

LETTER XXII.

Zaragoza — The Portilla gate — The heroine Agustina — Cathedrals — Virgen del Pilar — Kissing the Pillar — Church treasures.

Zaragoza, June 29th,
Fonda de Europa.

WE had a thunderstorm this morning, and a pretty smart one, though I did not at first distinguish the claps from the many other loud and lumbering noises which I sleep through at this place. The air is now (eight o'clock) delightfully fresh and balmy, and the people moving gaily about in their holiday best, it being St. Peter's day.

I have made two pilgrimages here ; one to the famous Virgen del Pilar (Virgin of the Pillar), the other to the Portilla gate, where Agustina, the Maid of Zaragoza as she is called, though it seems that she was a married woman,* manned her gun so nobly against the French in the two great sieges. Nothing can well be less imposing than the appearance of the yellowish brick gate and walls which fence in the city on this side ;

* Perhaps not at the time of the first siege.

indeed on every side. At the Portilla there is now a sort of rough broken place on a level with the top of the gate, which you might imagine to have been the scene of struggle only yesterday : either it has remained a ruin or it is undergoing improvement. It looks out upon a rural scene, now part of the walks round the city, but has nearly opposite a mass of building, formerly the Moorish alcazar or outside fort, which was then in the hands of the French. All that you see now connected with the siege, and it is not much, calls up the idea of a town riot more than a military resistance, though it was one of the most glorious resistances ever known. I do not see any memorial of Agustina or hear any talk of her.

The cathedral of El Pilar is a vast building, but in the taste of the last century, and not very interesting. The Pilar chapel is at one end of it, parted off by an enclosure, which I was told that none but royal persons enter (ecclesiastics excepted), and having its own roof or canopy. At this time there was some special ceremony connected with it. The altar was in a blaze of wax candles, and dressed out in all its riches : a great crowd of all ranks kneeling before it and stretching away in a file quite to the cathedral door, in the direction which gave a chance of seeing the sacred image. The illuminated mass of faces immediately before and round the altar was very striking. It was a good while before I could make out what or where

the sacred object was. It is a very small figure, not four feet high, I think, and was nearly lost in a stiff pink and silver robe, which spread out angularly on each side : and it is not in the centre but at one end of the altar. The pillar (of jasper) on which the figure stands is a very short column, not much seen from the front. Whether it, or the image of the Virgin, is supposed to have descended from heaven, I am not sure ; one or both did, it is said. The crowd was so great, the light so dazzling, and the drapery so spacious, that I cannot be quite certain whether I saw the pillar or not, in front ; but, going round the chapel, you come to an opening, about as large as a small face, under a narrow arch, where the back of the pillar is laid bare and the people kiss it. It is quite bright coloured, and worn with perpetual kisses. People of every rank, a man, for instance, who might be of my own station in life ; peasants of the fiercest appearance ; ladies, maid-servants, children ; in short, all things human, were pressing up to this little arch, where only one at a time could do homage, and they had to stoop. It was like the money-taker's box at a theatre on a full night.*

* And there were money-takers at hand, who seemed actively enough employed. This cathedral is devoted expressly to the Virgin ; vast as it is, I do not remember seeing in it a single representation of our Saviour (except as a babe), though I do not presume to say that in so large a building none may exist.

As I stood gazing, the chorister-boy whom Canon C—— (M. de Gayangos's friend) had sent to attend me, said, "Se besa el Pilar" (it is usual to kiss the pillar): but I was unintelligent, and I dare say gave the poor lad much scandal. I am far from being censorious, as you know, about Romish practices which I think wrong ones, but this scene does carry one too far back towards the middle ages.

By the Canon's order to the Sacristans I was shown a great deal of the church wealth in ornaments, at both this and the older cathedral, the Seu. At the older cathedral the Sacristan threw open quite a treasury of jewellery and trinkets, which had been presented from time to time by persons from royal downwards: magnificent jewelled orders of the St. Esprit and Calatrava; miniatures, jewel bouquets, a fan, a snuffbox, very trumpery watches, and even a little bronze gilt bull, presented by some torero sixty or seventy years ago in memory of an escape; but this was not locked up with the grand relics. When it was perceived that the treasury was open, numbers of people flocked in from the church, and I found myself in the front of a crowd, peasants and others, which, if it had been a London instead of a Zaragoza audience, would have alarmed one a little for the treasures, none of our blue friends being at hand; but the Sacristan did not show any misgiving, and seemed rather pleased to exhibit the curiosities to the chance

spectators. A handsome jewelled cup was shown to me at the Pilar. I asked at both places how these things escaped when the French took the town: at one I was told that the capitulation reserved them; * but the answers were not clear.

I have been comfortable enough here, though in a place of awful racket in-doors and out; table and bed good, and people intelligent and attentive. I did mean to go to the Cuatro Naciones, but when I got there the Intendente asked me how long I proposed staying.

* At both cathedrals it was said that the church treasures were respected by the French. The terms on which Zaragoza surrendered are known, and, too clearly, made no reservation of property. The Duchess of Abrantes complains (*Mémoires*, vol. xii. pp. 213-222) that all the treasures of the Pilar were appropriated by Lannes, after the manner of the lion who went hunting with the Junots and Mortiers of his forest, while the poor Duke of Abrantes carried off nothing but an inventory of the jewels, which, with a sublime indignation, she puts in print. See also the Narrative of the Second Siege, by Don P. M. Ric (Translation: London, 1809), p. 33. It does not seem to me unquestionable, on the various testimonies, that the whole jewellery even of the Pilar was taken; whether one church or both preserved some portion, whether the present exhibition consists wholly or in part of new acquisitions, or whether there be any other explanation, it is too late for me to inquire.

The Seu has some Zurbarans, in the Sala Capitular. A John the Baptist seemed to me a fine picture.

I said, two or three days : he answered, " We are going away to-morrow, because the house is tumbling down, but our other house is ready ; and if you like to take a room here to-night and move with us to-morrow, we shall be happy to receive you." But the place he showed me looked so forlorn that I declined ; for a pleasant room I might have risked a crash.

NOTE.

Among the travellers who bear witness to the ancient splendour of the Pilar church is the Cardinal De Retz. He was there in 1654, and the story of his visit has a touch of the racy eccentricity which characterizes so many of his adventures. In his day none but the priests were admitted within the balustrade which fenced the Pilar, except sovereign princes and cardinals. De Retz had access of course, but he was travelling under the name of the Marquis de St. Florent ; and when the sacred precinct was opened to a gentleman in a cravat and a black velvet juste-au-corps, all the town, which had assembled to see the ceremony, imagined that the favoured stranger must be the King of England (Charles II.). " Il y avoit, je crois, plus de deux cents carrosses de dames, qui me firent cent et cent galanteries, auxquelles je ne répondis que comme un homme qui ne parloit pas trop bien Espagnol."—Mémoires, liv. iv. ; vol. xlvi. p. 281, of Petitot's ' Collection of French Memoirs.'

LETTER XXIII.

Zaragoza — Ruins of Sta. Engracia — New walks — The Coso — Scenes of the two sieges — The town and country people — Costume — Walks under the town walls — The streets and houses — Cathedral of the Seu — The leaning tower — Application for the key — A Mayor's siesta — View from the tower — Night journey to Huesca — Scenery of the town and suburbs — Salto de Roldan — Churches and La Campana — An Aragonese gentleman — Departure for Jaca — Mountain venta.

Huesca, Fonda del Turco, June 30th.

I ARRIVED at this old-world town at eight o'clock this morning per diligence, and have been taking my cigarillo with Mr. de Gayangos's friend, Don Manuel de Miranda, and talking over my plans of progress. He seems an excellent person, and, besides devoting the day to me (with the exceptions a Spaniard always makes of the hot hours), he offers me anything I can want, even money if I had occasion for it, con toda franqueza (with all frankness).

I had intended riding to Jaca to-morrow, but it is a very long journey; one should start, it seems, at three in the morning; and he recommends dividing it and taking a few additional hours here to-morrow.

Liking my adviser, and having been up all last night, I am inclined to listen, so Spanish am I grown on the subject of *después* and *mañana* ("by-and-bye and to-morrow" *); besides, I rather fancy my present quarters, though they are of the most primitive. My diligence journey was a very rough one, the roads almost as bad as the best by-roads in Andalusia; some parts quite dangerous for a carriage.

I have left little to be said about Zaragoza, for there are not many details that can be given of it with advantage: the general impression is what you study and enjoy. We entered it by the ruin of the Convent of Santa Engracia, consisting now of little more than the highly enriched stone portal, where the religious carved imagery stands peaceful and perfect, after surviving all the fury and horror that raged round it in 1809; for it was here that, by battering and mining, the French fairly forced their way into the town: they then worked up, from one small street to another, house by house, till they got to the *Coso*, or *Corso*, the main street. But the very destruction which took place then has rubbed out the recollections of the siege, for all these streets and houses were demolished, and there is now a wide

* The unctious with which a Spaniard says "*Mañana por la mañana*" (to-morrow in good time) is irresistible when your own inclination is for resting to-day.

boulevard-walk in their place, with trees, and large new houses built and building : and this is the favourite evening promenade on a holiday and Sunday.

When you get to the Coso, which is a good handsome street, thirty-eight short paces wide in the broadest part, twenty-one in the narrower, you are, as I mentioned before, in the scene of the great street conflict, where the French ranged themselves on one side and the people on the other, pushing across, as occasion offered, to skirmish, to remove dead bodies which made the air intolerable, or to capture a gun from the enemy. My hotel was at the corner of this street and of the Santa Engracia walk. The streets, on the two days of holiday when I was there, were full of a population who seemed just fit to fly to the same work again ; idle, hardy looking fellows, with strong active frames and little or no intellectual expression. The well-dressed Aragonese peasant is as picturesque as the Andalusian, and there is about him sometimes that startling revival of the Roman, in costume and figure, which I noticed last year in some of the Moors at Tangier, but in a slighter degree and without any air of a statue. The man wears a showy fillet (a handkerchief knotted into that form) about his brows, is in his shirt-sleeves, has a coloured sash, perhaps a coat slung upon his shoulder, knee breeches or white drawers, leggings which come down only to the ankle, a sandal just

covering the toe, with garterings of black on the bare foot and leg from the toe to the ankle; making such a sandal as I have seen Kemble wear in Roman parts, and often showing very fine sinewy limbs. And if, with such a dress, he wears, descending from his shoulders nearly to the ground on one side, one of the dun mantles of the country with broad black or blue bars, and has, moreover, a face as dark as that of the tawniest Moor, though with no African character, you have a figure which a person of taste will certainly look at twice. I saw these men trooping about together in crowds and files, sometimes following some paltry tambourine or guitar,* and I hoped they had more to do on workdays, but I am told work is not plentiful, and they say there is very little more commerce in the town than depends upon the traffic with passing strangers and some intercourse with Barcelona.† The women, though with pretty

* In some hovels adjoining a great open space near the Pilar Cathedral I observed people dancing jotas to the voice.

† There is a gay appearance of traffic, though of an humble kind, in the Plateria, a very long, narrow street, full, on each side, of silversmiths' shops, all making profuse display of large, antique-patterned ear-rings, and models of the sacred image of the Pillar, upon many different scales, to suit the various means of votaries.

features, are much less picturesque, and I miss all through the north the graceful Andalusian custom of decking the hair with flowers. It is neatly clubbed behind, and some, but not as far south as Zaragoza, wear it in tails: these, I believe, are the Basques.

I walked at two different times nearly round the town, under the walls, and saw the places which were remarkable posts during the siege; and followed, some way (but it was not very pleasant in sultry weather), the paltry little river Huerba, fringed here and there with poplars and with olive-trees, which was for some time a line of separation between the besieged and the enemy. Loopholed walls occasionally remind you of war, otherwise the scenery is now tranquil enough and pretty in places. The streets are singular. The ancient taste in houses has been massive and magnificent. You see vast numbers (compared with the size of the place) of great square buildings with heavy pent-house roofs, the pent-houses richly carved underneath; the house itself, perhaps, showing a great deal of architectural decoration: looking in at the great gates, you find, appropriated perhaps to some mean use, a handsome court-yard with palace-like staircases, and beautiful mouldings in the heavy rich Renaissance style. These things often appear in narrow lanes, where a man might give a light to his neighbour's cigar across the way. You wonder what obscure princes lived in such houses. It was one of

the difficulties of the French that these places, so solid and so roomy inside, were so easily turned into a succession of citadels. Again, you spy here and there narrow abysses of lanes of a meaner kind, closer almost than the Edinburgh wynds, running up as if into the bowels of the town: looking at these, you would say you were in a city of rats. Here and there the *reja* is seen, but I have hardly observed this ornament or safeguard in all my present journey.

This is my siesta; now I am going to dine, and then to walk with Don Manuel. Huesca is as full of wandering groups, in comparison to the size, as Zaragoza; but in both places this is accounted for in some degree by the harvest-time, which brings men from great distances to seek field-work: and I attribute to this some varieties of costume which have rather puzzled me.*

July 1st.

My first day's ride from Huesca sets me down at a *venta*, a large, lone stone house on a moor, under a rough ridge of mountains, but with a pleasant country in view. It is so cool an evening that I have been very willing to sit by the wood fire on a great hearth-

* Besides this, it was the season of the *Quinta* (drawing for the conscription).

stone in the kitchen, and watch my chocolate boiling, while my guide stretched his great limbs and sandalled feet on the bench opposite, as fond of the fire as myself. We are to sally out again at three in the morning. The beds are extraordinary : masses of bedding in recesses something like berths in a cabin, but not one above another. They are sweet and seem clean. I have my choice, for nobody else is here. The people of the house are a brother and two sisters, peasant-looking people, but intelligent and able to understand a map. I see a guitar ; several cats bask at the fire, a bad omen for the beds ; and what is very ghastly and wizard-like, they are all without tails.* I have declined having a fowl killed, and am waiting for an egg supper.

I had nearly done with Zaragoza. I called on the Canon C——, and he received me very graciously, and appointed me to meet him in the sacristy of the Seu cathedral the next morning. I did so ; but, as it was a great feast (St. Peter's), when he would have to be on grand duty, he put me in the hands of some officials, who were properly attentive. The old cathedral, the Seu, is a very fine thing, though much spoiled ; the architecture of a sombre ancient Gothic, very lofty and very massive, and with no light

* Born so, I was told ; but cats and dogs meet with some foul play in Spain.

except from a few circular windows just under the ceilings, and from a lantern above the altar ; no arched side windows or rose lights : so dark, stern, and sepulchral it is that, when you come into it from the blaze of a Spanish morning sun, you at first perceive hardly anything but a gloom ; the grand outlines dawn upon you by degrees. Afterwards you observe that all the lower parts of the building are overlaid, to a degree quite wonderful, as the work of industry and prodigality, with decoration as thick as that which you see on Dresden china, and in a style comparatively as minute. There is a great deal in the several chapels that is worth seeing, but I could not go over it in detail.

You may remember in prints the leaning tower of Zaragoza, the Torre Nueva, one of the highest buildings in the place,* but a mere tube of masonry with a staircase and clock. It is of brick, rather handsomely flourished on the outside, and stands in a small plaza ; its singularity is that it has swerved nine feet from the perpendicular. The brickwork has several ghastly-looking cracks, but I do not know that they have anything to do with the leaning. But for my appointment with the Canon, I should have gone up on Monday morning ; unluckily I did not, and

* 312 Spanish feet in height, according to the topographical Dictionary of Madoz, Art. Zaragoza. The English foot is 13 Spanish inches. Ford, Part i. p. 71.

great was my plague in consequence. The key was to be had from the mayor in person. I thought it judicious to reserve the adventure till the midday heat was past, and went about four. The mayor is a Catalonian cloth-merchant, living in one of the old decorated houses, in a good narrow part of the town, a sort of Mark Lane. I went with my attendant from the hotel; and upon our ringing a blue policeman came to the door, which opened immediately into his worship's apartments. He told us in a whisper, and seemingly with trepidation, that the mayor was asleep still, and could not be disturbed. We were advised to return at five, the very hour of my table-d'hôte. Nothing could induce the man to see a possibility of doing anything for me. The stupid fellow would not even take the hint of a bribe: he was evidently terrified to his policeman's heart's core at the image of a sleeping mayor of Zaragoza. We went away, and returned at five, and then we had still, for a long time, not to faire antichambre even, but to sit on a bench in the open arched corredór of the first floor; where, however the decorations were worth looking at. It was rumoured that the mayor was awake: what he was about was a mystery: a second policeman was now in waiting to receive orders. Our first stupid friend presently came out with some recommendation about returning at eight. All this time I was famishing, not, like Ugolino, because I could not get out of a "hor-

rible tower," but because I could not get into one. I then insisted upon sending in a card and a message; but at this moment the potentate made his appearance, dressed, and smart, and going out. We stopped him, and our business was at once done.*

The tower, though high, is very easy to ascend; and the view from the top over the Ebro and the distant hills and neighbouring fields and olive-woods, the tile-roofed city, and the suburbs so gloriously fought for, is very interesting. You see to great advantage that important position in the two sieges, the Torrero hill, a little way out of town. The leaning of the tower does not strike you much as you look down, but the pigeons hovering about it half-way up gave me a strong impression of its great height.†

* The great man fixed an inquisitorial eye upon me, and then conceded the key to the livelier of the two policemen, who attended me very obligingly, and, when I offered him his fee, hesitated unaffectedly about taking it.

† Johnson, in his criticisms upon Shakspeare's description of Dover Cliff (Boswell, vol. iii. p. 88, ed. 1835 : Note on King Lear, act iv. scene 6), blames the introduction of "crows and choughs that wing the midway air," because it "peoples the desert of intermediate vacuity, and stops the mind in the rapidity of its descent through emptiness and horror:" "it should be all precipice—all vacuum:" "the crows impede your fall." On such a point the senses are the best critics,

At ten that night I got into the berlina of the diligence for Huesca : companions, a young slight man, condition unknown, and a niño of ten or eleven, travelling by himself, who was not very troublesome. As we passed over the long bridge of the Ebro, the cupolas of the Pilar cathedral, showing dark against the moonlight, were very grand and oriental. We entered upon a kind of heath country, where the night air was scented with thyme ; and, I believe towards two in the morning, we approached a wide water, the Gállego river, without any bridge. The passengers alighted, and, with due deliberation, a vast ferry-boat or stage was moved across to us, large enough to take the diligence and half a score of mules. I asked the mayoral what time it was : he shrugged his shoulders and did not know : how different from an English coachman or guard, whose watch would have been an oracle ! It was in very proper time, however, that we caught the

and every one, I suppose, has experienced that the disposition of the brain to whirl and the heart to sink, when he looked from a precipitous height, has increased, not lessened, if a bird has sailed out from one of its hollows and skimmed between the summit and the base. Mere vacuity is not that which most impresses : to make the void felt, it should be slightly broken ; a solemn stillness by a faint momentary sound ; an expanse of desert by a remote diminished figure ; a shoreless sea by a sail in the far distance.

first sight of Huesca ; its cathedral on an eminence, and the town gathered round its feet ; the prospect backed by a ridge of bold, stony mountains with some very romantic outlines. Before we gained this view we had joined a new road which they are making, with an electric telegraph, from Zaragoza. The old road near Huesca was, as I have said, frightfully bad ; there were cracks and deep gullies, which in the dark must be seriously dangerous. We arrived about eight.

I went to an hotel which had been recommended to me, called El Turco, kept by a Frenchman, who boasted of having held an under place in the kitchen of the Duke of — (I do not remember the name), but said that he forgot all his cookery in Spain. He was rather satisfactory nevertheless.* Huesca is a very primitive town even for this country ; there is a bleak, blank, backyard look about the staring whitewashed houses, with their fluttering curtains, which it is impossible to describe. In places it reminded me a little of Tangier ; and the Moors did occupy it a very long time. It has, like Zaragoza, its Coso, a main street, but formerly the walk on the outside of the town walls ; one or two of the towers of the walls, and an antique gate opening from the Coso inwards, are still preserved. When you catch any of the more prominent parts of

* And the Turco generally commendable, for a small provincial inn.

the town in connexion with the neighbouring scenery of the alameda,* river, and romantic mountains beyond, the effects are admirably picturesque. One part of the opposite ridge of mountains makes a chasm about a furlong wide, guarded by a turret-like rock on each side; it is called the Salto de Roldan, from a tradition that the Paladin Orlando once leaped his horse across it.

I shall not have time to tell you much of the lions I saw under the guidance of Don Manuel. The first was a very antique church indeed, San Pedro, with a curious little tottering cloister, in which are some capitals of columns, with figures, apparently of the earliest Christian times. I should mention that we were joined, soon after we began our rounds, by a gentleman to whom I was kindly introduced by letter from a casual neighbour at the Zaragoza table-d'hôte, and he and I went up the cathedral tower together.† He is a

* The alameda is more rural and less trim than such places usually are; it is shaded by elms, and skirts (on the outside) a part of the antique town wall.

† We enjoyed the fine view from this eminence, while our good friend, Don M., who was not light of foot, rested below. But I was less interested by the prospect over the mountains, the well-cultivated plain, and its little rivers, than by the simple manners and conversation of the man in charge of the belfry, who beguiled his lonesome hours on the second floor with a cage of small birds. The birds had a little carrillon of their own to entertain them, but were sometimes indulged

Latin professor in the University of Huesca, and in consequence we spent some time in looking over the lecture-rooms, halls, and museum of Natural History. The University has four hundred students. The buildings are modern, and seemingly convenient, but not very remarkable. The next day I went with Don M. into the cathedral, and saw several notable things; one picture which I thought good; but the boast of the place is the stone retablo or carved altar-piece, reaching high up the church, and crowded with delicately executed figures. We went also to the church of St. Lawrence, where everything about the gridiron is multiplied and magnified so that the dullest capacity cannot be at a loss about it; and to St. Dominic, chiefly remarkable, to my mind, for a striking coloured effigy of our Saviour bearing his cross, which is carried about the streets on Good Friday. Don Manuel continued his kindness to me till the last, and sat waiting in my balcony for more than an hour on my going, to help me in my bargain with a man who was to find me horses for Jaca. He is, I suppose, a true old-fashioned Spaniard; for he says he has never been away from Huesca in his life, except twice to

with liberty, and flew up among the great bells of the church; and they were punctual in returning.

We duly visited the vault of the Campana de Huesca, but it is no otherwise remarkable than for the legend which is associated with it; and this appears not to be undisputed.—Handbook of Spain, part ii. p. 937.

Madrid, once to Barcelona, and now and then to one of the Aragon towns.*

Jaca, July 2nd.

I left Huesca not on horse but on mule back, with a mounted follower taking care of my luggage, about half-past one yesterday, and had a pleasant ride enough

* The persevering kindness and delicately cordial manners of this excellent Aragonese gentleman were such as I have seldom seen equalled, even in our own country, and I have many times thought with pain that my acquaintance with Don Manuel is not likely to be renewed in this world.

As we strolled about Huesca in the evening, two or three gentlemen of the place fell into committee with us (as the manner is in country towns) upon my plans for the next few days. The tones of civilized conversation, and its subject, the pleasure arrangements of a tourist, contrasted strangely with the African-looking street and the wildly-vestured groups that loitered through it. It was not very easy to find a guide and animals for my journey. The person most recommended (but he was engaged) was a man occupying a cottage and garden at the end of the town. In our parley with his wife, a smart, intelligent little woman, I met with a complete Spanish rendering of Wordsworth's 'We are seven.' Don Manuel asked how many children she had. "Why," she said, counting on her fingers: "one at —, another at —, one at home, y dos en el cielo" (and two in heaven), "make five."

over the fine plains called the Hoya de Huesca, a sort of little Vega, very well gardened for this country, and bounded on one side by the line of wild mountain which I have said so much of, the Sierra de Marcuella. The plain is crossed, in places, like all the plain country I have seen in Aragon, by high, straight barriers of sand-hill, looking like artificial bulwarks, or like the mounds in which the remains of Nineveh have been found. The ill-omened mount Moncayo was in the distance; and the chill wind that blew in the evening was one he might glory in. I found the Venta de Benito very tolerable for such a place, and my bed neat and clean, though the pulga family had a scattering of representatives in it. One of the women, a sensible well-spoken girl, told me that the place is kept by the three young people I mentioned; the father and mother live in a village a mile or two off and keep a school; the brother, besides venta-keeping, is secretary to the Ayuntamiento there; the younger family live at this bleak place all the year round, and the pack-horse and other horse and mule traffic never leaves them unoccupied for a day.*

* The brother joined with his other employments the cultivation of a little land round the venta.

LETTER XXIV.

Journey from Huesca to Jaca — Oroel mountain — City of Jaca — Posada del Catalan — Journey to San Juan de la Peña — Scenery — The modern convent — Voto the hermit — The ancient cloister — Chapel of the hermitage — Pantheon of the Kings — Jaca canons — Santa Cruz — A Cura's house and housekeeper — Chronicles of San Juan de la Peña — Spanish manners and language.

Pau, July 5th, Hôtel de France.

UNLESS you could have battled through Spain within five or six days from Zaragoza to the Pass of Jaca and out of it, including a trip to San Juan de la Peña, you could hardly imagine the heavenly feeling of repose with which I sat down to-day at this beautiful and comfortable place, to rest after a really hard week. I have here one of the finest views of the Pyrenees in Pau; this evening, after a slight summer storm, the moon is shining upon it; and in another direction I see, through the trees, the walk of the Place Henri IV., and the lights of a gay café on the other side. Now for rougher matters.

I left off at the solitary venta between Huesca and Jaca. The journey was about six leagues, and pleasant enough, over the great plain, farmer's country of

the Hoya, bordered by the rugged Sierra de Marcuello, which always produced something of interest. On one of the horizontal bars of sandstone mountain which I mentioned before we passed a curious old town or village, Gallur, formerly Moorish, dovetailed between two yellowish headlands of the hill, and itself nearly of their colour. An old watchtower near is still called by the Moorish name Atalaya. In ascending to the moor of Sarsa, where I slept, we saw in the valley to the left Ayerbe on the main road from Zaragoza, which our bye-road finally dropped into. It appeared to me that it would have been an easier and almost as speedy a route, though longer and probably not so interesting, to keep the lower road from Huesca to Ayerbe. Of the night at the Venta Benito I have said enough. The mule-travelling was not very comfortable. My man "made me up" well enough with the manta and alforjas and a cushion beneath, which was the only piece of talent he showed; he was a good-natured willing fellow, but a boor and not at all bright. My mule had a tiresome trick of not keeping up with the other, so that I was constantly obliged to fetch up with a little trot, and nearly dislocate my shoulder with beating the animal. There was a high wind all Wednesday night. We began our journey again at four on Thursday morning. My guide had stipulated for three, but in Spain threatened folks lie in bed long. We had to finish the mountain

ascent which was interrupted by our stop at the venta. The wind was bitter, and in my comparatively light clothing I felt very naked, but the worst was over before I had time to resolve upon unstrapping the manta. The view of plain and mountain from the top of the pass was very fine. The heights near us were crowned with the remains of an old tower, "Obra de los Moros," as usual. We entered upon a glen which took us downward again in a new direction, and here the great Pyrenees themselves opened upon us: bleak ghastly hills of wild outline, not candied over at the top with pure white like the greater Alps, but slobbered with snow: the expression is vulgar, but precise.* We were descending into the valley of the Gállego river, by a steep staircase of loose stone and rock: around us were wild hills and woods, in which my guide said there were bears, and that they sometimes did a good deal of mischief among the cattle.† I was not so far favoured as to see one. I breakfasted ‡ at another venta

* Horace (Sat., lib. ii., Sat. 5, v. 41) immortalizes an older writer, one Furius, for using a phrase something like it:

"Jupiter hybernas canâ nive conspuit Alpes."

† A guide who attended me on the French side of the Pyrenees told me that the bears of these mountains do not attack men, unless under extraordinary provocation or necessity. "C'est un animal raisonnable," he said.

‡ Between eight and nine, at the venta of Auzánigo.

(but the Benitos gave me chocolate before our setting out), and was attended by a mother and daughter, both of whom, if they could have been produced at a London party as foreign ladies, and had not had to speak, or do anything trying, might have passed for distinguished-looking people. We joined the Zaragoza high road by the side of the green river Gállego, and had then good riding. In the latter part of the morning we rounded the great promontory of Oroel, one of the finest mountains, of the class which does not retain snow, that I have ever seen. It stands proudly detached from the range of which it forms part; and if you see it foreshortened and against the light, looks like a little Peak of Teneriffe: if you catch it sideways, it seems formed of layer upon layer of gigantic masonry, as if it were a remnant of one of the ruder Indian pagodas, but on an immense scale. Lastly, we came upon a full view of the green vale in which Jaca stands, bounded on the farther side by the great barrier of Pyrenees, which, however, is cloven by a deep gorge on the mountain side beyond the city, the pass of Jaca. This is said to be the most practicable pass of all the Pyrenees till you come to the sea-coast, and is open all the winter. Jaca is placed right opposite to it, like a cat to watch a mouse-hole: and an odd, primitive little place it is: more of a toy city than Pamplona, though not so pretty. It stands quite level on the flat, like something upon a waiter: the little

quadrangle of its grey walls is not broken by anything, nor has anything grown up beyond them ; the place is quite self-contained : its houses, and its squat little ancient cathedral, all comfortably tucked in, and its prim lines of poplars parallel with the walls on the outside, seeming to bear witness that nothing ever takes liberties with the perpendicular.

We arrived at Jaca about four o'clock, and then I had to find out two gentlemen of the place, to whom I had letters, to help me about my visit to the Convent of San Juan de la Peña. One of them promised me an introduction, which, however, did not come : the other, a Canon Ena, received me in a very kind and gentlemanly manner, and wrote me word at night that a party of the Jaca canons were going (but not he himself) to San Juan the next morning ; he had mentioned me to them, and I might perhaps join them. In case they should not go, he gave me a line to the cura parroco (curate according to our old use of the word)* of Santa Cruz, who could give me access to the convent and would do all that might be needful. I had no means of knowing when their reverences the canons would set out, and could only send back word that I was going at six.

Jaca is a poor forlorn place : its chief signs of life

* The person having the cure of souls, as the word implies in our Common Prayer-book. Fletcher's "Spanish Curate" was the vicar of his parish.

seemed to me to be the garrison, and the coming and going of diligences. The people, though not bad souls I dare say, have less of the instinct of courtesy than any I ever met with, at least inhabiting a town or village. My posada (del Catalan), the best in the place, was singularly uncomfortable in this way. You were provided for, if you took things in their fashion, but nobody asked what you wished, or said you should have it; sometimes they said you could not. There were two or three sharp little girls, from twelve to fourteen years old, who ran about the house, and should have been useful, but came up to stare at you and be amused with anything strange in your appearance, laughed at your mistakes, and, when you inquired for anything, looked at you as one does at a dog begging: all very well perhaps, if with this you got goodnatured attention; not so well otherwise. The woman of the house was a smart body, but always very busy about everything but what you wanted. The only bedroom I could get was a place opening out of a hall which was common to other bedrooms and without any door or partition from the hall but a slight curtain at the bed's foot. It was only by express request that I got a basin and towel put into one corner of the common apartment. I sat down to a bad table-d'hôte dinner with some diligence travellers disappointed of a passage to one of the watering-places some leagues onward. At dessert, by way of a confection, they gave us what

was meant to be buttered toast: strips of bread slightly branded with the fire, and rank Spanish butter, disguised, as they hoped, by strewing sugar over it.

The few notable things in Jaca were soon seen. There is some curious and very ancient carved stonework about the cathedral;* and in the streets some remains of handsome private buildings in the Zaragoza style.†

About six on Thursday I set out for San Juan, with my man and his mules. My keeping him on was partly from indulgence, a great deal more from indolence, and because I did not like to face the loud impudent extortion of the hangers-on at the posada: with my own man I knew my bargain, and it was moderate. Prudently as it turned out, I carried some cold cutlets, bread, and hard eggs with me. The journey to San Juan takes about four hours.

My intention was to breakfast at Santa Cruz on the way out, and scale the Peña (cliff) afterwards. We first went two or three miles down the pleasant open valley of Jaca by the side of its little river, and we then turned into a mountainous glen on the left, in the

* Some capitals of pillars in the porch are enriched with groups of figures extremely quaint, and seemingly of the most venerable antiquity.

† If you pass out at one of the town gates, which are soon reached, you are at once in a solitude of green fields and hills.

mouth of which was a little old tower just like one of the peel-houses on the Scottish border. A great deal of box grew in the valley, indeed it is common over all these districts ; and it gave one a home feeling to see the lane, if it may be called so, in which we travelled, bordered with hedgerows : fields of corn and of hay were on the other sides. Some grand limestone cliffs appeared before us, and for a short way the road near them lay through a second glen, not unlike some of those in what are, or were, called the Wilds of Monmouthshire. By-and-bye a new valley scene opened. It was bounded on the farther side from us by enormous reddish-coloured cliffs, or rather faces of a mountain, moulded into huge reddish peaks and rounded buttresses, which, after a while, were lost in wood, but evidently to reappear at some distance. Our road now mounted rapidly. As we went on I had found reason to suspect, from his frequent inquiries, that my guide did not know much about the way ; and I now perceived that he had got some direction which led us to San Juan indeed, but quite away from Santa Cruz, for I now, about half-past nine, saw that longed-for place lying far below us in the bottom. There was no help, so on we went, right up the mountain, mastering a very precipitous ascent by rugged zigzag paths, under a sun which was now scorching.

The upper part of the mountain into which we thus wiggled ourselves took the form of a vast deep-red

alcove, crowded with wood and echoing to the songs of birds. Pine-trees crowned the higher parts, and in places grew out of the front of the cliff, as if rooted in the stone, shooting perpendicularly up the face of the rock. The valley we had left was now a deep distant gulf: on the other side of it a line of hill, arid-looking though not uncultivated, and behind this the high Pyrenees and their snow, and the towering Oroel.

The road presently turned aside, coasting the front of our mountain, and directing itself towards another huge recess like the one we were leaving. We now moved on a comparative level, on a well-kept ride, five or six feet in breadth, among fine trees: it reminded me of some close ride through a domain in England, and my mind was running upon Bowood and Stourhead, when we emerged into open space, and I found myself in what at the first glance might have passed for a complete English park. I had not anticipated it, and have seldom been more taken by surprise. There was the modern Convent of San Juan, a reddish-coloured building, surrounded by outer walls, enormously large, but without any architectural beauty or curiosity: a wide cleared (at least clear) space round it, in front a spacious down, such as we see in our parks, clothed with good green turf: adjoining this, a handsome wood of firs, and on the other side a moorland height towering up green to the top, but wild,

and scattered over with pines, not unlike some of the park scenery in the West Riding of Yorkshire: near the convent a good sprinkling of pines, larches, and hollies.

We arrived at the convent gate about half-past ten, and my guide turned his mules out to roll themselves in the grass. Some snug-looking nags appeared near the door, and I found that the Canon party had arrived some time, and were gone with the cura to the older convent some distance away, and were shortly expected back. The modern convent is one of those now suppressed, but is taken care of, and on this day several people were there in a large hall, making kitchen preparations for the reverend visitors. What the ordinary establishment of the place is, I could not quite understand. "Since there is nothing to be done now," I thought, "I will sit down and get my own breakfast, and see the place as I can by-and-bye." But, just then, a man who seemed to be the principal servant came to me and said that there was a horse that I might use, and he would go with me to the place where the cura was. This was reasonable, though hard upon a famished traveller; so I bolted a hard egg with the desperation of a man committing suicide, and mounted the pony. As I went the canons were returning: they seemed to know about me, but referred me to the cura Don Tomas Garcia, and I found him quite ready to attend me. He was an honest, middle-aged, parsonic-looking man, very

quick and intelligent, and did the honours most patiently and kindly; a great politeness, since he had gone through the whole thing on this hot morning already.

The ancient convent was under the second recess of mountain, which you approach from the one I described before; a grand pile of dull red rock and cliff, beetling over the woods, and favourable to secrecy and to solemnity. As you look at it from the valley, mountain and wood seem to fold within and within each other, as if cherishing and hiding something in their arms. Here it is said the Aragonese took refuge when their city of Pano was destroyed by the Moors about the year 760.* The convent was founded in consequence of a miracle. From the park in which the modern convent stands you descend by shelving ground, wood, and shrubbery, to the edge of a huge precipice, unsafe even now to careless people: the cura warned me from it rather anxiously when we were above. A hunter named Voto (who he was I do not know, but he dressed very gaily according to the modern picture of the miracle), following a stag, rode to the brink of this abyss: the stag went over and was killed; the hunter would have met the same fate, but, invoking San Juan (Saint John the Baptist), he found the horse become fixed with his forefeet in the air over the edge of the precipice; horse and man, according to the picture, looking like one of

* Handbook of Spain, part ii. p. 929.

our equestrian statues, as unconcerned and as unlikely ever to move. Presently he made his way by safe means to the bottom of the precipice, and there he found the remains of a hermit named Juan, who had founded in this place a chapel to the Baptist. Voto thereupon turned hermit himself, and the convent was founded in honour of the event. Many miracles are said to have been done at the hermitage. The old convent was destroyed many years ago, but a copy of it stands in the place, and some vestiges of the ancient building. It seems to have been reared flat against the cliff, like something pasted to a wall, as I have seen another very ancient convent at Salzburg.*

The building itself is not curious, except as one may suppose it a fac-simile. But the remains of the cloister are a scene for which I would willingly undergo all the toil of such a journey again; it quite transported me. Two sides are tolerably entire: lines of little, low, very antique arches with columns in the oldest style of Christian architecture; the capitals representing scenes

* Martinez, the historian of the convent (see note at the end of this letter, p. 371) says (p. 75) that, as you look towards the rock, "Se descubre todo el edificio de la casa, en medio de su cueva, como pintada en la misma pared." "All the convent building discovers itself, in the midst of its recess in the rock, as if actually painted against a wall." He is eloquent in praise of the park scenery above; p. 78.

from the New Testament: Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, and others: perfect, generally, as if finished yesterday, but so very old and quaint in the design, that you seem to be disinterring some unknown people. Where the cloister was quite gone, there has, judiciously, been no attempt to restore, but the quadrangle merely completed with shapeless columns. Adjoining this, at the entrance of a small chapel,* is a Gothic arch of very late date, in the richest style, and very perfect and beautiful: how it has escaped destruction I do not know. The cloister is not closed above, but an immense protuberance of the mountain, a mass which it would be ridiculous to estimate by tons, of a sombre red,† projects over and canopies it, so that you barely see a small strip of the bright blue sky. The softened light, softened by such an awful shadow, the fresh cool air, the verdure, the solitude and stillness, and the presence of those venerable images in the stone, make together a scene perfectly enchanting, and carry you far out of the life and thoughts of the day. The chapel supposed to have been built over the old hermit's cell stands near, and you see there a modern picture of the miracle, not badly done: and there is also, under the huge mountain canopy, a chapel called the Pantheon, erected by King Charles III. in honour of the kings of

* Dedicated to St. Victorian.

† The material of the rock was described to me as "almendron."

Navarre and Aragon down to the time when their kingdoms merged in the crown of Spain. Their names are inscribed on tablets of metal in the chapel; their remains lay here, and, the cura said, are here still. Ford says the French dispersed them.* The Pantheon is pretty enough, but perhaps the scene would be better without it.

Returning from these places, where I would willingly have spent hours, I found the canons lounging over the new, but now dismantled convent and its large church, both quite uninteresting. They were a party of seven or eight, besides the cura. They asked me a world of questions; among others if I were Catholic or Protestant: one who could speak French, and so got forward in talk better than the rest, showed off. One asked if I understood Latin, but, on my saying I did, he rested satisfied. Right glad was I to be released to my cold pocket breakfast. The gentlemen themselves soon afterwards came to their dinner, which they had sent up from Jaca. How little sometimes ceremonial forms have to do with a real sentiment! Had I come in when these gentlemen were eating, they would have thought it disgraceful not to say formally, "Will you take some?"; yet, although I was in a manner introduced to them, and they passed to their dinner-room through

* I think it probable that they did not meddle with the old convent buildings. See p. 374.

the stone hall where I was tugging at my cold cutlet with my pocket-knife, on a piece of paper for want of a plate (all the utensils of the place were required for the dinner), not one thought it necessary to say, "Will not you take something with us?" (The cura, I suppose, was himself only a guest.)

I returned by a road less steep than that of the morning to Santa Cruz, where there is an old church, handsome and curious. The place itself is very picturesquely situated in front of the Peña mountain, from which I had descended. The cura told me, if I had any difficulty about the key, to inquire at his house for the Ama Nicolasa: and so I did. The Ama is the Cura's housekeeper: * no scandal; she was of a safe age, though a dapper little body, and of most discreet behaviour. She took all manner of pains to do the honours of the church, and positively declined receiving any fee. By-the-bye, I have had more money refused in Spain than in any country I have ever visited. Not only did she do this, but she pressed me to go to the house and rest, and take some chocolate, and did it so much in earnest that I accepted. She set me down in the cura's state room, which had some good reverend-looking furniture in it, fit enough for a parsonage in England, only that his bed appeared as part of it. By a glimpse into an inner room, I could

* The person so often mentioned in our translations of Don Quixote as the housekeeper was his "Ama."

see that he had some well-looking shelves of books : the Ama said they were religious. She brought me my chocolate very speedily, and scalding hot, and, when I asked for the usual concluding glass of water, wanted to sugar it.* I suppose I was the more sensible of this good creature's kindness from feeling a little sore at what seemed to me (though wrongly perhaps) the coolness of her betters : but I could not help giving her a good shake of the hand in going away, and upon some little farther talk she repeated the English ceremony, and we parted with hearty "con Dios"es on both sides.

I returned to Jaca in a beautiful evening ; Oroel looking grandly in the declining light. From weakness of character I again agreed to go on with my muleteer, though my liking did not increase either for him or his mule. But it was only one day more.

NOTES.

I have dipped into the *Chronicles* Martinez and Abarca (cited by Ford), who treat largely of the convent of San Juan de la Peña and its connection with Spanish history during successive centuries. Martinez was abbot

* With an azucarillo, a kind of sugar wafer ; the usual finale to a dish of chocolate taken with proper attention to luxury.

of San Juan, and his History of the Convent, a folio volume of 863 pages, was published at Zaragoza in 1620. Abarca, a Jesuit, published his Annals of the Kings of Aragon, in two quarto volumes, at Madrid and Salamanca in 1682 and 1684.

I collect from these works that in the eighth century a city, Panno or Pano, was built by a small number of fugitives after the Moorish conquest, on the elevated level ground above the site of the oldest convent, and where the modern one stands: that the Moors destroyed that settlement, and the place again became a solitude, but a hermit established himself under the cliff and built a chapel of St. John the Baptist, which was afterwards discovered by Voto.

Voto (or Oto) was a native of Zaragoza, then under Moorish dominion; a gentleman of good family, and a man of fashion (caballero cortesano), and greatly addicted to hunting the stag and wild boar. Whether by miracle or for want of other occupation, he found his way to the obscure recess under the Peña mountain, where the hermit had lived and died. The abbot Martinez cites (fol. 35), for the alleged miracle, a history of it by a monk named Macharius, who was almost a contemporary. In Abarca's work (vol. i. fol. 72) the origin of the convent is detailed at large from a history in Latin, said to have been written in the tenth century and preserved in the convent itself; and it is remarkable that in this narrative nothing is said of the miracle, but Voto's discovery is described as made by natural means. Its result, however, was that Voto and his brother made cells for themselves under the cliff and became recluses, and others followed their example. Sanctified by the residence of successive hermits, the retreat of La Peña

became the resort of many devout Christians ; and it was still more frequented when, about the end of the ninth century, a Moorish persecution drove numbers to seek in these wilds not only a scene of worship, but an asylum where they might dwell secretly and in safety, and concert the deliverance of their country. The church of St. John was built there (or rebuilt), and a religious community established, about the year 920. As times became more tranquil, the laity by degrees withdrew : the convent, under the shadow of its great rock, flourished in fame and endowments, and was the residence of bishops, the cemetery of kings, and the assembling-place of Spanish ecclesiastical councils.

Down to the seventeenth century the ancient fame of San Juan, and its stupendous natural feature, the overhanging canopy of mountain stone, made it awful in the eyes of the people. Abarca describes the house, with its sacristy and cloister, as "cubierta enteramente de la majestad y firmeza de su alto y pendiente peñasco ; que, como gigante de piedra, se sostiene asido, y continuado por los pies con las inmensas raizes del monte Pano : " "covered entirely by the majestic strength of its lofty and impending rock, which, like a giant of stone, bears itself up, grappling to the immense roots of Mount Pano, and blending itself with them as it stretches below." "Nothing sustains it," says Martinez, "but the power of God, working a continual miracle." Many people, as Abarca tells, dared not sleep there for the great stones that rolled from above ; but both writers affirm that the stones never hurt any human being. Martinez describes the columns and arches of the cloister as enriched with "muchas imagenes y molduras," many figures and mouldings. In the year 1675 the old con-

vent was ruined by a fire;* the archives were saved, and the bodies of the kings were unconsumed. By royal command, as Abarca states (fol. 75), a new building was to be erected in its stead on the level ground at the top of Mount Pano: "lo alto y llano del hermoso Pano."

During the invasion under Napoleon the ancient renown of San Juan, and its advantageous position, made it a favourite rendezvous of the guerillas. The Central Junta designated it to the people on the left of the Ebro as the sacred ground of Aragonese independence. In August, 1809, Suchet sent a detachment against it; the position was attacked on three sides, the garrison slain or captured, and every part of the convent which offered means of defence destroyed and burnt. Mémoires de Suchet, vol. i. p. 61, Paris, 1829. The present convent, vast in size, but mean in other respects, was, I presume, a restoration of that built on mount Pano after 1675, and ruined by the French.

It would be difficult to point out in Europe a more venerable Christian antiquity than the remnant of the old San Juan, or a consecrated place in which the religio loci is more deeply enforced by the majesty and luxuriance of nature. The pilgrimage to it, including two nights at Jaca, is troublesome, but richly worth the trouble. And travellers in Spain must remember that (to borrow the title of one of Lope's plays) "Nunca mucho cuesta poco;" you can never have a great deal for a little.

The instances I have given of uncouth rudeness in some of the lower inhabitants of Jaca are not mentioned

* The buildings had already suffered by fire in 1492. Martinez, p. 77.

as grounds for any inference as to the manners and education of the Spanish people generally, or throughout any province. I do not recollect to have found elsewhere, in the lower classes, ill-manners betokening both ignorance and want of good-nature. There is, however, in the character of Spaniards who have lived at home without any peculiar opportunities of coming in contact with foreigners, an insular freshness which in the vulgar is rude, though without the intention to offend (as when the people at an inn catechize you about your family, or the boys and girls of a village break into a clamour of surprise because your hat is the first of the kind they have seen), but, in the well-bred, is merely amusing, and sometimes gives an attractive originality to their address and conversation.

With the mingled simplicity and self-opinion which are frequent in the ordinary Spaniard, so far as I have seen him in his own country, is combined another characteristic surprising to an English traveller who arrives uninstructed in the national peculiarities; a plain independence of manner, which varies, in different ranks of life, from the bluff style of the "jolly miller" in our old song, to the unaffected though chastened frankness which is the charm of social life in the best classes everywhere. The address of a mere rustic will appear sometimes to breathe the "*Nos que valemos tanto como vos*" (we who are as good as you) with which the states of Aragon used to receive their sovereign. Salvandy (Don Alonso, vol. ii. p. 4.) describes the Spaniard of the lower order as "*conservant, en état de société, l'indépendance et la dignité personnelle de l'état sauvage; doué de vertus républicaines sous le joug du plus lourd despotisme; tenant à la liberté par son orgueil, au pouvoir absolu par sa paresse.*" A generation has passed

away since this picture was drawn, but those who converse with the people at this day will recognise its outlines. In the more cultivated class the features are softened, but a likeness may still be traced ; though it is well remarked of them by Bourgoing (*Espagne Moderne*, vol. ii. p. 291, 3rd ed., Paris, 1803), that, if they want that "urbanité" which a Frenchman requires as the mark of a perfectly refined education, "ils y suppléent par cette franchise peu maniérée, par cette bonhomie qui annonce la confiance et qui l'inspire." Kindred qualities, though in different degrees, pervade the upper and the lower ranks : as the one exhibit some touches of the popular stiffness and bluntness, the other, in their plain, sturdy fashion, disclose sometimes as true a generosity of spirit as could have been inspired by birth or formed by culture.

With the character thus described, haughty yet plain, distant yet frank, the genius of their language singularly coincides. No modern tongue, as far as I know, is more stately and sonorous, more round and flowing and fitted to roll in Ciceronian meanders : yet none is more homely and downright, or richer in phrases which have the simplicity and terseness of proverbs. In their drama the lyrical descants of Calderon are full of stars, and birds, and flowers, and the dialogue soars after the point of honour in flights little lower than "the pale-faced moon:" yet no writer since Sophocles has thrown more terrible meaning into a few simple words than is condensed in the last short speeches of *El Medico de su honra*. The most affecting turn of dialogue in the *Cid* of Corneille is where the lovers Rodrigue and Chimène are lamenting, but both acknowledging, the duty, which family honour imposes upon her, of pursuing her beloved to death for having slain her father ; and, after much

lofty phrase and many a fine-drawn sentiment, nature breaks in, and the unhappy pair exclaim, in the language of every-day life,—

“ Rodrigue, qui l'eut cru ?
 Chimène, qui l'eut dit ?
 Que notre heur fut si proche et si tôt se perdit ? ”

Act iii. sc. 4.

And this is an almost literal translation from the old Spanish Cid of Guillen De Castro.

“ Ay Rodrigo, quien pensara ?
 Ay Ximena, quien dixera ? ” &c.

In other passages the eloquent Frenchman paraphrases his simple predecessor, and exaggerates him as the madman in Don Quixoté inflated the dog. The succinctness and homely ease of the Spanish ballad style are despair to the multitude of translators; most are stiff; some have not scrupled to be heroic where the original was playful as childhood. In this spirit Southey (but he was then very young) translated, elegantly but untruly, the pretty Romance of George de Montemayor (“Cabellos, quanta mudanza,” &c.) on the false maiden who sat upon the river's bank with her lover, and inscribed a vow in the sand. Southey makes the damsel write

“ Death for Diana—not inconstancy ! ”

Honest George said only

“ Antes muerta que mudada.”
 Southey's ‘Letters from Spain and
 Portugal,’ p. 87. Bristol, 1797.

LETTER XXV.

Pass of Jaca — Posada of Canfranc — Tea in the Pyrenees —
Head of the pass — First view of France — Fellow travellers
— Urdos — Gardener's house — Journey to Bedous — Douane.

Pau, July 6th.

I DID not leave Jaca till a quarter before six* on Saturday, but the morning was still fresh, and the shadows of the little poplars slanting over the grass looked amiably prim. We went at once to business, plunging into the valley of the river Aragon, which threads the Jaca pass, rising from almost its head.† In four hours we reached Canfranc, the last village in Spain, a long straight street of white and slated houses, every one, I think, built with an arched door, as if to let in a loaded animal. Baggage, a great deal of it wool, and

* After a night of much discomfort at the Catalan.

† The stream was not large, but the wide span of the bridges gave token of its prowess in winter. Half way between Jaca and Canfranc we passed fine walnut-trees. Snowy mountains were in view on each side as we ascended.

beasts, were encumbering the way ; it is the last place people stop at in going to France, and a lively scene it is, even in winter, I am told ; indeed, more so then, because at that time other passes are closed by the weather. The principal posada does not even pretend to have a name, but merely puts up "Posada publica ;" and when my guide followed his beasts to the stable I went up stairs, not much hoping from my Handbook to find a very genial reception. The mistress was quietly suckling her child in the chimney corner, but took my orders and gave me one of the most comfortable breakfasts I have had in Spain ;* an excellent fry of new-laid eggs, home-bred ham equally good, fresh trout, very passable red wine of Huesca, and all other things Christianlike. I sent down my own tea : they had never seen any like it ; the landlady said she had tea of her own, and showed it me ; it was two or three ounces, made up in a pasteboard roll like a quack medicine, with a great deal of print outside, and consisted of a greyish moss adhering to little twigs, with a faint perfume no more like tea than musk. I gave her a little of mine, and have done the same in two or three places, not merely out of kindness, but to introduce a knowledge of the plant into the country. This landlady, and her daughter who waited

* Generally, the flesh-pots of Aragon, according to my experience, are sadly inferior to those of Andalusia.

on me, were remarkably gentle-mannered and intelligent people; the mother had a handsome and refined cast of countenance, which would have suited any station; and I wondered how such superior persons as these seemed to be could have grown up (if they did so) among the muleteers, smugglers, and douaniers, and all other runners of the border, of the pass of Jaca.

We had still an ascent of several hours before us, and to set out at the bad hour of noon, but it was unavoidable. Our company was increased now by other mules and travellers. The natural instinct by which people join each other on the road in Spain seems doubly strong in the case of mules and muleteers. Mules have a particular pedantry about companionship. I believe mine would have died sooner than pass the tail of her fellow; and when, on this day, the fellow mule accidentally stayed behind because my man took a long drink with one of his mates, my beast, finding herself alone, made such lamentable brays, or attempts at them, for a mule cannot fairly bray out, that I was almost heartbroken.

It would be useless to attempt describing our journey up the pass: it was fine mountain scenery, not much differing from other country of the same kind, except at one place, where, on a kind of open plateau, bleak snowy mountains of the first Pyrenean rank looked in upon us on every side, like parts of some stupendous amphitheatre. A little after three we gained a level

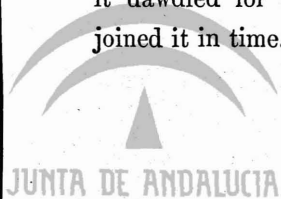
summit, and passed an upright pole which denoted that we were now in France. Not only did this show it; instantly, as if by a spell, the ragged, wild, smugglers' track that we had been riding upon, changed into a firm, well-defined bridle-way, like a horse-road in a gentleman's plantation. Nature, too, altered almost as suddenly. We were going down, as we had ascended, among high mountains, but their forms looked softer; they were generally green to the top, and all their foldings first sprinkled with trees, then by degrees richly mantled over with wood: and so we descended, in a bright burning afternoon (my hand on the side next the sun was literally scorched) to the valley of Urdos. There we joined a magnificent new road, intended by the French government to be the passage into Spain, but the Spanish continuation will be waited for, I suppose, some time.

I walked over a good deal of the pass, and had a talk with some Frenchmen who were on their way to Toulouse. One of them, a handsome ingenuous looking lad of about twenty, walked in this burning day the whole distance from Jaca to Urdos (not much less I suppose than thirty English miles), having no conveyance except a share in the mule which carried his baggage and that of his two comrades. His spirit and cheerfulness all the way, without any affected swagger, were quite interesting; and when we began to descend this side of the pass into bright and green France, I

heard him behind singing French romances to himself, as if he could not resist it. He walked again through part of the night to Oloron, where I found him next day as cheerful and even-minded as before.

We had to undergo douane, but very gently, at Urdos, which is a small village a few miles within the frontier. I had been told at Jaca that we should find here public conveyances to Oloron and Pau, but this proved a fable, and I remained fixed at Urdos between six and seven in the evening. The village inn was no temptation, but there is a gardener in the place who has a good-sized and prettily situated house, and accommodates travellers, and has moreover a little open char which he rents from the government, and which will carry the said travellers to Bedous on the way to Oloron; so I naturally devolved into his hands, at least those of his wife, for he was out with the char. I was dying to eat, drink, and sleep, and yet seemed too tired even to do the last. The old woman made me very comfortable, and charged me the most aristocratic prices. I do not suppose my bill here at Pau will be on anything like the same scale. In the morning, a little after five, the bourgeois drove me at a rattling pace to the village of Bedous, about ten miles off, a pretty journey through a smiling mountain valley. We arrived just as the diligence (honoured with that name, but something like one of our old short stages) was about to start. To my consternation, I found there

was another douane, and I had to get down, open all my baggage, and submit to a bonâ fide search, which left everything in a pudding. I asked some one afterwards why this was, and was told that there are so many by-ways out of Spain, and so many tricks, that your merely appearing at Bedous, to which Urdos is the high road, is no sufficient proof that all your things have been passed at Urdos. My driver very sensibly left me and pushed on to the diligence : it started, but, with the complaisance which is the only good quality (when you need it) that short stages have, it dawdled for me on the hill above Bedous, and I joined it in time.



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

JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA

LETTER XXVI.

Ascent of the Marcadaou Pass from Cauterets — Spaniards crossing the border — View into Spain — Pyrenean woods — Lodging-house at Torla — Venta de Bujaruelo — Cirque de Gavarnie — French sportsmen — The izzard — Pass of Bujaruelo — Frontier regulations.

Gavarnie, July 14th.

I REST to-night in the midst of the finest scenery in the French Pyrenees, and have planned passing to-morrow night in Spain again.

Yesterday I left Cauterets about six, and rode up the grand valley of the Cauterets Gave to Pont d'Espagne, a romantic timber bridge, or rather two bridges, with waterfalls, and a rainbow.

(The letter then describes a visit to the Lac de Gaube.)

Returning from this place to the Pont d'Espagne (the lake is two hours out of the way in going to the Marcadaou pass*), we travelled through some fine

* And cannot be included in the same day's ride without a hurry and fatigue scarcely consistent with pleasure. I report this from experience.

valleys, beset with a variety of noble mountains, and in general handsomely wooded. In some places there are wide parkish levels of green turf, with firs picturesquely scattered, and rhododendrons of so rich a flower as to look quite garden-like. The verdure which is such a bright feature in the Pyrenean landscapes is no doubt cherished by the same cause to which (and to good draining) we owe ours in England, the abundance of moisture from the ocean.

At last, after long toiling through detestable roads, I saw the head of the Marcadaou pass, a comparatively low line like the slackening of a cord, between huge dark piles of rock ending in great splintered headlands that looked black against the sky. In the gulf between these points were long tracts of snow. Horses were no longer of use, because the snow, being of uncertain depth, was not safe for a quadruped; and the rock paths at the sides were too rough and scrambling even for Pyrenean horses. Unfortunately the snow at present comes down lower than it generally does at this season, so that we were obliged to forsake our steeds a quarter of an hour sooner than usual. Carrau* had relied upon meeting a shepherd on the hills to take care of the horses, but none was in sight, so he merely took off the saddles and bridles, alforjas,

* Joseph Carrau, an excellent guide, introduced to me at the Hôtel de France in Caunterets.

and all our little effects, and laid them under a rock, and left the beasts upon their own hands.

As we painfully plodded up the rocks we saw groups of sandalled Spaniards with packs at their backs (smugglers all, Carrau said), gaily skimming down the middle of the snow-fields, with a sort of skating motion, steadying themselves with a stick behind. Eight or nine of these fellows had stopped us on the road a little before to ask the hour; I could not help being glad that my watch was anything but tempting. These over-the-border Spaniards, and the neighbouring Spaniards generally, do not seem to be popular with the lower class of French, though it is admitted that they do not, because they dare not it is said, commit any open depredation in France.

My guide and I were obliged at last to take to the snow, and killing work it was; sinking almost knee-deep sometimes, and slipping aside, though we took care to deepen each other's footsteps. Besides this, the glare of the early afternoon sun upon the snow was almost distracting. At last we did reach the top, after an hour and a half of labour. The prospect over Spain, though grand, hardly repaid so much exertion. It was indeed wild and snowy to one's heart's content, but not so varied or striking in outline as that on the French side. I was interested, however, in seeing, beyond the great Spanish Pyrenean ranges, the lower hill country of Aragon, which I so well remembered, in the neigh-

bourhood of Huesca. The favourite Spanish baths of Panticosa were not in sight, but the promontory under which they lie seemed very near.

After a little rest we returned down the mountain.* The horses had behaved honourably enough, only moving a little way lower on the hill, which gave Carrau the trouble of walking down with the saddles and other paraphernalia on his head. He had some talk, in passing, with an official, who lives here in a hut, with a gun and bayonet, to terrify the smugglers I believe ; but, the discourse being in patois, I did not profit.

The profusion of trees on these mountains would be valuable if there were means of conveyance. I understood that they were in the hands of the government ; but the wind seemed to be the only woodman : in the remote places many large stems had been blown down and appeared to have long lain as they had fallen. In one place, near the Pont d'Espagne, the trunk of a very good tree was smouldering with fire : Carrau supposed that some one had set it on fire that it might fall down and then be made booty of. After a tedious descent, and being continually off and on horseback on account of mauvais pas, we got to Pont d'Espagne : and we were at Cauterets by about seven. We had glorious weather : not a cloud till the usual exhalation of the Pyrenees a little after noon, and not a great deal of that.

* The descent on foot took about fifty-five minutes.

Torla, July 15th, Wednesday.

I write once more in the Queen of Spain's dominions, in a ghastly, dirty village, not even whitewashed, which I have come to through wonderful scenery, little patronized at present by John Bull. I am not in a posada, but in a private house which receives visitors for money: a strange rambling place, once a château and decorated with some stateliness: in the neighbouring bedroom to mine the Administrador de la Aduana sleeps in an alcove fronted with gilt cornices. But I sit with my feet on bare loose stones, and my bedroom has no door but a curtain. There is a chapel in the courtyard, and the gate of the yard might be that of a town; but the stable is a dungeon, and there is no litter for the horses, nor corn. I am charmed with the intelligence of a humpbacked girl who waits upon me, and understands what I say in Spanish almost sooner than I do myself. As we talked while I ate my supper (or dinner) she asked me if I had been at Barèges: I said not yet, had she? "Yes, often: four different years," she said: and did not at all like it. Poor creature! all the sulphur in the Pyrenees will not make her shoulders even.

Venta de Bujaruelo, July 16th.

The above, written last night at Torla, was an effort of somnambulism. I am thus far (between two and three

hours' ride) on my return to Gavarnie : we halt (half-past ten) for two or three hours, to let the heat of the day pass : it is not excessive, however, though the weather is glorious. This is a solitary place, stone built, at a bridge at the foot of the Bujaruelo pass : its aspect on a distant view (not when near) is quite that of a Scotch Highland inn : it stands in a great bason of mountains by the side of a rolling trout-stream, and in a pretty patch of cultivated plain : a field of about two acres of rye, near the house, is quite a picture, the crop is so tall, even, and unruffled. On the hill opposite, a great deal of timber has been cut, a sight I have seldom seen yet in the Pyrenees. At the door is the usual border-scene of muleteers, leisurely and noisy, *going* to load their beasts for the next stage of their journey. The inn has been lately reconstructed, and has a second floor, barn-like enough, but not bad, for gentlefolks to be clear of the kitchen and the arrieros (mule-drivers). The said gentlefolks are charged something more than town hotel prices for very poor fare. Trout and eggs are the only good things, and to-day "no hay truchas," there are no trout.*

* They had, however, two qualities of wine at this wild place ; for, on my first visit they gave me a wine, from Barbastro in Catalonia they said, strongly flavoured by the skin : I noticed this to them, and, on my return from Torla, they produced wine which was pure and not despicable.

(The letter then continues a description, previously commenced, of the author's journey from Caunterets to St. Sauveur and Gavarnie on July 14th.)

As we drew near Gavarnie towards evening, the grand cliffs and mountains which close the valley at that place began to show themselves: the brown head of Mount Marboré (an outwork of Mont Perdu), over-spread with fields of snow, and containing great glaciers; and, in the outline of the mountains against the horizon, the famous chasm called the Brèche de Roland, said to have been cut at a blow by Orlando with his sword, when pursuing the Moors. Though it is three hundred feet wide and three hundred and fifty feet high (Murray), it is, at this distance, a mere notch: or rather, supposing the line of mountain at the top to be a fence-wall, it looks as if there was a gate which was open. There is a smaller chasm of the same kind, at some distance, called la Fausse Brèche. I put up at the country inn, not a bad one, at Gavarnie, and, by my landlady's advice, though I should not have needed the hint, hastened on to see the grand scene of the Cirque de Gavarnie while it was tolerably clear (there were a cloud or two on it), for fear of what might happen on the morrow. There is a small screen of rocky ground which just conceals the Cirque from you at the inn; but in a few minutes' walk the whole bursts upon you, and a wonder it is. The mountains at the head of the valley of Gavarnie terminate here in a cul-

de-sac, and in an amphitheatrical form : but the amphitheatre consists of tier upon tier of cliffs, barren and perpendicular ; each tier corniced with a huge bed of snow. High above all are the peaks and snowy recesses of the Mount Marboré, for the scene I have just described is only his skirt. The cliffs, and the promontories of the mountain, are generally of the hue of unbaked brick, but sometimes of a light sand colour, or an ashy grey. What little vegetation clings to the walls of the Cirque is hardly visible : a little way out of it grass and trees begin. A long silvery cascade runs down the whole height of the cliffs on the left-hand side : it is said to be 1266 feet high, but I do not know how it is measured, for you trace it up and up by stages to the glacier itself, in the bosom of the Marboré. All round the Cirque are a number of little sister cascades, gliding down other faces of cliff like the larger waterfall ; and in a multitude of places the rocks are darkened with water which does not show itself outwardly. The base of the Cirque is covered with rocks and accumulated snow, under which the streams find their way out, making grotesque snow bridges. So much awful stillness, and yet so much life, such savageness of forms, yet such a resemblance to artificial grandeur, such a glow of light, when the evening sun is on the snow, and yet such a sombre sullenness in the hues of cliff and mountain, make a scene which hushes and quells you rather than calls forth an exclamation.

Others were not hushed in its neighbourhood if I was; for a party of Frenchmen, going to shoot the izzard (a creature of the wild goat kind), put up at my inn for the night, and hunted their izzard so obstreperously at table that the whole house was alive till one in the morning; and their reveil was just as noisy and cockneyish. We heard them to-day in the Bujaruelo pass (I am now at Gavarnie again), and saw their izzard, a fawn-coloured animal, something larger than a goat. It appeared above us on the mountain to the left, looking rather perplexed and bored, and then made across our line of way to the opposite mountain, and got off. I am glad to have seen an animal of this country which is a little rare, and glad the swaggering sportsmen lost their game.*

Yesterday, in a beautiful morning, I set out with Carrau (whom I more and more like) for Torla. We coasted the Cirque by a long, rocky, zigzag ascent. The view downwards into this magnificent concave is even grander than from the level; and for a while all sound was fortunately hushed as I looked into it, for

* Few travellers lodging at inns have the charity to respect one another's slumbers, but I have everywhere observed that none are so inhuman in this respect as our brisk friends the French. The most agreeable companions in waking hours, they are the most frightful neighbours at the season of rest.

we rode upon turf. The sun was glowing upon the snow-beds, and there were all the cascades busily doing the work set them by their Creator, of carrying down the collected moisture to the watercourses and levels beneath, as the sun liberated it from the snow. We then turned into a green hollow, ending with the col by which we were to pass into Spain: it looked easy enough now, but I was told that in winter it is very precarious, if not impassable, and smugglers are often lost in the avalanches. Crossing the col, I had a fine view of the bare mountains in Spain: the downward stage of our pass lay before us, a long course of toil to a far-distant valley: and in our way tracts of snow. We got down and walked our horses nearly to Bujaruelo, partly to spare them, and partly because there were so many ugly bits that to ride would have been a continual dismounting and remounting. Once or twice we had to drive the horses across the snow. In one of these passages, upon a slope of snow, about two or three hundred yards in descent, but gradual, I slipped, and lay on my face in the posture of a spread eagle, griping the snow with my hands manfully. If I had gone down, it would not have been to destruction, but farther and faster than I wanted. Carrau came to my assistance, and I then understood how, in a position of real danger, a good guide will preserve you. Steadying himself by one hand with his stick, he grasped one of mine in the other with a grip which seemed to send strength through

all my frame : and then, digging foot-prints with his heel for me to put my heel into, he soon set me walking, and everything was easy.* From the snow we marched down a declivity ; down and down without end, as it seemed ; a mere path, large enough for the horses' feet, on the edge of steep banks of brown shingle, which you might have rolled over for many minutes. I could not but rejoice that I was on two feet instead of four, and "gloomily think on the morrow," when I must either ride these paths or toil up them on foot. But somehow on the morrow I rode up them with complete unconcern.

At last the vale country began to disclose itself. A long wedge-like promontory descending from the mountain above Bujaruelo appeared, covered with fir-trees ; the level fields of the valley showed themselves a little : and on the right we had a beautiful round green hill, bright with grass and buttercups, and with plants of the box, which grows very luxuriantly in such places, sometimes as high as your head, and glows with a rich yellow suffusion. It was one of those scenes of verdure which seem to carry sunshine in themselves. We serpented through woods into Bujaruelo ; arrived between twelve

* My horse, in the mean time, had walked off and sauntered up the acclivity of snow, keeping his feet like a cat, and treating the accident with much indifference. He surrendered himself with a tolerably good grace when Carrau wanted him.

and one ; and made a halt of two hours before setting out for Torla.

On our way from Gavarnie we met two Englishmen, turned back as I should have been if I had attempted the route I first thought of on this frontier. If you cross the border into Spain with horses which should return, the French Government makes some kind of registration of your passage, with a view, as it is said, to the horse being duly brought back, and not lost to the French Empire.* This did not prevent people from leaving France at one point, and re-entering with their horses at another. The Spanish officials, when you enter their country with horses which are to return, make you leave a deposit in money, to be repaid on your passing out ; but, by a regulation of this year, you cannot reclaim the deposit any where but at the place where you left it ; which of course those who do not like to lose their money must attend to.† I suspect this may have to do with politics.

* On this morning's journey we delivered our horse-pass to a carbineer shortly after leaving Gavarnie.

† I stated the regulation as it was mentioned to me, without being certain that I correctly understood it. But there is no doubt that its effect was to prevent the English travellers whom I met from returning by a new route. It might perhaps be only a precaution against tricks upon the revenue.

LETTER XXVII.

Scenery of Bujaruelo — A carbineer — Journey to Torla — Grand scenery — Torla — The Casa Biou — Return to Bujaruelo — A weather wizard — Cirque of Gavarnie — Pyrenean guides — Smuggling.

Arreau, July 18th.

I RETURN to the Spanish trip of Wednesday,* when I sat down between twelve and one at the Bujaruelo venta at the foot of the pass, to take a noonday rest. For a while I reclined against one of the two great beds which were the pride of the upstairs sitting-room, and had a fair siesta. I wish I could describe the majesty of the light-brown, weather-worn mountain which rose in front of my window, seamed with snow-drifts and pouring down long cascades. As the light of the afternoon sun slanted upon it, the topmost cliffs and buttresses looked skeletoned, if I may coin such a word, by some exquisite operator; or, I may say, they seemed to be the most delicate cabinet work, on a scale fit for the giants. The stable and ground-floor of a venta are always amusing: looking into ours, I saw asses with woolpacks (what

* Pages 394, 395.

secrets they might contain besides I do not know) just going out : and our horses keeping company with a donkey off duty, and a cow with a bell, which I hope was entertaining to the other animals.

We took the road again at half-past three. Carrau told me, rather sheepishly I thought, that a carbineer was going to walk with us. Now, though I was once glad of a carbineer's countenance on a very ill-reputed road in Andalusia, I did not see any good in it here, and I began to surmise that the authorities, who had checkmated two other Englishmen about their hack horses, might have thought me worth watching : especially as, when I took a stroll by the river-side before dinner, I saw one of them on the bridge speculating upon me as far as he could without taking the trouble to come after me. However, off we set, and off set the carabiniere with his gun, always outwalking our horses, and not intruding at all, and a cheerful, harmless, poor fellow he was. Not to raise your expectations, I will end this matter by saying that at our journey's end Carrau, with my consent, gave the poor man a trifle to drink, and he went, as he said, to make a report to his chief before returning home. When we set out next morning upon our own return, there was our carbineer again, ready to start with us for Bujaruelo. The truth, we believed, was, that he had wretched pay and little to do, and walked the eighteen miles just for the chance of what might be given him at the journey's

end, in drink or money. I should hardly have been flesh and blood if I had disappointed him, foolish as the thing was. I complimented him (in his own tongue) upon his outwalking us, and observed, too, that he must find his gun heavy. Oh no, he said, "es ligerito" (it is a light little thing); and showed his teeth and flourished it as if balancing it on his finger.

From Bujaruelo to Torla was a horse's walk of two hours and a half, on terrace roads upon the sides of valleys. I should be glad to describe, but it is impossible in words, and painting would hardly do it, the grandeur and beauty of this afternoon ride. From Bujaruelo we entered a very deep narrow glen, where the forms of rock and cliff were already sublime; but as we went on new reaches of valley opened upon us, where the protuberances and headlands of mountain above became so extravagantly (if it were not nonsensical I should say absurdly) bold and great, that it was an always increasing astonishment. The last scene is the Val d'Arrase,* which I have never seen painted or described, though it is praised in general terms in Ford's Handbook.† It is a Glencoe immensely magnified, and rising upon banks of rock and forest, which are already mountainous.

* I am not sure whether the gorge here described is the Val d'Arrase itself, or the ravine into which that valley opens.

† Part ii. p. 933.

This wonderful upper region is a series of utterly naked cliffs and promontories, the colours grey and light umber, towering over the valley in a stupendous mockery of architecture: when the even perpendicular lines are thrown sharply off by the declining sun, you could fancy that palaces like those in Martin's pictures, but on a far vaster scale, had been built of some soft material and crumbled by weather or time into indistinctness, but still retaining many of their outlines, and a general trace of the architectural plan. At some points I could almost have persuaded myself that I saw angular recesses of building, and in them complete window or door-ways. This magic is half the work of the sun, for, when I returned the next morning, my description, if that had been my only view, would have been very different. As I saw it, however, with the spell in force, it was one of the grandest things I have ever beheld: such a display of enchanted architecture with everything wild about it; banks or rather mountain-sides of rock and tree stretching down from its base to the river; and the silence, or the stilling notes of the water and birds, contrasting strangely with the pageant above, where you might almost have expected banners to be thrown out and trumpets sounded. This seems fantastical, but my guide (who has a really good gentlemanly taste in scenery) talked in much the same strain.

We had to quit this enchanted valley and turn into the comparatively gentle and smiling vale of Torla:

pedestrians, I am told, may follow up the valley of Arrase among scenery of the same kind till they come face to face with Mont Perdu. Happy men! The village or little town of Torla stretches proudly enough across the valley with its old Templar church. But I have already told you what a squalid place it is. I hear that many of the inhabitants are landed proprietors, well off: many of the houses bear remains of architectural ornament fit for good residences at least; yet the streets seem dens; the pavements are a confusion of disjointed stones; the houses seem to have no windows intended to see out at or to let in air or light; and the people look wild and idle.

The house I lodged at was the Casa Biou: it belonged to a man of property, lately dead; his widow and a daughter (the deformed girl) carry the place on, but not well, and make something by casual strangers: part of the house is the aduana (douane), and the administrator lodges there, occupying the state bed.* I asked the girl soon after I arrived what the name of the posada was; forgetting its real condition. "No es posada, señor," said she, seriously (it is not an inn, sir). "Well," I said, "the fonda" (hotel). "Fonda tampoco, señor,"

* My own room, with a little civilizing repair, might have been handsome enough; and it looked out, by a tolerable window, upon something not unlike park scenery.

she said (no more an hotel than an inn); "es casa particular" (it is a private house). Yet the horses could not be littered at it, nor my shoes cleaned. However, I slept there very well, and had a tolerable supper: for a wonder in this part of Spain, a very nice dish of meat. I saw at this place, but not in use for the house, fir splinters cutting to be used as candles, being of course highly impregnated with resin. I have seen this long ago in the Highlands of Scotland (where the fir was from the bogs), but never elsewhere.*

We set out for Gavarnie again between seven and eight next morning, and when I rode out of the antique court-yard, waving a sentimental adieu to the little crookback who stood in the rotten timber balcony, if a caricaturist had been there he would have seen something worth sketching.

I think I have told you nearly all that happened on our return to Gavarnie. One thing had not struck me so much when I wrote before. As I stood at the door of the venta, talking with the usual knot of loungers, carbineer, muleteers, and I do not know what eers be-

* In the course of the evening my little attendant conducted me to the Templar church, an antiquity well enough worth seeing. The rustic muchacha who opened the gate would not take her fee till my conductress reproved her prudery and made her pocket the dos reales. (In the glib pronunciation of the people this piece, not quite a sixpence, is called a do-reales.)

sides, the weather being then quite clear and blazing hot, an old fellow with keen features and bright eyes, in the background, said something rather ominously of having seen "brúma," I think he called it (mist), over France. The younger Spaniards laughed him to scorn, for no afternoon ever looked more settled. Yet before night I saw in the sky a disagreeable-looking periwig of thunder cloud, and when I went to bed at Gavarnie there was so much fog that I could not prudently leave my window open ; and the next day many of the valleys were quite choked with mist : fortunately it ended in nothing worse. And so I have done with Spain for this journey, except that I may just step within it again if I go to see Mount Maladetta.

The journey back to Gavarnie was easier than I expected, and we managed better at the snow ; besides, it had had an additional day's thawing and trampling : a good deal at this season. In returning I went to take a near view of the Cirque, and stand upon the very stage, as it were, of which the rocks and snows are the boxes and gallery. A little way off, on the way to Gavarnie, is the cabin of a restaurant who lodges people wishing to be very near the mountain. Standing here we saw a gentleman with his guide marching down with a proud step from the heights : he was a young Frenchman, who had just performed the exploit of going up to the Brêche de Roland, which you commence at one corner of the Cirque. He talked highly of the prospect and

modestly made light of the difficulties. How man differs from man in all professions ! This gentleman had brought a guide with him from Eaux Bonnes, a loud, confident youth, who did not know the way up the Brèche, and therefore very properly turned his employer over to a local attendant ; but he himself stayed lounging below. Carrau was scandalized, and observed warmly that a man who hoped ever to be a guide should have been happy in the opportunity of learning his way up this famous pass. He described his own apprenticeship from the age of fourteen, and said there was not a pass or nook of the places visited by strangers in the Western Pyrenees through which he, or any really good guide, was not prepared to lead the way whenever required.

I forgot to mention that, turning off the Gavarnie road to go to the Cirque, we were espied by a roving douanier, and hailed as coming from Spain ; and were obliged to have the few things we carried with us examined in the middle of the moor : a provoking delay, as the sun was fast sinking.

NOTE.

In my journey of last year through Andalusia I could never reflect upon the subject of contraband traffic without some feeling of compunction for the encouragement it is said to derive from Gibraltar. But the