four half-octagon piers appear much more modern than do the two that are houses, as though they were restorations of, or rather substitutes for, the original ones. I have made inquiry about the matter, but, as usual, the stereotyped, and quite unnecessary to impart, piece of information, that “God knows,” and the absurd counter-question, “Who knows?” is all the satisfaction obtainable by an inquiring mind. Probably, however, though Spaniards here do not know, there may be plenty of my countrymen at home who do.

The foundation of the bridge is continuous stonework, and over it, between the piers, the Ebro rushes and boils as if over a dam. Four well-sculptured stone lions couchant guard the approaches to the bridge, and lines of nets, hanging up to dry, give evidence that fish are to be got out of the river.

On my return from amusing myself by inspecting this interesting bridge, and feeding my appetite for the beautiful in nature by gazing on the views up and down the river, I, just before reaching the Placa del Seu, passed a pair of large oak doors, standing partly open. Peeping in, I saw what I supposed to be the interior of a church, and, "no man forbidding," entered. I found myself within a large square edifice, whose lofty, arched, and sculptured roof was supported by twenty-four beautiful columns, whose walls were covered with coats-of-arms—the imperial ones of Charles V., Emperor of Germany, &c. &c., being the most conspicuous—with paintings, and with old banners. At one end was a raised dais, and the whole floor was littered with canvases, paint-pots, brushes, and scantlings;
while draughtsmen, painters, and carpenters were at work
on all sides. On inquiry, I learned I was in the ancient
Hôtel de Ville, and that, for the nonce, it was being
utilised as a studio for scene-painting for the theatre. It
was a beautiful interior, quite equal to some of Spain’s
famous churches.

I was so pleased with the reward obtained for curiosity,
that for the rest of the way to my quarters I peered into
every open entrance, hoping to obtain a sight of another
good interior, and not in vain. Entering a wide porte-
cochère I stood in an unroofed courtyard, enclosed by a
double portico, resting on pillars, with wide overhanging
eaves of elaborately-carved woodwork. Pillars, porticoes,
walls, were a mass of sculpture, the labours of Hercules,
and bust-portraits of ancient Spanish kings being the most
conspicuous; but nude human figures of all sexes, human
and other monsters, and demons, were not lacking. The
wear of the lower portions of the hard stone pillars, and
the whole style of the building, showed its extreme anti-
quity. But the newness of some portions of the sculpture
puzzled me, until I noticed a scroll with an inscription
setting forth that La Casa Infanta had been restored in
1871 by the direction of the Liberal Monarchical Club of
Zaragoza. A close scrutiny satisfied me the work of
restoration had been committed to able hands, and con-
scientiously and artistically done. It also forced on my
notice that there was not only a great lack of fig-leaves,
but a realistic completeness of detail that the nineteenth
century considers quite superfluous. I suspect some monk
of old had a hand in the designing of those figures.
From a sportsman of this city I have learned a fact concerning the migratory quail of Western Europe, which upsets my previously-conceived opinion. I have heretofore believed that the birds in question bred in Africa. He tells me the Ebro’s valley, between the Imperial Canal and the river, is one of their great breeding-grounds. The old birds arrive in April, and immediately go to nest, in that immense wheatfield. After harvest, in the end of July, the young birds are strong on the wing and very fat. Then the sport is excellent, the bag to a good shot, who has well-broken dogs, being only a question of quick loading and walking.

I am disgusted to find I have burdened and troubled myself with gun, sporting equipment, and dog, to make the trip at the very worst time of the year for shooting, indeed when there is none. But it is not my fault; I tried to get full and reliable information on the subject in England, and could not. As a result, I have journeyed through a country which, in the proper season, abounds with game, prepared for shooting, and have not bagged fur or feather.

I am again bothered by the copper coins. In Tudela, a peseta was a silver piece of forty cuartos; here it is reckoned as worth thirty and a half, for, while there a doscuarto meant five of the new centimos, here a cuarto piece means one of the now legally obsolete cuartos of Old Castile, by which coin, however, these shopkeepers persist in computing prices. As to some of my countrymen, who ought to know better, so the decimal system is, to these provincials, foolishness.
During the last few days the temperature has become rather chilly. In the early mornings there have been dense river-fogs, and though the afternoons and evenings have been bright and clear, the natives are all shivering and grumbling. Here they warm their rooms by large braziers, full of red-hot charcoal sprinkled over with ashes, and placed in wooden frames having wire-gauze screens over them. These are put under the tables of the dining-rooms, and anywhere in the sleeping-chambers. Doors and windows are closely fastened up; and why people are not asphyxiated I do not know—they ought to be. The fuel used for cooking is the branches and roots of rosemary plants—an endless supply of which is growing wild all over the uplands. It is brought into town on jackasses, long strings of which beasts of burden, loaded until they look like perambulating brush-piles, can be seen any day on the roads leading to town, or in the market-places. This shrub is now in bloom, and the plants look quite pretty.

The other day I made inquiry of an official whom I have become acquainted with, what they meant at the “new posada” near Pedrola, by asking me if I had regular papers, and learned from him, that though the foreign passport system is here abolished, the interior one is in full force; for instance, said he, “Did I wish to go by rail, or otherwise to Madrid, or elsewhere, I ought to be furnished with papers—a passport or permit.” These “papers” vary in price from a few coppers, for leave to make a short journey, to as many dollars for a permit good for a year and all Spain. The visa of the Spanish Consulate in London on my Foreign Office passport is, I find, equivalent
to a permit of the latter class, so I am all right. But, knowing that a passport was not required by an Englishman to enter Spain, and not being aware before of this internal police regulation, I might have easily run myself into a difficulty, and been "run in" by authority—for lack of "papers," found myself arrested, in some out-of-the-way village, by country officials who were stupid, obstinate, and zealous. And may all Spain's thousand saints defend me from zealous village authorities, of all and every country and place.

Last Tuesday being St. Ildefonso's day, a saint who by a stretch of official ingenuity is considered the king's tutelar, all Zaragoza was en fête. The balconies of the House of Deputies, those of the Captain-General, and of every other public building, were covered with crimson velvet embroidered with gold lace, and in every direction fluttered and waved yellow draperies and banners. After breakfast there was a march out and review of the troops of the garrison, which everybody, dressed in their best, went to see—a remarkably well-attired and behaved crowd. And the ubiquitous, sandalled, ragged-blanketed, crop-haired arrieros, labradores, pastores, and andrajosos—all picturesqueness and dirt, but quiet and inoffensive in behaviour—served but to enhance, by strong contrast, the handsomeness of the numerous really elegant toilettes of both sexes.

The show of female beauty was far beyond what I have seen here on the Sunday promenades; doubtlessly the class in which it is mostly to be found are, as a rule, not Sunday promenaders. Seated in carriages, standing in balconies, walking up and down—escorted by their attendant caballeros
or propriety dueñas—were more pretty women than I have yet beheld before in Spain, all taken together. Amongst them were many blue-eyed beauties; and, handsomest of all, a tall, full-chested, queenly, golden-haired blonde, who takes rank amongst the dozen most beautiful women I have seen anywhere. I begin to think I must add beauty to dance, song, and picturesqueness in my list of what is most remarkable in Spain. Small—very small—feet were plentiful; and the percentage of little, elegantly-shaped, well-gloved hands was marvellous.

There was a very respectable turn-out of troops. I walked down the review line. Without including intervals, it was considerably over a mile long. I timed the march past; even at the extraordinary pace Spanish soldiers go at it lasted forty minutes. Nearly all arms were represented—the engineers with iron sections of pontoon bridges, boats on trucks drawn by mules, and portable forges; horse artillery—to be accurately descriptive, it should be mule artillery—with guns and ammunition carts; a four-gun battery of mountain rifle-cannon—guns, carriages, ammunition, equipments, all on pack mules; foot artillery, infantry, cavalry, and mounted guardias civiles; a brilliant staff, several generals. I was more than ever struck with the varied and real elegance of Spanish uniforms. On or off the stage I have not seen them equalled. The mounted guardias civiles were the most plainly attired of the horsemen, but looked extremely well. Big good-looking fellows, arrayed in patent-leather jack-boots, snowy white breeches, double-breasted tail-coats—dark blue, with crimson breasts and silver buttons, crimson collars, coat-tails turned back...
ON FOOT IN SPAIN.

with crimson, and having a crown and lion embroidered in silver on them; cocked hats, heavily braided with white, and having a crimson badge in front; white gauntleted gloves, long steel spurs, sabre and carbine, and splendidly horsed. The staff seemed all colours. Even the long ostrich plumes of their head-gear were dyed of many hues —gold and silver, lace, ribbons, orders, covered them. They were a gilt, silvered, and jewelled rainbow. The bands—numerous and respectively strong—played very well.

The number of handsome men amongst the officers was remarkable, and many, who were "on the show off," displayed horsemanship that would have made their fortunes in a circus. The mules were big, heavy, serviceable animals, ranging from fifteen-and-a-half to nearly seventeen hands high; and weighing, I should suppose, from nine to thirteen hundred pounds each. Taking them altogether, they were almost as fine a lot of mules as though they belonged to the United States transport service.

This review was, as a spectacle, very striking and effective. I have never seen so fine a show made by the same number of troops, and I have been in the way to see a great deal in that line. But, however, an army must be good for something; and if the Spanish one has not greatly improved in fighting qualities since the days of the Peninsular War—which the skirmishing, dodging, and running-away performances, called collectively, "The late civil war," and its Cuban fiascos, would lead one to doubt—it ought to be ornamental in peace.

I have received so much polite attention and courtesy
from Spanish military men, that it seems ungrateful in me to make such a remark as the foregoing; but I fear there is more truth than sarcasm about it. And after all, pageantry ought to be the only use for an army in Spain. No foreign power wants, or, if her external affairs are conducted rationally, is ever likely to make war on this country; and if Spain’s upper classes would cease being conspirators, the people—hardworking, frugal, patient, given more to dance and song than thinking, a people of “vuelta mañana” (to-morrow will do)—would give no employment to the military. Unfortunately, as it now is, the short cut to power and wealth in Spain is a successful treason; and the individual ambition and energy, that in England conduces to general prosperity, makes Spain the arena of interminable revolution. It will be a most happy time for this country when the day comes, that to participate in a conspiracy will be to take a short and sure cut to the gallows.

In the evening the public buildings were illuminated. The Casa de Deputacion appeared to the best advantage. The gas lamps and jets arranged around its windows, along its balconies, and under its eaves, gave to its white front a look of alabaster, lit up the crimson and golden hangings, and brought out in strong relief against their dark shadows the sculptured figures of the façade; and the motto in large letters, “Vive Alfonso XII.,” showed at all events official loyalty.
CHAPTER XVIII.

The Start from Zaragoza—Too much Railway Station—The Charon of the Ebro—"Every Man must march when the Drum beats for him"—An ugly Prospect—Getting into Difficulties—In Peril—Candle to the Virgin for safe Deliverance—Astray—Licorice Diggers' Camp—Osera—Rough Fare—A delighted Child.

JANUARY 27, 1877.—Early on the morning of yesterday I walked forth from Zaragoza, bound for Lerida across Los Monégros—a tract of country I had been solemnly warned against attempting to traverse on foot or alone. I was told it is a most uninteresting stretch, quite unworthy of being visited; that settlements are very far apart; that it is a retreat, or refuge, for banditti, and that I ought positively to go from Zaragoza to Lerida by rail, via Monegon, so turning instead of crossing Los Monégros. But I started out to walk from the Bay of Biscay to the Mediterranean, and am going to do so—"A wilfu' chiel mun gang her ain gait," even if it brings him to grief. So, being totally averse to making any considerable gap in my pedestrian trip, I again urged on my three to four miles an hour "mad career," quitting Zaragoza by the Puerta del Duque de la Victoria, situated immediately to the left of the old and interesting church of San Michael, whose sculptured
porch—over which, under a colossal scallop-shell, is an heroic-sized figure of his saintship in single combat with a most extraordinary-looking devil—is well worth a passing glance.

The city gate of the Duke of Victory is a fine Tuscan porch with three sets of handsome iron gates, connected by railings marked Henry Russell, London, 1860 (wonder if they were paid for in Spanish bonds?), and when through them I found myself on the camino real to El Burgo, a hamlet near which I had been informed there was a good ferry across the Ebro—for thence my route would be north of that river.

Traversing by a stone bridge the little stream La Huerra, my course led past two large flour-mills, a grove of olives, and then a fine railway station, one locally believed to be the finest in Spain. This station consists principally of a range of imposing-looking buildings forming three sides of a quintagon, the enclosed space being elegantly laid out as an ornamental garden, with a handsome fountain in its centre. The cost of this station is said to have been so great as to have made its construction the proximate cause of a stoppage in that of the line, which, starting out with the grand title, "Line of Zaragoza and the Mediterranean," and having, on paper, branches to almost everywhere in Spain, has stopped at Fuente del Ebro, at a distance from its commencement of but thirty-eight kilometres, where, judging by the present financial prospects of the company, it will continue to stop sine die. In the meantime the buildings, nearly all uninhabited, are going rapidly to the bad for want of care.
and repairs; already the place had acquired a dilapidated appearance.

Two hours' walk from this huge commencement of a small ending brought me to El Burgo. I had traversed vineyards, olive orchards, and gardens; crossed several small bridges, passed a most tastefully-laid-out and handsomely-monumented hospital cemetery, and inspected the ruined towers and walls of what I took to be a huge monastery, two sides of whose encircling outer square of walls were still standing. They were of solid masonry, twenty-five feet high, and strengthened at short intervals by round towers, of which I counted seven on one side, fifteen on the other.

I took the El Burgo route, for I wished to see the present termination of the Imperial Canal, its mouth, and because it was a shorter one than that which, crossing the Ebro by the Puente de Zaragoza, led round by the town of Alfajarín.

Arrived at El Burgo, I found it an insignificant village, with nothing remarkable to distinguish it from many just such others I have seen. I also discovered that the Imperial Canal has no mouth; that, as a canal, its waters do not rejoin the Ebro. Pignatilli, the engineer, who had the completion of this great enterprise committed to his charge, died ere his plans were executed, and then and there the work stopped. Below El Burgo the canal, as such, ceases, and becomes a system of irrigating streams.

The village appearing to be some half mile from the banks of the Ebro, I inquired of a peasant I met in its one street the way to the ferry. He said the ferryman was, at
that time of day, most probably not at the river's side, but in his house, and kindly volunteered to take me to it. He was right. The ferryman was found sitting in his cottage over the embers of a wood fire, smoking *cigarrillas*, and drinking out of a goatskin *botella*, which, the usual salutations having passed, he handed round. I have been already long enough in Aragon to learn the accomplishment of drinking in the style that is the custom of the country; so raising the *botella* at arm's length, opening widely my mouth, I directed a thin stream into it, and poured a continuous flow down my throat, until thirst was quenched; nor did I disgrace myself by wasting a drop of the appreciated fluid. I have assiduously practised the trick for conformity's sake, and always with good wine for my own.

When I made my wish to be ferried across the river known, the ferryman politely but positively refused to stir, alleging the wind was too strong to make the attempt. It certainly was blowing hard. It had been a lovely, balmy morning when I set out, but though cloudless, and not cold, the force of the wind had been steadily increasing, and was still doing so. It was blowing harder and harder every minute. But I thought of the excellent ferry I had seen at El Bocal, judged the one at El Burgo would certainly be as good, and suspected the ferryman before me was simply lazy, and hated to leave his comfortable seat, tobacco, and wine, to go to work; so I stoutly insisted. Getting up, he remarked, with a shrug of the shoulders: "What must be must. One cannot hasten or postpone his destiny. Every man must march when the drum beats for him."
calling a boy to accompany us, and throwing a long coil of light rope over his shoulders, the ferryman led the way.

Arrived at the river, I must say I did not like the prospect. The stream was at least twice as broad as at Zaragoza, full of gravel and shingle banks and of shoals, between and over which rushed sharp currents and rough rapids; and the wind, then blowing a stiff gale, lashed the water into miniature waves with broken crests. Nor was the look of the ferry-boat reassuring. I had altogether too rashly taken it for granted that the only ferry across the Ebro, connecting the high-road from Zaragoza on the south of the river with the Lerida route, was of course one for waggons and carriages. The means of crossing was simply a very rickety flat-bottomed skiff. But I felt sure the man and boy would not risk real danger. At all events, it would not do for me to be the one to propose turning back, so preparations were at once commenced.

The object of bringing the coil of rope soon became evident, one end of it was attached to the stem of the skiff, the other looped round the shoulders of the man, who started walking up stream. Taking one of the long poles that lay on the skiff's bottom (there were no oars), the boy, keeping alongside, braced the skiff's bows outward, and so it was towed along to get an offing. I took notice, not at all to my satisfaction, that that boatman did not know enough to tie his tow-rope so as to draw with advantage. As a consequence, the line of traction being diagonally against him, and the stream strong, the boy's strength was overtaxed, and the skiff continually grounded ashore. Lending a hand, sometimes to the lad, then at the
tow-rop.e, we proceeded half a mile up the river, and then all three getting in, the ferryman commenced poling across.

I crouched down—there were no seats—and held Juan by the collar, fearing he might, by putting his paws on one of the gunwales, upset us, for the crank skiff was totally unfit for rough water. About a third across was a long shingle shoal, whose hog’s back showed, in places, just above water. On arriving at its commencement the ferryman kicked off his alpargatas, took the rope in his hands, jumped overboard and commenced towing again, the boy poling on the shallow side.

Before we had gone far the current became like a mill-race. The wind was with it; together they were too much for the crew. The ferryman’s progress stopped; he began to lose ground; the shingle slipped beneath his feet. He alternately prayed and cursed, as he lunged against the stream. Then the boat began to swing outwards. The ferryman gave a cry of despair. If he left hold of the rope we should leave him like a rocket, and never be able to get to him again. If he did not, then would he be dragged into deep water and infallibly drowned. No swimmer could have made the shore caught in those cross currents and that rough water. In either case we should, in all probability, ground broadside on some shoal, be rolled over and fare likewise.

Of two dangers I chose the lesser; and, shouting to the boy to hold down the dog, who was frantically excited, I snatched his pole from him, and dropped the lower end of it on the deep side—the one to which the boat was swinging. To my amazement the twenty-feet pole only cleared
the surface some three feet. Putting my shoulder to its upper end, and throwing my weight and strength against it—after the manner of bargemen—I essayed to stop the outward swerve of the skiff.

It steadied—stopped.

The ferryman took fresh courage and wind; and, inch by inch, he pulling, I pushing, we gained headway; and after a quarter of an hour's desperate work the rapid was passed, and we were in slacker water. Then, jumping in the skiff, the ferryman recommenced shoving, and I, resigning my pole to the boy, again took charge of Juan, much to the lad's relief of mind, for he seemed in mortal terror of the dog, who, indeed, looked wild enough, and had more than once tried hard to get away from him, and growled and showed his teeth in a very menacing manner. Ere long we were in dead water, had only the wind and waves to contend against, and at last reached the bank in safety. On jumping ashore I looked at my watch. We had taken an hour and ten minutes to make the crossing.

It was simply idiotic of the ferryman, knowing, as he must have, the strength of the currents and the difficulties to be contended with, to attempt that crossing with a gale blowing down stream. But what could be expected of a boatman (?) who fastens a tow-rope to the stem of a craft? Besides, like all lower-class Spaniards, he was a fatalist, and that always counts for something. Had I not been deceived by the waves disguising the rapidity of the current, certainly I would never have risked the crossing. As it was, we had had a close enough shave of turning the Ebro, so far as we three were concerned, into the Styx. I could not, after such
a passage, offer the trifle that the legal fare amounted to. If anything, I went to the other extreme, judging by the look of grateful astonishment and hearty "gracias" of the ferryman. But my excessive payment was, after all, but a sort of "candle to the Virgin for safe deliverance."

My expectation was to be met at the river's side by a Zaragoza acquaintance; but no one was in sight excepting the ferryman and his boy. The gentleman I refer to is a licorice speculator, who had a gang of hands somewhere in the neighbourhood of the ferry's north landing, digging and stacking licorice-roots. These men he had gone to look after a short time prior to my leaving Zaragoza; and, ere doing so, had invited me, if I would content myself with camp fare, to breakfast with him when en route, saying he would be on the look-out for me at the landing. I inquired of the ferryman where the licorice camp was. He did not know. There was one somewhere, up or down the river, he said, and added immediately: "God knows! who knows? May your worship go with God." Then waving an adieu, he and boy lay down under a bush growing by the river's bank to smoke and snooze.

Walking on a few yards to the top of a little knoll, I reconnoitred. I was in a wide river-bottom, a sandy, hillocky waste of sage-brush thickets, scattered growths of willows, wild rosemary, and rushy hollows. The small town of Alfajarín and hamlet of Noallen, backed by mountains and hazy from distance, and a few far-off farmhouses, were the only habitations in sight.

Taking a direction diagonally from and down the river, in a line that would lead me on my journey's way, I
started to find, if possible, my friend's camp, or if not, to gain the road to Lerida. Juan, jumping a rabbit, dashed after him, and, three feet from the narrow path I had taken, was lost to sight in the dense sage-brush. I whistled and called to no purpose; he was to windward, and it is no use whistling against a gale. I waited for my dog's return till patience ceased to be a virtue; besides, I had no time to waste, I was "burning daylight," so again proceeding on my way, ascending every little rise of ground to look around for the whereabouts of my friend's camp and my lost dog. Before an hour had elapsed I spied patches of dug ground, where licorice-roots had been extracted, midway between me and the river to my right, and worked my way to them through the brush and reed-beds.

Arrived thereat, I found places where the soil had been quite recently turned up. I was all right, it was only a case of tracking, and in a few minutes "I ran in the trail" to my friend's camp, a small cabin in a hollow surrounded on three sides by tall reed-canes. I entered the door and was greeted with a shout of welcome. I had not been met at the river's side, my friend having been sure a crossing in such a gale down stream was impossible. The little cabin was full of labourers taking their "nooning." Breakfast was finished, but a meal for me was immediately set cooking, and, en attendant, my host and I started out to hunt for Juan. After going a short way we heard him, at intervals between the furious gusts of wind, howling dismally in the distance. We ran up on a knoll, caught occasional glimpses of the dog making wide circles to get
my trail, which, soon striking, he, ere long, reached us at a tearing gallop, and seemed ready to devour me with delight.

After breakfast, my friend accompanied me about a mile to show the way to a foot-bridge across a wide irrigating ditch, its only crossing for several miles, and pointing out the best way to proceed thence, bade me a final a dios. After traversing ploughed fields, alkaline flats, and sand barrens, the camino real was regained at the entrance to the hamlet seen from the Ebro's bank, and from there the road wound along the sides of gray-clay hills (the bluffs forming the enclosing rim to the river's valley). These hills were quite bare of vegetation, looking, consequently, extremely forbidding; nor was the aspect of the valley much better, such wheat as there was being short, scattered thinly over the ground, and sickly in colour.

At half-past three was passed, a mile to the right, the little town of Villafranca de Ebro, looking very picturesque and striking, lit up by the rays of the declining sun, that brought sharply out the detail of the towers of its Gothic church, and brightened and gilt the pointed gables of its houses; and soon after five the end of my day's journey was reached—the small town of Osera, situated immediately on the bank and in a big bend of the Ebro.

Osera has two posadas, both much of a muchness. I walked into one with the least forbidding exterior, and was glad to perceive that, for an inn in an Aragonesa country town, it was within rather clean than otherwise. A bed and supper were at my service, so I sat down in the
entrance passage, lit my pipe, and chatted with the host, a burly peasant proprietor, and his handsome wife. By-and-by the little son of the house, a child of ten years old, entered, satchel on back, on his return from school. This small boy literally "kissed hands," beginning with me as the stranger present, and consequently the first in honour, and ending with his youngest sister, a baby just able to toddle. It was the first time I had seen this old Spanish custom practised, and as the little fellow was of a pleasing countenance, and his hands and face clean, I did not mind the performance.

Supper was set out for me at the same table and time as for the family; but a more sumptuous, or rather less frugal, repast was furnished me than they were content with. A mess of cabbage and potatoes (the latter having been first boiled soft in water), stewed in olive-oil and water, and seasoned with little morsels of garlic fried in oil prior to being put with the cabbages and potatoes, salt, pepper, and red chillies; fried eggs and a sausage—a very hard one; a salad, no napkin, wine at discretion, but too fruity and sweet for my taste, is a full, true, and particular account of what was set before me.

My bedroom was clean, as also the bedding, the washing apparatus hardly worth mentioning, the chamber furnished principally with martyrs and virgins. I was one, a martyr of course, but only to a limited extent, for I was armed against the midnight tormentors. At Zaragoza I had purchased from a chemist a quarter of a pound of insecticide, and the Christian prevailed against the wild beasts.
A DELIGHTED CHILD.

On coming down in the morning, only the eldest daughter, a girl of twelve years old, seemed to be stirring. I requested to have my chocolate. She ran off, but soon returned with a lump in her hand, and asked, "Would I prefer to eat it raw, and wash it down with a drink of aguardiente, or have it cooked?" From which I infer that to breakfast on a lump of raw chocolate and a "go down" of still rawer spirits, is a not unusual Aragonesa meal. But I cared not to try such, so the little maid had to blow up a fire with the bellows and her mouth, which latter she seemed to prefer using to the former, and to cook me my jicara of chocolate after the ordinary fashion. At leaving, the little lass told me my bill was ten reals (two shillings), and seemed quite astonished at receiving a gratuity, kissed it, crossed herself, and ran upstairs flourishing the small silver coin over her head, evidently intending to show it in triumph. It was, perhaps, the first bit of piata she had ever had to call her own.
CHAPTER XIX.

A hard Road to Travel—An inhabited Smoke-bottle—"Everything in the House"—Bujaraloz—Wandering Knife-grinders—An Education in Patience—A sweet Picture—Wolves—Los Monégros and New Mexico—Penalba—An exceptionable Landlord—Suspicious Characters—"The usual Assistance"—"The Priest’s Business, not mine."

JANUARY 29, 1877.—The little town of Osera was left on one of the most lovely mornings that ever broke, and as, there, the Ebro and the road along which my route ran parted at right angles, I took my last look at a river I shall probably not see again; one I certainly shall never again give another as good a chance to drown me. Soon I found myself amidst barren, desert-looking hills; but they were not altogether as worthless as they appeared; the gray sage and brownish-green wire-grass growing sparsely on them was sufficiently nutritious and plentiful to afford sustenance to flocks of goats and sheep, of which I saw several. The road itself was, if possible, harder than it had been the evening before. It looked as though it had never been rained on, and the gray clay, parched by hot sun, swept by moistureless wind, was like cast-iron to one’s feet. When, at half-past eleven, I arrived at the first habitation come to on the road, I was almost footsore.
The house was a *posada*, and, on passing through its open portal, I stood in a huge stone stable, occupied only by a young woman sitting on the floor, knitting. She looked surprised at seeing me and Juan come in, and asked what I wanted.

"Some breakfast."

"For how many?"

"Only for one."

"What would your worship like? Whatever your worship wishes for shall be cooked."

"What is there in the house?"

"Everything!"

"Then cook everything, for I am hungry!"

The young woman got up, and inviting me to follow, led the way into the combined kitchen and living-room. This apartment was neither more nor less than a gigantic chimney, and in shape and proportions exactly like a champagne bottle, without a bottom, placed on the ground, entered by one small door, and having no other aperture excepting its mouth. It was flagged; a fire burned, or rather smudged, in its centre, and round three sides of it were wooden benches. Of course, this queer interior was almost dark, the light through the little doorway and the few rays able to struggle through the smoke down the funnel chimney, being all the illumination. It was darkness revealed, and the smoke of perhaps two centuries had blackened everything to the uttermost. When sufficiently accustomed to the darkness to see clearly, I took note of the other occupants of the room, if such it can be called. On one of the benches sat a man of about forty years
of age—a "good devil" sort of fellow—and very close to him reclined, in a most dégagé attitude, a sister of the woman who had brought me into this inhabited smoke-bottle. The relationship of the two females was apparent at a glance, and both were young and very good-looking. The man was probably the landlord. The women were too old to be his daughters, certainly were not his sisters, nor, I am sure, was either of them his wife. Perhaps they were his nieces, but, if so, he permitted himself to indulge in a licence of expression and conduct that was highly reprehensible in an uncle.

Soon "everything in the house" was cooked, and my meal set down before me, literally so, for there being no table in the establishment, an old smoke-blackened cooking-pot in which water was being boiled was placed on the floor in front of me, its lid taken off, and a plate substituted therefore, containing the "everything in the house," that is to say, a repetition of my previous night's supper minus the vegetables. A loaf of dark, hard, sour, most indifferent bread was put on the bare floor beside me, and a wooden fork furnished. "Vaya!" exclaimed the good-looking wench who had been officiating as cook, as she spread out her hands palms upwards, and I fell to work.

For the first time in Spain I had to ask for wine at a meal, and then, instead of having a bottle placed before me, was asked how much did I want. The wine proved poor for this country, but was the best thing provided, and I and Juan contented ourselves with what we could get.

These people were civil, but rude and rough in manner;
indeed, I have observed a gradual change for the worse in the manners and customs of the peasantry since leaving the land of the “honest” smugglers. My bill was as moderate as the quality of the fare. As to quantity, my big dog and I had not stinted ourselves. It was three reals. Sevenpence-halfpenny, including wine of course, of which I had drunk about a pint and a half, is not a ruinous price for a full meal for man and dog. In conversation with the “good devil,” I learned that the country I had traversed that morning was “a great grazing range.” One man, the richest in the district, ran on it a herd of twelve hundred head.

“Of cattle?”
“No, goats.”

The wind, which had been gradually rising, was, when I started again, blowing “great guns;” fortunately in my back, still it was most disagreeable. As I proceeded along, the hills on both sides became a rolling plain, and large fields of young, sickly-looking wheat appeared in every direction; but scarcely any habitations, those that were in sight being so small, and so closely resembling in colour the bare ground, as to be quite inconspicuous. The gray-clay soil showed occasional horizontal bands of sulphide of lime, and several rude lime-kilns appeared at intervals. Towards evening the town of Bujaraloz appeared in the distance. It stood in the middle of a wide depression on the general level of the country, looking verdant with wheat, and close thereto lay a small lake, of perhaps fifty acres in extent. Bujaraloz was to be my stopping-place for the night. By five o’clock I arrived there, and was glad to do
so, for the desperately hard ground, the heat—the sun had shone fiercely forth part of the day—and the strong wind, had fatigued me much.

The one posada of Bujaraloz was a dirty affair—a very dirty one, and the best meal it could afford me simply wretched. White beans boiled with a little grease in water, bread like that I had had for breakfast, and, boiled together, some cabbage and salt cod—a vile mess. Again I had to ask for wine. Again no napkin was to be had.

After supper, on taking my seat under the hood over the fire, in the dirty den which served for living-room and kitchen, I was immediately accosted in French, and welcomed as a countryman, by two individuals, who I afterwards ascertained to be itinerant French knife-grinders, who, like myself, were for the night guests of the inn. The accent of my answer proved, doubtless, the truth of my statement, that I was English, but my knife-grinding friends seemed not a whit less pleased at finding a person with whom they could converse in a language not understood by the natives, for though they had ground knives, razors, and scissors in Spain for ten years, and spoke Spanish like natives, it evidently did them good—before the face of the people of the country, and without being understood by them—to abuse the ways of the posadas of Aragon, and the rough, uncouth behaviour of its peasantry and inn-keepers. "Ah," they said, "we are in a country of savages. It is not like beautiful France!"

I got a better room and bed than I had expected; both were large and clean. The window-holes were spacious, and the washing apparatus, if limited, sufficient.
furniture there was none. On preparing for bed I discovered why my feet ached, and felt so hot and sore. They were covered with deep blood-blisters. I was disgusted, for the stations between me and Lerida were far apart from one another, and should my feet give out, it would seriously inconvenience me. Of course there was but one thing for it, to open my penknife and run the blade through the blisters—experience had long since taught me that—and, trusting to be able to resume my march next morning, I turned in and slept soundly. I had intended an early start, but, as usual, was frustrated in my endeavour to do so. On asking for my chocolate in the morning, I was informed the cook had gone to early matins, and I must wait till she returned from church. “She will be back in a little moment,” said the landlord—a big, lazy-looking lout, who was making his desayuno on a crust of wretched bread, and aguardiente, which he drank by “word of mouth” out of a bottle. The “little moment” proved to be over an hour.

Truly a trip in Spain is an education in patience. To waste an hour of the cool of early morn, waiting for an eggcupful of chocolate and a little thin slice of bread, is decidedly aggravating. But grumbling on a journey only annoys the grumbler; besides, I had not come to Spain to grumble. I can, did while at home, and will again when I return, grumble in my own country against its climate, its cooking, the way the women walk, and, generally speaking, against everything that travel shows England does not excel in. Is it not my natural inheritance and birthright, as a Briton, to grumble at everything British
that does not suit me? Yea, I will even, if so inclined, grumble at the income-tax. So with a bland smile, looking, in fact, rather pleased than otherwise, I paid my bill of eight reals, handed a small gratuity to the chambermaid, with a parting compliment; and the host, after a preliminary suck at the bottle (his breakfast was evidently to last, at intervals, all day), wishing me to "Go with God," I replied, with a polite wave of the hand, "and you remain with him," and departed.

The morning was simply superb, balmy as spring, not a cloud in the air; the lightest of white frosts melting on the ground; a suspicion of a breeze from the south, just enough for the air not to be stagnant; a ghost of a mist rising on the low grounds; larks singing all round, the goat-bells of distant flocks ringing in the air. I took a good long gaze all round me. The old-time village I had just left, standing by its deep-blue little lake, bathed in the warm haze, distorted into quaint grotesqueness by the vapours stealing from the water's surface, made a sweetly-pretty picture. As I stood there a goatherd passed with a small flock. I inquired if there were any fish in the lake. "Fish! why the lake is so salt and alkaline it is not drinkable for man. It is hardly fit for my goats. The town is supplied by wells, and the water of them is bad," was the answer I received.

The pastor and his flock were just disappearing in a hollow to the right, when, to my amazement, I observed three wolves trotting, in Indian file, across the road, just in front. They were, I take it, a female and two males, and looked about the size of large colleys, and very gaunt;
but, being too far off for shot to be effective—about one hundred yards—I did not fire. Juan, too, saw them, but did not appear inclined to cultivate their acquaintance.

The wolves gave the finishing touch to, and were the most appropriate living accessories of, the landscape.

A gradual rise of half a mile’s length, a steep acclivity of a couple of hundred yards, took me out of the table-land basin, in whose centre I had left Bujaraloz, up to, and on, a higher level of country, and immediately my view became widely extended. I had a sea’s horizon. Around me stretched a broken, accidented plain of small, isolated, perpendicularly-sided, flat-topped hills, with intervening wide, shallow valleys and basins. To my right rose above the horizon what seemed a line of pale blue clouds, drifting into the clear sky, but which I knew to be the far-away Sierras de Cucalon y San Just, whose nearest peaks were sixty miles off. And to my left, more than one hundred miles distant, but looking within an easy day’s ride, so sharply defined, so brilliantly white, did they glisten in the morning sun, stretched in a long continuous chain of serrated peaks the Pyrenees. Oh, how cold they looked! one immense unbroken sheet of virgin snow.

The prospect, though extensive to vastness, and having many of the elements of the sublime, struck the mind with a sentiment of barrenness and solitude. But for the broad, hard, well-kept highway, I could have fancied myself back again once more on New Mexico’s wild plains. The table-topped, precipitous-faced hills were the same as these. The Pyrenees looked exactly like the Sierra Madre. The warm, moistureless, clear air, the brilliant sky, were similar;
so, too, was the general hue of everything, and the apparent absence of human habitation.

On looking for details, however, it became at once evident I was in a land of industry, that the expanse around me had to a great extent been conquered by man's hand from the curse of sterility, and converted into a huge granary. The light green tint which covered extensive stretches was given by young wheat; much of the barren-looking portion was ploughed and harrowed ground; nor were small, low, widely-scattered-apart houses wanting; but so exactly did the brownish-gray bricks of which they were constructed match in colour with their surroundings, that only after being closely looked for, did they strike the eye. I have since learned that the country I was looking over is, when it does rain in due season, the greatest wheat-field of Spain, but that not few are the years wherein no propitious moisture falls. Then there is no harvest. The young wheat scorches and withers on the ground, and the whole region is indeed a desert.

At nine o'clock I came to a large engraved stone. It marked the north-western boundary of the province of Zaragoza; another step and I was in that of Huesca.

At half-past ten I reached the little town of Peñalba, and being very hungry, and finding it could boast of a posada, repaired to it, and obtained breakfast. It was a very poor meal, like unto, and scarce better than, the one eaten the day previous. The inn resembled much in appearance what one would suppose a highwayman's boosing-ken was like in the time of Dick Turpin. Had it been a decent one, I should have halted for the day, as my
poor feet were troubling me; but the next town being but two hours farther on, I continued my way, hoping there to find more prepossessing accommodation.

Soon after leaving Peñalba, I got amongst small, broken, stony hills, quite devoid of soil, wheat patches disappeared, and for some miles I seemed truly to be traversing a complete waste. Emerging from this forbidding tract, I came to a more level and productive district, and at two o'clock got to the town of Candásnos.

This place at once favourably impressed me by its appearance. A tall, round, white stone chimney, and steam stack, from which issued puffs of steam, was a harbinger and sign of progress. Candásnos is a very little town, but many of its houses are new, and most of its old ones recently whitewashed. I had not seen whitewashed outer walls for many a long league, certainly had not seen clean whitewash since leaving Zaragoza. A short way in town stood a neat trim-looking barrack for the guardia civil, and in its porch, chatting and laughing with a lot of girls, sat two members of the corps.

Next to the building having the tall chimney and steam stack was a largish better-class house, the best-looking in the town; and of the elderly blue-eyed man, who sat in its entrance hall, I inquired where I should find the posada. His answer pleased me. “This is the posada. You must not pass here without eating and resting. Please enter.” And, rising up, he relieved me of my gun and haversack, led me into a clean if bare sitting-room, and asked what would I like to refresh myself with until supper time. It was the first occasion in this country of Spain on which a
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landlord had received me otherwise than as though I was a nuisance, come to disturb him from his lazy repose, but who, from the nature of his calling, had by him to be tolerated.

I took a glass of aguardiente, gladly disencumbered my feet of my walking-boots, and slipped them into my alpargatas. Then this attentive old landlord suggested that the sunshine in front of the house made that the pleasantest place to rest, and taking a chair out for me, set it against the wall, and told me to make myself comfortable.

While enjoying repose, warmth, and a cigarro, two disreputable-looking individuals, whose dress and physiognomy proclaimed them Frenchmen, came up to and asked me in villainous Spanish if I could understand French. Answering in the affirmative, they told me in that language that I beheld before me two míserables, who were in a hard plight—strangers in a country whose language they could not speak, and therefore unable to make their wants known, without money and hungry. Volubly the two Frenchmen commenced then to explain the circumstances that had brought this unhappy state of things to pass. But I cut them short, not being given to believe tales told in such cases, nor wishful to encourage lying by affording opportunity to practise doing so to me, and said their state called for assistance under any circumstances, and then handed them at once all the coin I could conveniently spare. They thanked me with vehement expressions of gratitude and departed.

These two made the number of Frenchmen I have
assisted since I came to Spain three. The first one, I have since ascertained, was a rascal, a swindler, and a thief. These, I had little doubt, were poor devils of deserters; but it was quite possible they were escaped galériens.

From me they went straight to the barracks of the guardia civil, showed some papers to the two guardias civiles in the porch, had quite a confab with, and accompanied by one of them, passed out of sight down the street and round a corner. Before long one of the guardians of order came to the posada to ask for my papers. Of him I inquired what sort of chaps the Frenchmen were. He told me that, according to their passport and account of themselves, they were travelling paupers, professing to be on their way to Barcelona in search of work there at their trade of machinists; failing to do which they would leave the country by any ship they could get passage in for their labour. That they had a pass from the civil governor of the province, and a requisition on the alcaldes of the towns on their route to give them "the usual assistance." He further told me that in Spain able-bodied pauper foreigners never had any difficulty in getting such papers, provided nothing was known against them, the authorities being glad to pass them on, and get rid of such trash out of the country. "But," said he, "they will keep hungry on the allowance they'll get, for we do not encourage that class of men; and if they leave their designated route, or fail to report themselves to us at every station on it, they'll pretty soon find themselves in prison as rogues and vagabonds. There are lots of such Frenchmen on this route, and more of them than like it in gaol."
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Seeing a man go past the front of the posada, wearing boots, and sporting a hat on his head, and so evidently one of Candásnos's most superior citizens, I suspected immediately he was the owner or manager of the steam flour-mill, for such I had ascertained the tall-chimneyed building to be; and inquiry proving this to be so, I watched for his return, and when the opportunity presented itself asked permission to look over his mill, a request that was most politely complied with. Though the day was Sunday, it was in full work. Its engine, an upright cylinder, having the minimum possible amount of gearing, and very direct action, was running a pair of large stones, and doing excellent work. Engine and machinery had been made at Barcelona. The enterprise was only just started, but its proprietor said he had every prospect of making a great success. I hazarded the observation he must have plenty of grain to grind, if it was necessary to run on Sundays. "Indeed," said he, "I have to run when I can get my hands to work. They won't do anything on saints' days, of which there are more, as you know, than there are Sundays, and they'd as soon work as not on the Lord's days. Anyway, that's the priest's business, not mine."
CHAPTER XX.


JANUARY 30, 1877.—The Sunday evening spent at Candasnos was being celebrated by the burning of huge bonfires in its narrow and only street; the day being one of those Sundays specially appointed whereon to pray souls out of purgatory.

Within a distance of sixty yards I counted seven of these tangible reminders of the flames of futurity, each, however, a centre of mirth and revelry; I doubt if anyone there thought of “the great majority.” Our blazing pile, the one in front of the posada, was not the least of them. Round each were congregated men, women, and children yelling, laughing, and romping; but though Sunday is a great dancing-day in Spain, not a note of the guitar was to be heard. In fact, since leaving Zaragoza I have not even so much as seen one. Possibly, “according to the eternal fitness of things,” the guitar, the vine, and the olive go together, and I have no right to expect to hear its twang in a country which only produces wheat.
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Supper was a great improvement on my late meals. Bedroom and bed clean and comfortable. The little cup of chocolate served promptly in the morning. I felt well rested and refreshed, paid ten reals, and got a comparatively early start.

At half-past ten o'clock I arrived abreast of a small roadside settlement, every house of which excepting one was either a total ruin or nearly such. In their day they had been residences of people of quality, testified by the stone armorial sculptures over their broken porches. The one unruined and inhabited building proved to be a venta, and was my chance for a breakfast. Traversing a wide hall, cheerful with the sunshine that poured through a large open double doorway, I entered one of the dark dens that in the country dwellings of Aragon seem always to serve for kitchen and parlour, and there perceived, seated on a wooden bench, drinking wine and munching dry bread, my two vagabond acquaintances of the day before. They sat regaling themselves with the two cheapest refreshments of the country, and trying to converse with the only other occupant of the room, a clean, tidy old woman, seated on the floor opposite them spinning.

After exchanging salutations, I turned to this spinster, or old wife, as the case might be, and asked if I could have breakfast; and she answering, "Certainly," and proceeding at once to cooking, I confidently supposed a meal was about to be prepared for me, and so, to while away the time of waiting, entered into conversation with the two Frenchmen.

These apostles of "the dignity of labour" soon intro-
diced what was evidently their favourite topic, "the rights of man," launching into a denunciation of "the tyranny of capital," and kindred grievances; evidently they were Socialists, possibly Communists, perhaps Internationalists. One of them showed me his "pass," on the back of which the authorities had from time to time endorsed the several amounts of "relief" given to him, and the dates when. The guardia civil was right. The Frenchmen would "keep hungry" on "the usual assistance." A real per day seemed what was considered enough for subsistence—a ha'p'orth of wine and two pennyworths of bread, I suppose.

They told me that even their poverty-struck appearance had not prevented them being waylaid in the "bad country" we were in. And one of them narrated that on leaving Peñalba, he and his companion were suddenly pinioned from behind, menaced with knives, stripped, and searched for money. Having but a few sous, they were kicked and beaten by the disappointed robbers, and soundly abused for travelling without sufficient money to pay for "the right of the road." However, the few sous were not taken from them, which the Frenchmen considered very strange. I did not. To take them would have been, commercially speaking, to take a loss. Absolution for highway robbery would have cost more. And Spanish thieves are all devout Catholics!

Possibly the tale I had just heard was altogether a coinage of its narrator; but it might have been true, the Frenchman gave no other indication of being a romancer, and I was surprised to find, as our conversation continued, how well informed he and his comrade were on questions
of political economy, and in the modern history of England as well as of their native country.

Presently the old woman took the eatables off the fire, and carried them out of the kitchen; and I looked for her return to announce that breakfast was served in the hall. I waited till patience became a vice, and then went to look after her; she was sitting in the sunlight engaged as when I first saw her, spinning, and asked what did I want. "My breakfast," I exclaimed with emphasis; "where have you put it; I am hungry and in a hurry to be gone." "Oh, you never ordered your breakfast," she quietly replied. "I and my family have just eaten ours; you could have eaten with us. You only asked could you have breakfast. Now you will have to wait till I cook again, and take what you can get; but I will give you a home-made sausage—made of killed meat, not of goats and pigs who have died like those at most places—and some new-laid eggs, and a salad." And she returned to the kitchen and her cooking. It was provoking, but could not be helped.

I had had enough of the political economists, and sat down in the sunny hall to console myself with a cigarrilla. While smoking, a very superior looking mule-waggon drove up, and a middle-aged man of most respectable appearance, and a very pretty, showily-dressed young woman alighted therefrom and entered. The señor saluted, and took a seat in the hall. The señora, or señorita, as she might happen to be, produced a large hand-bag from under a wrap, and disappeared into the kitchen; to which retreat I, too, soon repaired, to look after my breakfast and the old' woman, of course. I found my breakfast was nearly
ready, and the newly-arrived traveller, with her gown pinned back, her skirts and sleeves tucked well up, getting her and companion's (the señor's) breakfast; for she was cooking what had been the contents of her hand-bag.

The meals were ready almost simultaneously, and then, by the two women, set out on the hall-table, upon a clean white cloth, which was furnished by the young one, who fetched it out of the mule-waggon, and all three of us sat down to eat together, having mutually invited one another to partake of our respective dishes; I being the clear gainer by the arrangement, for my new acquaintances had been well furnished with raw material, and la señorita—for she was not a married woman—was a good as well as a lively cook.

After we had eaten a few mouthfuls, the señor turned towards and with a most unexceptional accent addressed me in excellent French; and after a few complimentary remarks touching the pleasure of meeting me, &c., he asked what department I belonged to.

I am continually annoyed by being taken for a Frenchman, not that I consider such mistake a bad compliment, per se, but I find in Spain the French are most cordially hated by all degrees of people; and as, per contra, English are liked, it is annoying, to say the least of it, to be so misjudged. In this instance I have no doubt I got even with my unintentional aggravator, for I replied: "Sir, I am not a countryman of yours, but an Englishman." He hastened to explain that neither was he French, but a Spaniard; adding he, however, supposed few Spaniards spoke French with such an accent as he did, for he had
enjoyed unusual advantages in acquiring that language, having "passed his class" in France, and also been a traveller, on commission, in that country for six years. He now lived in Zaragoza with his daughter—pointing to the pretty girl beside me—and was an itinerant merchant, also a collector of old coins; and, too, picked up, when possible, pictures of merit for a Paris house. On his present trip he had obtained over three hundred coins, chiefly Roman, and would show me some choice gold ones if I wished. Of course I did. After inspecting them we talked of art in general, and his amount of knowledge on the subject quite surprised me. Our opinions concerning many things coinciding, we were naturally mutually pleased with and impressed by the discernment of each other; and on separating from him, this "itinerant merchant" professed great regret that our ways lay in opposite directions, as had they been similar, he would have been delighted to offer me a seat in his conveyance, so as to be enabled to enjoy the pleasure of my society—a flattering speech that his pretty daughter added a still more gratifying remark to.

Soon after leaving this best venta seen since leaving Zaragoza, the country commenced to fall rapidly, and became very broken. All the hillsides and steep grounds were either bare of vegetation or sparsely covered with desert plants. The flats and hollows, however, were green with a much more thriving growth of young wheat than I had before seen since quitting the valley of the Ebro. This thriving condition they owed to their immediate vicinity to steep adjacent acclivities and numerous higher-lying gullies, and to the thorough arrangements which
had been made to intercept, catch, concentrate together, and distribute over them every available drop of rain that fell above their level. Indeed, since entering on Los Monégrons, I noticed with admiration the extensive system of so doing everywhere apparent. Each gully, every washout, all depressions in the ground, were invariably dammed by stone walls, sometimes slight and rough in construction; at others, in places where torrents—when it did rain—might be expected, of good solid masonry. As a consequence, the land between these stone dams had, in time, from deposit and wear, become quite level, and small ditches served to convey and spread the surplus water running over from one level to another. In short, *Los Monégrons*, once a barren waste, apparently a foredoomed desert, has, by the industry of ages, and thanks to the catch-rain arrangements, for the introduction of which Spain owes an eternal debt of gratitude to the Moors, been made a series of scattered wheatfields, some, indeed, little if any larger than billiard-tables, but many of them square miles in extent. The smallness of some of the cultivated spots of ground, lying below the short watersheds, was quite a remarkable feature in the landscape. No matter how small it were, every piece of ground on which it was possible to concentrate the rain-fall seemed to have been seized upon to grow wheat.

The day was lovely as one of England's finest summer ones, larks were singing all round, a flock of plover wheeled and whistled in the air; the view, though totally lacking the charms of wood and water, and, excepting the birds, seemingly untenanted, was unique and interesting, and but
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for the state of my feet I should have greatly enjoyed my walk.

As evening was closing in, on rounding a hill, I came in sight of Fraga, the last town in Huesca. It looked large and important, is the cabeza of a very large partido, and I trusted there to once more find a good inn and the comforts of life.

When I first came in view of Fraga it was still some miles off, but, lying far below me, seemed quite near. Soon the road commenced descending rapidly, winding serpentwise round and along steep hillsides. A splendidly engineered and completed road, having fine ample-sized cut-stone culverts crossing under it wherever necessary, to carry off the wash from gullies, and a continuous stone parapet, breast-high in places, on its perpendicular side. Below ran the Cinca, a river whose head-springs lay behind the Mont Perdu of the Pyrenees, making verdant with its waters a wide valley covered with olives, figs, pomegranates, and vines, and on the steep slope of its opposite side, rising house over house, street above street, the town and its dismantled and ruinous old castle, while, far as eye could see up and down the deep chasm through the table-land which constitutes the valley of the Cinca, a continuous level of rich, luxuriant verdure presented itself to view. Only by the leaflessness of vines and fig-trees could I realise that it was not summer time. An avenue-like road across this Eden of a valley led me to the bridge over the river—a trestle-work, two hundred and eighty yards in length, but only one-third that distance was water; the rest
being river shingle, then dry, but, when the Pyrenean snows should melt, to be swept over by a raging torrent.

The street-way between the houses of the town fronting the water and the river's wall was crowded with children, women, and idlers, for the day was the fiesta of San Francisco de Salis. Their general appearance was forbidding enough, all were dirty and uncouth. I inquired for the best posada, and was sent to a large, dilapidated, filthy building near the river's bank. I entered and asked of an untidy but be-ribboned and bedizened young woman, met in the horse-passage, if I could have a room and meals. She did not know; I must ask the landlord. Where was he? Did not know again. It was a fiesta night; he might not come home till morning.

Starting forth, I searched for another and, I hoped, a better inn. Surely, thought I, in so large a place, the centre and market of so fruitful a valley, the second town in importance and population of the province of Huesca, there must be such.

I wandered about the miserable, stony, steep, uneven streets of Fraga, and saw only hovels and dens. The least bad-looking house I saw was a saddler's shop. I asked the man behind the counter to be directed to a respectable inn—the best. The saddler, evidently from his accent and appearance not a native citizen, directed me to the one I came from.

"But," said I, "it is a beastly hole."

"I know it is," he replied, "but it is the best. None other is fit for a pig."
I told him what the maid had said.

"Never you mind what she told you," he answered.

"All she wanted was to drive you away; so as not to have the trouble of making your bed. You go back, and take up your quarters there. You can do no better." So I went.

I entered the kitchen and living-room, sat down on a bench close to the hearth and took items. The room (?) was a funnel chimney, partitioned from the mule quarters by a dirty smoke-dried matting, and lit by a dismal old oil lamp. On the bench round the embers of a fire lolled several men and children, and a dirty slovenly "old fatty" was cooking some sort of a mess in the hot ashes. With much difficulty, and after considerable delay, I procured a supper. Such an apology! One egg, fried with a small hard villainous sausage. I thought of what the clean, tidy old woman of the venta had said about posada sausages, and I had my suspicions—very strong suspicions. A small loaf of the worst bread I have yet tasted in Spain, and a glass of poor wine, comprises the total of all I could get for self and dog. What a meal! It was served on a bare filthy table. A dirty wooden spoon was the only table utensil. I did not linger over that feast (?).

It was getting chilly, and I rejoined the group around the fire to warm and smoke. In person, in language, in manners, they were the most dirty, uncivilised, rough people I ever sat under a roof with. My remarks to them were either unanswered or replied to by a grunt, nor to one another were they more courteous. There was but one good-looking person present—a young mother with an
NOVEL ABLUTIONS.

infant in her lap; she was quite pretty, had really refined regular features, but otherwise was as bad as the rest.

Her baby requiring washing, the operation was performed publicly in the following and, to me, novel manner: This madonna-faced female took her infant by one ankle, raised the young child up, and giving it a good shake, reversed all its clothes; baby yelling like mad all the time, The old cook then held handy to her reach, and half full of water, the glass I had drunk out of at supper, and the mother, dipping therein the corner of a dirty apron, gave baby a smear all over with it, wiped it dry with her petticoat, and the ablution was completed. Then she rolled her brat up in numerous dirty wraps, and put it to sleep on an old sheepskin in a corner!

I had had enough and to spare of such society, and asked to be shown my room. The one redeeming feature of the chamber I was led to consisted in its not being dirty—at least, not very. It was about eight feet square and had no window, excepting a hole four inches by three in dimensions, situated close to the ceiling and opening into a dark passage. A truckle-bed was all the furniture and appurtenances it contained. In appearance it was a condemned cell, in fact, a "demned" cell to offer to a white man as a bedroom. Of course this black-hole was equally dark by day or night, so every time I awoke I had to strike a light and consult my watch to ascertain if it were yet morning; and at last discovering it was, I lit the dismal oil lamp that had been left with me and dressed. Of course I could not wash, and I knew it would be futile to ask for a basin, towel, and water, let alone soap. I do not believe there
were such things in the house. Everybody in it had old dirt on their hands and face. The extensive (?) ablutions of the baby the night before were probably as heavy a wash as is ever made in the best posada of that city of the province of Huesca, which stands in rank next to its capital, a city of four thousand souls. I had to wait nearly an hour for my chocolate, the lump with which it was made having to be fetched from a shop, there being none in the house, and the girl doubtlessly availing herself of her errand to enjoy a gossip. I gladly quitted the vile place. Fraga is not fit for a white man and a Christian to visit.
CHAPTER XXI.


FEBRUARY 1, 1877.— Climbing up the steep road that, winding up bare gray cliffs to the broken table-land above, led from Fraga and out of the deep valley of the Cinca, though depressed at starting by recent uncomfortable experiences, my spirits were soon rallied and invigorated by a balmy tonic morning air, and consoled by the reflection it was the last day of my pilgrimage across Los Montgrons. It was another most charming morning. I was on the home-stretch for Lerida—there I would rest and enjoy myself; so when my feet, warming to their work, ceased to hurt, I was once more the jolly wanderer.

The top of the ascent was nearly achieved, when, being hailed from below and looking back, I perceived a farmer-like man striving to overtake me. On his so doing, he saluted most respectfully and apologised for calling out to me, alleging as excuse he had considerable money on him, so did not like to risk travelling alone, and knew
he could do no better than journey in the company of the inspector of roads, especially as he noticed my worship carried a gun. I told him I was not the inspector of roads, but an Englishman travelling for pleasure. "Ah!" said he, "that is just as good so far as protection goes, and better so far as obtaining information does, for I love greatly to hear of foreign countries, especially of England." And forthwith I found myself, figuratively speaking, witness-boxed. My inquisitive friend seemed a very intelligent individual. He was not of Aragon, and gave that portion of the ancient kingdom we were in a very bad name; said it was the worst portion of the Spains; that Fraga was "un posoalbanal" (sink-hole), and its people — (an unwritable and untranslatable word). I cordially agreed with him. This good man showed me several short cuts across table-topped hills, from whose flat summits splendid views of the Pyrenees and mountain chains of Northern Huesca presented themselves, and round whose bases wound the well-graded waggon-road to Lerida, for the general level of the country was again falling.

After going three miles in company, my companion left me, the house he was going to being close at hand, and I had not long parted from him when I was overhauled by a regular tramp and his "doxy." These illustrious individuals were not at all proud stuck-up people, and without the slightest encouragement insisted on accommodating their pace to mine, whether I loitered or pushed on, and in talking to me. The man spoke excellent Castellano, without any detectable local accent; and accepting the inevitable, I fell into conversation with him. This
vagabond told me he had served in the war twenty years ago; had been once attached to an English contingent; spent a few weeks in England, having gone there as an officer's servant, but could only speak a few words of that country's language, which he immediately fired off for my benefit, but with an accent that rendered them almost unintelligible.

The day became distressingly hot. We were traversing an almost barren alkali plain; the few attempts at agriculture were, for the season at least, manifest failures. The appearance of the country surrounding us was simply wretched; the hot acrid alkaline dust got into my boots, through my socks. My feet commenced to give me "the devil," and I was unhappy.

On leaving this uninviting stretch of country by a long hill, we passed near its summit the boundary line between Aragon and Catalonia, and his trampship informed me I was arrived in a more civilised region than the one we had just left. A little farther on and we came to a venta. The tramp, with the air of a grave courtier, invited me to enter, and repose and refresh myself with him. I was quite tired, very hungry, and complied with his request.

The woman, who was companion and señora to this beggarly caballero a pie, produced out of a dirty, dusty, and travel-stained canvas sack she had been carrying over her shoulder, a stale tortilla and some bread, and proceeded to warm the former in the hot ashes of the hearth; and he called in a lordly way for a bottle of wine, which with difficulty I prevailed upon him to allow me to pay for. It cost twopence. With the warmed-up tortilla, the woman
brought to the table whereat her companion and I were seated, a clean plate for me, and the two insisting I should help myself, I did so, and being hungry, found it excellent; the bread, however, was indifferent.

Whilst we were eating, two mounted guardias civiles rode up, entered, and asked for our papers.

These functionaries looked sharply and, I thought, suspiciously enough from me to my companions and back again. They were puzzled to see such a strangely-assorted trio; indeed, I felt myself to be in queer company. The raggiest, most sinister-looking, sturdy beggar of England would have, in personal appearance, compared favourably with the man. As to the woman, she was in all respects a fit and appropriate mate for him; and, as usual with such females, was “as women wish to be who love their lords.” Their and my papers being, however, en règle, the two guardias could only wonder and pass on.

Having concluded our slight repast, we three, still in company, proceeded on our way.

Before arriving at the little town of Alcarraz, where I purposed to get a regular breakfast and take a good rest, I made a determined attempt to escape from the tramps. They had been polite, after their fashion, and hospitable, but I did not want to enter a town in such disreputable company; and they showing symptoms of fatigue, and lagging on the way, I pretended to be in a hurry, and wishing them a dios, put on a killing spurt. It was rough on my blistered feet, but I went ahead at a pace the tired tramps could not live at, and soon was at a safe distance ahead.
Alcarraz, though but a little place, showed signs of much improvement on the towns I had lately passed; and, in it, I directly found a clean, respectable venta, and—the second encountered in Spain—civil, empressé landlord. He, too, took gun and traps from, and gave his guest a hearty and polite greeting. This commendable host was smoking a very good cigar, and after conducting me into a clean dining-room, handing a chair, and requesting my worship to be seated, produced another from a case, and offered it with an air and manner rendering refusal impossible. It would assist, as he said, to pass the time comfortably while breakfast was being prepared.

My déjeuner à la fourchette at Alcarraz's little venta was a very fair meal, properly appointed, well served, and its accompanying wine excellent; and, after my late unfortunate experience in the commissarial line, I enjoyed it thoroughly. Then I fed my dog, took a good rest, another smoke, paid the modest and, considering my entertainment, extremely reasonable bill of fifteen pence, and then pushed on for Lerida.

Soon the two fortified hills, ancient Gothic cathedral tower, and closely-packed houses of that provincial capital were in sight; the district of ill-repute—Los Monégrons—was passed, and the view changed in character.

A charming panorama was before me. Through its foreground wound the many bends and curves of a beautiful river—the Segre—whose upper portion, skirting the foot of the Pyrenean mountains of La Cerdana, coursing down the valley north of the Sierra del Cadi, was fed by the snows of the Col de la Percha in Roussillon—a
river that is a French tribute to Spain. Irrigated by its fertilising waters, extended for miles a level tract of vineyards, olives, and almonds, gardens and nurseries, dotted with houses and clumps of shade-trees. Beyond, were the *Llanos del Urgel*, a vast plain strongly accentuated with detached ridges, small table-mountains, and sharp peaks; looking, generally speaking, from its gray-brown colour, to be a desert tract; but evidently, in truth, only partially such, as proved by there being no less than five towns of considerable size in sight ere distance rendered more invisible. On the horizon were the blue mountains of *La Llana* and Montserrat, and through a gap in the hills to the north was obtainable a peep of the snow-clad Pyrenees. Above was a sky of cloudless blue. A warm sunset glow brightened and illumined the entire picture.

Twilight was approaching as I walked into Lerida, and no time was to be lost in finding quarters.

I walked along a street facing the river Segre, prospecting for a promising resting-place, and had not gone far when a well-built, clean, comfort-suggesting, large-windowed, cheerful-looking *fonda* — it was no *posada*, no *venta* — claimed my notice. On its wide balcony, three attractive and elegantly-attired girls and two young officers were chatting together, mutually entertaining each other. If I went farther I might fare worse. I entered the courtyard — clean as any gentleman's — passed through the large open door of the house, and stood in a spacious stall. A trim, well-built, *très-lancée*, smart waiting-maid appeared, and asked if I required a room. I did.
“Then please follow me, and I will show your worship to one.”

She led the way up a wide, easy flight of steps, across a long, tastefully-decorated upper hall—whose French windows opened to the balcony so agreeably occupied, and into as comfortably-furnished a bed-chamber as any single man need wish for; told me the hours of meals, the charge per day, and, on my expressing satisfaction with the room, inquired what I would like to take before dinner-time should arrive. I told her a large jug of hot water. The girl stared with astonishment, for something to eat and drink was her idea of my requirements. I explained: “Not to drink, but to wash with; I do not want to spoil my appetite for dinner.” She brought it and left me.

With the expenditure of much soap—of which, by-the-bye, there was a tablet of excellent quality on the washstand—and personal exertion I got rid of the real estate I had accumulated while journeying from Zaragoza, dressed the blisters on my feet with tobacco, and felt comfortable. Once again I was in a civilised house, and, being in Spain, felt sure of good company, good living, and an absence of insect tormentors. I had “fallen on my feet.” I would stop where I was until they were well.

Juan stretched himself on the carpet of striped crimson and yellow matting covering the waxed oaken floor, evidently satisfied. He knew the quarters were good as well as I did, that once more we were in clover. The dog was as footsore as his master, as glad to come to an anchor. That long road of iron hardness, the penetrating
alkaline dust, the hot sun, the long journadas, the poor and scanty fare that had so often been our portion had, too, told on him.

A few days at mine inn has proved I made a lucky hit when entering it. The table is both profusely liberal and extremely choice; the cooking excellent; and I profess to know something of that fine art, both theoretically and practically, having turned my attention to it as one of those things everybody ought to understand.

My only dissatisfaction as regards the living is with the wine, which is a Bordeaux. Being infinitely dearer than the native wine, it is of course more fashionable, and, therefore, I suppose our hostess, who naturally from her sex is a better judge of fashion than wine, thinks her house ought to give such to its guests. In my opinion, as compared to what I have been lately drinking, it is most inferior. I shall have to go through a course of English beer before I can again take proper pleasure in Bordeaux. Neither do the almonds suit my taste, for, as always in this country, they are quite spoiled; but I do not mind that. The custom here is to slowly roast them, a process which entirely dissipates the essential flavour, and substitutes therefor that of roasted wood; in fact, they become no better than so many acorns which have been similarly treated. The reason alleged for this barbarity is, so doing renders the almonds less unwholesome. I say, what is the use of being at the trouble of making anything wholesome, if at the same time you render it not worth eating?

The cook here, a white-garmented individual wearing the cap of his order, tells me he has served "with approa-
tion” in French, Italian, and English houses, and I have no doubt he has. We have held several arguments together touching the relative merits and demerits of French and Spanish cooking; for to elicit opinion, and in consequence of natural contrariness, I, as usual, espoused the opposition. But I am a badly defeated individual. The chef maintained that the French were good “disguisers,” but totally failed as “developers,” and that to be able to develop natural flavours, not to destroy, obliterate, or confuse them, proved the artiste. “Eat of twenty French dishes,” said he, “and if you look not at the carte I defy you to tell what they profess to be made of, for every true flavour is so overlaid with that of foreign sauces that the several dishes cease to be mutton, beef, venison, and are simply messes. Did not the famous cook of the Duc Decazes serve up an ancient pair of his master’s hunting-boots, which an assembled tableful of guests pronounced to be excellent eating; and is not such feat (?) recorded by them as a triumph of culinary skill? I say doing so proves a state of hopeless misdirection of talent. If I as a Spanish cook had directed the cooking of those old boots, I would have brought out their true flavour so strongly that no man living could eat of them. In a word, French cooks spoil good victuals, but make trash eatable. We make good raw material divine, and leave trash to the dogs.”

This learned cook was too many guns for me; I limbered up, and left him master of the situation—did not propose to make practical disproof of his ability to serve up old boots in such a manner that I could not eat them.

The chef is the only indoor male domestic, the rest of
the house servants—waiters, or rather waitresses, included—being clean, neat, smart, and attentive girls.

The guests of the fonda are a very pleasant lot, but not numerous. About twenty generally sit down to dinner, most of them transients; but there is a little party at the upper end of the table of habitués, some of whom have been in the house over a year. They are quite friendly and jocose together, and amongst them I have succeeded in getting myself placed, and have already fraternised with several and got on good terms with all. The principal individuals of this coterie are the Medical Director of the provincial military hospital, the District Colonel of guardias civiles, a major of engineers, two subalterns of infantry, and the Director-General of the telegraph department for the province; a married couple, rather stylish people, are here too. The husband is so lover-like in his attentions as to provoke smiles from the rest of the company. Did not the "great expectations" of the lady forbid the idea, it might be supposed the couple were passing their honeymoon.

With the colonel is a young lady, his daughter, I presume, who is extremely pretty. She is here supposed to be of the English type of beauty. And I am continually asked if this is not so. National pride forbids me to say: her complexion is of a too delicate hothouse fineness, her hands and feet altogether too small for any critical Englishman to take her for his countrywoman, otherwise she is quite English in appearance.

The three girls I saw on the balcony are the daughters of the house, the eldest being hostess and manageress—a great charge for so young a woman, but the fonda could not be better conducted. The father is the proprietor of
the *fonda*, and a widower, old, and takes no further trouble. The family are rich for their position, owning, besides this property, an estate near Barcelona paying a large rental, but I suppose the *fonda* is too profitable to be given up. These girls appear to be well educated, talk French fluently, play the piano—one of them with great taste and execution—and are quite ladies in language and behaviour.

In the *señoritas*’ sitting-room there is a nightly reunion of the privileged; the colonel and the “English beauty,” the telegraph and medical chiefs, the three officers, various visiting *señoritas*—friends of the girls—the daughters of the house, and, in spite of all protestations, explanations, and travel-damaged *tenue*, the so-called “milor” comprise the gathering. And, as one of the girls said the other evening, “We talk about everything we understand and everything we do not, and oftenerst about the latter.”

One of the young infantry officers here sings and plays nicely. He is Andalusian, and has been very polite to me. Our acquaintance began at table. Sitting opposite at the mid-day breakfast, he heard me remark to my right-hand neighbour, with whom I had entered into conversation, that I should much like to see the interior of the citadel and the old cathedral enclosed within the fortifications. Addressing me across the table, he volunteered to obtain for me from the Military Governor permission to do so, and get the keys of the cathedral doors from their custodian; adding, that being off duty all the remainder of the day he placed his time entirely at my disposal, if I felt inclined to accept his company and guidance. Of course I was “delighted,” and we went accordingly.
CHAPTER XXII.


February 7, 1877.—Lerida's citadel is a fortified eminence immediately behind and dominating the town. The situation is one of great natural strength, for the hill is an isolated one, not commanded from anywhere, not large in its base, and carrying its size well up, being, indeed, unscalably perpendicular almost everywhere. Its height is close on three hundred feet, and the only practicable approach is over three drawbridges, each with its accompanying strong arched gateway and portcullis, on all which the fire from several redoubts, curtains, covered ways, and a long "serpent" can be converged. The outer gateway and its defences are the most modern of the works, and were finished in 1708.

The ancient cathedral stands within the most interior line of defence, crowning the highest part of the hill's summit, and close to the right-angled edge of the perpendicular side thereof facing the river, and has a reputation
of being the oldest, handsomest, most original in design, and strictly pure specimen of Gothic architecture in Spain, some say in Europe. Certainly, so far as I have seen, this is so, and if there be one surpassing it in all these qualities I sincerely hope some day to behold it. Its proportions, sculptured figures, tracery in stone, entrance porches, supporting arches, are all of exceeding merit.

In an elaborately and richly-carved recess to the left of the altar in the chief chapel lay a life-sized figure of a reclining ecclesiastic, as fine a thing of the kind as I ever saw. An accompanying inscription was beyond my deciphering powers; that it was in monkish Latin, all the letters capitals, no divisions between the words, and the date obliterated by age, was the extent of my discoveries. Fortunately, I was more successful with an inscription the lieutenant called my attention to, situated on the right side of the choir, which, unless I am greatly deceived, sets forth that the foundation-stone of the cathedral was laid in 1203 in the presence of King Pedro II.

We ascended the winding stairway, enclosed in the octagon tower, by two hundred and thirty-four steps. Though deeply worn, they averaged ten inches in height in front, certainly they must be two inches thicker behind, thus giving the tower an altitude of between two hundred and thirty and two hundred and forty feet to its belfry floor, beyond which are no steps. The view we obtained thence was very fine and extended, quite bird's-eye so far as Lerida is concerned, and panoramic as to the rest—plains, mountains, rivers, and towns.

Then we noticed the bells and ancient clockwork,
ON FOOT IN SPAIN.

quite curiosities from age and quaint construction. At four of the corners of the parapet round the belfry were the remains of watch-fire gratings, from which, doubtless, many a signal blazed forth during the first three or four hundred years of the cathedral’s existence.

Descending the corkscrew stairway, we made our way to what was once the palace of the archbishop—a large oblong building, coeval with the cathedral. It is now used as a military storehouse and quarters. Everything in it was in soldierlike order and condition, excepting the instruments in the band-room. Thinking the opportunity a good one to learn the reason that the musical instruments of Spanish regimental bands are so generally dirty, I asked why those before us were in such a state. "I do not know," replied the lieutenant, "but will find out." He called up a man and asked him. The answer seemed strange to me.

"We are only musicians, not mechanics; if we took our instruments to pieces to clean them properly we could never put them together again; only an instrument-maker could do that."

I wonder what an English bandmaster would think if such a reason were given by one of his musicians for a cornet being disgracefully dirty?

The stores visited, we lighted cigarros and made the tour of the fortifications, of which I can give no description, merely remarking that now I know them, I should still less like to lead a "forlorn hope" to attempt their capture than I probably should had I remained in a state of ignorance of their strength.