

had hardly got my right foot to the ground, when from resting on a loose stone it gave way, and in a moment I found myself thrown on my back in front of the horse, with my left foot wedged tight in its stirrup, an article of native workmanship so narrow, and cramped as to be quite dangerous. To make matters worse, I was encumbered with a thick cloak, a slight shower having recently fallen. The bridge was not above twenty or thirty yards ahead, and close behind, clattering over the stones, came the rest of the party. Most horses under such circumstances would have dashed onward in fear, and dismay, dragging me along to almost certain death; but by God's mercy mine stood perfectly still, and allowed me to drag myself upright by main force, pulling for dear life by the stirrup-leather. Never did horse give better proof of steadiness, and good-temper, and, as may well be imagined, I loved him ever after, as one who had been a true friend in a moment of extreme peril.

CHAPTER XX.

JUST about sunset we passed through Xarandilla, where Charles V. spent three months while Yuste was being prepared for his reception. Stirling ("Cloister Life," pp. 28, 29) says of it, "Xarandilla was, and still is, the most considerable village in the Vera of Placentia. Walled to the north with lofty Sierras, and watered with abundant streams, its mild climate, rich soil, and perpetual verdure, led some patriotic scholars of Estremadura to identify this beautiful valley with the Elysium of Homer, 'The green land without snow, or winter, or showers.'

"The fair valley was unquestionably famous throughout Spain for its wine, oil, chestnuts and citrons, for its magnificent timber, for the deer, bears, wolves, and all other animals of the chase, which abounded in its woods, and for the delicate trout which peopled its mountain waters.

“The village of Xarandilla is seated on the side of the Sierra of Xaranda, and near the confluence of two mountain torrents, which fall from the steep Penanegra. The mansion of the Oropesas, built in the feudal style, with corner towers, has long been in ruins; and of its imperial inmate the village has preserved no other memorial than a fountain, which is still called ‘The Fountain of the Emperor,’ in the garden of a deserted monastery, once belonging to the order of St. Augustine.”

Night overtook us soon after passing Xarandilla, and the only light we had to guide us on this worst of all possible roads, (as in our inexperience we then deemed it,) was the faint beam, that fell from the slender crescent of the young moon as she declined towards the west.

At last we saw the lights of a village, and made sure it was Cuacos. But when, at the peril of our necks, we had scrambled along a series of those stony gutters, which in this neighbourhood have done duty for streets some three centuries or more, with a stream strong and rapid as a small mill-race careering down the centre, and then emerged into the village square, we found to our infinite disappointment,

that Cuacos was still a good league off, which in Spain is a most elastic figure of speech, representing any distance from four to seven miles, especially in mountain districts, where large ideas are in vogue.

So on we toiled, rather out of humour, and when at last, after another hour and a half's travel, we reached our destination, men and beasts had done a good day's work of at least eleven hours.

We found the posada so very wretched, that we betook ourselves forthwith to that ever-open refuge for the destitute traveller in all Roman Catholic countries I have visited—the house of the *Cura*.

That gentleman, Don Louis Setiz, gave us a most cordial welcome, utter strangers though we were, without even an introduction except our necessities. Not only did he place his house, with all it contained, at our disposal, in the spirit of true Spanish courtesy, but took care moreover to prove his words were no mere Chinese compliment, professing everything, but meaning nothing.

We must have caused him considerable inconvenience, but there was no indication of its existence to be traced in the perfect kindness

of his manner the whole time we remained under his roof.

I wonder what any of us English clergymen would say, were three gentlemen from Spain to throw themselves on our hospitality some Saturday night between eight and nine, taking possession of the best portion of the Parsonage, and turning the Incumbent himself (if unmarried) out of his own particular bedroom? I fear they would hardly meet with the welcome we received at Cuacos!

Purkiss set up his cuisine at the posada, supplying our meals from thence, and there he, Swainson, and Elfick, managed to get some sort of beds, after having slept in their clothes the three previous nights. Unhappily, however, the loft in which they lay was so abundantly stored with newly-gathered pods of red pepper, that their eyes streamed like fountains all night long, and they had, poor fellows! a most miserable time of it.

Ford, in his "Gatherings," p. 169, inveighs against English servants as worse than useless in Spain. "They are nowhere greater incumbances than in this hungry, thirsty, treeless, beerless, beefless land; they give more trouble, require more food and attention, and are

ten times more discontented, than their masters."

Our experience was altogether different; nothing could exceed the good-humour, patience and cheerfulness, with which each of them underwent every sort of discomfort, privation, and fatigue, from the beginning to the very end of our long journey, and this in a man of Purkiss's age, between fifty and sixty, was especially praiseworthy.



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA

CHAPTER XXI.

IT was on a lovely morning that we visited Yuste, under the guidance of the good Cura. The day and season were in perfect harmony with the object of our pilgrimage, where the greatest monarch of his age had sought a brief breathing-space between the world and the grave. The late autumn, with its gentle sunshine and perfect stillness, realized to us with peculiar force the motives that induced Charles to retire to such a spot, contrasting so strongly by its seclusion and repose with the turmoil and disquietude of his previous career.

Yuste stands a full mile above Cuacos, just where the steeper slopes of the mountain, that shelters it from the northern blast, subside towards the plain. Eastward a tract of upland cuts off all prospect in that direction, only to enhance the delight with which the eye turns

to the south-western expanse, where copse-wood, and vineyard, green bank and rocky knoll, mountain-glen and shining river, terminate in the broad plain of the Tagus, with its glittering villages, and dark groves of ilex. In the silvery thread of water intersecting the landscape we recognize the river Tiedar, crossed by us yesterday, and on the extreme horizon we trace the purple mountain-range, through which we hope to make our way to Seville.

Lord Portarlington and I were reminded of the hills behind Powerscourt, both in their form and colour, by the range that overhangs the convent, clothed with its autumnal drapery of heather, and fern, and looking to English eyes so natural and home-like.

It was delicious to sit in Charles's favourite balcony enjoying the pleasant sunshine, as he had often done, and gazing on the same landscape that once was the companion of his solitude. The very air seems redolent of peace and tranquillity; for without bearing any impress of that loneliness and desolation characteristic of so many a scene in Spain, Yuste is pervaded with a soothing influence sequestering the mind from worldly associations, and drawing it into communion with better things. I

never saw any spot commanding so extensive a prospect, fraught with such an atmosphere of repose, as it lay basking in the October sunshine. You see, it is true, indications of man's presence in vineyard and cornfield, but he occupies a retiring position, in modest subordination to Nature, as one owning her supremacy over that fair region, and unwilling to obtrude even his humble dwelling on the view; not a single cottage being discernible as the eye glances over the broad tank, where Charles used to fish, downward into the bosom of the Vera.

We found the convent a complete ruin, its central court filled with a chaos of *débris*, out of which fig-tree, myrtle, and box, unpruned and wild, struggle forth into open day. The Church has sustained little substantial injury, the massive solidity of its masonry having happily defeated every attempt the French made to demolish it, and a few repairs now being carried on, will soon render it as sound as ever. It is a remarkably fine specimen of the Florid Gothic so often seen in Spain, with a noble chancel-arch, and an altar of high elevation.

A considerable portion of the west end is



CHARLES VTH'S BALCONY. YUSTE.

occupied by a stone gallery, with a low pierced screen in front, a feature not uncommon in Spanish churches.

Against the south wall of the Church stand the apartments built for Charles's reception, consisting of only two stories, with four rooms in each, his bed-chamber having a window opening directly into the chancel, which enabled him to witness the celebration of mass, when too unwell to leave his bed. It was here Charles died, September 21st, 1558, having felt the first approach of death on the 31st August, as he sat sunning himself in his favourite western balcony.

We saw the coffin, a rude chest of chestnut-wood, in which his remains reposed for sixteen years, before their ultimate removal to the Escorial.

Nothing can be simpler or more unpretending than the Imperial apartments, which remain substantially very much as they were at Charles's death, and we thought ourselves fortunate in the moment of our visit. For the present proprietor is going to restore the building, in consequence, it is said, of the interest excited in the spot by recent writers, more especially Stirling in his "Cloister Life of

Charles V.," the scaffolding and building materials being all prepared when we were there.

The intention is certainly most praiseworthy, but it is to be hoped, nothing will be attempted beyond necessary repairs.

We duly visited all Charles's haunts, and were especially struck with the situation of his summer balcony, with its umbrageous belt of trees, and cool northern aspect. We then descended the sloping causeway constructed to save him the fatigue of going up and down stairs, an exertion which his frequent attacks of gout must have rendered very trying.

Of course we did not fail to go to the great walnut-tree, under which the Emperor used to sit, and which even in his day was famous for its size and patriarchal age. The steward gathered for us some of its fruit, and we carried them away as a *souvenir* of one of the most interesting places I ever had the happiness to visit. It was a great advantage to have the Cura's company, introducing us as it did to every civility and attention on the part of the good-natured steward, who did the honours in a very pleasing manner, and, what is even more worthy of record, declined accepting any pecu-

niary acknowledgment of his services, though evidently gratified by the offer.

In going to Yuste we had a good deal of fragmentary conversation with the Cura, partly in Latin, and partly in the few scraps of Spanish we had managed to pick up, eked out by an occasional bit of pantomime, when all other expedients failed to convey our meaning. He was very much surprised at an English Prayer-book I showed him, having hitherto never heard that the Church of England possesses a regular Liturgy, with various services and forms of devotion, drawn from "the pure well" of Catholic Antiquity, and that she does not leave her people at the mercy of extemporized effusions, as is the case with so many of the sects into which Protestantism is divided.

The walk from Yuste to Cuacos is so very pretty that, as we emerged from the hollow in which the convent nestles, I lingered behind my companions to enjoy for a longer space the eastward view, on which, as yet, I had hardly looked. Here and there stand small homesteads scattered over the mountain-side, each under a group of chestnuts, while every rocky ledge, and natural terrace, has its narrow strip of green corn or ruddy vineyard sloping to the

south. The wind came gently southing up the valley, mingled with the sounds of distant waters, that added to the quiet sadness of the scene, which I gazed upon with the conviction I should never see it again.

On returning to the Cura's house, we found the servants had been holding quite a reception during our absence, the villagers feeling a very natural curiosity to see, and hear something more of the strangers whose arrival had caused quite a sensation in that secluded community. The servants very good-naturedly showed everything that could interest them, more especially the India-rubber sponging-baths, which they inflated in their sight to their great wonderment and delight.

In Charles's day the people of Cuacos did not bear the best character, and it is quite amusing to find that the greatest monarch of the age, whose word was law to so many millions, was utterly unable to keep them, his nearest neighbours, in anything like order. They seem actually to have given him far more trouble and worry than all the rest of his dominions. They poached his trout, drove away his small dairy of two cows, and pelted his son Don John of Austria, the future hero of Lepanto, because,

like a boy of enterprise, he made inroads upon their cherry-trees. Charles seems at last to have been fairly at his wits' end, and held solemn consultations with the gentlemen of his suite, as to the best method of bringing them to a sense of their duty.

There is a vague tradition, that the name of the place, Cuacos, was first suggested by some enormity of theirs, which the Emperor happened to witness. Some assert that they had just broken Don John's head, when his Imperial father came up, very wroth no doubt at such an outrage, and while on the point of venting his indignation, a duck chancing to quack, a sudden inspiration seized him at the sound, and he declared such people no longer deserved to be treated as men, being in fact no better than ducks, or such-like irrational creatures.

Stirling disbelieves the story for the best of all reasons—Cuacos was so called before Charles ever went to Yuste, though he allows it may have had its origin in some previous incident; it being quite certain that even in the present day, any allusion to the name Cuacos is highly offensive to the villagers, producing upon their minds very much the same sensation felt by certain good people in the county of Dorset

at the slightest reference to the history of the Shapwick Monster!

However, we had every reason to speak favourably of the whole population, with the excellent Cura at their head, for they showed us every civility, and were evidently much pleased and not a little flattered by our visit.



P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA

CHAPTER XXII.

IT was with much regret that we said good-bye to our worthy host the Cura of Cuacos, having first induced him to accept some return for the trouble and expense our visit had occasioned in his quiet household. This he received with unembarrassed simplicity of manner, as if, like a man of sense, he felt it to be no discredit to possess such slender means, as would make the exercise of unrequited hospitality impossible.

Placentia was our next destination, a distance of about thirty miles, and as the route is very intricate, abounding with what the Spaniards call "partridge-paths," we engaged a guide at Cuacos, who slung a couple of hams at his saddle-bow, intending therewith to do a little business on his own account, after piloting us through the wilds that intervene between his

native village and the principal town of the district.

Having, as we calculated, ridden more than a hundred miles since leaving Toledo, we had gained sufficient experience to understand the necessities and requirements of our journey, and began to look forward hopefully to its successful accomplishment, now that we knew what man and beast could perform.

Our road to-day (October 31st) skirted the lower slopes of the Yuste chain, its terrace-like windings bringing us continually upon some display of autumnal beauty, that would enchant an English water-colourist. I never remember to have seen anywhere such a perfect blaze of colour, as met the eye along this road, from the ruby and lemon of the vine, to the soberer hues of the oak, while the distant mountains of Guadalupe toned down the picture with rich shades of indigo and purple. It was a most enjoyable ride, the day being everything we could desire, warm and sunshiny, yet fresh; and when our path left the cultivated dells and ascended the mountain-side along the banks of a lovely trout-stream, that would have converted even old Johnson himself into a fisherman, we once more caught sight of Yuste, refreshing our

impressions of yesterday, and stamping them deeper on the tablets of memory. We passed through masses of Spanish chestnut, green as "in the leafy month of June," contrasting most effectively with the brown fern out of which they grew.

It was indeed a feast of beauty, and one longed to summon to it, by some magic power, all who could appreciate such an entertainment.

Through oak woods and orchards we descended upon Pasaron, which Ford describes as "a picturesque old town of Prout-like houses, with toppling balconies, overhanging a brawling brook." Here we took a hasty luncheon, while the horses were feeding, and the good people having apparently no important business on hand at that particular moment, clustered like bees round the inn-door, headed by the Cura, a brisk little man, of decidedly controversial turn. He soon accosted me, and before we had exchanged half a dozen words, he plunged headlong into polemics, and tried to draw me after him; asserting that there was one faith and one Church, and that within the pale of the Romish Communion alone were

these essentials to be found. Had I accepted his challenge, we might have been at it till now, with perhaps more than the usual fruitlessness of controversy; so I contented myself with remarking that the Church of England holds no more and no less, than "the faith once delivered to the Saints" in Apostolic times. Though we parted very graciously, I fear the little man was disappointed at my non-combativeness, he being one of those pugnacious spirits to whom a passage of arms is a real enjoyment, more especially amid the stagnation of a secluded neighbourhood.

We now entered upon a new line of country, *dehesas* (sheep-walks) consisting of uncultivated wastes, with extensive tracts of oak-scrub watered here and there by shallow brooks, and this continued nearly the whole way to Placentia. In Estremadura vast districts have been in this condition, ever since the expulsion of the Moors, and what was once called in Arabic, as Ford states, "the land of corn," is now reduced in great measure to a mere barren desert, producing nothing but scanty pasturage for sheep, and those very few compared with the immense area over which they range. To English eyes,

however, such regions of solitude are as striking as happily they are novel, and we journeyed on through them with much enjoyment, arriving at Placentia, of which we had a lovely sunset view from the vine-clad height, Calzones, shortly after nightfall.



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA

CHAPTER XXIII.

WE had formed great hopes of this place, with its population of 6000, and exquisite position in the teeming valley of the Xerte. Our stores had fallen into reduced circumstances, and we now fondly flattered ourselves, that in so considerable a town, the centre of a very extensive district, there would be no difficulty in restoring them to their former abundance. But there is nothing so disappointing as a Spanish town. Shops there were in plenty, but not of the sort we required, with their bright array of *mantas*, and flashy kerchiefs that seemed to flaunt our hunger, as if colour could feed the ravenous appetite we had picked up in Estremenian wilds. What the inhabitants live on remains to the present hour as great a mystery to us, as when we first arrived in the town. A vague rumour reached us that an ox is killed once a year, in June, on the Feast of St. John

the Baptist; but we derived little comfort from the information, seeing it wanted nearly eight months before the next victim could become available for our necessities, and a "Midsummer Night's Dream" could hardly be more unsubstantial, than our prospects of relief from that quarter.

We had found, with much difficulty, a very primitive posada just below the Cathedral, where we purposed taking "such ease" as could be had for a couple of nights; but when I sallied forth with Purkiss on a shopping expedition, partly in the hope of seeing Spanish life in its more intimate haunts, and partly out of deference to the ancient proverb, "Two heads are better than one," we might almost as well have gone foraging into the wilderness, so unsuccessful did our search prove after the commonest necessaries of life. Grave doubts respecting the sinfulness of eating anything but bread and garlic began to arise in my mind, as we wandered like beggars from house to house, so much out of fashion did every other species of food seem in this Cathedral town; and when at last some good-natured people told us that neighbour Rodriguez had just killed a nice pig, we felt ready, had it been necessary, to go to the ends

of the earth in compliance with the welcome intelligence, though it would have been a trying journey just at that moment, 7.30 P.M., for men who had ridden all day through the keen air of Estremadura.

Happily the goodman Rodriguez lived at no great distance, down a narrow lane, and having descended under the chaperonage of his sturdy wife into the cellar, where the defunct porker lay in state, we soon purchased a goodly quantity of spare-rib, and returned in triumph to the posada, having previously met with several bottles of Manzanilla, which Mr. Sykes and I hailed as a boon, though Lord Portarlington vowed it was no better than physie.

Only one of the rooms at the posada had glass in the window, and it was altogether one of those hostelries that carry back the mind to the simplicity of medieval accommodation. In my bedroom, which was fortunately large, I counted fifty-eight melons laid up for winter use, five frying-pans, with a supplement of half-a-dozen other culinary items, representing, we may suppose, the useful arts of life, while a couple of guitars suggested the ornamental, and completed the picture.

As a set-off against the comestible disadvan-

tages of Placentia, few towns can boast a situation of rarer beauty, which more than satisfies the expectations called forth by the alleged derivation of its name. It is well remarked by Ford, "Placentia seen from outside is indeed most *pleasing*; here river, rock, and mountain—city, castle, and aqueduct, under a heaven of purest ultramarine, combine to enchant the artist." The stateliest city indeed might be proud of such a site.

The Xerte, clear as crystal, sweeps round three sides, reflecting on its broad bosom the western portion of the picturesque old Roman wall, with its massive semicircular towers; and then through a rugged belt of rock, that recalled some exquisite river-scenery in North Wales, it passes onward to "fresh fields, and pastures new," falling eventually into the Tagus near Alcantara. Three fine bridges span the stream within the space of a mile, adding greatly to the architectural pretensions of the place. To the north, far up the valley, rises a snow-capped range of mountains, while the southeastern hills are covered with olive-groves, vineyards, and gardens, in pleasant contrast to the grey rocks and naked soil that bound the prospect westward.

The day we stayed there (Nov. 1st) was lovely, and having sauntered over the Trujillo bridge, we sat down on a thymy bank, just above the river, where its waters falling over a succession of weirs fill the ear with a soothing, slumberous, influence, perfectly delicious to travellers like us, glad of a day's repose. Some have compared Placentia to Toledo, each city being seated on a platform of rock, and enfolded on three sides by a river. But here all comparison ceases. The Tagus at Toledo flows in a turbid stream, red as brickdust, and the surrounding scenery frowns with an air of sternness and desolation; while the Xerte is purity itself, as it glides among the smiling meadows of Placentia. It was once proposed to set up the capital here instead of at Madrid, an arrangement that would have given Spain a metropolis hardly to be excelled in Europe for beauty, and healthiness of situation; but where would have been the glassy brightness of the Xerte, polluted past recovery by the defilements of a large population?

It being the Feast of All Saints, a grand *funcion* was celebrated at the cathedral, and a stately procession headed by the bishop, with a long train of ecclesiastics, and students from

the neighbouring colleges, carrying crosses, tapers, and banners, swept along through aisle and cloister, singing some of the sweetest Gregorian chaunts I ever heard. The vestments of the Spanish clergy are beautiful, of a chaster style, and much less overloaded with ornament, than those used in other branches of the Roman Communion; and the countenances of the wearers express more mind and refinement than the commonly-received notion of the Spanish priesthood prepared us to expect. Their behaviour, however, during service-time was sadly irreverent; even while taking a part in the procession not a few of them conversed freely, and after staring pertinaciously at the English strangers, it was evident they were making facetious remarks at our expense, though we tried in every way by our demeanour to avoid attracting the notice of the congregation. At last it became so very unpleasant, that having letters to write, I left the church, and thus to my extreme regret missed a sermon preached by some celebrity, not being aware any would be delivered on the occasion. The congregation consisted chiefly of men, a rare occurrence anywhere, more especially in Spain, where the majority of church-goers, who are not very

numerous, consists usually of females. This exception may be accounted for by the preacher's reputation; his manner, I was told, was particularly dignified and quiet, with none of those bursts of declamation we are accustomed to associate with the foreign pulpit; more, in fact, after the best style of English preaching.

In the course of the day, we had time to examine the Cathedral more carefully. It is by no means a large building, of the date 1498, in the florid Gothic so prevalent in some parts of the Peninsula. Its massiveness, and the granite of which it is constructed, impart to it a solemn stateliness, that is very effective. It has, as usual, a double choir, and, like most Spanish churches, contains superb iron-work, especially a *reja* or screen in front of the altar; but there is very little painted glass. At the western extremity stands an interesting chapel, containing arches of great beauty, and from its vaulted roof, figures, heads, &c., project, not where you would expect to see them, at the central bosses, but thrown out along the ribs that ramify from them. Out of the quaint old Romanesque cloisters you enter a round apartment of exquisite beauty, that looked like a chapter-house on a small scale, enriched with

a profusion of stone-carving on moulding and capital, and crowned with a dome. I had time only for a hasty glance, and when we all went hoping to examine it at leisure, it was locked up, and I saw it no more.

Near the town are extensive Roman remains. Going to visit one of them, an aqueduct of fifty-four arches, we came upon a group of shepherds at their mid-day meal. We are continually falling in with similar parties on their way from the mountains of the north, where they spend the summer, to the winter-pastures of Estremadura, and this circumstance alone gives the later months of autumn a peculiar advantage over other seasons for making a tour of the province.

It was a striking picture of pastoral life to see the poor wayworn sheep and saucy goats, with the huge watchdogs, and rough-looking shepherds clad in sheepskins, grouped together in the warm sunshine under the weather-beaten arches of the old aqueduct. Many of the ewes had lambs, October and November being the usual lambing-time in Spain. On the march the shepherds, of whom there are four or five to a flock of twelve or fifteen hundred, have constantly to carry on their shoulders some new-

born lamb, or ailing sheep; and you seldom pass one of these migratory flocks without observing some incident that reminds you of pictures of the Good Shepherd. Four or five dogs of noble size, and formidable aspect, are attached to each flock, having their necks protected with iron-spiked collars, as the wolf, their worst enemy, always flies at the throat. We conversed with this party of shepherds, if that can be called conversation, which is carried on solely by means of monosyllables, and gestures; and when we told them we were English, they seemed delighted, and one cried out "London" with great vivacity, though not exactly in the tone and accent most commonly heard in England. They appeared to be very good-natured beings, and pressed us urgently to drink out of their leathern bottle, which after the Oriental fashion is universally used in Spain, an invitation we declined with many thanks.

Messrs. O'Shea's correspondent at Placentia, upon whom Lord Portarlington had occasion to draw, was very civil, and finding we were interested in the antiquities of the place, carried us off to see a convent, which in his estimation was worthy of being classed in that category. Like the generality of religious houses in Spain,

it had been suppressed and emptied of its occupants, and was now converted into a college, but whether ecclesiastical or secular, I cannot recollect. It contained no object of antiquarian interest, though our cicerone, with no small pride and satisfaction, pointed out a spacious staircase, and some far-reaching corridors, gloomy enough to have figured in the most tragic of Mrs. Radcliffe's romances.

In the large court through which we entered, about a hundred lads from sixteen to eighteen, were amusing themselves in various ways, "pitching the bar" being the most popular game. The whole party exhibited an exterior of remarkable dinginess, unrelieved by the smallest scrap of linen, the only article that indicated its existence cropping out at a part of one boy's person, where shirt does not usually make its appearance. We watched them for some time, and I could not help contrasting the joyous light-heartedness, and exuberant fun, that animate the play-ground of a school in our own country, with the lugubrious air pervading this sombre troop of young Spaniards, and their utter lack of that "go," so descriptive of an English schoolboy. As we came away, unmistakable tokens of displeasure

manifested themselves on every side, and sounds expressive of anything but approbation proceeded from the general body of students, while one of the masters, who chanced to be standing by, gave vent to an amount of indignation that was perfectly incomprehensible, as we had neither said, nor done anything which the most perverse ingenuity could distort into an occasion of offence. We could not ask for an explanation, our interpreter, Purkiss, not being with us at the moment; but we made out in a sort of hazy, indistinct way, that the students having expected a present of money from us, took this method of expressing their disappointment, when they saw us leaving the college, without doing so, such a thought never having presented itself to our minds. Every one educated at a public school must recollect the day, when he used to look upon the time-honoured fashion of "tipping" as one of the most precious institutions that form the heritage of Britons, though the donors, it is probable, hardly regard the custom with the same enthusiasm, as the recipients. But to "tip" a whole college at once would be an enterprise, that the most thoughtless schoolboy would stigmatize as a Quixotic extravagance, more especially during a tour in Spain, where the

expenses of the road are ever exceeding the traveller's most liberal estimate.

An occurrence that took place while we were at Placentia, and of which the two servants and Purkiss were eye-witnesses, shocked us exceedingly. They had gone into a wine-shop to make provision for the road, and while standing there with several others until they could be served, a poor woman was brought in, who had just been stabbed by her husband with such severity under the right shoulder-blade, that whenever she attempted to speak, the blood gushed copiously out of her mouth. Not one of the natives offered the least assistance, or expressed the slightest sympathy for the poor sufferer, and when she was taken away to the hospital, several of them burst out into a brutal laugh!

CHAPTER XXIV.

NEXT morning (November 2nd) we were aroused at a very early hour by a party of muleteers, who were holding "revel high and loud" in the corridor of the posada, a prevalent practice of their class, to judge from our observation. In most countries evening is the season for carousing and joviality; but the Spanish muleteer's highest flow of spirits seems to set in about four in the morning, which we often found a great bore; and when we would have given anything for a quiet hour, then did jest, laughter, and snatches of old song sound forth, not exactly in the gentle tones of Master Bottom's "sucking dove," but with a vehemence and energy that effectually banished sleep. We felt anxious to start betimes, having a very wild district to traverse to-day; but several obstacles intervened, the principal being a long altercation about the bill, and it was ten o'clock before we

crossed the Trujillo bridge, bidding adieu to fair Placentia, and its lovely river, which looked more than ever attractive, as it gleamed in the morning sunshine.

Our next point was Trujillo, distant about sixty miles. The route lay over one of the least-populated portions of sparsely-peopled Estremadura, through scenery that differed altogether from anything we had yet seen. On reaching the summit of the uplands enclosing the valley of the Xerte to the south, we looked over a region where Nature is left entirely to herself, and you may ride a live-long summer-day, without ever seeing more than perhaps one lone group of houses, or any other indication of man's permanent presence. An undulating succession of low swelling hills, reminding us in their outline of the "rolling prairies of the Far West," as travelers describe them, stretched out before us for many a league, clothed with an expanse of gum-cistus, which in some directions seemed interminable; while farther on, Nature's own hand had laid out the masses of cork-tree, and ilex, with which the more open ground was interspersed, after the fashion of an English park. Perfect stillness reigned on every side of this vast solitude, imparting a degree of grandeur to the

landscape, which its general features could never produce in any other situation, and the action of the sun on that wide breadth of gum-cistus filled the air with a delicious fragrance, as if earth were wafting up to Heaven an unceasing cloud of incense, in honour of her Almighty Creator.

Sometimes our path lay over a long tract of sand and stones, running like a highway for miles, where, during the downpours of the rainy season, a torrent may have taken its capricious course. All this country, it is said, was once under the plough, and judging from the progress Spain has made during the last ten years, and the extensive clearance of waste places carried on in other provinces, it may again become subject to its dominion.

About mid-day we reached the summit of the Puerta de de la Serrana, having, for more than a mile, had to scramble up a steeply-sloping bed of stones outrivalling the roughest portions of the well-known Chesil Beach near Weymouth. Not long ago this spot was notorious for robbery and murder, the brigands having here the double advantage of a look-out over both sides of the mountain at once, in addition to an ascent each way of such extreme difficulty, from the badness

of the road, that escape was simply impossible. Happily, the whole gang has been routed out by the Guardia Civil, and the worst peril we met with was caused by the rocks and stones that blocked up the road. The top of the Pass commands a very striking panorama, the cistus-clad wastes looking more like grousing-hills infinitely magnified, than any other scenery with which I am acquainted; but instead of the purple tints of heather, the atmosphere is tinged with a bluish hue, thrown out apparently from the foliage of that shrub, and producing a most singular, I might almost say, unearthly, effect. We had ample time to contemplate the various features of the scene, embracing not only a grand sweep of verdant wilderness towards Placentia, and the frontiers of Portugal, but of the valley of the Tagus also, as it opened out far away to the eastward, while we sat eating our mid-day meal, ensconced in extemporized bowers of fruit-laden arbutus, with which the mountain is clothed.

The descent carried us over another villanous road to San Carlos, a deplorable-looking hamlet of five or six houses, our proximity to the Tagus, which for hours we had surmised from the for-

mation of the country, being now at every turn more clearly indicated, and our curiosity proportionably stimulated; though in the deep ravines, by which the country all around is furrowed, we could, as yet, catch no glimpse of its actual presence.

We were getting quite excited with expectation, and pushed on more rapidly than was safe over such a road, when at last the river burst upon us in full view, its broad stream newly replenished by the waters of the Tiedar, and cleaving a path through the very heart of mountains, which, rising abruptly from its brink, embank it on either side. A noble old bridge of fine proportions, and massive construction, spans both river and ravine at once, while below, the ruins of Monfrague, an old feudal castle, crown a distant rock overhanging the stream. We hailed the Tagus as an old friend, having now traversed its banks repeatedly, at Aranjuez, Toledo, Talavera, to bid a final adieu to it here, at Puente del Cardenal.

At one time it had been our intention to make our way to Seville by Alcantara, for the purpose of seeing the old Roman bridge, which Ford declares is worth going a hundred miles to visit.

This detour, however, would have occupied more time than we could possibly spare, and the plan was consequently relinquished.

The bridge we were now going to cross is called Puente del Cardenal, from having been built, with three others along this route, by Cardinal Juan de Carvajal, a native of Placentia, where his family were among the magnates of their day. One cannot help believing he must have been a good and benevolent man, who, for the convenience of a thinly-populated neighbourhood, where bridle-roads alone exist, and peasants are the most frequent travellers, erected so costly a work, far out of the world's ken. Jeremy Taylor reckons it among acts of mercy to repair highways, and bridges; much more, therefore, does their original construction, especially in such a country as Spain, deserve a place in the catalogue.

After sunset, we heard, for the first time, the *cicala*, a species of cricket possessing vocal powers almost as shrill as a railway whistle; there were scores of these insects pouring forth on every side their several contributions to swell the general chorus; and the combined result, as may easily be conceived, was somewhat overwhelming. We proposed halting for the night

at Torrejon el Rubio, a hamlet in the midst of the wilds, where we arrived between eight and nine, having, since sunset, travelled over roads bad beyond conception, which hardly man or beast could have faced had there been daylight to disclose their real condition. But habit and a Spanish horse will carry one through almost everything.

Torrejon had surely never received such a cavalcade as ours, and the good people were sorely perplexed to find us accommodation. The posada being a decidedly questionable-looking abode for any purpose save dinner, we had to hunt up and down for beds. Mr. Sykes was taken in at one private house, Lord Portarlington and myself at another, where we were stowed away in a tiny room about nine feet square, just large enough for two beds. The ceiling was ornamented in a manner peculiar to the Peninsula, with a goodly array of melons, which hung like pendants in some Gothic roof, though we cannot say the effect was either as artistic, or the general arrangement carried out with equal consideration for the convenience of the inmates. Whichever way we turned, bump went our heads against some green mass; and if our worthy host, Tomas Sanchez' melons did

not keep as well as usual last winter, it will, no doubt, be owing to the repeated collisions that took place on the night of November 2nd.

Despite Purkiss's best endeavours, a considerable time elapsed before dinner was ready, as indeed was generally the case throughout our expedition. We found such delays more exhausting and wearisome than the longest ride, and many were the complaints we used to pour forth on such occasions, without ever being able, however, with the collective wisdom of the whole party, to devise any better arrangement. It is thought unadvisable in Spain to divide forces, by sending on some one to the next halting-place with the baggage to secure beds and prepare dinner, a plan that would have obviated this inconvenience. Whenever we had the good fortune to find an inn capable of supplying anything in the shape of a plain dinner, we did very well, and in a good meal and early bed soon forgot the fatigue of a ten or twelve hours' ride. But on most occasions the case was widely different with us, arriving, as we did often at eight or nine o'clock at some posada where a larder is a thing unheard of, and you can find nothing to eat, except what is furnished from your own stores. You have not even the travel-

ler's never-failing resource in other countries, bread, and cheese, or butter, such articles being unknown over the greater part of Spain. For weeks we saw no butter; frequently milk was not to be had, and on asking for it in some places we were told none would be forthcoming before Easter! Every preparation, therefore, had to be made after our arrival, and this in a very unexpeditious manner, as the most available implement in Purkiss's *batterie de cuisine* was a frying-pan we had brought from Bayonne, to which he had generally to attach a stick by way of a supplementary handle, on account of the heat of an open fire. It was with this scanty apparatus that legs of mutton whole, chines of pork, chops, fowls, hares, partridges, rabbits, and such-like "small deer," were each in their turn converted into food for us. As a natural consequence, we frequently dined at ten, and went to bed at midnight, which was not the best way of preparing for the work of the morrow.

I remember being very much struck, years ago, with a statement of Disraeli's in "Contarini Fleming," which at the moment I thought exaggerated—that the Spanish peasantry are the cleanest in Europe. Our Spanish experiences continually verified this assertion; for though

often, as at Torrejon, our sleeping-quarters were rough and primitive to a degree, we could always lie down with a conviction of their perfect cleanliness, a remarkable fact, I think, when the isolation of the country and the warmth of its climate are kept in mind.

Torrejon had nothing to detain us next morning, and through *dehesas* and *despoblados* (sheep-walks and uninhabited wastes) we continued our way to Trujillo, the park-like scenery of the ilex-woods being the predominating feature of the country. Soon after starting, Mr. Sykes discovered two enormous vultures, sitting, like birds of evil omen, on a decayed stump, and when our approach scared them away, it was with a heavy lethargic flight, as if they had been eating more than was good for them; while chattering magpies, whiter and larger than in England, and the pretty little jays we had seen before, were perpetually flitting across our path. We passed several streams to-day, one of them, the Vid, where we made our noon-tide halt *al fresco*, being of sufficient volume to require a bridge of considerable dimensions. Along the banks of these streams lay pleasant meadows, refreshing the eye with their greenness, which the sombre hues of the all-perva-

ding ilex threw out by contrast with vivid effect. Almost the whole way between the Vid and Trujillo, we seemed to be riding through a vast domain attached to feudal castle, or princely mansion, so perfectly did the size and arrangement of the timber, and configuration of the ground, recal the general characteristics of an English park. Our imagination all the time pictured the existence of some abode worthy of the situation, lying concealed among the recesses of the forest, and we were quite prepared to see it any moment, though we never did!

Hereabout Pizarro, when a lad, used to feed his father's pigs, and in the long double range of pigsties at Aldea del Obispo, a bleak village within sight of, though unsheltered by, the extensive woods of the district, we perchance saw the spot where he once had lodged his acorn-eating herds.

At length we came out upon the high-road between Madrid and Badajos, in sight of Trujillo, though, as we found in due time, we were still a weary distance from it. As we rode along, with no object to interest or engage our attention in the dreary wind-swept plateau that encircles Trujillo, we observed a narrow black

line extending across the road, here about thirty-five feet wide. On closer inspection we found it consisted of ants, which in grand procession were streaming over the ground by myriads, one division going to our left hand, and the rest in the contrary direction, each individual ant giving its neighbour a nudge in passing. The destination and cause of this movement we failed to discover.

A few days before, while walking near Cuacos, we had enjoyed another opportunity of studying natural history, though not in so pacific a phase as that exhibited on the Trujillo road. Two beetles were fighting furiously by the wayside, one being very large, the other half his size. As Englishmen we instinctively gave the little one the benefit of our good wishes, though in reality the combatants were more equally matched, from their relative circumstances, than their difference in size led us at first to conclude. The big beetle had, in truth, a double duty to perform; not only did he repel the incessant assaults of his nimble antagonist, keeping his front towards him constantly with great adroitness, and pom-melling him lustily all the while, but he was moreover engaged in rolling, with his hind legs, the husk of a chestnut (which we suspected to

be the gage of battle between the belligerents) up a bank so steep that it must have assumed in his eyes the dimensions of a precipice. It was quite astonishing how well he executed this complicated manoeuvre. We did not witness the final settlement of the quarrel, not wishing to detain our kind host, the Cura, who did not seem to participate our interest in this insect duel.



JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA

CHAPTER XXV.

TRUJILLO is not only a quaint old town, with narrow, tortuous streets, full of picturesque houses, but, what at that particular moment had more attraction for us than any amount of antiquarian interest or pictorial effect, it contains the best inn we met with between Madrid and Seville. While we were in quest of it, who should turn up but our Talavera acquaintance, the little French equestrian, good-natured as ever, and by his aid we were soon installed in the unwonted luxury of rooms with glazed windows, carpets, and a sufficiency of chairs and tables. Indeed, so comfortable did we find our quarters, that it was almost provoking to quit them on the morrow, but we felt anxious to reach Merida by Sunday, and we had still before us a journey of two days.

Next morning, Friday, November 4th, we lionized Trujillo in a most hasty fashion, which

was little better than not seeing it at all. The mansion built by Pizarro after the conquest of Peru, stands in the *Plaza*, and, though indifferently situated, is a handsome building of freestone, decorated after the Spanish custom with boldly-sculptured coats of arms, and other heraldic devices, the most conspicuous being a couple of pigs feeding under an oak-tree, a badge that not only recalled his origin and early employment, but proved, moreover, that the conqueror of Peru was not ashamed to own himself the son of a swineherd. We searched several churches for his tomb, which, according to Ford, is in Santa Maria de la Concepcion, but found nothing corresponding to his description.

Several old houses invited examination, had time permitted; but we were obliged to content ourselves with a hasty glance at them, and at the towers, both Moorish and Lombard, as well as at ancient gateways of massive Roman construction which we fell in with while perambulating the town. It is the worst place I ever was in for finding one's way, which is seldom a difficulty to me. On my return from the upper town I wished to revisit the Square for the purpose of having one more glimpse of Pizarro's house; but so narrow are the streets,

and so lofty the houses, that, in spite of repeated attempts, I could not find my way there, being all the time within two hundred yards of the spot! In fact, I lost myself completely, passing and repassing the same point four times, and had I not chanced to emerge upon the town wall in sight of our inn, it is impossible to say when I should have found an exit out of this labyrinth of streets.

During the night it had blown quite a hurricane, accompanied by heavy rain, and when we set off soon after ten, it was under what sailors would call "a dirty sky," with every sign of bad weather, so that Trujillo, which from its situation has a very bleak, cheerless air, looked this morning miserably chill and storm-beaten. At Placentia, two days before, I had noticed the sun rising amid angry-looking clouds, called in Gloucestershire "the reds," which flashed from one end of heaven to the other. Every land has its peculiar weather-wisdom, which a stranger cannot acquire speedily. Not knowing, therefore, what "the reds" might presage in Spain, I did not venture to prognosticate their consequences. In England rain would certainly have fallen the self-same day, but the Peninsular clerk of the weather seems

to be a person of more deliberate action, for eight-and-forty hours elapsed, yet not a drop fell, only, however, to descend upon our unlucky heads with treble violence on the third day after. Our ride to Montanches lay through a bare, treeless region, utterly without shelter of any kind, and just as we were wending our spiritless way over its most exposed portion, the storm burst upon us with almost tropical fury, till men and beasts fairly streamed like water-spouts, so that altogether we had very much the appearance of a row of gigantic gargoyles in full action. The storm lasted about an hour and a half, and I was thankful to escape with no worse damage than a pair of wet legs, thanks to my good cloak, though several of the party were thoroughly drenched. As soon as the rain ceased, the sun and wind, not being on this occasion antagonists, as in the old fable, united their powers for our relief, and soon made matters more comfortable.

There being no posada in the village, where we made our mid-day halt, our whole party was received with much kindness at the principal farm-house. The mistress, an old lady of superior manners, and a good deal of quiet dignity; placed her house and all it contained at our

disposal, making her two maids wait on us ; and when her husband came in, finding to his surprise the whole place full of strangers, he also gave us a cordial welcome. A young man dropped in soon after, whom we set down as the village doctor on seeing him feel the old lady's pulse. He turned out to be her son. One of the things, which struck us here, as elsewhere, was the abundance, and excellence of the household linen, reminding us of the olden days of spinsters and homespun in England. The kindness of this worthy couple forms quite a pleasant point of retrospect amid the dreary, uninteresting district of saturated corn-land, through which most of our route from Trujillo to Montanches led us, and we were really sorry to say good-bye to them.

Montanches soon came into sight, perched upon a platform of rock, that rose like an islet, out of a level expanse of arable plain, and looking close at hand. But experience had begun to teach us, that in Spain to see a place, and to be near it, are two utterly different things, and it was two hours after nightfall ere we rode into the market-place of this central depôt for "hams, and other bucolic meats of Estremadura."

The hams of Montanches are not only, as Ford informs his readers, world-famous in the

present day, but they have enjoyed their celebrity at least a couple of centuries. From the time of Anacreon downwards, inspiration has often been sought in the wine-cup; but it was reserved for the accomplished author of "The Handbook in Spain," to discover, first of all Englishmen, another of its sources in the flesh-pots of Montanches, following therein the example of the prolific dramatist, Lope de Vega, who never found himself quite up to the mark for composition, until he had refreshed himself with a good rasher. Ford's account of a Montanches ham is one of the most glowing passages in his whole book. Kindling with the fire of poetic rapture, he assures the reader, whom the description makes positively hungry, that "the fat when properly boiled looks like melted topazes, and the flavour defies language, although we have dined on one this very day in order to secure accuracy and inspiration. The Montanches hams are superb, and it would perplex a gastronomic Paris to which to adjudge the prize—whether to the *jamon dulce* of Alpujarras, the *tocino* of Galicia, the *chorizo* of Vique, or the transcendental hams of this locality." And lest it should be imagined Mr. Ford's Pegasus had taken the bit between his teeth, and run

away with his rider on this occasion, I will repeat the testimony of the sober-minded Duc de St. Simon, though even he cannot approach the subject, without catching a spark of poetical fervour :—" Ces jambons ont un parfum si admirable, un goût si relevé, et si vivifiant, qu'on en est surpris ; il est impossible de rien manger si exquis."

Now I will appeal to any candid reader (if I am fortunate enough to have one endowed with so admirable a quality) whether, after all this flourish of trumpets, we were not perfectly justified in expecting to find at least *something to eat* at Montanches. The sequel will show how far so reasonable an expectation was satisfied.

Matters looked rather ominous, methought, when we were told that this town of more than five thousand souls has only one posada, a fact that did not indicate any great amount of communication with the rest of the world. There of course we went, only to be disappointed, it being so crowded with scampish-looking company, that we had to seek accommodation elsewhere without much regret. We next tried the Cura's, but his reverence being out, we had for three-quarters of an hour to play the agreeable to his

housekeeper, a shrewd clever woman, who seemed highly amused with our small attempts at conversation. At last in came the Cura, Don José M. de Orozco y Bulnes, a man of good family, even in Spain. He was very polite, but having only one bed to offer us, could do little to satisfy our necessities. So Purkiss was despatched to the Alcalde (the Mayor of the town), to inquire whether he could do anything to aid houseless travellers. The news of our arrival must have circulated extensively, for in a few minutes the room where we sat was quite filled by the elders of the place, who came dropping in one after another, the Cura's brother among them, with the evident intention of holding a sort of non-professional inquest on the wayfarers, whom the chances of travel had brought within their coasts. In proof that we were "true men," we produced our passports, and letter of recommendation to the Guardia Civil; and it was highly amusing to observe the semi-official air, with which each in his turn inspected those documents. Not one of them however had the good-nature to render us substantial assistance by getting us beds, and what was still more extraordinary, none appeared to entertain the notion, that after a ride of nine or ten hours, with a

good wetting to boot, we might possibly be hungry and glad of some refreshment, now that it was drawing near nine P.M. It was evidently the last thing they were going to think of. They had all eaten their supper, had comfortable beds to get into, whenever they chose; till then it was an agreeable diversion to their monotonous existence to look at, and talk over the strange Englishmen, who were wandering through the country in a manner so unaccountable to a genuine Spaniard. Altogether, it was the most ludicrous scene I ever played part in, and, despite hunger and fatigue, irresistibly entertaining. I seemed all the while to be asking myself unconsciously, "Can all this be real? Are we at a play, or holding an interview with some Polynesian Islanders, or are we surrounded by the fantastic imagery of a dream, with its sensations of utter helplessness?" Had we been tied hand and foot, we could not be more at the mercy of these natives, who stared at us, talked us over, came in and went out with as much nonchalance, as if they had actually paid us for exhibiting ourselves, and were now only receiving their money's worth.

An incident of a somewhat similar nature befel Lady Eastlake at Narva, while on her

way to Esthonia, and is described in her charming "Letters from the Baltic."

Presently his worship the Alcalde appeared, attended by a retinue of humble friends, when the recital of our story, accompanied by a reperusal of documents, recommenced as a matter of course, making a fresh demand upon our almost exhausted patience. Suddenly a worthy elder conceived the bright idea, that a couple of beds might be had at the house of a respectable old lady of his acquaintance, who was accustomed to take in lodgers. Thither we adjourned at once, to find ourselves in a totally different atmosphere, and to meet with every kindness and attention from our warm-hearted hostess, in refreshing contrast to the cool indifference we had hitherto experienced, and oh! how pleasant it was to have a comfortable wash, and to put on dry things!

It was ten o'clock before we returned to the Cura's, where Purkiss was preparing dinner, and there to our horror we found about twenty persons, men and women, the "quality" of the place apparently, drawn up to see us dine. The room was as full as it could hold, and there did they all remain the whole time we were at dinner, making their observations, having evi-

dently very much the same tone of mind as the famous Mrs. John Gilpin ; for though on pleasure they were bent (and thoroughly in their way did they enjoy the entertainment we were providing them), they still retained "the frugal mind" of that excellent housewife. Not a single contribution did any of them make to the scanty meal which our own stores supplied, with the exception of a few grapes, which, when fruit is scarce, might cost perhaps a penny, and when it is abundant, as was then the case, *nil!* Some of our wine was offered them, and when they found it was not champagne, a luxury none of us had tasted since Madrid, they were evidently disappointed, and seemed to consider it not worth drinking.

It would have been an insult to the *genius loci* of Montanches to omit the purchase of some of its "transcendental hams ;" so a couple of well-recommended ones were secured, weighing about fourteen pounds apiece, and costing rather more than a shilling a pound, and never did travellers make a better investment. The first ham was dressed at Merida, and proving of first-rate excellence served as the main stay of our commissariat all the way to Seville, while the other travelled nearly to Granada, each in

its turn coming in most conveniently on all occasions, sometimes cold, sometimes in the shape of a broil. Judging from their sweetness of flavour, we fancied they must have been cured chiefly with sugar, there being hardly a perceptible taste of salt in them.

According to Ford's theory, after eating so much Montanches ham, we ought to turn out first-rate Poets, and if any of the party does hereafter astonish the world in that character, we shall know whence this inspiration has taken its rise.

The ruined castle, that dominates the town, commands a glorious view, though a dense fog concealed the larger portion of it on the morning of November 5th, and Montanches would make an excellent centre for exploring the neighbourhood, those necessary postulates board and lodging being first granted; indeed our landlady told us that an English artist, whose name she could not recollect, had stayed with her a considerable time for the purpose of sketching.

The Cura in parting, kindly offered us a letter to a friend of his at Merida, our next destination, who would probably spare us some wine from his own cellars, to replenish our exhausted stock; and as such an introduction is always

serviceable in Spain, where travellers are more dependent on any chance civility than in other countries, we gladly availed ourselves of his offer.

Our ride at first was dreary enough, through a succession of ploughed fields under a canopy of fog, that intercepted every ray of sunshine, and chilled us to the very bone. In time circumstances improved, and we entered upon sunny woodlands, where herds of swine were doing their best to sustain the reputation of the Montanches hams, by feeding on the crop of acorns grown on the surrounding cork-trees, and ilices. After traversing extensive copses of arbutus, laden with festoons of lovely fruit, scarlet, and primrose-coloured, we descended into a verdant little valley watered by a trout-stream; and there, tempted by the abundance of good pasture, we spent a pleasant hour in refreshing man and beast. Resuming our travel with renewed spirit, about seven we crossed the arid plain that encircles Merida, entering the town near the old Roman aqueduct, which, "spanning the earth at broken intervals with colossal stride," stood out gaunt and grand in the dim moonlight.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WE had been looking forward with great satisfaction to our Sunday's rest at Merida, having ridden during the last week about a hundred and forty miles, which, at our slow pace, represented a good many hours' travel; and it was no agreeable surprise to find in so considerable a town, on the great highway between Madrid and Badajoz, only two wretched posadas, both being too full to take us in. After some trouble, however, we found a *Casa de Pupillos*, or boarding-house, that was tolerably comfortable, and there we remained till Monday at noon, enjoying our well-earned repose.

Ford says of it, "Merida is the Rome of Spain, in respect of stupendous monuments of antiquity." Among these may be mentioned, a noble bridge of eighty-one arches, and 2575 feet long, over the Guadiana; extensive walls, finer, Mr. Sykes thought, than any in Rome; a