

treasure worthy of its magnificent endowment. It may be sufficient to name one item, which was a statue of Saint Lawrence, weighing four hundred and fifty pounds of silver, and eighteen of gold. These in the time of the revolution were plundered indiscriminately by French and Spaniards; nay, for aught I know, by the good monks themselves. The paintings, too, which had been collected at immense expense, were carried to France to enrich the gallery of the Louvre. Most of these have been returned, and the good Jeromites have in them ample consolation for the loss of their silver Saint Lawrence.

The Escorial likewise possesses a library of thirty thousand volumes; four thousand of which are manuscripts, and half of these Arabian. A very valuable collection of Arabian manuscripts, arranged in a room of the convent, was destroyed by fire in 1671*.

The convent of the Escorial was formerly tenanted by one hundred and sixty monks of the order of Saint Jerome, and then its revenue amounted to one hundred and thirty thousand dollars a year, proceeding from estates, and from a flock of thirty-six thousand merino sheep, which lived upon the neighbouring mountains in summer,

* The library of the Escorial furnished Conde materials for his excellent history of the Arabs in Spain.

and were driven in winter to the plains below in quest of a warmer clime*. They had beside a small flock of a thousand, which they kept in the neighbourhood to supply their table; for the Jeromites are good livers, and are not accused either of abstinence or maceration. The means of the convent, and in consequence the number of monks, have been somewhat reduced by the revolutions which have agitated Spain during the present century. Nevertheless, the Escorial still continues to be one of the most formidable of that vast system of religious strongholds which cover the whole Peninsula, and maintain it in spiritual subjection.

The court comes to the Escorial every autumn, and remains there during part of October and November. In addition to the royal apartments within the walls of the convent, there are two small palaces in the neighbourhood, erected for the recreation of the full-grown Infantas. One of these is called the Casa del Campo. It is of plain exterior, but within of the most exquisite finish of any royal residence that I have seen: even the fairy Trianon at Versailles sinks in the comparison. The staircase is formed of the choicest Spanish marbles, and of unequalled beauty. The ceilings of the apartments are covered with a profusion of minute ornament

* Bourgoanne.

which resembles the richest mosaic; and the walls are hung with paintings, among which are some Arabesques and heads by Raphael.

The Escorial must certainly prove a dreary abode to the king and court. Its bleak situation upon the mountain exposes it to the cold and furious winds of which we have already spoken; whilst the inclination of the declivity upon which it stands toward the south-west lays it open to the sun. Hence the proverb applied to it by the Spaniards—"It freezes in winter, and burns in summer."—" *En invierno yuela, en verano quema.*" There are no trees, no rivulets, no fountains, no cultivation, no industry; nothing in short but monks, masses, and granite. Nor is the result different from what might be expected. It is during the residence of the court at the Escorial, more than ever, that the ghostly counsels of the clergy are visible in the affairs of state. It was within the dreary walls of this very convent that the fatal edict by which the Moriscos were driven from Spain received the royal signature.

After wandering a whole day through the convent, we had completed a hasty examination of its most important parts. But it is so complicated that we were able to carry away with us a distinct impression only of the giant Chapel and of the Pantheon. These no one who has not seen them

can appreciate; no one who has seen them can forget. There is no end to one's admiration in contemplating this stupendous edifice, of which it has been said—somewhat, perhaps, in the spirit of exaggeration—“There is no structure in the world, save only those which triumph over ages upon the banks of the Nile, which gives so high an idea of human power.” Some one else exclaims, “Time, which destroyeth all things, doth but establish its walls.” As for the Spaniards, they show their estimation of the Escorial by calling it, familiarly, “The eighth wonder.”—“*La octava maravilla.*”

But let no one envy the Spaniards the possession of their Escorial. Independent of the annual sum so unproductively expended for the maintenance of the idle monks by whom it is inhabited, it cost originally fifty millions of dollars; a sum which, it is said, would have sufficed to cover the whole country with a beautiful system of internal communications by means of canals and highways—one of many things for the want of which Spain is now sunk into such insignificance.

On the fifth morning of our departure from Madrid, we set out, after breakfast, with two mules and a guide, to return to the city. We had heard so much lately of robbers, that we had much the same feeling toward them that a Frenchman has towards a jesuit. We saw robber written upon

every face. The night before, the little group about our kitchen fire had each some doleful story to communicate. One poor fellow had been stopped in the morning on a bridge about a league from the Escorial by a number of *salteadores* or jumpers, a name given to the robbers in Spain from the sudden way in which they leap like tigers upon their prey. They had come suddenly upon him from out the ruined post-house that lies hard by; and not finding any money upon him, they had cudgelled him severely, leaving him, according to his own account, *molido y echo pedazos*—mauled and pummelled to pieces.

We started, therefore, with our minds made up to being robbed, and paid for the mules in advance, in order to save thus much from the wreck. When we came in sight of the fatal bridge, we made our guide get up behind one of us, so as to move on faster, and linger the least possible time in this dangerous neighbourhood. We now descended briskly into the glen, and urged our mules over the noisy pavement of the bridge. The ruined post-house stood at the right: its roof had fallen in, but the walls remained. No robbers, however, came out to meet us; and we passed without any rencontre, and at a rapid rate. We went on thus four or five miles, when our guide suddenly jumped to the ground, saying, "*Voy molido.*" He had been

sitting upon the buckle of the crupper; and though a Spaniard and very tough, it had at last made an impression. He was a finely formed, athletic young man, and kept up with us at the rate of near five miles an hour, and with little seeming exertion, during the greater part of the twenty-eight miles which lay between Madrid and the Escorial.

Towards four o'clock we passed through the crowded promenade of the Florida, thence under the noble portal of San Vincente, and ascending by the palace, to the lofty level of the city, we arrived at last at the Puerta del Sol fatigued, way-worn, covered with dust, and our faces burnt and blistered with the sun. We were received at home with a hearty welcome by Don Valentin and Doña Florencia, who testified a pleasure at our return extremely grateful to strangers in a foreign land.

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