisles, of which nineteen run longitudinally, and thirty-three across the building, all having a nearly uniform width of
twenty-two feet, except one near the centre, which is twenty-seven.

Another barbarism of the Cathedral clergy was the removal of the original roof of *alerce* wood, a species of *arbor vitae*, which was carved and painted with all the skill and taste of Moorish art, and the substitution of the present hideous brick vaulting with its congenial coating of whitewash. After such Vandalism, one cannot but wonder that persons, who went to so much trouble and expense in gratifying their barbarous taste, should ever have permitted such a gem as the Sanctuary to survive their day. According to Fergusson, this was the work of Caliph Hakeem, 695 A.D., and he considers it the most perfect and pure specimen of Moorish architecture in the whole of Spain, pointing out at the same time, that its graceful and flowing forms are infinitely superior to the interlacing straight lines of the Alhambra, while the materials, instead of being mere painted plaster, are real marbles, and true mosaic-work.

He further remarks that the shortness of the marble columns suggested one of the peculiar features of the building, the architect having adopted the expedient of placing arch upon
arch, in order to eke out their height, an idea he may have caught from the frequent use of successive tiers of arches in the construction of Roman aqueducts.

It was quite a relief to turn from blank walls and frowning roof, to the rich colouring, and light, graceful arches of the Sanctuary. Its hues have lost none of their brilliancy, nor has the lapse of time dimmed the golden cells of the exquisite honeycomb roof; and as you stand under its fairy-like dome, you hardly regret the blankness of the general building, setting off as it does, in the highest degree, the mellow beauties of this central shrine.

Most of the Spanish Cathedrals we had already seen were perfect treasuries of Art, combining under one roof such an overwhelming profusion of carving, metal-work, painted glass, sculpture, and pictures, that it is impossible to examine them worthily, without more leisure than tourists can generally command. It was therefore especially provoking that at Cordova, where our detention for four days through bad weather gave us abundance of spare time, the Cathedral is almost devoid of decorative detail, the most conspicuous ornament we saw being a florid display of massive brass railings in the
highest state of polish, connecting the two choirs, which a number of workmen were busily engaged in rubbing with oranges. It was the most tasteless piece of metal-work we saw anywhere in Spain, and though it would probably have delighted the heart of Alexander the coppersmith, and men of his craft, it failed to give us any pleasure, having no more beauty than the balusters of an ordinary staircase!

What a resource should we have found in the great Palace of Zahra, which once existed in the neighbourhood of Cordova, and of which Ferguson transcribes from Arabian historians so remarkable an account:

"According to these authors, the enclosing wall of the Palace was 4000 feet in length, East and West; 2200 feet North and South. The greater part of this space was occupied by gardens, but these, with their marble fountains, kiosks, and ornaments of various kinds, must have surpassed in beauty, and perhaps even in cost, the more strictly architectural part of the building. 4300 columns of the most precious marbles supported the roofs of the halls; 1013 of these were brought from Africa, 19 from Rome; 140 were presented by the Emperor of Constantinople to Abd el Rahman, the princely
founder of this sumptuous edifice. All the halls were paved with marbles in a thousand varied patterns. The walls, too, were of the same precious material, and ornamented with friezes of the most brilliant colours. The roofs, constructed of cedar, were ornamented with gilding on an azure ground, with damasked work and interlacing designs. All, in short, that the unbounded wealth of the Caliphs at that period could command, was lavished on this favourite retreat; and all that the art of Constantinople and Bagdad could contribute to aid the taste and power of execution of the Spanish Arabs, was enlisted to make it the most perfect work of its age. Did this Palace of Zahra now remain to us, we could afford to despise the Alhambra, and all the works of that declining age of Moorish art."—Vol. i. p. 456.

Now, alas! not a stone remains upon another to mark the site of so marvellous a construction!

Cordova is a singularly quiet old town, resembling Toledo in the rarity of its carriages, and narrowness of streets, many of them being mere alleys with a watercourse in the centre, into which the deep eaves of the houses on each side discharge, during rain, a stream so copious,
that it requires a very robust umbrella to bear up against it. It used to be celebrated for its leather (hence our legal term, Cordwainer), and silver filigree, both being creations of Moorish skill. No town certainly stands more in need of good leather, were it only to protect the feet of its inhabitants from the vile pavement, but the art has been carried off by the exiled Moors over the sea to Morocco, where it still flourishes, and the only specimens we saw of "Cordovan," were a few pigskins, tanned, for holding wine. Silversmiths, however, still abound at Cordova, and in their shops we spent a good deal of our spare time and money. Spanish filigree, though perhaps hardly equal to the Indian in delicacy and elegance, is much more adapted to the vicissitudes of a traveller's portmanteau, from its remarkable firmness and strength. This is a good place to pick up old jewellery, and both Lord Portarlington and Mr. Sykes made considerable purchases of ear-rings, lockets, reliquaries, &c., in some of the curiosity-shops.

Our hotel, being constructed for the exclusion of air and light, on account of the intense heats of summer in Andalusia, was woefully dismal, and ill adapted for "the brief November days," which during our visit "fell chill and dun" on
the banks of the Guadalquivir, as ever over northern moorland. We were almost as desti-
tute of resources for passing the time, during our four days' sojourn at Cordova, as Washington Irving in his story of the Stout Gentleman; and when books, letters, and journals had each in turn been exhausted, not a few of our odd moments were employed in watching the clerk of a diligence-office, over the way, with whom, from the narrowness of the street, we might almost have shaken hands, had each party been simultaneously disposed to do so. Morning, noon, and night, there sat he at a desk under the window, writing away with unflagging in-
dustry and perseverance. This, in a Spaniard, quite excited our curiosity, and having nothing better to do, we wondered what could be the cause of so remarkable a devotion to business. On the third day our speculations on the subject were happily terminated by the appearance of another actor on the stage, who looked like an Inspector, severe and official, and commenced a grand overhauling of accounts, and exami-
nation of ledgers. The result was never com-
municated to us, so in default of more accurate information, let us hope it was perfectly satisfac-
tory to all parties. At any rate, when I looked
again through the deepening twilight, the writing had ceased, the scribe with his velvet cap and red tassel had disappeared from his accustomed place,

"And left the world to darkness and to me!"

One afternoon the weather cleared up for a few hours, and glad to escape from our prison-house, we walked to the top of one of the hills behind the town, commanding the best view we had yet seen of the surrounding neighbourhood. Behind us rose the lowest range of the Sierra Morena, broken up into green dells and sunny slopes; while here and there, in sheltered nooks of more than ordinary attractiveness, stood hermitages, of which the mountain contains a host. Before us lay Cordova, glittering in almost snowy whiteness, with its broken outline of tower, monastery, and church, while from the centre of the housetops, which, in the South of Spain, form so prominent a feature in town-views, a single palm-tree reared its graceful head. Southward we caught a glimpse of the Guadalquivir, as, brimful with the late floods, it poured its turbid waters under the old Roman bridge. The air had all that lustrous transparency, which precedes, and follows rain, and a fine old castle,
which, at a distance of—I know not how many leagues, crowned a promontory thrown out from the mountain-range into the level expanse of the plain, seemed to have approached within the limits of a moderate walk.

The old bridge and classical gateway possessed a peculiar interest for us, as being the principal objects in a charming painting by Bossuet at Emo Park, which, from its faithfulness of representation, enabled us to recognize them at once as old friends. In our different explorations about the town we had remarked with much pleasure, that several houses of recent erection had been built in the old Moorish style with patio, gallery, and fountain, as it would indeed be difficult to devise an arrangement which would more thoroughly combine so many elements of the picturesque, with the requirements of a southern climate.

Altogether, in spite of bad weather, Cordova struck us as being far more agreeable in point of situation and scenery than Seville. Days could be spent in delightful rambles along the sides of the Sierra Morena among the hermitages and convents with which it is dotted. One of the latter, which came in view as we rode away to Montilla, seemed more like a small town,
Bad Weather. 347

than a religious house, so vast was its extent; while its position on a broad upland slope, sheltered by the mountain-crest from the northern blast, was perfection itself for beauty and healthiness; and its occupants, with Cordova at their feet, could still look down on the busy haunts of men, and, though sequestered from the world, were not absolutely shut out of its ken by those depths of solitude, which surround so many religious houses.

Many an anxious look had we been casting daily on the narrow strip of sky visible from our sitting-room, yet little could we see but the tokens of "pitiless, ceaseless, unrelenting rain," which came down with as much energy and steadiness, as if fair weather had departed for ever. Our time meanwhile was shrinking to its shortest span. November was almost at an end; we felt particularly anxious to reach Gibraltar by the 13th of December to catch the Peninsular and Oriental boat for Southampton, and we were no less desirous to have ample leisure for thoroughly seeing the grand culminating point of our journey—Granada. It was not, however, till Thursday, the 24th, that our constant gaze at what sailors call "the wind's
"A Change.

eye," enabled us to detect a kindlier expression, and even then, the indications were by no means hopeful. It may be wondered, why we did not brave the weather, and start in the rain? The reason is a very simple one. In many parts of Andalusia the soil is so tenacious, that after rain it acquires the adhesiveness of birdlime with the heaviness of lead, so that, had we started in bad weather, we should very soon have stuck in the mud, it being an utter impossibility for even horses and mules, much more the donkeys that carried our baggage, to make way through such roads.

November 25th.—Up at daybreak, the weather-tokens having a very promising appearance; packed up and breakfasted in haste, anxious to escape from that house of bondage; and then to our mortification discovered, that Marcos and Tomas would not be forthcoming for a good hour, though they had been strictly charged yesterday to be ready betimes. We had repeatedly remarked, that the more kindly and indulgently they have been treated, the slacker has their service grown. Nothing could exceed their regularity and diligence for the first fortnight. They were always ready in good time,
and packed the different articles of baggage with such care that each kept its place firmly all through the live-long day. In acknowledgment of their conduct we treated them one night to a substantial supper. It was a moment of weakness, and we rued it ever after!

Next day they were behind their time, the luggage was loosely packed, various articles were shed along the road, and more time was consumed in necessary re-adjustment of almost every donkey, than had been similarly expended in the whole course of our previous journey. Heedless of this, which ought to have served us as a warning, so pleased were we with our delightful ride through Estremadura, that on reaching Seville we gave them another entertainment on a much grander scale, which completed the relaxation of discipline, and left us virtually very much at their mercy in such matters as punctuality, for the remainder of the expedition. Indeed we fully proved the truth of Ford’s counsel, that Spanish servants should always be kept up to the mark, so as to feel a master’s authority; according to “the Duke’s” maxim, that the only way to get them to do anything is “to take a decided line and frighten them.”

Seville and Cordova had been Marcos and To-
Delay.

mas' Capua, and after such a lengthened inter-
mission of travel they seemed so slow in realiz-
ing the fact, that we were actually about to
resume our journey, that it was nearly ten
o'clock before we had fairly quitted the town!
CHAPTER XXXII.

FRIDAY, November 25th.—Our satisfaction at escaping from that dreary Hôtel Rizzi at Cordova, and the pleasure of being once more on horseback under one of the loveliest skies I ever beheld, with an atmosphere of lustrous transparency, made to-day's ride peculiarly agreeable; man and beast commencing this second portion of our journey with renovated vigour.

Granada was our destination, and the waters being out in consequence of the late rains, the shortest route through Castro del Rio, and Alcalá la Real, had become for the moment impracticable, so that we were obliged to follow the Camino Real by Fernan Nuñez to Montilla, where we proposed halting for the night. Riding along the Queen's highway was never popular with us; but to-day, so delicious was the freshness of the air, so striking and varied the atmospheric effects, that a country of far less interest,
than this rich and highly-cultivated district, which produces some of the finest wheat in the world, would have assumed at least a transient semblance of beauty. For the first two hours we did not lose sight of Cordova, every turn of the road presenting to us some fresh aspect of the picturesque old city, as it lay slumbering in the sunshine, backed by the bosky dells and sparkling hermitages of the Sierra Morena. Were the broad plain of the Guadalquivir an expanse of sea, the whole scene might have suggested to Guido the landscape of his Aurora.

We read in "Don Quixote," that on the day after his adventure with the windmills, he and Sancho met "two monks of the order of St. Benedict, mounted on dromedaries; for the mules whereon they rode were not much less." Had the worthy knight been in our company this morning, he would have seen a veritable specimen of that quadruped, but without a Benedictine for its rider, the whole race of monks having become, since the suppression of the monasteries, an almost extinct genus throughout the Peninsula. Just as we were crossing the Guadajoz, to our extreme surprise, and to the manifest disgust of horses, mules,
and even donkeys, we suddenly came upon a splendid Bactrian dromedary, which, being led about the country as a show, was now on its way to astonish the juvenile population of Cordova. He looked hardly out of keeping with surrounding objects; so many are the points in common between the South of Spain, and the general character of Oriental scenery.

The olive-harvest was now at its height, and on all sides such merry groups of men, women, and children were stripping the well-laden trees, reminding us by their gaiety of "the joy in harvest," so often alluded to in Scripture. The berries, when fit for gathering, have much the same colour and size as the common damson, with a flavour widely different, being extremely bitter. One of the marked features in Spanish progress during the last twenty years is the increased attention now paid to the cultivation of the olive, and in all directions plantations are being formed on land, that was previously almost unproductive.

About three o'clock we reached Fernan Nuñez, a cleanly, thriving village, with every house numbered after the custom of the country, which according to our observation seems to extend to the smallest hamlet. I first remarked it at
Cuacos. Here we ought to have halted for an hour, to give the horses their usual afternoon feed; but so anxious were we to make up for the lateness of our start, that we rode on still, the scenery becoming more picturesque at every turn, opening out from time to time into landscapes of exquisite beauty, in which Castro el Rio, an old hill-fort, perched like an eyrie on an isolated crag to our left, occupied a prominent position.

All through this part of Andalusia, castles and towns are similarly situated, memorials of those by-gone ages, when the district formed "the Debatable Land," as a Borderer would express it, between Christian and Infidel. Sometimes two or three such eagles' nests are in sight at once.

Night had fallen long before we rode into Montilla, the birth-place of "the Great Captain," a small country-town famous for its wine, while the neighbourhood, like Palestine of old, abounds "in wheat, and barley, vines and fig-trees, olive and honey." Having found a very homely, but clean-looking posada, close to the town-gate, we were very glad, during the hungry interval that elapsed before supper was ready, to take our place among the group of muleteers, that
hemmed in the fire; the nights having now become quite as cold, though not so damp, as at the same season in England.

Saturday, 26th.—Off betimes for Cabra, a mountain-town at the foot of the Sierra Frailes, getting almost bogged, immediately after leaving Montilla, in a great slough, which threatened to swallow up bodily some of the minor donkeys. Country still very pleasing. Sometimes our road lay through open spaces of heath, and thicket, such as gipsies love to frequent; sometimes beside meadows, where murmuring brooks create a perennial verdure. Further on a snug olive-farm looked out from its sheltering grove upon a broad sweep of undulating corn-land, which the young wheat had clothed with a vesture greener than emerald; while right ahead, with broken wall, and ruined donjon-tower, rose Aguilar, one of those curious old towns beloved by painter, and archæologist, which having once been the stronghold and protection of the neighbourhood, still survives to be its ornament.

The morning was lovely, but we had not ridden far, before unmistakable signs of a change appeared along the bold outline of the Sierra Frailes, over which to our left, lay the road to
Granada. The vapoury mists, that followed last night's frost, were not absorbed insensibly into the air, but after ascending in irregular spiral wreaths, had settled in compact masses upon the mountain-tops, an almost infallible indication that they would descend again in rain, ere another sunrise, as any one who has paid much attention to the weather-tokens of a mountainous country, might easily prognosticate.

We made our mid-day halt on the banks of a small stream, the Cabra, and while the horses drank of the brook, and fed on the barley we had brought with us, the rest of the party (mules and donkeys excepted, which, like Mahometans in Ramadan, never broke their fast from sunrise to sunset), regaled themselves on Montanches' ham, and other items of good cheer.

Our route now struck off from the highway, just where a small town, named, if I remember aright, Monturque, crowns the summit of a green hill, that reminded me of Corfe Castle, and following the windings of a miry lane with ruts of portentous width and unknown depth, we at last emerged upon a terrace-like strip of open ground that overhung the course of the Cabra, and led up through many a tangled thicket and rocky dell, all a-glow with the hues
of autumn, to the principal town of the neighbourhood, which either owes, or gives, its name to the stream, that waters this most romantic mountain glen.

Cabra is approached from the west through a broad avenue of olive-groves, producing a stateliness of effect, I should scarcely have anticipated from a tree, so generally condemned for its commonplace, characterless, appearance. It is a place of considerable antiquity, and as it came in sight, seated on a platform of rock terminated abruptly by a precipitous ravine, with gardens and orchards crowded into every available space, and gleaming with the brightest tints of the Fall, on cherry-tree, mulberry, vine, poplar, and white thorn, while the dark masses of the Sierra Frailes towered behind; and framed-in the picture, we agreed it was one of the most remarkable landscapes we had seen anywhere in Spain, and, though of a totally different description, not unworthy to be the pendant of beautiful Placentia.

Here we spent Advent Sunday, November 27th, and while the good people at home were singing the hymn of the season, we had to pass the day, as best we could, in that dreary exile from public worship which is the lot of the
Names of Posadas.

English Churchman all through Spain, with the exception of one or two favoured localities.

An antiquarian might have found food for speculation in the name of our inn, "the Posada of Souls," a strange title to give to a house of public entertainment, as in every other country disembodied spirits are supposed to have nothing to do with such places; unless, indeed, a delicate vein of irony may be detected in the term, implying that a Spanish inn, with its empty larder, is adapted only for the accommodation of such beings as are no longer affected by bodily wants!

In this old-fashioned kingdom, where novelty is deprecated as an evil, and friends part with the benediction, "Vaya, usted, con Dios, y que no haya novedad!"—"Go with God, your grace! and may nothing new happen!"—the innkeeper's sign still attests the connection between the hostel and the Church, so general in the Middle Ages, when pilgrims were the chief travellers, and of which, even in England, we retain a few memorials, such as the "Lamb and Flag," "The Angel," "The Cross Keys," "Mitre," and "Cardinal's Cap." Most of the inns in Spain are named after some saintly person, San Cristobal, San Carlos, Sant Anton, San José, de los Angeles,
Rainy Morning.

de las Animas, and occasionally even the sacred name of our Lord is desecrated to this purpose in the title Jesu Nazareno.

Cabra still exhibits traces of its occupation by the Moors. One of the Churches was originally a Mosque, and its conversion to Christian uses was effected with the same barbarism and want of taste that ruined the Mezquita at Cordova. I noticed, also, that several horse-shoe arches, and other features of Moorish architecture could be traced out in the rough masonry of our quaint-looking old posada.

The weather this morning did not belie our prognostications of yesterday. A drizzling rain, beginning at daybreak, continued to fall steadily for hours, and the surrounding mountains wore a pall of immovable mist, imparting to the whole landscape an aspect of melancholy chilliness. It is some satisfaction to an Englishman, under such circumstances, to observe that the sunniest lands wear quite as dismal an appearance in bad weather as our own much-abused climate, while they have none of those fireside comforts that enable us to regard “the storm without” with comparative indifference. Nothing, certainly, could be less cheering than our Sunday at Cabra, and from Purkiss’ account
it seemed as if we could hardly assure ourselves lodging for the night, the landlady having what is called "a temper of her own," the effects of which, however, were liberally imparted to all within her sphere, combined with an extra amount of Spanish independence. Altogether Purkiss, being not only interpreter, but cook and general purveyor to our party, found very "hard lines" in the kitchen, and had to exercise no small amount of diplomacy to get on with his various avocations, more especially while using the fire, without coming to an open rupture with the worthy dame, and receiving his congé before Monday morning.

On the whole we came to the conclusion that Cabra, despite its lovely situation, is hardly the spot where we should choose to spend all the days of our life. The natives appeared to be more uncouth and disagreeable than any community we had yet fallen in with, either in town or country; and we could not stir out of doors without being dogged by a following of dirty boys, who, though bred among these unsophisticated mountains, were not a whit inferior in audacity and general impertinence to the veriest gamins of Paris or London. Nor did we find better manners indoors, for Mr.
Sykes having given a peseta to one of the landlady's grandchildren, the mother, who happened to be standing by, instead of making some acknowledgment, immediately brought forward two others of her offspring as claimants more than expectants, of a similar gift. Precisely the same incident happened to me a week later, while rambling among the nooks and corners of the Alhambra, the only difference being that, while Mr. Sykes bestowed his largesse in silver, mine took the form of economical "coppers."

One can hardly wonder, after such instances of effrontery, at the pertinacity of professional mendicants in Spain. They do not beg, but demand; their usual mood being, not, as in other countries, optative, but imperative, and if they find you do not pay them the consideration they conceive themselves entitled to, they do not hesitate to pluck your coat, or even to poke you in the ribs!

We observed here the same desecration of the Lord's day so noticeable all along our route. At Cuacos, on inquiring whether any game could be purchased in the village, we were told there was every prospect of a plentiful supply, as the next day was Sunday! And so it came to pass. For the schoolmaster, whom I chanced
to meet about ten a.m. in full shooting costume, brought home on Sunday evening a well-filled bag, the greater part of which, in the shape of a brace of hares and sundry partridges, Purkiss purchased on reasonable terms.

Fancy the horror of any of us “country parsons” in England, were he to meet his parish schoolmaster setting off some fine Sunday morning on a shooting expedition! It is, however, only fair to add, that apart from the question of “Sports and Pastimes” on the Lord’s day, to which we English feel a very legitimate dislike, such Roman, Catholics as go to church at all, (a minority, it is to be feared, in Spain,) have generally attended as many services by ten or eleven o’clock as most Protestants do during the whole day.

At Merida, again, where we spent the following Sunday, ploughing, wheat-sowing, and all kinds of farming-work proceeded with just as much activity as during the remainder of the week, and so to-day at Cabra, a large portion of the population was busily engaged in gathering the crop of olives.

Hair-cleaning appears to be a favourite Sunday occupation in all parts of the country, and it is one of the commonest occurrences in
Hair-cleaning.

walking through the streets to see groups of women (it being wholly a feminine practice), operating on each other’s heads with most praiseworthy diligence, and a gravity of countenance we were never able to imitate.
CHAPTER XXXIII.

The ride over the mountains from Cabra to Priego is one of extreme beauty, with variety enough to satisfy the most exacting taste. Passing the Alameda, which in early summer must be a little Paradise, vocal with the song of nightingales, and the unceasing voice of water, murmuring on all sides through orchard, and garden, we picked our way along deep-banked lanes of chalky mire, which, ascending continually, landed us at last on a stony plateau of considerable elevation, wild, and stern as the summit of an Alpine pass.

The masses of cold grey rock, streaked with many a patch of weather-beaten lichen, that cropped out on every side, presented a most effective contrast to the glowing sweep of autumnal tints, stretching before us for miles, and marking the curves of the glen we had threaded on Saturday, as we turned round to
take a parting glance at the teeming belt of vineyard, garden, and olive-ground, which makes Cabra proverbial for fertility. How a painter would have revelled in that wondrous profusion of colour! Candour, however, obliges me to add, that having at all times an eye to business, we were suddenly recalled from the contemplation of the landscape by the sight of a woman riding to market, with a fine young hare dangling from her saddle, which at the price of a peseta, ten-pence English, immediately changed owners.

All through the country we remarked a most intimate connection between beauty of scenery, and badness of roads. Seldom did we enjoy any uncommon amount of the picturesque without such an accompaniment, the portion of bad road we had most recently travelled being always voted the very worst we had ever fallen in with, anywhere. Our ride to-day formed no exception to this rule, and slowly toiling down the mountain-side, we made experiment of every peril that can jeopardize either the knees of a horse, or the neck of its rider. Stones of all shapes and sizes, from a door-step to a boulder, shelving banks of rotten earth, gnarled roots of ilex and chestnut (not to mention the deep holes of the narrow mule-track, which on rocky ground like
Forest Scene.

this are especially dangerous to the wider-hoofed horse), lay in turn along our path, as we descended into a hill-encircled basin, where turkeys and pigs were feeding under groups of venerable trees. It was one of those rare scenes of sylvan beauty, once so common in England, which scarcely exist now-a-days, except in the pages of "Ivanhoe." But for the greater height and steepness of the hills, I might almost have fancied we were riding through the glades of Bradgate Park. As the fern-clad slopes opened out more and more into the vale country, some new object of interest continually came into view—distant mountain, Moorish castle, or high-perched town,—the most conspicuous of these being Alcalá la Real, through which, had the previous week been drier, our road to Granada would have lain, while the very soil, a rich ruddy brown, added its contribution of colour to heighten the general effect.

Through such scenes, in a day of cloudless sunshine, and tempered warmth, we rode along the upland valleys of the Sierra Frailes from Cabra to Priego.
CHAPTER XXXIV.

It was quite evident, as we rode through the streets of Priego a good hour before sunset, that something of more than common interest was going on. The central square was full of men, who in their long brown cloaks reminded me of the groups, that linger about street-corners in Irish country-towns. It could not be either market, or fair, for not a pig, cow, or horse, was anywhere to be seen, nor even cabbages, potatoes, or bundles of garlic. In these sequestered parts, where travellers are almost unknown, we had everywhere attracted an amount of attention, altogether disproportionate, we felt, to our personal merits, and this was sometimes exhibited in ways rather embarrassing to a modest temperament. Nevertheless, in spite of all the distinction, which had now become our daily portion, we could not flatter ourselves, that all those solemn-looking Spaniards
had come together in the market-place of Priego merely to do us honour.

At present, however, we had no leisure for further speculation on the subject, having yet to discover some place where we could procure lodging for the night. On entering we had immediately gone, as usual, to a posada, which chanced to be the only one in the town, hoping to meet with accommodation; but such utter poverty and emptiness did we find there—bedrooms without bed or chair,—"four blank walls staring at each other,"—the very floors threatening to give way under our feet—that it was impossible to stay under such a roof. We next went to a most comfortable casa de pupillos. The proprietor was very civil, and having only one room unoccupied, offered to put three beds into it, an arrangement, which, as Englishmen, we rejected with horror, having never yet been reduced to greater extremities, than sleeping two in a room.

He then told us of a private house in the same street, kept by an old lady with a most meek and obedient partner, such a one, in fact, as the generality of wives would consider quite a model husband. Here, he thought, we might meet with accommodation for the night, strangers being occasionally taken in to lodge. Forthwith
we proceeded thither, and soon found that the husband, who admitted us, was perfectly willing to comply with our wishes, but not being master his good-will availed us little, and we had still to await the decision of his "missis." On opening negotiations with the lady, she became perfectly furious, rejecting our proposal with a degree of indignation, that was quite incomprehensible in a person, who was known to be in the habit of taking in lodgers!

There being evidently abundance of room in the house, while no more reason was assigned for our rejection, than the man who hated Dr. Fell could give for his dislike of that venerable Divine, we grew desperate, and determined to persevere, knowing we had no other chance of beds. Sometimes we joked, sometimes we entreated, throwing in a hint, now and then, that if we were absolutely compelled to sleep in the streets, it would hardly be creditable to the hospitality of the good people of Priego, nor should we be able to give our friends in England, on returning home, so favourable a report of them, as we could wish. The husband from the beginning had been on our side, and finding his wife's objections gradually giving way under the fierceness of our assaults, he now ventured
openly to advocate our cause, until at length grievously beset, and hemmed-in by a circle of entreat ing faces, the fat old soul melted into hospitality, placed the house and all its contents at our disposal, and lent herself heartily to make us comfortable!

It turned out afterwards, that from the first she had been labouring under an entire misconception, fancying we were a party of French bagmen, the only species of the genus traveller, with which the population of this out-of-the-way region has any acquaintance. These people are by no means a popular class of lodgers, as they give an infinity of trouble wherever they are taken in, extemporizing their apartment into show-rooms, for the various articles they carry with them, and receiving all sorts of customers for their wares. No wonder, then, the old lady should have declined to entertain us, as long as she mistook us for a party of commis-voyageurs.

Having thus provided for our most pressing necessities, we had now leisure to attend to matters in general, and on inquiring what had brought together that concourse of men we had passed in the market-place, were told, that two ladies having completed their noviciate, had to-day taken the black veil at a nunnery in the
town. This event, combined with the impending war against Morocco, which most Spaniards of the middle and lower classes regard as a new Crusade, had produced a profound impression in the neighbourhood, kindling a fervour of religious enthusiasm, which, however misdirected, is very refreshing in these days of sceptical indifference. Unluckily for us, England being supposed to have a direct interest in thwarting the expedition against Morocco, partly on Protestant, partly on political grounds, our countrymen at the moment were more than commonly unpopular in Spain, and we naturally came in for our share, so that while we were on our way through the market-place at Priego, the countenances of the crowd wore anything but a friendly expression. One individual went so far in his zeal against us poor "heretics," as to say, though not in our hearing, that we "ought to be presented with a blossom," a playful figure of speech, which, when translated into less poetical language, intimated his conscientious conviction, that we deserved to be stabbed!

We were then going to see the "lion" of the place, at the particular request of our host, who seemed very anxious to obliterate the recollection of any previous désagrément. This proved to
be a very pretty kind of fountain, or rather
water-basin, oblong in form, with curved sides,
of marble, through which flowed a spring of
limpid purity and considerable volume, falling
eventually in a fairy-like cascade over a slope of
the same material, in its downward course to-
wards the town. Lime-trees with seats under-
neath, are planted all round, and in warm
weather a more delicious lounge cannot be ima-
gined... The whole of this highland district
might be described in the language of Scripture,
as "a land of brooks of water, of fountains and
depths, that spring out of valleys and hills," and
from that circumstance and its comparative cool-
ness, it might well be visited even in summer,
and early autumn.

We returned to our quarters followed by a
troop of boys, a species of escort, to which we
were becoming accustomed by frequent use.
Indeed, without departing from historical accu-
racv, I may say we were objects of curiosity to
every class and age. Not even

"the Anthropophagi,
And the men, whose heads do grow
Beneath their shoulders,"

could have produced a greater sensation, than
our appearance in the streets; whichever way
we turned, doors and windows were crowded with eager faces, so that we were not sorry to escape into a less-conspicuous position. Our landlady was delighted to find one of the party was a clergyman, both she and her goodman having, she told us, a great respect for the order. In consequence of this prepossession, her attentions to me became so marked and particular, that I should have been completely overwhelmed, had I not felt the distinction was owing to no merit of my own, but because I had been elevated for the moment to the dignity of a "Representative Man." It seemed to afford her special gratification to pat me on the back in most maternal fashion, following up the action with a sort of purring accompaniment of "O Padre Cura! O Padre Cura!"

We had scarcely finished dinner, when such a posse of townsfolk, and neighbours were announced (professedly to pay their respects to the Señores Ingleses, but really to gratify their curiosity to greater advantage), that we had to hold quite a levée, and the old lady's best parlour was soon filled with a goodly company of grave personages, who behaved with exemplary propriety and decorum. We did our best to entertain them, though from our ignorance of Spanish it
A Levee.

was somewhat after the fashion of Captain Cook, and other circumnavigators, receiving the islanders of the Pacific. There happened to be an old piano in the room, the bequest of an organist, who had once lodged there, and on this instrument, whose best melody was a mere metallic vibration, Lord Portarlington played several tunes; while I exhibited my compass, and a pocket-knife fitted up with various appliances, one of which, a lancet, as might be expected from so blood-letting a population, excited particular admiration. By this time it was getting late, and as the Spaniards have an unlimited power of sitting, we were at our wits' end how to bring our soiree to a conclusion, without giving offence to the company; and it was only after a considerable expenditure of palaver and circumlocution, that we effected this object, and parted with many expressions of good-will.

I was out of doors betimes, next morning, having sat up nearly all night, in consequence of a damp bed (the only occasion, by the way, on which such an incident befell me, during the whole expedition); and though sitting up in a hard-bottomed chair is not the most agreeable method of passing "the small hours," it is, at
any rate, preferable to the contingencies of a pair of damp sheets.

Soon after sunrise, I found myself on the town walls, and anything more lovely, than the prospect that met the eye on every side, I never saw. Priego stands on the extreme edge of a precipice, overhanging a deep ravine, laid out in garden-plots, and strips of bright green meadow, through which the Xenil, a new-born stream, struggles forth into the lowlands, on its way to the Vega of Granada. To the left, rose a most picturesque range of mountains, their sides seamed with many a ruddy line, which wintry torrents had ploughed in the ochreous soil, while the whole landscape was flooded with morning sunshine, and an atmosphere of such perfect transparency as brought the most distant objects into startling proximity and distinctness.
IT was with many tender adieux and good wishes, that we parted after breakfast from our host and hostess, who assured us with much earnestness, that should we ever chance to be passing through Priego on any future occasion, they would be delighted to receive us again.

We had a long ride before us, wishing on the morrow, November 30th, to reach Granada early in the afternoon, so as to enjoy the beautiful scenery by which it is environed. Our course lay entirely among the mountains which enclose the Vega to the north-west, and was of a very different description from any we had yet travelled. For a considerable distance we skirted precipices, that reminded me of the old road from Visp to Zermatt, where a single false step would carry horse and rider a good deal further than would be pleasant, landing them at last, it might be, on the roof of one of the picturesque
old mills, green with damp and moss, which the Moors of by-gone days had perched here and there, upon many a ledge of rock, over the streams of this wild district.

One such spot we particularly noticed, just where the summit of a mountain opposite is crowned with a cross, to commemorate the death of a man, whose horse having run away, carried him sheer down the precipice. A similar monument stood by the wayside on our approach to Cabra, recording the death of a gentleman, who with his horse was killed near the spot during a thunder-storm. Most travels in Spain make frequent mention of what Wordsworth calls "the votive death-cross," indicating the scene of a murder, or some other violent death, and we fully expected, that in Andalusia at least, such memorials would be as common as milestones. Ford speaks of having once counted fifteen crosses within a space of fifty yards. We saw very few in any part of the country, owing probably to the comparative suppression of brigandage.

The mountain-tracks being very intricate, we engaged a man to pilot us to-day, and he must either have undertaken more than he could accomplish, as had been the case with previous
guides, and so through ignorance led us astray, or else in this neighbourhood a road does not signify the same thing as in other parts of the globe. For miles we had to follow the bed of a torrent, which happening to be dry was at our service for the nonce, scrambling up such stairs and ledges of rock, and then plunging again into such deep holes and narrow gullies, as no quadruped that had not received the special education of a smuggler's horse, could ever traverse in safety. Had we chanced to be overtaken by a thunder-storm, while struggling through these difficulties, the donkeys must inevitably have been swept away by the torrent, the wide strips of sand and stones, that lay here and there in the more open spaces, giving a plain proof of the violence with which it occasionally dashes down the defile. Happily no such catastrophe occurred, the day being beautiful; and having at last overcome all difficulties, we soon reached a village at the top of the pass.

Here we wished to feed the horses, but our guide being of a different mind posted onwards down the mountain-side, with an obscure intimation, not very palatable to hungry men, ignorant of his vernacular, that further on there
was a venta, where we should halt to greater advantage. Nor did we question the judiciousness of the arrangement, when having quitted the mule-track we found ourselves entering the courtyard of a solitary farm-house, with the snow-clad chain of the Sierra Nevada rising before us in cloudless majesty, at a distance of about forty miles. It was our first view of the Spanish Alps, which in the Picacho Mulahacen attain a culminating elevation of 12,762 feet, and although they exhibit neither the massive grandeur, nor the variety and gracefulness of outline that distinguish the mountains of the Oberland, Zermatt, and Chamouni, they still possess attractions of their own, imparting to the moment they are first sighted, an interest never to be forgotten.

Granada, with all its associations of chivalry and romance, was no longer a dim and shadowy picture sketched by the imagination, but a substantial and visible reality, and we were now in sight of a region where some of the most remarkable events of Spanish history had been transacted. Even the grassy slopes, and undulating sweep of the mountain plateau, that stretched before us in all the commonplace tameness of an upland farm, had once formed a
portion of the Border-land, which Christian and Moslem for so many ages had made their battle-field, and over this very ground had the flower of Spanish knighthood descended oftentimes in sudden raid upon the villages of the Vega.

We had not, however, much leisure for day-dreaming, and after a hasty meal were once more on horseback, having still an unknown distance to travel, before we could hope to find a halting-place for the night. In fact, among the mountains you can form no estimate of distances, the league of a Spanish mountaineer being quite as indefinite a measurement, as the aggravating "bittuck" so heartily anathematized by pedestrians in the Highlands. From Cabra to Priego is called three leagues, but they must have been estimated on a very liberal scale; as it took us a whole day's travelling of average speed to accomplish the journey. At this moment, while descending the mountain-side, we had very little idea where we were going, beyond a vague belief that we were on our way to Granada. Our guide, if he could be dignified with such a title, was hardly better informed than ourselves, having evidently nothing but the faintest apprehension of the route, and so reserved in speech was he, that question
Demoralized Donkeys.

after question elicited only the briefest replies. From time to time we heard mention of Casa Lope, but whether it was a posada, or merely a private house, where we might receive admission for the night as a favour, seemed enveloped in the profoundest mystery.

The donkeys and mules had become very disorderly this afternoon, owing to the vivacious sallies of an undisciplined young jackass (a recent purchase, it appeared, at Cordova), which, being exempted from carrying a load in consideration of his tender years, was named by us "the donkey of respect," because, like the unoccupied "coach of respect," that makes such a figure in the royal retinue of Spain, he had nothing to do. He was continually breaking out into some juvenile extravagance, leaving the beaten path and walking in self-chosen ways, to the serious demoralization of the other donkeys, and then, for his pains, getting a sound cudgelling from the irate Marcos. As it takes some time to catch, on rough ground, a nimble Spanish donkey "without encumbrance," and with a thrashing in prospect, we did not get on very fast this afternoon, and so were too late to see the snow-crested peaks of the Sierra Nevada lighted up with the rosy flush of sunset, as we had
fondly hoped. This was very provoking, there being every probability, that had we been more advanced on our way, we might have reached such a point of view as would have enabled us to enjoy the glorious spectacle of an Alpine sunset.

Night soon overtook us picking our way, as best we could, through puddle and mire, under the light of a young moon, whose slender crescent seemed an appropriate sign to meet the eye of travellers on their road to the classic ground of Western Mahometanism. Thus passed two or three hours, the night-air among the mountains, at the end of November, making the prospect of a warm chimney-corner especially attractive. Still no token of village or posada appeared, and, to mend matters, our guide became confused, and having lost all recollection of the route, left us, drawn up in the middle of the road, while he went to make inquiries at a farm-house. This interval we naturally devoted to the exercise of a privilege seldom left long in abeyance (say the critics), by our countrymen, Lords and Commons alike, and for which there is little need “to search for precedents.” In the midst, however, of our growling and discontent, to which hunger was beginning to im-
Watch-Fires.

part additional acerbity, we could not help admiring the beauty of the shepherds' watch-fires, as they flashed up fitfully against the murky sky, from mountain slope and moorland; nor could we recollect without some feeling of self-rebuke, the hardships of those poor men, who, every night of the year, winter and summer alike, take their turn in watching their flocks, and, like Jacob of old, are "consumed with drought by day, and with frost by night, while sleep departs from their eyes," with no Rachels, moreover, to sweeten their labours. For the shepherds of Spain are an almost wifeless brotherhood, their way of life seldom permitting them to marry.

Still, whether we grumbled or philosophized, it was all one. Casa Lope remained provokingly unapproachable, and beginning to regard its existence as a myth, we quite expected we should soon have to follow the example of the shepherds, and bivouac for the night by the wayside. At last we discovered a cottage, and on making the usual inquiry, "How far is it to Casa Lope?" were answered in tones which struggled forth with a muffled sound, apparently from under heaps of bed-clothes, "that we must ford a brook, climb a hill, and then
we should speedily find ourselves at our destination."

In the course of half an hour this prediction was satisfactorily fulfilled, and we entered the gateway of a building, which looked gaunt and spectral in the uncertain light, just as the young moon was sinking over the western hills.

This was Casa Lope, and though we were never very critical of appearances, much less after a ride of thirteen hours, a more deplorable-looking place cannot well be imagined. Judging from its extent and proportions, we concluded it had been built long before the formation of new roads had drained the general stream of traffic from the Pass of Puerto Lope, on the ancient highway between Cordova and Granada. But now its roomy stables were untenanted, the lofty chambers dismantled of their furniture, and our footsteps echoed mournfully along the spacious corridor, into which the rooms on the first floor opened. Having nothing antique or venerable in its appearance, it gave one, on a small scale, a very good idea of the condition and aspect our cavalry-barracks would exhibit after about twenty years' ascendancy of the Peace Society. Happily as we entered there was a good blaze on the hearth, and though the people of the
Casa Lope.

house were by no means kindly disposed, or even civil, they could not deny us seats among the muleteers, who surrounded the fire. The only beds available were shake-downs on the brick floor, in one of the upstairs rooms, of which Lord Portarlington and Mr. Sykes took advantage. I preferred an arrangement of three chairs, which, if hard, were at any rate clean, and inodorous, and I managed in this way to get a brief doze, in spite of the gusty draughts, that eddied through the long corridor, where by choice I had taken my station. It required no great persuasion to start us betimes next morning, and soon after seven we had bidden (let us hope) an eternal farewell to Casa Lope, a bourne to which no traveller would willingly return.

The ground was crisp with hoar-frost, and the transparent clearness of the fresh morning air brought the glittering crest of the Sierra Nevada, and the snow-white villages of the Vega, into a proximity that cheated the eye of half the distance. It now became evident how fortunate we had been yesterday in our view of the principal peaks of the great chain, Picacho Mulahacen, and Picacho de Veleta. As we then saw them they were noble objects, while the greensward of the pastures over which we looked at them; formed
a foreground that threw them out to the greatest advantage. But to-day our point of view being changed, other ranges of far more picturesque form, and varied outline, came into sight on the north-east, though none of them was crowned with a diadem of snow.

With Illora on a hill to our right, we could now distinctly make out the buildings of Granada on the opposite side of the Vega, clinging to the lowest terraces of the Sierra Nevada, and it was with the pleasant feeling of having prosperously accomplished a long-cherished design (seasoned, I trust, with a spirit of thankfulness), that we descended the paved causeway leading to the village of Pinos.

Purkiss had ridden on before, to see what he could provide for our mid-day meal, and on dismounting at the cleanliest and neatest of posadas, which after Casa Lope looked like a traveller's Paradise, we found with much satisfaction he had been most successful in his catering, and we now made ample amends for the scantiness of yesternight's supper. The old lady of the house, finding we were going to Granada, volunteered some very maternal advice respecting its inhabitants, whom she did not seem to regard as the most virtuous community in the world; and
Bridge of Pinos.

though, from our very limited acquaintance with Spanish, she did not succeed in conveying to us any very distinct idea of the perils that awaited us in the old Moorish capital, her kindness and good-will were equally manifested, and appreciated accordingly.

Just outside the village we passed a spot of far deeper interest (to my mind) than most of the scenes that history has ennobled. It was on the bridge, which here spans one of the tributaries of the Xenil, that Queen Isabella's messenger overtook Columbus, when, disgusted with the delays and disappointments, he had so long encountered at the Spanish Court, he set out in February, 1492, to quit Spain for ever, on his way to offer his services to our Henry VII. For seven years he had been seeking in vain for that assistance from Ferdinand, which was necessary to the success of his grand project; and when now at last Isabella, larger-hearted and more prescient than her husband, offered her aid, it was almost too late, and Columbus, warned by bitter experience, hesitated to expose himself anew to the vexatious intrigues of a Court, that had already wasted some of the best years of his life.

It was a moment of intense interest. How
must his mind have been agitated by the tumult of contending feelings! On the one hand, with what bitterness, and unavailing regret would he look back on the vain struggles and hopes deferred, which month by month, and year by year, had sickened his heart, producing a most natural repugnance, even in his brave spirit, to re-embark on such "a sea of troubles." While on the other, wherever else he turned, a still more cheerless prospect opened before him. He was now on his way to England, but though going there under the patronage of Henry, he could hardly expect to find his path perfectly clear. He would still be a stranger among strangers, to begin anew the wearisome task of disarming self-interest, enlightening ignorance, and conciliating prejudice. Whereas now at length, Isabella's unexpected offer seemed likely to realize his fondest aspirations, and the mere word of the good Queen would exercise an influence on him the most solemn promises of the selfish Ferdinand had no longer the power of producing.

During the centuries of war that preceded the final expulsion of the Moors from Spain, the spot we were now passing had witnessed many a gallant deed of high emprise, and the waters of
the Xenil were often crimsoned with the bravest blood of Christian and Moslem. It was the pass by which the Spanish chivalry used to carry their forays up to the enemy's gates, from some of their nearest strongholds, such as Alcalá la Real, or even occasionally from Cordova itself. One of the worst disasters recorded in Spanish history took place in the immediate neighbourhood, when on the 26th of June, 1319, an army of such numbers, "as covered the face of the earth," commanded by the Infantes Pedro and Juan, was utterly routed by the Moors with the loss of 50,000 men, including the two Princes, one of whom, Don Pedro, was skinned, stuffed, and hung up over the gate of Elvira. Nearly two hundred years later, the bridge of Pinos was the scene of one of the bloodiest encounters of the last Moorish war, when the royal army under Ferdinand forced the passage after a desperate resistance.

But of all the events, of which the bridge of Pinos has been the theatre, though they may occupy a larger space in the pages of history, none can be compared in point of genuine interest with the unrecorded conflict, which took place that memorable February day in the mind of Columbus, when, in answer to Isabella's invita-
tion, he decided to return to the royal camp at Santa Fé, where the King and Queen then resided, having in the previous month accomplished the crowning achievement of their reign by the conquest of Granada.

From this spot nothing lay between us and Granada, but the famous Vega, a plain which, occupying the bed of a dried-up lake, runs up to the walls of the town, and stretches some thirty miles to the westward, an uninterrupted expanse of verdure and fertility. Doubling the base of a mountain, Elvira, which projects like a promontory into the bosom of the Vega, we rode in single file along the narrow path by which alone, for several miles, Granada was approachable on the Cordova side. Not but what a road of unimpeachable dimensions exists in that direction; but when we passed on the 30th of November, it was a mere causeway of mud, with depth and width enough to engulf all the donkeys in the neighbourhood, one of which, as its half-devoured carcase testified, had recently sunk therein, to rise no more.

The existence of such a road, within a league of such a place as Granada, would be almost incredible to those, who have not travelled in Spain, where the highways are invariably worse
kept in the vicinity of large towns, than out in the country.

This portion of the Vega is an uninteresting level of irrigated cornfields, divided by banks of earth, and intersected in every direction by water-courses, which at this season were brimful, so as to flood all the intermediate ground, for the purpose of stimulating the vegetation of the newly-sown grain. Having in due course emerged upon firm road, near a grove of the finest cypress-trees I ever saw, we soon entered the town, threading several narrow lanes of most Oriental appearance, and passing the graceful archway of the well-known Casa del Carbon, while our cavalcade attracted universal notice, we crossed the torrent-stream of the Darro, and entering the principal thoroughfare, alighted with much satisfaction at the doorway of the Victoria Hotel.