WHITE JOSEPH BLANCO

LETTERS FROM SPAIN

Joseph White

Letters from Spain

White J.

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Содержание

Joseph Blanco White
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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

That a work like the present should appear in a Second Edition, implies such a reception from the Public as demands the most sincere gratitude on my part. I am anxious, therefore, to make the only return I have in my power, by adding, as I conceive, some value to the work itself; not, indeed, from any material corrections, but by stamping the facts and descriptions which it contains, with the character of complete authenticity. The readers of *Doblado's Letters* may be sure that in them they have the real Memoirs of the person whose name is subscribed to this address. Even the disguise of that name was so contrived, as to be a mark of identity. *Leucadio* being derived from a Greek root which means *white*, the word *Doblado* was added, in allusion to the repetition of my family name, translated into Spanish, which my countrymen have forced upon us, to avoid the difficulty of an orthography and sound, perfectly at variance with their language. In short, Doblado and his inseparable friend, the Spanish clergyman, are but one and the same person; whose origin, education, feelings, and early turn of thinking, have been made an introduction to the personal observations on his country, which, with a deep sense of their kindness, he again lays before the British Public.

JOSEPH BLANCO WHITE.

Chelsea, June 1st, 1825.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Some of the following Letters have been printed in the New Monthly Magazine.

The Author would, indeed, be inclined to commit the whole collection to the candour of his readers without a prefatory address, were it not that the plan of his Work absolutely requires some explanation.

The slight mixture of fiction which these Letters contain, might raise a doubt whether the sketches of Spanish manners, customs, and opinions, by means of which the Author has endeavoured to pourtray the moral state of his country at a period immediately preceding, and in part coincident with the French invasion, may not be exaggerated by fancy, and coloured with a view to mere effect.

It is chiefly on this account that the Author deems it necessary to assure the Public of the reality of every circumstance mentioned in his book, except the name of *Leucadio Doblado*. These Letters are in effect the faithful memoirs of a real Spanish clergyman, as far as his character and the events of his life can illustrate the state of the country which gave him birth.

Doblado's Letters are dated from Spain, and, to preserve consistency, the Author is supposed to have returned thither after a residence of some years in England. This is another fictitious circumstance. Since the moment when the person disguised under the above name left that beloved country, whose religious intolerance has embittered his life—that country which, boasting, at this moment, of a *free* constitution, still continues to deprive her children of the right to worship God according to their own conscience—he has not for a day quitted England, the land of his ancestors, and now the country of his choice and adoption.

It is not, however, from pique or resentment that the Author has dwelt so long and so warmly upon the painful and disgusting picture of Spanish bigotry. Spain, "with all her faults," is still and shall ever be the object of his love. But since no man, within the limits of her territory, can venture to lay open the canker which, fostered by religion, feeds on the root of her political improvements; be it allowed a self-banished Spaniard to describe the sources of such a strange anomaly in the New Constitution of Spain, and thus to explain to such as may not be unacquainted with his name as a Spanish writer, the true cause of an absence which might otherwise be construed into a dereliction of duty, and a desertion of that post which both nature and affection marked so decidedly for the exertion of his humble talents.

Chelsea, June 1822.

LETTER I

Seville, May 1798.

I am inclined to think with you, that a Spaniard, who, like myself, has resided many years in England, is, perhaps, the fittest person to write an account of life, manners and opinions as they exist in this country, and to shew them in the light which is most likely to interest an Englishman. The most acute and diligent travellers are subject to constant mistakes; and perhaps the more so, for what is generally thought a circumstance in their favour—a moderate knowledge of foreign languages. A traveller who uses only his eyes, will confine himself to the description of external objects; and though his narrative may be deficient in many topics of interest, it will certainly be exempt from great and ludicrous blunders. The difficulty, which a person, with a smattering of the language of the country he is visiting, experiences every moment in the endeavour to communicate his own, and catch other men's thoughts, often urges him into a sort of mental rashness, which leads him to settle many a doubtful point for himself, and to forget the unlimited power, I should have said tyranny, of usage, in whatever relates to language.

I still recollect the unlucky hit I made on my arrival in London, when, anxious beyond measure to catch every idiomatic expression, and reading the huge inscription of the Cannon Brewery at Knightsbridge, as the building had some resemblance to the great cannon-foundry in this town, I settled it in my mind that the genuine English idiom, for what I should now call *casting*, was no other than *brewing* cannon. This, however, was a mere verbal mistake. Not so that which I made when the word *nursery* stared me in the face every five minutes, as in a fine afternoon I approached your great metropolis, on the western road. Luxury and wealth, said I to myself, in a strain approaching to philosophic indignation, have at last blunted the best feelings of nature among the English. Surely, if I am to judge from this endless string of *nurseries*, the English ladies have gone a step beyond the unnatural practice of devolving their first maternal duties upon domestic hirelings. Here, it seems, the poor helpless infants are sent to be kept and suckled in crowds, in a decent kind of *Foundling-Hospitals*. You may easily guess that I knew but one signification of the words *nursing* and *nursery*. Fortunately I was not collecting materials for a book of travels during a summer excursion, otherwise I should now be enjoying all the honour of the originality of my remarks on the customs and manners of Old England.

From similar mistakes I think myself safe enough in speaking of my native country; but I wish I could feel equal confidence as to the execution of the sketches you desire to obtain from me. I know you too well to doubt that my letters will, by some chance or other, find their way to some of the London Magazines, before they have been long in your hands. And only think, I intreat you, how I shall fret and fidget under the apprehension that some of your pert newspaper writers may raise a laugh against me in some of those *Suns* or *Stars*, which, in spite of intervening seas and mountains, can dart a baneful influence, and blast the character of infallibility, as an English scholar, which I have acquired since my return to Spain. I have so strongly rivetted the admiration of the Irish merchants in this place, that, in spite of their objection to my not calling tea *ta*, they submit to my decision every intricate question about your provoking *shall* and *will*: and surely it would be no small disparagement, in this land of proud *Dons*, to be posted up in a London paper as a murderer of the *King's English*. How fortunate was our famous Spanish traveller, my relative, *Espriella*[1] (for you know that there exists a family connexion between us by my mother's side) to find one of the best writers in England, willing to translate his letters. But since you will not allow me to write in my own language, and since, to say the truth, I feel a pleasure in using that which reminds me of the dear land which has been

[1] See Espriella's "Letters from England."

my second home—the land where I drew my first breath of liberty—the land which taught me how to retrieve, though imperfectly and with pain, the time which, under the influence of ignorance and superstition, I had lost in early youth—I will not delay a task which, should circumstances allow me to complete it, I intend as a token of friendship to you, and of gratitude and love to your country.

Few travellers are equal to your countryman, Mr. Townsend, in the truth and liveliness of his descriptions, as well as in the mass of useful information and depth of remark with which he has presented the public[2]. It would be impossible for any but a native Spaniard to add to the collection of traits descriptive of the national character, which animates his narrative; and I must confess that he has rather confined me in the selection of my topics. He has, indeed, fallen into such mistakes and inaccuracies, as nothing short of perfect familiarity with a country can prevent. But I may safely recommend him to you as a guide for a fuller acquaintance with the places whose *inhabitants* I intend to make the chief subject of my letters. But that I may not lay upon you the necessity of a constant reference, I shall begin by providing your fancy with a “local habitation” for the people whose habits and modes of thinking I will forthwith attempt to pourtray.

The view of Cadiz from the sea, as, in a fine day, you approach its magnificent harbour, is one of the most attractive beauty. The strong deep light of a southern sky, reflected from the lofty buildings of white free stone, which face the bay, rivets the eye of the navigator from the very verge of the horizon. The sea actually washes the ramparts, except where, on the opposite side of the town, it is divided by a narrow neck of land, which joins Cadiz to the neighbouring continent. When, therefore, you begin to discover the upper part of the buildings, and the white pinnacles of glazed earthenware, resembling china, that ornament the parapets with which their flat roofs are crowned; the airy structure, melting at times into the distant glare of the waves, is more like a pleasing delusion —a kind of *Fata Morgana*—than the lofty, uniform massive buildings which, rising gradually before the vessel, bring you back, however unwilling, to the dull realities of life. After landing on a crowded quay, you are led the whole depth of the ramparts along a dark vaulted passage, at the farthest end of which, new-comers must submit to the scrutiny of the inferior custom-house officers. Eighteen-pence slipped into their hands with the keys of your trunks, will spare you the vexation of seeing your clothes and linen scattered about in the utmost disorder.

I forgot to tell you, that scarcely does a boat with passengers approach the landing-stairs of the quay, when three or four *Gallegos*, (natives of the province of Galicia) who are the only *porters* in this town, will take a fearful leap into the boat, and begin a scuffle, which ends by the stronger seizing upon the luggage. The successful champion becomes your guide through the town to the place where you wish to take up your abode. As only two gates are used as a thoroughfare—the sea-gate, *Puerta de la Mar*, and the land-gate, *Puerta de Tierra*—those who come by water are obliged to cross the great Market—a place not unlike Covent Garden, where the country people expose all sorts of vegetables and fruits for sale. Fish is also sold at this place, where you see it laid out upon the pavement in the same state as it was taken out of the net. The noise and din of this market are absolutely intolerable. All classes of Spaniards, not excluding the ladies, are rather loud and boisterous in their speech. But here is a contention between three or four hundred peasants, who shall make his harsh and guttural voice be uppermost, to inform the passengers of the price and quality of his goods. In a word, the noise is such as will astound any one, who has not lived for some years near Cornhill or Temple Bar.

Religion, or, if you please, superstition, is so intimately blended with the whole system of public and domestic life in Spain, that I fear I shall tire you with the perpetual recurrence of that subject. I am already compelled, by an involuntary train of ideas, to enter upon that endless topic. If, however, you wish to become thoroughly acquainted with the national character of my country, you must learn the character of the national religion. The influence of religion in Spain is boundless. It divides the whole population into two comprehensive classes, bigots and dissemblers. Do not, however, mistake

[2] He visited Spain in the years 1786 and 1787.

me. I am very far from wishing to libel my countrymen. If I use these invidious words, it is not that I believe every Spaniard either a downright bigot or a hypocrite: yet I cannot shut my eyes to the melancholy fact, that the system under which we live must unavoidably give, even to the best among us, a taint of one of those vices. Where the law threatens every dissenter from such an encroaching system of divinity as that of the Church of Rome, with death and infamy—where every individual is not only invited, but enjoined, at the peril of both body and soul, to assist in enforcing that law; must not an undue and tyrannical influence accrue to the believing party? Are not such as disbelieve in secret, condemned to a life of degrading deference, or of heart-burning silence? Silence, did I say? No; every day, every hour, renews the necessity of explicitly declaring yourself what you are not. The most contemptible individual may, at pleasure, force out *a lie* from an honestly proud bosom.

I must not, however, keep you any longer in suspense as to the origin of this flight—this unprepared digression from the plain narrative I had begun. You know me well enough to believe that after a long residence in England, my landing at Cadiz, instead of cheering my heart at the sight of my native country, would naturally produce a mixed sensation, in which pain and gloominess must have had the ascendant. I had enjoyed the blessings of liberty for several years; and now, alas! I perceived that I had been irresistibly drawn back by the holiest ties of affection, to stretch out my hands to the manacles, and bow my neck to that yoke, which had formerly galled my very soul. The convent of San Juan de Dios—(laugh, my dear friend, if you will: at what you call my *monachophobia*; *you* may do so, who have never lived within range of any of these European *jungles*, where lurks every thing that is hideous and venomous)—well, then, San Juan de Dios is the first remarkable object that meets the eye upon entering Cadiz by the sea-gate. A single glance at the convent had awakened the strongest and most rooted aversions of my heart, when just as I was walking into the nearest street to avoid the crowd, the well-remembered sound of a hand-bell made me instantly aware that, unless pretending not to hear it, I could retrace my steps, and turn another corner, I should be obliged to kneel in the mud till a priest, who was carrying the consecrated wafer to a dying person, had moved slowly in his sedan-chair from the farthest end of the street to the place where I began to hear the bell.

The rule on these occasions, is expressed in a proverbial saying—*al Rey, en viendolo; a Dios, en oyendolo*—which, after supplying its elliptical form, means that external homage is due to the king upon seeing him: and to God—*i. e.* the host, preceded by its never-failing appendage, the bell—the very moment you hear him. I must add, as a previous explanation of what is to follow, that God and the king are so coupled in the language of this country, that the same title of *Majesty* is applied to both. You hear, from the pulpit, the duties that men owe to *both Majesties*; and a foreigner is often surprised at the hopes expressed by the Spaniards, that *his Majesty* will be pleased to grant them life and health for some years more. I must add a very ludicrous circumstance arising from this absurd form of speech. When the priest, attended by the clerk, and surrounded by eight or ten people, bearing lighted flambeaus, has broken into the chamber of the dying person, and gone through a form of prayer, half Latin, half Spanish, which lasts for about twenty minutes, one of the wafers is taken out of a little gold casket, and put into the mouth of the patient as he lies in bed. To swallow the wafer without the loss of any particle—which, according to the Council of Trent, (and I fully agree with the fathers) contains the same Divine person as the whole—is an operation of some difficulty. To obviate, therefore, the impropriety of lodging a sacred atom, as it might easily happen, in a bad tooth, the clerk comes forth with a glass of water, and in a firm and loud voice asks the sick person, "Is his Majesty gone down?"[3] The answer enables the learned clerk to decide whether the passage is to be expedited by means of his cooling draught.

But I must return to my *Gallego*, and myself. No sooner had I called him back, as if I had suddenly changed my mind as to the direction in which we were to go, than with a most determined tone he said "*Dios—Su Magestad.*" Pretending not to hear, I turned sharply round, and was now

[3] The Spanish words are *Ha pasado su Magestad?*

making my retreat—but it would not do. Fired with holy zeal, he raised his harsh voice, and in the barbarous accent of his province, repeated three or four times, "*Dios—Su Magestad*;" adding, with an oath, "This man is a heretic!" There was no resisting that dreadful word: it pinned me to the ground. I took out my pocket-handkerchief, and laying it on the least dirty part of the pavement, knelt upon it—not indeed to pray; but while, as another act of conformity to the custom of the country, I was beating my breast with my clenched right hand, as gently as it could be done without offence—to curse the hour when I had submitted thus to degrade myself, and tremble at the mere suspicion of a being little removed from the four-footed animals, whom it was his occupation to relieve of their burdens.

In the more populous towns of Spain, these unpleasant meetings are frequent. Nor are you free from being disturbed by the holy bell in the most retired part of your house. Its sound operates like magic upon the Spaniards. In the midst of a gay, noisy party, the word—"*Su Magestad*"—will bring every one upon his knees until the tinkling dies in the distance. Are you at dinner?—you must leave the table. In bed?—you must, at least, sit up. But the most preposterous effect of this custom is to be seen at the theatres. On the approach of the host to any military guard, the drum beats, the men are drawn out, and as soon as the priest can be seen, they bend the right knee, and invert the firelocks, placing the point of the bayonet on the ground. As an officer's guard is always stationed at the door of a Spanish theatre, I have often laughed in my sleeve at the effect of the *chamade* both upon the actors and the company. "*Dios, Dios!*" resounds from all parts of the house, and every one falls that moment upon his knees. The actors' ranting, or the rattling of the castanets in the *fandango*, is hushed for a few minutes, till the sound of the bell growing fainter and fainter, the amusement is resumed, and the devout performers are once more upon their legs, anxious to make amends for the interruption. So powerful is the effect of early habit, that I had been for some weeks in London before I could hear the postman's bell in the evening, without feeling instinctively inclined to perform a due genuflection.

Cadiz, though fast declining from the wealth and splendour to which she had reached during her exclusive privilege to trade with the Colonies of South America, is still one of the few towns of Spain, which, for refinement, can be compared with some of the second rate in England. The people are hospitable and cheerful. The women, without being at all beautiful, are really fascinating. Some of the *Tertulias*, or evening parties, which a simple introduction to the lady of the house entitles any one to attend daily, are very lively and agreeable. No stiffness of etiquette prevails: you may drop in when you like, and leave the room when it suits you. The young ladies, however, will soon either find out, or imagine, the house and company to which you give the preference; and a week's acquaintance will lay you open to a great deal of good-natured bantering upon the cause of your short calls. Singing to the guitar, or the piano, is a very common resource at these meetings. But the musical acquirements of the Spanish ladies cannot bear the most distant comparison with those of the female amateurs in London. In singing, however, they possess one great advantage—that of opening the mouth—which your English *Misses* seem to consider as a great breach of propriety.

The inhabitants of Cadiz, being confined to the rock on which their city is built, have made the towns of Chiclana, Puerto Real, and Port St. Mary's, their places of resort, especially in the summer. The passage, by water, to Port St. Mary's, is, upon an average, of about an hour and a half, and the intercourse between the two places, nearly as constant as between a large city and its suburbs. Boats full of passengers are incessantly crossing from daybreak till sunset. This passage is not, however, without danger in case of a strong wind from the east, in summer, or of rough weather, in winter. At the mouth of the Guadalete, a river that runs into the bay of Cadiz, by Port St. Mary's, there are extensive banks of shifting sands, which every year prove fatal to many. The passage-boats are often excessively crowded with people of all descriptions. The Spaniards, however, are not so shy of strangers as I have generally found your countrymen. Place any two of them, male or female, by the merest chance, together, and they will immediately enter into some conversation. The absolute disregard to a stranger, which custom has established in England, would be taken for an insult in any part of Spain; consequently little gravity is preserved in these aquatic excursions.

In fine weather, when the female part of the company are not troubled with fear or sickness, the passengers indulge in a boisterous sort of mirth, which is congenial to Andalusians of all classes. It is known by the old Spanish word *Arana*, pronounced with the Southern aspirate, as if written *Haranna*. I do not know whether I shall be able to convey a notion of this kind of amusement. It admits of no liberties of action, while every allowance is made for words which do not amount to gross indecency. It is—if I may use the expression—a conversational *row*; or, to indulge a more strange assemblage of ideas, the *Arana* is to conversation, what romping is to walking arm in arm. In the midst, however, of hoarse laugh and loud shouting, as soon as the boat reaches the shoals, the steersman, raising his voice with a gravity becoming a parish-clerk, addresses himself to the company in words amounting to these—"Let us pray for the souls of all that have perished in this place." The pious address of the boatman has a striking effect upon the company: for one or two minutes every one mutters a private prayer, whilst a sailor-boy goes round collecting a few copper coins from the passengers, which are religiously spent in procuring masses for the souls in purgatory. This ceremony being over, the riot is resumed with unabated spirit, till the very point of landing.

I went by land to St. Lucar, a town of some wealth and consequence at the mouth of the Guadalquivir, or Bœtis, where this river is lost in the sea through a channel of more than a mile in breadth. The passage to Seville, of about twenty Spanish leagues up the river, is tedious; but I had often performed it, in early youth, with great pleasure, and I now quite forgot the change which twenty years must have made upon my feelings. No Spanish conveyance is either comfortable or expeditious. The St. Lucar boats are clumsy and heavy, without a single accommodation for passengers. Half of the hold is covered with hatches, but so low, that one cannot stand upright under them. A piece of canvass, loosely let down to the bottom of the boat, is the only partition between the passengers and the sailors. It would be extremely unpleasant for any person, above the lower class, to bear the inconveniences of a mixed company in one of these boats. Fortunately, it is neither difficult nor expensive to obtain the exclusive hire of one. You must submit, however, at the time of embarkation, to the disagreeable circumstance of riding on a man's shoulders from the water's edge to a little skiff, which, from the flatness of the shore, lies waiting for the passengers at the distance of fifteen or twenty yards.

The country, on both sides of the river, is for the most part, flat and desolate. The eye roves in vain over vast plains of alluvial ground in search of some marks of human habitation. Herds of black cattle, and large flocks of sheep, are seen on two considerable islands formed by different branches of the river. The fierce Andalusian bulls, kept by themselves in large enclosures, where, with a view to their appearance on the arena, they are made more savage by solitude; are seen straggling here and there down to the brink of the river, tossing their shaggy heads, and pawing the ground on the approach of the boat.

The windings of the river, and the growing shallows, which obstruct its channel, oblige the boats to wait for the tide, except when there is a strong wind from the south. After two tedious days, and two uncomfortable nights, I found myself under the *Torre del Oro*, a large octagon tower of great antiquity, and generally supposed to have been built by Julius Cæsar, which stands by the mole or quay of the capital of Andalusia, my native, and by me, long deserted town. Townsend will acquaint you with its situation, its general aspect, and the remarkable buildings, which are the boast of the *Sevillanos*. My task will be confined to the description of such peculiarities of the country as he did not see, or which must have escaped his notice.

The eastern custom of building houses on the four sides of an open area is so general in Andalusia, that, till my first journey to Madrid, I confess, I was perfectly at a loss to conceive a habitable dwelling in any other shape. The houses are generally two stories high, with a gallery, or *corredor*, which, as the name implies, *runs* along the four, or at least the three sides of the *Pátio*, or central square, affording an external communication between the rooms above stairs, and forming a covered walk over the doors of the ground-floor apartments. These two suites of rooms are a counterpart to each other, being alternately inhabited or deserted in the seasons of winter and summer.

About the middle of October every house in Seville is in a complete bustle for two or three days. The lower apartments are stripped of their furniture, and every chair and table—nay, the kitchen vestal, with all her laboratory—are ordered off to winter quarters. This change of habitation, together with mats laid over the brick-floors, thicker and warmer than those used in summer, is all the provision against cold, which is made in this country. A flat and open brass pan of about two feet diameter, raised a few inches from the ground by a round wooden frame, on which, those who sit near it, may rest their feet, is used to burn charcoal made of brushwood, which the natives call *cisco*. The fumes of charcoal are injurious to health; but such is the effect of habit, that the natives are seldom aware of any inconvenience arising from the choking smell of their brasiers.

The precautions against heat, however, are numerous. About the latter end of May the whole population moves down stairs. A thick awning, which draws and undraws by means of ropes and pullies, is stretched over the central square, on a level with the roof of the house. The window-shutters are nearly closed from morning till sunset, admitting just light enough to see one another, provided the eyes have not lately been exposed to the glare of the streets. The floors are washed every morning, that the evaporation of the water imbibed by the bricks, may abate the heat of the air. A very light mat, made of a delicate sort of rush, and dyed with a variety of colours, is used instead of a carpet. The *Pátio*, or square, is ornamented with flowerpots, especially round a *jet d'eau*, which in most houses occupies its centre. During the hot season the ladies sit and receive their friends in the *Pátio*. The street-doors are generally open; but invariably so from sunset till eleven or twelve in the night. Three or four very large glass lamps are hung in a line from the street-door to the opposite end of the *Pátio*; and, as in most houses, those who meet at night for a *Tertulia*, are visible from the streets, the town presents a very pretty and animated scene till near midnight. The poorer class of people, to avoid the intolerable heat of their habitations, pass a great part of the night in conversation at their doors; while persons of all descriptions are moving about till late, either to see their friends, or to enjoy the cool air in the public walks.

This gay scene vanishes, however, on the approach of winter. The people retreat to the upper floors; the ill-lighted streets are deserted at the close of day, and become so dangerous from robbers, that few but the young and adventurous retire home from the *Tertulia* without being attended by a servant, sometimes bearing a lighted torch. The free access to every house, which prevails in summer, is now checked by the caution of the inhabitants. The entrance to the houses lies through a passage with two doors, one to the street, and another called the *middle-door* (for there is another at the top of the stairs) which opens into the *Pátio*. This passage is called *Zaguan*—a pure Arabic word, which means, I believe, a porch. The middle-door is generally shut in the day-time: the outer one is never closed but at night. Whoever wants to be admitted must knock at the middle-door, and be prepared to answer a question, which, as it presents one of those little peculiarities which you are so fond of hearing, I shall not consider as unworthy of a place in my narrative.

The knock at the door, which, by-the-by, must be single, and by no means loud—in fact, a tradesman's knock in London—is answered with a *Who is there?* To this question the stranger replies, "Peaceful people," *Gente de paz*—and the door is opened without farther enquiries. Peasants and beggars call out at the door, "Hail, spotless Mary!" *Ave, Maria purisima!* The answer, in that case, is given from within in the words *Sin pecado concebida*: "Conceived without sin." This custom is a remnant of the fierce controversy, which existed about three hundred years ago, between the Franciscan and the Dominican friars, whether the Virgin Mary had or not been subject to the penal consequences of original sin. The Dominicans were not willing to grant any exemption; while the Franciscans contended for the propriety of such a privilege. The Spaniards, and especially the Sevillians, with their characteristic gallantry, stood for the honour of our Lady, and embraced the latter opinion so warmly, that they turned the watchword of their party into the form of address, which is still so prevalent in Andalusia. During the heat of the dispute, and before the Dominicans had been silenced by the authority of the Pope, the people of Seville began to assemble at various churches, and,

sallying forth with an emblematical picture of the *sinless* Mary, set upon a sort of standard surmounted by a cross, paraded the city in different directions, singing a hymn to the *Immaculate Conception*, and repeating aloud their beads or rosary. These processions have continued to our times, and constitute one of the nightly nuisances of this place. Though confined at present to the lower classes, those that join in them assume that characteristic importance and overbearing spirit, which attaches to the most insignificant religious associations in this country. Wherever one of these shabby processions presents itself to the public, it takes up the street from side to side, stopping the passengers, and expecting them to stand uncovered in all kinds of weather, till the standard is gone by. Their awkward and heavy banners are called, at Seville, *Sinpecados*, that is, "sinless," from the theological opinion in support of which they were raised.

The Spanish government, under Charles III., shewed the most ludicrous eagerness to have the *sinless purity* of the Virgin Mary added by the Pope to the articles of the Roman Catholic faith. The court of Rome, however, with the cautious spirit which has at all times guided its spiritual politics, endeavoured to keep clear from a stretch of authority, which, even some of their own divines would be ready to question; but splitting, as it were, the difference with theological precision, the censures of the church were levelled against such as should have the boldness to assert that the Virgin Mary had derived any taint from "her great ancestor;" and, having personified the *Immaculate Conception*, it was declared, that the Spanish dominions in Europe and America were under the protecting influence of that mysterious event. This declaration diffused universal joy over the whole nation. It was celebrated with public rejoicings on both sides of the Atlantic. The king instituted an order distinguished by the emblem of the Immaculate Conception—a woman dressed in white and blue; and a law was enacted, requiring a declaration, upon oath, of a firm belief in the *Immaculate Conception*, from every individual, previous to his taking any degree at the universities, or being admitted into any of the corporations, civil and religious, which abound in Spain. This oath is administered even to mechanics upon their being made free of a Guild.[4]

Here, however, I must break off, for fear of making this packet too large for the confidential conveyance, to which alone I could trust it without great risk of finishing my task in one of the cells of the Holy Inquisition. I will not fail, however, to resume my subject as soon as circumstances permit me.

[4] See Note A, at the end of the Volume.

LETTER II

Seville – 1798.

TO A. D. C. ESQ

My Dear Sir—Your letter, acquainting me with Lady –'s desire that you should take an active part in our correspondence on Spain, has increased my hopes of carrying on a work, which I feared would soon grow no less tiresome to our friend than to me. Objects which blend themselves with our daily habits are most apt to elude our observation; and will, like some dreams, fleet away through the mind, unless an accidental word or thought should set attention on the fast-fading track of their course. Nothing, therefore, can be of greater use to me than your queries, or help me so much as your observations.

You must excuse, however, my declining to give you a sketch of the national character of the Spaniards. I have always considered such descriptions as absolutely unmeaning—a mere assemblage of antitheses, where good and bad qualities are contrasted for effect, and with little foundation in nature. No man's powers of observation can be, at once, so accurate and extensive, so minute and generalizing, as to be capable of embodying the peculiar features of millions into an abstract being, which shall contain traces of them all. Yet this is what most travellers attempt after a few weeks residence—what we are accustomed to expect from the time that a Geographical Grammar is first put into our hands. I shall not, therefore, attempt either abstraction or classification, but endeavour to collect as many facts as may enable others to perceive the general tendency of the civil and religious state of my country, and to judge of its influence on the improvement or degradation of this portion of mankind, independently of the endless modifications which arise from the circumstances, external and internal, of every individual. I will not overlook, however, the great divisions of society, and shall therefore acquaint you with the chief sources of distinction which both law and custom have established among us.

The most comprehensive division of the people of Spain is that of *nobles* and *plebeians*. But I must caution you against a mistaken notion which these words are apt to convey to an Englishman. In Spain, any person whose family, either by immemorial prescription, or by the king's patent, is entitled to exemption from some burdens, and to the enjoyment of certain privileges, belongs to the class of nobility. It appears to me that this distinction originated in the allotment of a certain portion of ground in towns conquered from the Moors. In some patents of nobility—I cannot say whether they are all alike—the king, after an enumeration of the privileges and exemptions to which he raises the family, adds the general clause, that they shall be considered in all respects, as *Hidalgos de casa y solar conocido*—"*Hidalgos*, i. e. nobles (for the words are become synonymous) of a known family and *ground-plot*." Many of the exemptions attached to this class of Franklins, or inferior nobility, have been withdrawn in our times, not, however, without a distinct recognition of the *rank* of such as could claim them before the amendment of the law. But still a Spanish gentleman, or *Caballero*—a name which expresses the privileged gentry in all its numerous and undefined gradations—cannot be ballotted for the militia; and none but an *Hidalgo* can enter the army as a cadet. In the routine of promotion, ten cadets, I believe, must receive a commission before a serjeant can have his turn—and even that is often passed over. Such as are fortunate enough to be raised from the ranks can seldom escape the reserve and slight of their prouder fellow-officers; and the common appellation of *Pinos*, "pine-trees"—alluding, probably, to the height required in a serjeant, like that of *freedman*, among the Romans, implies a stain which the first situations in the army cannot completely obliterate.

Noblesse, as I shall call it, to avoid an equivocal term, descends from the father to all his male children, for ever. But though a female cannot transmit this privilege to her issue, her being the daughter of an *Hidalgo* is of absolute necessity to constitute what, in the language of the country, is called, "a nobleman on four sides"—*noble de quatro costados*: that is, a man whose parents, their parents, and their parents' parents, belonged to the privileged class. None but these *square noblemen* can receive the order of knighthood. But we are fallen on degenerate times, and I could name many a knight in this town who has been furnished with more than one *corner* by the dexterity of the *notaries*, who act as secretaries in collecting and drawing up the proofs and documents required on these occasions.

There exists another distinction of blood, which, I think, is peculiar to Spain, and to which the mass of the people are so blindly attached, that the meanest peasant looks upon the want of it as a source of misery and degradation, which he is doomed to transmit to his latest posterity. The least mixture of African, Indian, Moorish, or Jewish blood, taints a whole family to the most distant generation. Nor does the knowledge of such a fact die away in the course of years, or become unnoticed from the obscurity and humbleness of the parties. Not a child in this populous city is ignorant that a family, who, beyond the memory of man have kept a confectioner's shop in the central part of the town, had one of their ancestors punished by the Inquisition for a relapse into Judaism. I well recollect how, when a boy, I often passed that way, scarcely venturing to cast a side glance on a pretty young woman who constantly attended the shop, for fear, as I said to myself, of shaming her. A person free from tainted blood is defined by law, "an old Christian, clean from all bad race and stain," *Christiano viejo, limpio de toda mala raza, y mancha*. The severity of this law, or rather of the public opinion enforcing it, shuts out its victims from every employment in church or state, and excludes them even from the *Fraternities*, or religious associations, which are otherwise open to persons of the lowest ranks. I verily believe, that were St. Peter a Spaniard, he would either deny admittance into heaven to people of tainted blood, or send them to a retired corner, where they might not offend the eyes of the *old Christians*.

But alas! what has been said of laws—and I believe it true in most countries, ancient and modern, except England—that they are like cobwebs, which entrap the weak, and yield to the strong and bold, is equally, and perhaps more generally applicable to public opinion. It is a fact, that many of the grandees, and the titled noblesse of this country, derive a large portion of their blood from Jews and Moriscoes. Their pedigree has been traced up to those cankered branches, in a manuscript book, which neither the threats of Government, nor the terrors of the Inquisition, have been able to suppress completely. It is called *Tizon de España*—"the Brand of Spain." But wealth and power have set opinion at defiance; and while a poor industrious man, humbled by feelings not unlike those of an Indian *Paria*, will hardly venture to salute his neighbour, because, forsooth, his fourth or fifth ancestor fell into the hands of the Inquisition for declining to eat pork—the proud grandee, perhaps a nearer descendant of the Patriarchs, will think himself degraded by marrying the first gentlewoman in the kingdom, unless she brings him *a hat*, in addition to the six or eight which he may be already entitled to wear before the king. But this requires some explanation.

The highest privilege of a grandee is that of covering his head before the king. Hence, by two or more *hats* in a family, it is meant that it has a right, by inheritance, to as many titles of grandeeship. Pride having confined the grandees to intermarriages in their own caste, and the estates and titles being inheritable by females, an enormous accumulation of property and honours has been made in a few hands. The chief aim of every family is constantly to increase this preposterous accumulation. Their children are married, by dispensation, in their infancy, to some great heir or heiress; and such is the multitude of family names and titles which every grandee claims and uses, that if you should look into a simple passport given by the Spanish Ambassador in London, when he happens to be a member of the ancient Spanish families, you will find the whole first page of a large foolscap sheet, employed merely to tell you who the great man is whose signature is to close the whole. As far as vanity alone

is concerned, this ambitious display of rank and parentage, might, at this time of day, be dismissed with a smile. But there lurks a more serious evil in the absurd and invidious system so studiously preserved by our first nobility. Surrounded by their own dependents, and avoided by the gentry, who are seldom disposed for an intercourse in which a sense of inferiority prevails, few of the grandees are exempt from the natural consequences of such a life—gross ignorance, intolerable conceit, and sometimes, though seldom, a strong dose of vulgarity. I would, however, be just, and by no means tax individuals with every vice of the class. But I believe I speak the prevalent sense of the country upon this point. The grandees have degraded themselves by their slavish behaviour at Court, and incurred great odium by their intolerable airs abroad. They have ruined their estates by mismanagement and extravagance, and impoverished the country by the neglect of their immense possessions. Should there be a revolution in Spain, wounded pride, and party spirit, would deny them the proper share of power in the constitution, to which their lands, their ancient rights, and their remaining influence entitle them. Thus excluded from their chief and peculiar duty of keeping the balance of power between the throne and the people, the Spanish grandees will remain a heavy burthen on the nation; while, either fearing for their overgrown privileges, or impatient under reforms which must fall chiefly on them and the clergy, they will always be inclined to join the crown in restoring the abuses of arbitrary government.

Would to Heaven that an opportunity presented itself for re-modelling our constitution after the only political system which has been sanctioned by the experience of ages—I mean your own. We have nearly the same elements in existence; and low and degraded as we are by the baneful influence of despotism, we might yet by a proper combination of our political forces, lay down the basis of a permanent and improvable free constitution. But I greatly fear that we have been too long in chains, to make the best use of the first moments of liberty. Perhaps the crown, as well as the classes of grandees and bishops, will be suffered to exist, from want of power in the popular party; but they will be made worse than useless through neglect and jealousy. I am neither what you call a tory nor a bigot; nor am I inditing a prophetic elegy on the diminished glories of crowns, coronets and mitres. A levelling spirit I detest indeed, and from my heart do I abhor every sort of spoliation. Many years, however, must pass, and strange events take place, before any such evils can threaten this country. Spanish despotism is not of that insulting and irritating nature which drives a whole people to madness. It is not the despotism of the taskmaster whose lash sows vengeance in the hearts of his slaves. It is the cautious forecast of the husbandman who mutilates the cattle whose strength he fears. The degraded animal grows up, unconscious of the injury, and after a short training, one might think he comes at last to love the yoke. Such, I believe, is our state. Taxes, among us, are rather ill-contrived than grinding; and millions of the lower classes are not aware of the share they contribute. They all love their king, however they may dislike the exciseman. Seigneurial rights are hardly in existence: and both gentry and peasantry find little to remind them of the exorbitant power which the improvident and slothful life of the grandees, at court, allows to lie dormant and wasting in their hands. The majority of the nation are more inclined to despise than to hate them; and though few men would lift up a finger to support their rights, fewer still would imitate the French in carrying fire and sword to their mansions.

For bishops and their spiritual power *Juan Español*[5] has as greedy and capacious a stomach, as *John Bull* for roast beef and ale. One single class of people feels galled and restless, and that unfortunately neither is, nor can be, numerous in this country. The class I mean consists of such as are able to perceive the encroachments of tyranny on their intellectual rights—whose pride of mind, and consciousness of mental strength, cause them to groan and fret, daily and hourly, under the necessity of keeping within the miry and crooked paths to which ignorance and superstition have confined the active souls of the Spaniards. But these, compared with the bulk of the nation, are but a mere handful. Yet, they may, under favourable circumstances, recruit and augment their forces with the ambitious

[5] A name denoting the plain unsophisticated Spaniard.

of all classes. They will have, at first, to disguise their views, to conceal their favourite doctrines, and even to cherish those national prejudices, which, were their real views known, would crush them to atoms. The mass of the people may acquiesce for a time in the new order of things, partly from a vague desire of change and improvement, partly from the passive political habits which a dull and deadening despotism has bred and rooted in the course of ages. The army may cast the decisive weight of the sword on the popular side of the balance, as long as it suits its views. But if the church and the great nobility are neglected in the distribution of legislative power—if, instead of alluring them into the path of liberty with the sweet bait of *constitutional* influence, they are only alarmed for their rights and privileges, without a hope of compensation, they may be shovelled and heaped aside, like a mountain of dead and inert sand; but they will stand, in their massive and ponderous indolence, ready to slide down at every moment, and bury the small active party below, upon the least division of their strength. A house, or chamber of peers, composed of grandees in their own right—that is, not, as is done at present, by the transfer of one of the titles accumulated in the same family —of the bishops, and of a certain number of law lords regularly chosen from the supreme court of judicature (a measure of the greatest importance to discourage the distinction of *blood*, which is, perhaps, the worst evil in the present state of the great Spanish nobility), might, indeed, check the work of reformation to a slower pace than accords with the natural eagerness of a popular party. But the legislative body would possess a regulator within itself, which would faithfully mark the gradual capacity for improvement in the nation. The members of the privileged chamber would themselves be improved and enlightened by the exercise of constitutional power, and the pervading influence of public discussion: while, should they be overlooked in any future attempt at a free constitution, they will, like a diseased and neglected limb, spread infection over the whole body, or, at last, expose it to the hazard of a bloody and dangerous amputation. But it is time to return to our *Hidalgos*.

As the *Hidalguia* branches out through every male whose father enjoys that privilege, Spain is overrun with *gentry*, who earn their living in the meanest employments. The province of Asturias having afforded shelter to that small portion of the nation which preserved the Spanish name and throne against the efforts of the conquering Arabs; there is hardly a native of that mountainous tract, who, even at this day, cannot shew a legal title to honours and immunities gained by his ancestors, at a time when every soldier had either a share in the territory recovered from the invaders, or was rewarded with a perpetual exemption from such taxes and services as fell exclusively upon the *simple*[6] peasantry. The numerous assertors of these privileges among the Asturians of the present day, lead me to think that in the earliest times of the Spanish monarchy every soldier was raised to the rank of a Franklin. But circumstances are strangely altered. Asturias is one of the poorest provinces of Spain, and the *noble* inhabitants having, for the most part, inherited no other patrimony from their ancestors than a strong muscular frame, are compelled to make the best of it among the more feeble tribes of the south. In this capital of Andalusia they have engrossed the employments of watermen, porters, and footmen. Those belonging to the two first classes are formed into a *fraternity*, whose members have a right to the exclusive use of a chapel in the cathedral. The privilege which they value most, however, is that of affording the twenty stoutest men to convey the moveable stage on which the consecrated host is paraded in public, on Corpus Christi day, enshrined in a small temple of massive silver. The bearers are concealed behind rich gold-cloth hangings, which reach the ground on the four sides of the stage. The weight of the whole machine is enormous; yet these twenty men bear it on the hind part of the head and neck, moving with such astonishing ease and regularity, as if the motion arose from the impulse of steam, or some steady mechanical power.

While these *Gentlemen Hidalgos* are employed in such ungentle services, though the law allows them the exemptions of their class, public opinion confines them to their natural level. The only

[6] *Gentle* and *simple*, as I find in those inexhaustible sources of intellectual delight, the Novels by the author of "Waverley," are used by the Scottish peasants in the same manner as *Noble*, and *Llano*, (plain, simple) by the Spaniards.

chance for any of these disguised *noblemen* to be publicly treated with due honour and deference is, unfortunately, one for which they feel an unconquerable aversion—that of being delivered into the rude hands of a Spanish *Jack Ketch*. We had here, two years ago, an instance of this, which I shall relate, as being highly characteristic of our national prejudices about blood.

A gang of five banditti was taken within the jurisdiction of this *Audiencia*, or chief court of justice, one of whom, though born and brought up among the lowest ranks of society, was, by family, an *Hidalgo*, and had some relations among the better class of gentlemen. I believe the name of the unfortunate man was *Herrera*, and that he was a native of a town about thirty English miles from Seville, called *el Arahal*. But I have not, at present, the means of ascertaining the accuracy of these particulars. After lingering, as usual, four or five years in prison, these unfortunate men were found guilty of several murders and highway robberies, and sentenced to suffer death. The relations of the *Hidalgo*, who, foreseeing this fatal event, had been watching the progress of the trial, in order to step forward just in time to avert the stain which a cousin, in the second or third remove, would cast upon their family, if he died in mid-air like a villain; presented a petition to the judges, accompanied with the requisite documents, claiming for their relative the honours of his rank, and engaging to pay the expenses attending the execution of a *nobleman*. The petition being granted as a matter of course, the following scene took place. At a short distance from the gallows on which the four *simple* robbers were to be hanged in a cluster, from the central point of the cross beam, all dressed in white shrouds, with their hands tied before them, that the hangman, who actually rides upon the shoulders of the criminal, may place his foot as in a stirrup,[7]—was raised a scaffold about ten feet high, on an area of about fifteen by twenty, the whole of which and down to the ground, on all sides, was covered with black baize. In the centre of the scaffold was erected a sort of arm-chair, with a stake for its back, against which, by means of an iron collar attached to a screw, the neck is crushed by one turn of the handle. This machine is called *Garrote*—"a stick"—from the old-fashioned method of strangling, by twisting the fatal cord with a stick. Two flights of steps on opposite sides of the stage, afforded a separate access, one for the criminal and the priest, the other for the executioner and his attendant.

The convict, dressed in a loose gown of black baize, rode on a horse, a mark of distinction peculiar to his class, (plebeians riding on an ass, or being dragged on a hurdle,) attended by a priest, and a notary, and surrounded by soldiers. Black silk cords were prepared to bind him to the arms of the seat; for ropes are thought dishonourable. After kneeling to receive the last absolution from the priest, he took off a ring, with which the unfortunate man had been provided for that melancholy occasion. According to etiquette he should have disdainfully thrown it down for the executioner; but, as a mark of Christian humility, he put it into his hand. The sentence being executed, four silver candlesticks, five feet high, with burning wax-candles of a proportionate length and thickness, were placed at the corners of the scaffold; and in about three hours, a suitable funeral was conducted by the *posthumous* friends of the noble robber, who, had they assisted him to settle in life with half of what they spent in this absurd and disgusting show, might, perhaps have saved him from his fatal end. But these honours being what is called *a positive act of noblesse*, of which a due certificate is given to the surviving parties, to be recorded among the legal proofs of their rank; they may have acted under the idea that their relative was fit only to add lustre to the family by the close of his career.

The innumerable and fanciful gradations of family rank which the Spaniards have formed to themselves, without the least foundation in the laws of the country, are difficult to describe. Though the *Hidalguia* is a necessary qualification, especially in country towns, to be admitted into the best society, it is by no means sufficient, by itself, to raise the views of every *Hidalgo* to a family connexion with the "blue blood"—*sangre azul* of the country. The shades by which the vital fluid approaches this privileged hue, would perplex the best colourist. These prejudices, however, have lost much of their force at Madrid, except among the grandees, and in such maritime towns as Malaga and Cadiz,

[7] The Cortes have abolished this barbarous method of inflicting death.

where commerce has raised many new, and some foreign families into consequence. But there is a pervading spirit of vanity in the nation, which actuates even the lowest classes, and may be discovered in the evident mortification which menials and mechanics are apt to feel, on the omission of some modes of address intended, as it were, to cast a veil on the humbleness of their condition. To call a man by the name of *blacksmith*, *butcher*, *coachman*, would be considered an insult. They all expect to be called either by their Christian name, or by the general appellation *Maestro* and in both cases with the prefixed *Señor*; unless the word expressing the employment should imply superiority: as *Mayoral*, chief coachman—*Rabadán*, chief shepherd—*Aperador*, bailiff. These, and similar names, are used without an addition, and sound well in the ears of the natives. But no female would suffer herself to be addressed *cook*, *washer-woman*, &c.; they all feel and act as if, having a natural claim to a higher rank, misfortune alone had degraded them. Poverty, unless it be extreme, does not disqualify a man of family for the society of his equals. Secular clergymen, though plebeians, are, generally, well received; but the same indulgence is not readily extended to monks and friars, whose unpolished manners betray too openly the meanness of their birth. Wholesale merchants, if they belong to the class of *Hidalgos*, are not avoided by the great gentry. In the law, *attorneys* and *notaries* are considered to be under the line of *Caballeros*, though their rank, as in England, depends a great deal on their wealth and personal respectability. Physicians are nearly in the same case.

Having now made you acquainted with what is here called the *best sort* of people, you will probably like to have a sketch of their daily life: take it, then, neither from the first, nor the last of the class.

Breakfast, in Spain, is not a regular family meal. It generally consists of chocolate, and buttered toast, or muffins, called *molletes*. Irish salt-butter is very much in use; as the heat of the climate does not allow the luxuries of the dairy, except in the mountainous tracts of the north. Every one calls for chocolate whenever it suits him; and most people take it when they come from mass—a ceremony seldom omitted, even by such as cannot be reckoned among the highly religious. After breakfast, the gentlemen repair to their occupations; and the ladies, who seldom call upon one another, often enjoy the *amusement* of music and a sermon at the church appointed on that day for the public adoration of the Consecrated Host, which, from morning till night, takes place throughout the year in this, and a few other large towns. This is called *el jubileo*—the jubilee; as, by a spiritual grant of the Pope, those who visit the appointed church, are entitled to the plenary indulgence which, in former times, rewarded the trouble and dangers of a journey to Rome, on the first year of every century—a poor substitute, indeed, for the *ludi sæculares*, which, in former times, drew people thither from all parts of the Roman empire. The bait, however, was so successful for a time, that *jubilees* were celebrated every twenty-five years. But when the taste for papal indulgences began to be cloyed by excess, few would move a foot, and much less undertake a long journey, to spend their money for the benefit of the Pope and his Roman subjects. In these desperate circumstances, the Holy Father thought it better to send the *jubilee*, with its plenary indulgence, to the distant sheep of his flock, than to wait in vain for their coming to seek it at Rome. To this effort of pastoral generosity we owe the inestimable advantage of being able, every day, to perform a spiritual visit to St. Peter's at Rome; which, to those who are indifferent about architectural beauty, is infinitely cheaper, and just as profitable, as a pilgrimage to the vicinity of the Capitol.

About noon the ladies are at home, where, employed at their needle, they expect the morning calls of their friends. I have already told you how easy it is for a gentleman to gain an introduction to any family: the slightest occasion will produce what is called *an offer of the house*, when you are literally told that the house *is yours*. Upon the strength of this offer, you may drop in as often as you please, and idle away hour after hour, in the most unmeaning, or it may chance, the most interesting conversation.

The mention of this offer of the house induces me to give you some idea of the hyperbolical civility of my countrymen. When an English nobleman, well known both to you and me, was some

years ago travelling in this country, he wished to spend a fortnight at Barcelona; but, the inn being rather uncomfortable for himself and family, he was desirous of procuring a country-house in the neighbourhood of the town. It happened at this time that a rich merchant, for whom our friend had a letter, called to pay his respects; and in a string of high-flown compliments, assured his Lordship that both his town-house and his villa were entirely at his service. My lady's eyes sparkled with joy, and she was rather vexed that her husband had hesitated a moment to secure the villa for his family. Doubts arose as to the sincerity of the offer, but she could not be persuaded that such forms of expression should be taken, in this country, in the same sense as the—"Madam I am at your feet,"—with which every gentleman addresses a lady. After all, the merchant, no doubt, to his great astonishment, received a very civil note, accepting the loan of his country house. But, in answer to the note, he sent an awkward excuse, and never shewed his face again. The poor man was so far from being to blame, that he only followed the established custom of the country, according to which it would be rudeness not to offer any part of your property, which you either mention or show. Fortunately, Spanish etiquette is just and equitable on this point; for as it would not pardon the omission of the offer, so it would never forgive the acceptance.

A foreigner must be surprised at the strange mixture of caution and liberty which appears in the manners of Spain. Most rooms have glass doors; but when this is not the case, it would be highly improper for any lady to sit with a gentleman, unless the doors were open. Yet, when a lady is slightly indisposed in bed, she does not scruple to see every one of her male visitors. A lady seldom takes a gentleman's arm, and never shakes him by the hand; but on the return of an old acquaintance after a considerable absence, or when they wish joy for some agreeable event, the common salute is an embrace. An unmarried woman must not be seen alone out of doors, nor must she sit *tête-à-tête* with a gentleman, even when the doors of the room are open; but, as soon as she is married, she may go by herself where she pleases, and sit alone with any man for many hours every day. You have in England strange notions of Spanish jealousy. I can, however, assure you, that if Spanish husbands were, at any time, what novels and old plays represent them, no race in Europe has undergone a more thorough change.

Dinners are generally at one, and in a few houses, between two and three. Invitations to dine are extremely rare. On some extraordinary occasions, as that of a young man performing his first mass —a daughter taking the veil—and, in the more wealthy houses, on the saint-days of the heads of the family, they make what is called a *convite*, or feast. Any person accustomed to your private dinners, would be thrown into a fever by one of these parties. The height of luxury, on these occasions, is what we call *Comida de Fonda*—a dinner from the coffee-house. All the dishes are dressed at an inn, and brought ready to be served at table. The Spanish houses, even those of the best sort, are so ill provided with every thing required at table, that wine, plates, glasses, knives and forks, are brought from the inn together with the dinner. The noise and confusion of these *feasts* is inconceivable. Every one tries to repay the hospitable treat with mirth and noise; and though Spaniards are, commonly, water-drinkers, the bottle is used very freely on these occasions; but they do not continue at table after eating the dessert. Upon the death of any one in a family, the nearest relatives send a dinner of this kind, on the day of the funeral, that they may save the chief mourners the trouble of preparing an entertainment for such of their kindred as have attended the body to church. Decorum, however, forbids any mirth on these occasions.

After I became acquainted with English hospitality, my mind was struck with a custom, which, being a matter of course in Spain, had never attracted my notice. An invitation to dinner, which, by the by, is never given in writing, must not be accepted on the first proposal. Perhaps our complimentary language makes it necessary to ascertain how far the inviter may be in earnest, and a good-natured civility has made it a rule to give national vanity fair play, and never, without proper caution, to trust *pot-luck*, where fortune so seldom smiles upon that venerable utensil. The first invitation "to eat the soup" should be answered, therefore, with "a thousand thanks;" by which a Spaniard civilly

declines what no one wishes him to accept. If, after this skirmish of good breeding, the offer should be repeated, you may begin to suspect that your friend is in earnest, and answer him in the usual words, *no se meta Usted en eso*—"do not engage in such a thing." At this stage of the business, both parties having gone too far to recede, the invitation is repeated and accepted.

I might, probably, have omitted the mention of this custom, had I not found, as it appears to me, a curious coincidence between Spanish and ancient Greek manners on this point. Perhaps you recollect that Xenophon opens his little work called "The Banquet," by stating how Socrates and his pupils, who formed the greater part of the company the entertainment therein described, were invited by Callias, a rich citizen of Athens. The feast was intended to celebrate the victory of a young man, who had obtained the crown at the Panathenæan games. Callias was walking home with his young friend to the Pireus, when he saw Socrates and his daily companions. He accosted the former in a familiar and playful manner, and, after a little bantering on his philosophical speculations, requested both him and his friends to give him the pleasure of their company at table. "They, however," says Xenophon, "*at first, as was proper*, thanked him, and declined the invitation; *but when it clearly appeared that he was angry at the refusal*, followed him." I am aware that the words in Xenophon admit another interpretation, and that the phrase which I render, *as was proper*, may be applied to the *thanks* alone; but it may be referred, with as much or better reason, both to thanks and refusal, and the custom which I have stated inclines me strongly to adopt that sense.[8] The truth is, that wherever dinner is not, as in England, the chief and almost exclusive season of social converse, an invitation to dine must appear somewhat in the light of a gift or present—which every man of delicacy feels reluctant to accept at all from a mere acquaintance, or without some degree of compulsion, from a friend. Besides, we know the abuse and ridicule with which both Greeks and Romans attacked the *Parasites*, or dinner-hunters; and it is very natural to suppose that a true gentleman would be upon his guard against the most distant resemblance to those unfortunate starvelings.

The custom of sleeping after dinner, called *Siesta*, is universal in summer, especially in Andalusia, where the intenseness of the heat produces languor and drowsiness. In winter, taking a walk, just after rising from table, is very prevalent. Many gentlemen, previously to their afternoon walk, resort to the coffee-houses, which now begin to be in fashion.

Almost every considerable town of Spain is provided with a public walk, where the better classes assemble in the afternoon. These places are called *Alamedas*, from *Alamo*, a common name for the elm and poplar, the trees which shade such places. Large stone benches run in the direction of the alleys, where people sit either to rest themselves or to carry on a long talk, in whispers, with the next lady; an amusement which, in the idiom of the country, is expressed by the strange phrase, *pelar la Pava*—"to pluck the hen-turkey." We have in our *Alameda* several fountains of the most delicious water. No less than twenty or thirty men with glasses, each holding nearly a quart, move in every direction, so dextrously clashing two of them in their hands, that without any danger of breaking them, they keep up a pretty lively tinkling like that of well-tuned small bells. So great is the quantity of water which these people sell to the frequenters of the walk, that most of them live throughout the year on what they thus earn in summer. Success in this trade depends on their promptitude to answer every call, their neatness in washing the glasses, and most of all, on their skilful use of the good-natured waggery peculiar to the lower classes of Andalusia. A knowing air, an arch smile, and some honied words of praise and endearments, as "My rose," "My soul," and many others, which even a modest and high-bred lady will hear without displeasure; are infallible means of success among tradesmen who deal with the public at large, and especially with the more tender part of that public. The company in these walks presents a motley crowd of officers in their regimentals,—of clergymen in their cassocks, black cloaks, and broad-brimmed hats, not unlike those of the coalmen

[8] See Note B.

in London,—and of gentlemen wrapped up in their *capas*, or in some uniform, without which a well-born Spaniard is almost ashamed to shew himself.

The ladies' walking-dress is susceptible of little variety. Nothing short of the house being on fire would oblige a Spanish woman to step out of doors without a black petticoat, called *Basquiña*, or *Saya*, and a broad black veil, hanging from the head over the shoulders, and crossed on the breast like a shawl, which they call *Mantilla*. The *mantilla* is, generally, of silk trimmed round with broad lace. In summer-evenings some white *mantillas* are seen; but no lady would wear them in the morning, and much less venture into a church in such a *profane* dress.

A showy fan is indispensable, in all seasons, both in and out of doors. An Andalusian woman might as well want her tongue as her fan. The fan, besides, has this advantage over the natural organ of speech—that it conveys thought to a greater distance. A dear friend at the farthest end of the public walk, is greeted and cheered by a quick, tremulous motion of the fan, accompanied with several significant nods. An object of indifference is dismissed with a slow, formal inclination of the fan, which makes his blood run cold. The fan, now, screens the titter and whisper; now condenses a smile into the dark sparkling eyes, which take their aim just above it. A gentle tap of the fan commands the attention of the careless; a waving motion calls the distant. A certain twirl between the fingers betrays doubt or anxiety—a quick closing and displaying the folds, indicates eagerness or joy. In perfect combination with the expressive features of my countrywomen, the fan is a magic wand, whose power is more easily felt than described.

What is mere beauty, compared with the fascinating power arising from extreme sensibility? Such as are alive to those invisible charms, will hardly find a plain face among the young women of Andalusia. Their features may not, at first view, please the eye; but seem to improve every day till they grow beautiful. Without the advantages of education, without even external accomplishments, the vivacity of their fancy sheds a perpetual glow over their conversation; and the warmth of their heart gives the interest of affection to their most indifferent actions. But Nature, like a too fond mother, has spoilt them, and Superstition has completed their ruin. While the activity of their minds is allowed to run waste for want of care and instruction, the consciousness of their powers to please, impresses them with an early notion that life has but one source of happiness. Were their charms the effect of that cold twinkling flame which flutters round the hearts of most Frenchwomen, they would be only dangerous to the peace and usefulness of one half of society. But, instead of being the capricious tyrants of men, they are, generally, their victims. Few, very few Spanish women, and none, I will venture to say, among the Andalusians, have it in their power to be coquettes. If it may be said without a solecism, there is more of that vice in our men than in our females. The first, leading a life of idleness, and deprived by an ignorant, oppressive, and superstitious government, of every object that can raise and feed an honest ambition, waste their whole youth, and part of their manly age, in trifling with the best feelings of the tender sex, and poisoning, for mere mischief's sake, the very springs of domestic happiness. But ours is the most dire and complex disease that ever preyed upon the vitals of human society. With some of the noblest qualities that a people can possess (you will excuse an involuntary burst of national partiality), we are worse than degraded—we are depraved, by that which is intended to cherish and exalt every social virtue. Our corrupters, our mortal enemies, are religion and government. To set the practical proofs of this bold position in a striking light is, undoubtedly, beyond my abilities. Yet such, I must say, is the force of the proofs I possess on this melancholy topic, that they nearly overcome my mind with intuitive evidence. Let me, then, take leave of the subject into which my feelings have hurried me, by assuring you, that wherever the slightest aid is afforded to the female mind in this country, it exhibits the most astonishing quickness and capacity; and that, probably, no other nation in the world can present more lovely instances of a glowing and susceptible heart preserving unspotted purity, not from the dread of public opinion, but in spite of its encouragements.

LETTER III

Seville, – 1799.

Fortune has favoured me with an acquaintance—a young clergyman of this town—for whom, since our first introduction, I have felt a growing esteem, such as must soon ripen into the warmest affection. Common danger, and common suffering, especially of the mind, prove often the readiest and most indissoluble bonds of human friendship: and when to this influence is added the blending power of an intercommunity of thoughts and sentiments, no less unbounded than the confidence with which two men put thereby their liberty, their fortune, and their life into the hands of each other—imagination can hardly measure the warmth and devotedness of honest hearts thus united.

Spaniards, who have broken the trammels of superstition, possess a wonderful quickness to mark and know one another. Yet caution is so necessary, that we never offer the right hand of fellowship till, by gradual approaches, the heart and mind are carefully scanned on both sides. There are *bullies* in mental no less than in animal courage: and I have sometimes been in danger of committing myself with a pompous fool that was hazarding propositions in the evening, which he was sure to lay, in helpless fear, before the confessor, the next morning; and who, had he met with free and unqualified assent from any one of the company, would have tried to save his own soul and body by carrying the whole conversation to the Inquisitors. But the character of my new friend was visible at a glance; and, after some conversation, I could not feel the slightest apprehension that there might lurk in his heart either the villainy or the folly which can betray a man, in this world, under a pretext of ensuring his happiness in the next. He too, either from the circumstance of my long residence in England, or, as I hope, from something more properly belonging to myself, soon opened his whole mind; and we both uttered downright *heresy*. After this mutual, this awful pledge, the Scythian ceremony of tasting each other's blood could not have more closely bound us in interest and danger.

The coolness of an orange-grove is not more refreshing to him who has panted across one of our burning plains, under the meridian sun in August, than the company of a few trusty friends to some unbending minds, after a long day of restraint and dissimulation. When after our evening walk we are at last comfortably seated round my friend's reading-table, where an amiable young officer, another clergyman, and one of the most worthy and highly-gifted men that tyranny and superstition have condemned to pine in obscurity, are always welcomed with a cordiality approaching to rapture—I cannot help comparing our feelings to those which we might suppose in Christian slaves at Algiers, who, having secretly unlocked the rivets of their fetters, could shake them off to feast and riot in the dead of night, cheering their hearts with wild visions of liberty, and salving their wounds with vague hopes of revenge. Revenge, did I say! what a false notion would that word give you of the characters that compose our little club! I doubt if Nature herself could so undo the work of her hands as to transform any one of my kind, my benevolent friends, into a man of blood. As to myself, mere protestations were useless. You know me; and I shall leave you to judge. But there is a revenge of the fancy, perfectly consistent with true mildness and generosity, though certainly more allied to quick sensibility than to sound and sober judgment. The last, however, should be seldom, if at all, looked for among persons in our circumstances. Our childhood is artificially protracted till we wonder how we have grown old: and, being kept at an immeasurable distance from the affairs and interest of public life, our passions, our virtues, and our vices, like those of early youth, have deeper roots in the imagination than the heart. I will not say that this is a prevalent feature in the character of my countrymen; but I have generally observed it among the best and the worthiest. As to my confidential friends, especially the one I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, in strict conformity with the temper which, I fear, I have but imperfectly described, they spend their lives in giving vent, among

themselves, to the suppressed feelings of ridicule or indignation, of which the religious institutions of this country are a perennial source to those who are compelled to receive them as of Divine authority. England has so far improved me, that I can perceive the folly of this conduct. I am aware that, instead of indulging this childish gratification of our anger, we should be preparing ourselves, by a profound study of our ancient laws and customs, and a perfect acquaintance with the pure and original doctrines of the Gospel, for any future opening to reformation in our church and state. But under this intolerable system of intellectual oppression, we have associated the idea of Spanish law with despotism, and that of Christianity with absurdity and persecution. After my return from England I feel almost involuntarily relapsing into the old habits of my mind. With my friends, who have never left this country, any endeavour to break and counteract such habits would be perfectly hopeless. Despondency drives them into a course of reading and thinking, which leads only to suppressed contempt and whispered sarcasm. The violence which they must constantly do to their best feelings, might breed some of the fiercer passions in breasts less softened with “the milk of human kindness.” But their hatred of the prevailing practices and opinions does not extend to persons. Yet I for one must confess, that were I to act from a first and habitual impulse, without listening to my better judgment, there is not a saint or a relic in the country I would not trample under foot, and treat with the utmost indignity. As things are, however, I content myself with scoffing and railing the whole day. But I trust that, on a change of circumstances, I should act more soberly than I feel.

I should have found it very difficult, without this fortunate intimacy with a man who, though still in the prime of youth, has lately obtained, by literary competition, a place among what we call the higher clergy—that is, such as are *above* the cure of souls—to give you an insight into the internal constitution of the Spanish church, the vices of the system which prepares our young men for the altar, and the ruinous foundations on which the ecclesiastical law, aided by civil power, hazards the morals of our religious teachers and their flocks. When I had expressed to my friend my desire of having his assistance in carrying on this correspondence, as well as satisfied his mind on the improbability of any thing entrusted to you, recoiling upon himself in Spain; he shewed me a manuscript he had drawn up some time before, under the title: “A few facts connected with the formation of the intellectual and moral character of a Spanish Clergyman.” “Who knows,” he said, “but that this sketch may answer your purpose? No traveller’s-guide account of our universities and clerical establishments, can convey such a living picture of our state, as the history of a young mind trained up under their influence. You might easily find a list of the professors, endowments, and class-books of which the framework of Spanish education consists. But who would have the patience to read it, or what could he learn from it? I had intended that this little effusion of an oppressed and struggling mind should lie concealed till some future period, probably after my death, when my country might be prepared to learn and lament the wrongs she has, for ages, heaped on her children. But, since you have provided against discovery, and are willing to translate into English any thing I may give you, it will be some satisfaction to know that the results of my sad experience are laid before the most enlightened and benevolent people of Europe. Perhaps, if they know the true source of our evils, the day will come when they may be able and willing to help us.”

The question with me now was, not whether I should accept the manuscript, but whether I could do it justice in the translation. Trusting, however, that the novelty of the matter would atone for the faults of my style; labour and perseverance have, at length, enabled me to enclose it in this letter. As I have thus introduced a stranger to you. I am bound in common civility to fall into the background, and let him speak for himself.

A few Facts connected with the formation of the Intellectual and Moral Character of a Spanish Clergyman

"I do not possess the cynical habits of mind which would enable me, like Rousseau, to expose my heart naked to the gaze of the world. I have neither his unfortunate and odious propensities to gloss by an affected candour, nor his bewitching eloquence to display, whatever good qualities I may possess: and as I must overcome no small reluctance and fear of impropriety, to enter upon the task of writing an account of the workings of my mind and heart, I have some reason to believe that I am led to do so by a sincere desire of being useful to others. Millions of human creatures are made to venture their happiness on a form of Christianity which possesses the strongest claims to our attention, both from its great antiquity, and the extent of its sway over the most civilized part of the earth. The various effects of that religious system, unmixed with any thing unauthorized or spurious, upon my country, my friends, and myself, have been the object of my most serious attention, from the very dawn of reason till the moment when I am writing these lines. If the result of my experience should be, that religion, as it is taught and enforced in Spain, is productive of exquisite misery in the amiable and good, and of gross depravity in the unfeeling and the thoughtless—that it is an insuperable obstacle to the improvement of the mind, and gives a decided ascendancy to lettered absurdity, and to dull-headed bigotry—that it necessarily breeds such reserve and dissimulation in the most promising and valuable part of the people as must check and stunt the noblest of public virtues, candour and political courage—if all this, and much more that I am not able to express in the abstract form of simple positions, should start into view from the plain narrative of an obscure individual; I hope I shall not be charged with the silly vanity of attributing any intrinsic importance to the domestic events and private feelings which are to fill up the following pages.

"I was born of parents who, though possessed of little property, held a decent rank among the gentry of my native town. Their characters, however, are so intimately connected with the formation of my own, that I shall indulge an honest pride in describing them.

"My father was the son of a rich Irish merchant, who obtained for himself and descendants a patent of *Hidalguia*, or noblesse, early in the reign of Ferdinand VI. During the life of my grandfather, and the consequent prosperity of his house, my father was sent abroad for his education. This gave a polish to his manners, which, at that period, was not easily found even in the first ranks of the nobility. Little more than accomplishments, however, was left him, when, in consequence of his father's death, the commercial concerns of the house being managed by a stranger, received a shock which had nearly reduced the family to poverty and want. Yet something was saved; and my father, who, by some unaccountable infatuation, had not been brought up to business, was now obliged to exert himself to the utmost of his power. Joining, therefore, in partnership with a more wealthy merchant, who had married one of his sisters, he contrived, by care and diligence, together with a strict, though not sordid economy, not to descend below the rank in which he had been born. Under these unpromising circumstances he married my mother, who, if she could add but little to her husband's fortune, yet brought him a treasure of love and virtue, which he found constantly increasing, till death removed him on the first approaches of old age.

"My mother was of honourable parentage. She was brought up in that absence of mental cultivation which prevails, to this day, among the Spanish ladies. But her natural talents were of a superior cast. She was lively, pretty, and sang sweetly. Under the influence of a happier country, her pleasing vivacity, the quickness of her apprehension, and the exquisite degree of sensibility which animated her words and actions, would have qualified her to shine in the most elegant and refined circles.

"*Benevolence* prompted all my father's actions, endued him, at times, with something like supernatural vigour, and gave him, for the good of his fellow-creatures, the courage and decision he

wanted in whatever concerned himself. With hardly any thing to spare, I do not recollect a time when our house was not a source of relief and consolation to some families of such as, by a characteristic and feeling appellation, are called among us the *blushing poor*.[9] In all seasons, for thirty years of his life, my father allowed himself no other relaxation, after the fatiguing business of his counting-house, than a visit to the general hospital of this town—a horrible scene of misery, where four or five hundred beggars are, at a time, allowed to lay themselves down and die, when worn out by want and disease. Stripping himself of his coat, and having put on a coarse dress for the sake of cleanliness, in which he was scrupulous to a fault; he was employed, till late at night, in making the beds of the poor, taking the helpless in his arms, and stooping to such services as even the menials in attendance were often loth to perform. All this he did of his own free will, without the least connexion, public or private, with the establishment. Twice he was at death's door from the contagious influence of the atmosphere in which he exerted his charity. But no danger would appal him when engaged in administering relief to the needy. Foreigners, cast by misfortune into that gulf of wretchedness, were the peculiar objects of his kindness.

"The principle of benevolence was not less powerful in my mother; but her extreme sensibility made her infinitely more susceptible of pain than pleasure—of fear than hope—and, for such characters, a technical religion is ever a source of distracting terrors. Enthusiasm—that bastard of religious liberty, that vigorous weed of Protestantism—does not thrive under the jealous eye of infallible authority. Catholicism, it is true, has, in a few instances, produced a sort of splendid madness; but its visions and trances partake largely of the tameness of a mind previously exhausted by fears and agonies, meekly borne under the authority of a priest. The throes of the New Birth harrow up the mind of the Methodist, and give it that frenzied energy of despair, which often settles into the all-hoping, all-daring raptures of the enthusiast. The Catholic Saint suffers in all the passiveness of blind submission, till nature sinks exhausted, and reason gives way to a gentle, visionary madness. The natural powers of my mother's intellect were strong enough to withstand, unimpaired, the enormous and constant pressure of religious fears in their most hideous shape. But, did I not deem reason the only gift of Heaven which fully compensates the evils of this present existence, I might have wished for its utter extinction in the first and dearest object of my natural affection. Had she become a visionary, she had ceased to be unhappy. But she possessed to the last an intellectual energy equal to any exertion, except one, which was not compatible with the influence of her country—that of looking boldly into the dark recess where lurked the phantoms that harassed and distressed her mind.

"It would be difficult, indeed, to choose two fairer subjects for observing the effects of the religion of Spain. The results, in both, were lamentable, though certainly not the most mischievous it is apt to produce. In one, we see mental soberness and good sense degraded into timidity and indecision—unbounded goodness of heart, confined to the lowest range of benevolence. In the other, we mark talents of a superior kind, turned into the ingenious tormentors of a heart, whose main source of wretchedness was an exquisite sensibility to the beauty of virtue, and an insatiate ardour in treading the devious and thorny path it was made to take for the 'way which leadeth unto life.'—A bolder reason, in the first, (it will be said) and a reason less fluttered by sensibility, in the second, would have made those virtuous minds more cautious of yielding themselves up to the full influence of ascetic devotion. Is this, then, all that men are to expect from the unbounded promises of light, and the lofty claims of authority, which our religion holds forth? Is it thus, that, when, to obtain the protection of an infallible guide, we have, at his command, maimed and fast bound our reason, still a precipice yawns before our feet, from which none but that insulted reason can save us? Are we to call for her aid on the brink of despair and insanity, and then spurn our faithful, though injured friend, lest she should unlock our hand from that of our proud and treacherous leader? Often have I, from education, habit, and a misguided love of moral excellence, been guilty of that inconsistency, till

[9] *Pobres vergonzantes.*

frequent disappointment urged me to break my chains. Painful, indeed, and fierce was the struggle by which I gained my liberty, and doomed I am for ever to bear the marks of early bondage. But no power on earth shall make me again give up the guidance of my reason, till I can find a rule of conduct and belief that may safely be trusted, without wanting *reason* itself to moderate and expound it.

"The first and most anxious care of my parents was to sow abundantly the seeds of Christian virtue in my infant breast. In this, as in all their proceedings, they strictly followed the steps of those whose virtue had received the sanction of their church. Religious instruction was conveyed to my mind with the rudiments of speech; and if early impressions alone could be trusted for the future complexion of a child's character, the music, and the splendid pageantry of the cathedral of Seville, which was to me the first scene of mental enjoyment, might, at this day, be the soundest foundation of my Catholic faith.

"Divines have declared that moral responsibility begins at the age of seven, and, consequently, children of quick parts are not allowed to go much longer without the advantage of confession. My mind had scarcely attained the first climacteric, when I had the full benefit of absolution for such sins as my good mother, who acted as the accusing conscience, could discover in my *naughtiness*. The church, we know, cannot be wrong; but to say the honest truth, all her pious contrivances have, by a sad fatality, produced in me just the reverse of their aim. Though the clergyman who was to shrive this young sinner had mild, gentle, and affectionate manners, there is something in auricular confession which has revolted my feelings from the day when I first knelt before a priest, in childish simplicity, to the last time I have been forced to repeat that ceremony, as a protection to my life and liberty, with scorn and contempt in my heart.

"Auricular confession, as a subject of theological controversy, is, probably, beneath the notice of many; but I could not easily allow the name of philosopher to any one who should look upon an inquiry into the moral influence of that religious practice, as perfectly void of interest. It has been observed, with great truth, that the most philanthropic man would feel more uneasiness in the expectation of having his little finger cut off, than in the assurance that the whole empire of China was to be swallowed up the next day by an earthquake. If ever, therefore, these lines should meet the eye of the public in some distant country (for ages must pass before they can see the light in Spain), I entreat my readers to beware of indifference about evils from which it is their happiness to be free, and to make a due allowance for the feelings which lead me into a short digression. They certainly cannot expect to be acquainted with Spain without a sufficient knowledge of the powerful moral engines which are at work in that country; and they will, perhaps, find that a Spanish priest may have something to say which is new to them on the subject of confession.

"The effects of confession upon young minds are, generally, unfavourable to their future peace and virtue. It was to that practice I owed the first taste of remorse, while yet my soul was in a state of infant purity. My fancy had been strongly impressed with the awful conditions of the penitential law, and the word *sacrilege* had made me shudder on being told that the act of concealing any thought or action, the rightfulness of which I suspected, would make me guilty of that worst of crimes, and greatly increase my danger of everlasting torments. My parents had, in this case, done no more than their duty, according to the rules of their church. But, though they had succeeded in rousing my fear of hell, this was, on the other hand, too feeble to overcome a childish bashfulness, which made the disclosure of a harmless trifle, an effort above my strength.

"The appointed day came at last, when I was to wait on the confessor. Now wavering, now determined not to be guilty of sacrilege, I knelt before the priest, leaving, however, in my list of sins, the last place to the hideous offence—I believe it was a petty larceny committed on a young bird. But, when I came to the dreaded point, shame and confusion fell upon me, and the accusation stuck in my throat. The imaginary guilt of this silence haunted my mind for four years, gathering horrors at every successive confession, and rising into an appalling spectre, when, at the age of twelve, I was taken to receive the sacrament. In this miserable state I continued till, with the advance of reason,

I plucked, at fourteen, courage enough to unburthen my conscience by a general confession of the past. And let it not be supposed that mine is a singular case, arising either from morbid feeling or the nature of my early education. Few, indeed, among the many penitents I have examined, have escaped the evils of a similar state; for, what a silly bashfulness does in children, is often, in after-life, the immediate effect of that shame by which fallen frailty clings still to wounded virtue. The necessity of confession, seen at a distance, is lighter than a feather in the balance of desire; while, at a subsequent period, it becomes a punishment on delicacy—an instrument to blunt the moral sense, by multiplying the subjects of remorse, and directing its greatest terrors against imaginary crimes.

"These evils affect, nearly equally, the two sexes; but there are some that fall peculiarly to the lot of the softer. Yet the remotest of all—at least, as long as the Inquisition shall exist—is the danger of direct seduction by the priest. The formidable powers of that odious tribunal have been so skilfully arrayed against the abuse of sacramental trust, that few are found base and blind enough to make the confessional a *direct* instrument of debauch. The strictest delicacy, however, is, I believe, inadequate fully to oppose the demoralizing tendency of auricular confession. Without the slightest responsibility, and, not unfrequently, in the conscientious discharge of what he believes his duty, the confessor conveys to the female mind the first foul breath which dims its virgin purity. He, undoubtedly, has a right to interrogate upon subjects which are justly deemed awkward even for maternal confidence; and it would require more than common simplicity to suppose that a discretionary power of this nature, left in the hands of thousands—men beset with more than common temptations to abuse it—will generally be exercised with proper caution. But I will no longer dwell upon this subject for the present. Men of unprejudiced minds will easily conjecture what I leave unsaid; while to shew a hope of convincing such as have made a full and irrevocable surrender of their judgment, were only to libel my own.

"From the peculiar circumstances of my country, the training of my mental faculties was an object of little interest with my parents. There could be scarcely any doubt in the choice of a line of life for me; who was the eldest of four children. My father's fortune was improving; and I might help and succeed him with advantage to myself and two sisters. It was, therefore, in my father's counting-house, that, under the care of an old trusty clerk, I learned writing and arithmetic. To be a perfect stranger to literature is not, even now, a disgrace among the better class of Spaniards. But my mother, whose pride, though greatly subdued, was never conquered by devotion, felt anxious that, since, from prudential motives, I was doomed to be buried for life in a counting-house, a little knowledge of Latin should distinguish me from a mere mercantile drudge. A private teacher was accordingly procured, who read with me in the evening, after I had spent the best part of the day in making copies of the extensive correspondence of the house.

"I was now about ten years old, and though, from a child, excessively fond of reading, my acquaintance with books did not extend beyond a history of the Old Testament—a collection of the Lives of the Saints mentioned in the Catholic Almanack, out of which I chose the Martyrs, for modern saints were never to my taste—a little work that gave an amusing miracle of the Virgin for every day of the year[10]—and prized above all, a Spanish translation of Fenelon's Telemachus, which I perused till I had nearly learned it by heart. I heard, therefore, with uncommon pleasure, that, in acquiring a knowledge of Latin, I should have to read stories not unlike that of my favourite the Prince of Ithaca. Little time, however, was allowed me for study, lest, from my love of learning, I should conceive a dislike to mercantile pursuits. But my mind had taken a decided bent. I hated the counting-house, and loved my books. Learning and the church were, to me, inseparable ideas; and I soon declared to my mother that I would be nothing but a clergyman.

"This declaration roused the strongest prejudices of her mind and heart, which cold prudence had only damped into acquiescence. To have a son who shall daily hold in his hands the real body of

[10] See Note C.

Christ, is an honour, a happiness which raises the humblest Spanish woman into a self-complacent consequence that attends her through life. What, then, must be the feelings of one who, to the strongest sense of devotion, joins the hope of seeing the dignities and emoluments of a rich and proud Church bestowed upon a darling child? The Church, besides, by the law of celibacy, averts that mighty terror of a fond mother—a wife, who, sooner or later, is to draw away her child from home. A boy, therefore, who at the age of ten or twelve, dazzled either by the gaudy dress of an officiating priest—by the importance he sees others acquire, when the bishop confers upon them the clerical tonsure—or by any other delusion of childhood, declares his intention of taking orders, seldom, very seldom escapes the heavy chain which the Church artfully hides under the tinsel of honours, and the less flimsy, though also less attainable splendour of her gold. Such a boy, among the poor, is infallibly plunged into a convent; if he belongs to the gentry, he is destined to swell the ranks of the secular clergy.

"It is true that, in all ages and countries, the leading events of human life are inseparably linked with some of the slightest incidents of childhood. But this fact, instead of an apology, affords the heaviest charge against the crafty and barbarous system of laying snares, wherein unsuspecting innocence may, at the very entrance of life, lose every chance of future peace, happiness and virtue. To allow a girl of sixteen to bind herself, for ever, with vows—not only under the awful, though distant guardianship of heaven, but the odious and immediate superintendence of man—ranks, indeed, with the most hideous abuses of superstition. The law of celibacy, it is true, does not bind the secular clergy till the age of twenty-one; but this is neither more nor less than a mockery of common sense, in the eyes of those who practically know how frivolous is that latitude.[11] A man has seldom the means to embrace, or the aptitude to exercise a profession for which he has not been trained from early youth. It is absurd and cruel to pretend that a young man, whose best ten or twelve years have been spent in preparation for orders, is at full liberty to turn his back upon the Church when he has arrived at one-and-twenty. He may, indeed, preserve his liberty; but to do so he must forget that most of his patrimony has been laid out on his education, that he is too old for a cadetship in the army, too poor for commerce, and too proud for a petty trade. He must behold, unmoved, the tears of his parents; and, casting about for subsistence, in a country where industry affords no resource, love, the main cause of these struggles, must content itself with bare possible lawfulness, and bid adieu to the hope of possession. Wherever unnatural privations make not a part of the clerical duty, many may find themselves in the Church who might be better elsewhere. But no great effort is wanted to make them happy in themselves, and useful to the community. Not so under the unfeeling tyranny of our ecclesiastical law. For, where shall we find that virtue which, having Nature herself for its enemy, and misery for its meed, will be able to extend its care to the welfare of others?—As to myself, the tenour and colour of my life were fixed the moment I expressed my childish wish of being a clergyman. The love of knowledge, however, which betrayed me into the path of wretchedness, has never forsaken its victim. It is probable that I could not have found happiness in uneducated ignorance. Scanty and truly hard-earned as it is the store on which my mind feeds itself, I would not part with it for a whole life of unthinking pleasure: and since the necessity of circumstances left me no path to mental enjoyment, except that I have so painfully trodden, I hail the moment when I entered it, and only bewail the fatality which fixed my birth in a Catholic country.

"The order of events would here require an account of the system of Spanish education, and its first effects upon my mind; but, since I speak of myself only to shew the state of my country, I shall proceed with the moral influence, that, without interruption, I may present the facts relating severally to the heart and intellect, in as large masses as the subject permits.

"The Jesuits, till the abolition of that order, had an almost unrivalled influence over the better classes of Spaniards. They had nearly monopolized the instruction of the Spanish youth, at which

[11] The secular clergy are not bound by vows. Celibacy is enforced upon them by a law which makes their marriage illegal, and punishable by the Ecclesiastical Courts.

they toiled without pecuniary reward; and were equally zealous in promoting devotional feelings both among their pupils and the people at large. It is well known that the most accurate division of labour was observed in the allotment of their various employments. Their candidates, who, by a refinement of ecclesiastical policy, after an unusually long probation, were bound by vows, which, depriving them of liberty, yet left a discretionary power of ejection in the order; were incessantly watched by the penetrating eye of the master of novices: a minute description of their character and peculiar turn was forwarded to the superiors, and at the end of the noviciate, they were employed to the advantage of the community, without ever thwarting the natural bent of the individual, or diverting his natural powers by a multiplicity of employments. Wherever, as in France and Italy, literature was in high estimation, the Jesuits spared no trouble to raise among themselves men of eminence in that department. In Spain, their chief aim was to provide their houses with popular preachers, and zealous, yet prudent and gentle, confessors. Pascal, and the Jansenist party, of which he was the organ, accused them of systematic laxity in their moral doctrines: but the charge, I believe, though plausible in theory, was perfectly groundless in practice. If, indeed, ascetic virtue could ever be divested of its connatural evil tendency—if a system of moral perfection that has for its basis, however disavowed and disguised, the Manichæan doctrine of the two principles, could be applied with any partial advantage as a rule of conduct, it was so in the hands of the Jesuits. The strict, unbending maxims of the Jansenists, by urging persons of all characters and tempers to an imaginary goal of perfection, bring quickly their whole system to the decision of experience. They are like those enthusiasts who, venturing upon the practice of some Gospel sayings, in the literal sense, have made the absurdity of that interpretation as clear as noon-day light. A greater knowledge of mankind made the Jesuits more cautious in the culture of devotional feelings. They well knew that but few can prudently engage in open hostility with what in ascetic language is called the world. They now and then trained up a sturdy champion, who, like their founder Loyóla, might provoke the enemy to single combat with honour to his leaders; but the crowd of mystic combatants were made to stand upon a kind of jealous truce, which, in spite of all care, often produced some jovial meetings of the advanced parties on both sides. The good fathers came forward, rebuked their soldiers back into the camp, and filled up the place of deserters by their indefatigable industry in engaging recruits.

"The influence of the Jesuits on the Spanish morals, from every thing I have learned, was undoubtedly favourable. Their kindness attracted the youth from the schools to their company: and, though this intimacy was often employed in making proselytes to the order, it also contributed to the preservation of virtue in that slippery age, both by the ties of affection, and the gentle check of example. Their churches were crowded every Sunday with regular attendants, who came to confess and receive the sacrament. The practice of choosing a certain priest, not only to be the occasional confessor, but *director of the conscience*, was greatly encouraged by the Jesuits. The ultimate effects of this surrender of the judgment are, indeed, dangerous and degrading; but, in a country where the darkest superstition is constantly impelling the mind into the opposite extremes of religious melancholy and profligacy, weak persons are sometimes preserved from either by the friendly assistance of a prudent *director*; and the Jesuits were generally well qualified for that office. Their conduct was correct, and their manners refined. They kept up a dignified intercourse with the middling and higher classes, and were always ready to help and instruct the poor, without descending to their level. Since the expulsion of the Jesuits, the better classes, for the most part, avoid the company of monks and friars, except in an official capacity; while the lower ranks, from which these professional saints are generally taken, and where they re-appear, raised, indeed, into comparative importance, but grown bolder in grossness and vice, suffer more from their influence than they would by being left without any religious ministers.[12]

[12] See Note D.

"Since the abolition of the Jesuits, their devotional system has been kept up, though upon a much narrower scale, by the congregations of Saint Philip Neri (*l'Oratoire*, in France), an Italian of the sixteenth century, who established voluntary associations of secular clergymen, living together under an easy rule, but without monastic vows, in order to devote themselves to the support of piety. The number, however, of these associated priests is so small, that, notwithstanding their zeal and their studied imitation of the Jesuits, they are but a faint shadow of that surprising institution. Yet these priests alone have inherited the skill of Loyóla's followers in the management of the ascetic contrivance, which, invented by that ardent fanatic, is still called, from his Christian name, *Exercises of Saint Ignatius*. As it would be impossible to sketch the history of my mind and heart without noticing the influence of that powerful engine, I cannot omit a description of the establishment kept by the *Philippians* at Seville—the most complete of its kind that probably has ever existed.

"The *Exercises of Saint Ignatius* are a series of meditations on various religious subjects, so artificially disposed, that the mind being at first thrown into distressing horror, may be gradually raised to hope, and finally soothed, not into a certainty of Divine favour, but a timid consciousness of pardon. Ten consecutive days are passed in perfect abstraction from all wordly pursuits. The persons who submit to this spiritual discipline, leave their homes for rooms allotted to them in the religious house where the Exercises are to be performed, and yield themselves up to the direction of the president. The priest, who for nearly thirty years has been acting in that capacity at Seville, enjoys such influence over the wealthy part of the town, that, not satisfied with the temporary accommodation which his convent afforded to the pious guests, he can now lodge the Exercitants in a separate building, with a chapel annexed, and every requisite for complete abstraction, during the days of their retirement. Six or eight times in the year the Exercises are performed by different sets of fifty persons each. The utmost precision and regularity are observed in the distribution of their time. Roused by a large bell at five in the morning, they immediately assemble in the chapel to begin the meditation appointed for the day. At their meals they observe a deep silence; and no intercourse, even among each other, is permitted, except during one hour in the evening. The settled gloom of the house, the almost incessant reading and meditation upon subjects which, from their vagueness and infinitude, harass and bewilder the fancy, and that powerful sympathetic influence, which affects assemblies where all are intent on the same object and bent on similar feelings, render this house a modern cave of Trophonius, within whose dark cells cheerfulness is often extinguished for ever.

"Unskilful, indeed, must be the hand that, possessed of this engine, can fail to subdue the stoutest mind in which there lurks a particle of superstitious fear. But Father Vega is one of those men who are born to command a large portion of their fellow creatures, either by the usual means, or some contrivance of their own. The expulsion of the Jesuits during his probationship in that order, denied him the ample field on which his early views had been fixed. After a course of theological studies at the University, he became a member of the *Oratorio*, and soon attracted the notice of the whole town by his preaching. His active and bold mind combines qualities seldom found in the same individual. Clear-headed, resolute, and ambitious, the superstitious feelings which melt him into tears whenever he performs the Mass, have not in the least impaired the mental daringness he originally owes to nature. Though seldom mixing in society, he is a perfect man of the world. Far from compromising his lofty claims to respect, he flatters the proudest nobles of his spiritual train by well-timed bursts of affected rudeness, which, being a mere display of spiritual authority, perfectly consistent with a full acknowledgment of their worldly rank and dignity, give them, in the eyes of the more humble bystanders, the additional merit of Christian condescension. As an instance of this, I recollect his ordering the Marquis del Pedroso, one of the haughtiest men in this town, to fetch up-stairs from the chapel, a heavy gold frame set with jewels, in which the Host is exhibited, for the inspection of the company during the hour of recreation allowed in the Exercises. No man ever shewed such assurance and consciousness of Heaven's delegated authority as Father Vega, in the Confessional. He reads the heart of his penitent—impresses the mind with the uselessness of disguise, and relieves shame by a

strong feeling that he has anticipated disclosure. In preaching, his vehemence rivets the mind of the hearers; a wild luxuriance of style engages them with perpetual variety; expectation is kept alive by the remembered flashes of his wit; while the homely, and even coarse, expressions he allows himself, when he feels the whole audience already in his power, give him that air of superiority which seems to set no bounds to the freedom of manner.

"It is however, in his private chapel that Father Vega has prepared the grand scene of his triumphs over the hearts of his audience. Twice every day, during the Exercises, he kneels for the space of one hour, surrounded by his congregation. Day-light is excluded, and a candle is so disposed in a shade that, without breaking the gloom of the chapel, it shines on a full-length sculpture of Christ nailed to the Cross, who, with a countenance where exquisite suffering is blended with the most lovely patience, seems to be on the point of moving his lips to say—"Father, forgive them!" The mind is at first allowed to dwell, in the deepest silence, on the images and sentiments with which previous reading has furnished it, till the Director, warmed with meditation, breaks forth in an impressive voice, not, however, addressing himself to his hearers, from whom he appears completely abstracted, but pouring out his heart in the presence of the Deity. Silence ensues after a few sentences, and not many minutes elapse without a fresh ejaculation. But the fire gradually kindles into a flame. The addresses grow longer and more impassioned; his voice, choked with sobs and tears, struggles painfully for utterance, till the stoutest hearts are forced to yield to the impression, and the chapel resounds with sighs and groans.

"I cannot but shudder at the recollection that my mind was made to undergo such an ordeal at the age of fifteen; for it is a custom of the diocese of Seville to prepare the candidates for orders by the Exercises of Saint Ignatius; and even those who are to be incorporated with the clergy by the ceremony of the *First Tonsure*, are not easily spared this trial. I was grown up a timid, docile, yet ardent boy. My soul, as I have already mentioned, had been early made to taste the bitterness of remorse, and I now eagerly embraced the offer of those expiatory rites which, as I fondly thought, were to restore lost innocence, and keep me for ever in the straight path of virtue. The shock, however, which my spirits felt, might have unnerved me for life, and reduced my faculties to a state little short of imbecility, had I not received from nature, probably as a compensation for a too soft and yielding heart, an understanding which was born a rebel. Yet, I cannot tell whether it was my heart or my head, that, in spite of a frighted fancy, endued me with resolution to baffle the blind zeal of my confessor, when, finding, during these Exercises, that I knew the existence of a prohibited book in the possession of a student of divinity, who, out of mere good nature, assisted my early studies; he commanded me to accuse my friend before the Inquisition. Often have I been betrayed into a wrong course of thinking, by a desire to assimilate myself to those I loved, and thus enjoy that interchange of sentiment which forms the luxury of friendship. But even the chains of love, the strongest I know within the range of nature, could never hold me, the moment I conceived that error had bound them. This, however, brings me to the history of my mind.

"An innate love of truth, which shewed itself on the first developement of my reason, and a consequent perseverance in the pursuit of it to the extent of my knowledge, that has attended me through life, saved me from sinking into the dregs of Aristotelic philosophy, which, though discountenanced by the Spanish government, are still collected in a few filthy pools, fed by the constant exertions of the Dominicans. Unfortunately for me, these monks have a richly endowed college at Seville, where they give lectures on Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, to a few young men whom they recruit at the expense of flattering their parents. My father's confessor was a Dominican, and he marked me for a divine of his own school. My mother, whose heart was with the Jesuits, would fain have sent me to the University, where the last remnant of their pupils still held the principal chairs. But she was informed by the wily monk, that *heresy* had began to creep among the new professors of philosophy—heresy of such a horrible tendency, that it nearly amounted to polytheism. The evidence on which this charge was grounded, seemed, indeed, irresistible; for you had only to open the second

volume of one Altieri, a Neapolitan friar, whose Elements of philosophy are still used as a class-book at the University of Seville, and you would find, in the first pages, that he makes *space* uncreated, infinite, and imperishable. From such premises the consequence was evident; the new philosophers were clearly setting up a rival deity.

"With the usual preparation of a little Latin, but in absolute want of all elementary instruction, I was sent to begin a course of logic at the Dominican college. My desire of learning was great indeed; but the *Categoriæ ad mentem Divi Thomæ Aquinatis*, in a large quarto volume, were unsavoury food for my mind, and, after a few vain efforts to conquer my aversion, I ended in never opening the dismal book. Yet, untrained as I was to reading, books were necessary to my happiness. In any other country I should have met with a variety of works, which, furnishing my mind with facts and observations, might have led me into some useful or agreeable pursuit. But in Spain, the chances of lighting on a good book are so few, that I must reckon my acquaintance with one that could open my mind, among the fortunate events of my life. A near relation of mine, a lady, whose education had been superior to that commonly bestowed on Spanish females, possessed a small collection of Spanish and French books. Among these were the works of Don Fray Benito Feyjoo, a Benedictine monk, who, rising above the intellectual level of his country, about the beginning of the present (18th) century, had the boldness to attack every established error which was not under the immediate patronage of religion. His mind was endowed with extraordinary clearness and acuteness; and having, by an extensive reading of Latin and French works, acquired a great mass of information on physical and historical subjects, he displayed it, with peculiar felicity of expression, in a long series of discourses and letters, forming a work of fourteen large closely printed volumes.[13]

"It was not without difficulty that I obtained leave to try whether my mind, which had hitherto lain a perfect waste, was strong enough to understand and relish Feyjoo. But the contents of his pages came like the spring showers upon a thirsty soil. A man's opinion of the first work he read when a boy, cannot safely be trusted; but, to judge from the avidity with which at the age of fifteen I devoured fourteen volumes on miscellaneous subjects, and the surprising impulse they gave to my yet unfolded faculties, Feyjoo must be a writer who deserves more notice than he has ever obtained from his countrymen. If I can trust my recollection, he had deeply imbibed the spirit of Lord Bacon's works, together with his utter contempt of the absurd philosophy which has been universally taught in Spain, till the last third of the eighteenth century. From Bayle, Feyjoo had learned caution in weighing historical evidence, and an habitual suspicion of the numberless opinions which, in countries unpurified by the wholesome gales of free contending thought, are allowed to range unmolested, for ages, with the same claim to the rights of prescription as frogs and insects have to their stagnant pools. In a pleasing and popular style, Feyjoo acquainted his countrymen with whatever discoveries in experimental philosophy had been made by Boyle at that time. He declared open war against quackery of all kinds. Miracles and visions which had not received the sanction of the Church of Rome did not escape the scrutinizing eye of the bold Benedictine. Such, in fact, was the alarm produced by his works on the all-believing race for whom he wrote, that nothing but the patronage of Ferdinand VI. prevented his being silenced with the *ultima ratio* of Spanish divines—the Inquisition.

"Had the power of Aladdin's lamp placed me within the richest subterraneous palace described in the Arabian Nights, it could not have produced the raptures I experienced from the intellectual treasure of which I now imagined myself the master. Physical strength developes itself so gradually, that few, I am inclined to think, derive pleasure from a sudden start of bodily vigour. But my mind, like a young bird in the nest, had lived unconscious of its wings, till this unexpected leader had, by his boldness, allured it into flight. From a state of mere animal life, I found myself at once possessed of the faculty of thinking; and I can scarcely conceive, that the soul, emerging after death into a higher rank of existence, shall feel and try its new powers with a keener delight. My knowledge, it is true,

[13] Feyjoo died in 1765. Several of his Essays were published in English by John Brett, Esq. 1780.

was confined to a few physical and historical facts; but I had, all at once, learned to reason, to argue, to doubt. To the surprise and alarm of my good relatives, I had been changed within a few weeks, into a sceptic who, without questioning religious subjects, would not allow any one of their settled notions to pass for its current value. My mother, with her usual penetration, perceived the new tendency of my mind, and thanked Heaven, in my presence, that Spain was my native country; 'else,' she said, 'he would soon quit the pale of the church.'

"The main advantage, however, which I owed to my new powers, was a speedy emancipation from the Aristotelic school of the Dominicans. I had, sometimes, dipped into the second volume of their Elements of Philosophy, and had found, to my utter dismay, that they denied the existence of a *vacuum*—one of my then favourite doctrines—and attributed the ascent of liquids by suction, to the horror of nature at being wounded and torn. Now, it so happened that Feyjoo had given me the clearest notions on the theory of the sucking-pump, and the relative gravity of air and water. Nothing, therefore, could equal my contempt of those monks, who still contended for the whole system of sympathies and antipathies. A reprimand from the reverend Professor of Logic, for my utter inattention to his lectures, sprung, at length, the mine which, charged with the first scraps of learning, and brimful of boyish conceit, had long been ready to explode.

"Had the friar remonstrated with me in private, my habitual timidity would have sealed up my lips. But he rated me before the whole class, and my indignation fired up at such an indignity. Rising from my seat with a courage so new to me that it seemed to be inspired, I boldly declared my determination not to burden and pervert my mind with the absurdities that were taught in their schools. Being asked, with a sarcastic smile, which were the doctrines that had thus incurred my disapprobation, I visibly surprised the Professor—no bright genius himself—with the theory of the sucking-pump, and actually nonplus'd him on the mighty question of *vacuum*. To be thus bearded by a stripling, was more than his professional humility could bear. He bade me thank my family for not being that moment turned out of the lecture-room; assuring me, however, that my father should be acquainted with my impertinence in the course of that day. Yet I must do justice to his good-nature and moderation in checking the students, who wished to serve me, like Sancho, with a blanketing.

"Before the threatened message could reach my father, I had, with great rhetorical skill, engaged maternal pride and fear, in my favour. In what colours the friar may have painted my impudence, I neither learned nor cared: for my mother, whose dislike of the Dominicans, as the enemies of the Jesuits, had been roused by the public reprimand of the Professor, took the whole matter into her hands, and before the end of the week, I heard, with raptures, that my name was to be entered at the University.

"Having thus luckily obtained the object of my wishes, I soon retrieved my character for industry, and received the public thanks of my new Professor. What might have been my progress under a better system than that of a Spanish university, vanity will probably not allow me to judge with fairness. I will, therefore, content myself with laying a sketch of that system before the reader.

"The Spanish universities had continued in a state worthy of the thirteenth century till the year 1770, when the Marquis of Roda, a favourite minister of Charles III., gave them an amended plan of studies, which though far below the level of knowledge over the rest of Europe, seems at least to recognise the progress of the human mind since the revival of letters. The present plan forbids the study of the Aristotelic philosophy, and attempts the introduction of the inductive system of Bacon; but is shamefully deficient, in the department of literature. Three years successive attendance in the schools of logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics, is the only requisite for a master's degree; and, though the examinations are both long and severe, few of the Spanish universities have yet altered the old statute which obliges the candidates to draw their Theses from Aristotle's logic and physics, and to deliver a long discourse upon one chapter of each; thus leaving their daily lectures perfectly at variance with the final examinations. Besides these preparatory schools, every university has three or four professors of divinity, as many of civil and canon law, and seldom less of medicine. The students

are not required to live in colleges. There are, however, establishments of this kind for undergraduates; but being, for the most part, intended for a limited number of poor boys, they make no part of the Academic system. Yet some of these colleges have, by a strange combination of circumstances, risen to such a height of splendour and influence, that I must digress into a short sketch of their history.

"The original division of Spanish colleges into *minor* and *major*, arose from the branches of learning for which they were intended. Grammar and rhetoric alone were taught in the first; divinity, law, and medicine, in the last. Most of the *Colegios Mayores* were, by papal bulls and royal decrees, erected into *universities*, where, besides the fellows, students might repair daily to hear the public lectures, and finally take their degrees. Thus the university of this town (Seville) was, till lately, attached to this college, the rector or head of which elected annually by the fellows, was, by virtue of his office, rector of the university. This, and the great colleges of Castille, enjoying similar privileges, but far exceeding ours in wealth and influence, formed the literary aristocracy of Spain. Though the statutes gave no exclusion to plebeians, the circumstances required in the candidates for fellowships, together with the *esprit de corps* which actuated the electors, confined such places to the *noblesse*. Anxious to increase their influence, none of the six great colleges of Spain could ever be induced to elect any one who was not connected with some of the best families. This, however, was but a prudential step, to avoid the public disgrace to which the *pruebas*, or interrogatories relative to *blood*, might otherwise expose the candidates. One of the fellows was, and is still at Seville, according to the statutes, to repair to the birth-place of the parents of the elected member, as well as to those of his two grandfathers and grandmothers—except when any of them is a foreigner, a circumstance which prevents the journey, though not the inquiry—in order to examine upon oath, from fifteen to thirty witnesses at each place. These, either from their own knowledge, or the current report of the town, must swear that the ancestor in question never was a menial servant, a shopkeeper or petty tradesman; a mechanic; had neither himself, nor any of his relations, been punished by the Inquisition, nor was descended from Jews, Moors, Africans, Indians, or Guanchos, *i. e.* the aborigines of the Canary Islands. It is evident that none but the hereditary gentry could expose themselves to this ordeal: and as the pride of the reporter, together with the character of his college, were highly interested in the purity of blood of every member, no room was left for the evasions commonly resorted to for the admission of knights in the military orders.

"Thus, in the course of years, the six great colleges[14] could command the influence of the first Spanish families all over the kingdom. It was, besides, a point of honour among such as had obtained a fellowship, never to desert the interest of their college: and, as every cathedral in Spain has three canonries, which must be obtained by a literary competition, of which the canons themselves are the judges, wherever a *Colegial Mayor* had obtained a stall, he was able to secure a strong party to any one of his college who should offer himself as a champion at those literary jousts. The chapters, on the other hand, were generally inclined to strengthen their own importance by the accession of people of rank, leaving poor and unknown scholars to grovel in their native obscurity. No place of honour in the church and law was left unoccupied by the *collegians*: and even the distribution which those powerful bodies made of their members—as if not only all the best offices and situations, but even a choice of them, were in their hands—was no secret to the country at large. Fellows in orders, who possessed abilities, were kept in reserve for the literary *competitions*. Such as could not appear to advantage at those public trials were, by means of court favour, provided for with stalls in the wealthiest cathedrals. The absolutely dull and ignorant were made *inquisitors*, who, passing judgment in their secret halls, could not disgrace the college by their blunders. Medicine not being in honour, there were no fellows of that profession. The lay members of the major colleges belonged exclusively

[14] There exist in Spain some other colleges which are also called *mayores*; but none, except four at Salamanca, one at Valladolid, and one at Seville, were reckoned as a part of the literary aristocracy of the country. None but these had the privilege of referring all their interests and concerns to a committee of the supreme council of the nation, expressly named for that purpose.

to the law, but they would never quit their fellowships except for a place among the judges. Even in the present low ebb of collegiate influence, the College of Seville would disown any of the fellows who should act as a mere advocate.

"While the colleges were still at the height of their power, a young lawyer offered himself for one of the fellowships at Salamanca, and was disdainfully rejected for want of sufficient proofs of *noblesse*. By an extraordinary combination of circumstances, the offended candidate rose to be prime minister of state, under Charles III., with the title of Marquis of Roda. The extraordinary success he had met with in public life, could not, however, heal the wound his pride had received in his youth. But, besides the inducement of his private feelings, he seems to have been an enemy to all influence which was not exerted by the king and his ministers. Two powerful bodies, the Jesuits and the colleges, engrossed so forcibly, and, I may say, painfully, his attention, that it was wittily observed, 'that the spectacles he wore had painted glasses, one representing a Jesuit, the other a collegian'— and thus allowed him to see nothing else. The destruction to which he had doomed them was, at length, accomplished by his means. His main triumph was, indeed, over the Jesuits: yet his success against the colleges, though certainly less splendid, was the more gratifying to his personal feelings. The method he employed in the downfall of the last is not unworthy of notice, both for its perfect simplicity, and the light it throws upon the state and character of the country. Having the whole patronage of the Crown in his hands, he placed, within a short time, all the existing members of the Salamanca colleges, in the most desirable situations both of the church and law, filling their vacancies with young men of no family. Thus the bond of collegiate influence was suddenly snapped asunder: the old members disowned their successors; and such as a few days before looked upon a fellowship as an object of ambition, would have felt mortified at the sight of a relative wearing the gown of a *reformed* college. The *Colegio Mayor* of Seville was attacked by other means. Without enforcing the admission of the unprivileged classes, the minister, by an arbitrary order, deprived it of its right to confer degrees. The convocation of doctors and masters was empowered to elect their own rector, and name professors for the schools, which were subsequently opened to the public in one of the deserted houses that had belonged to the Jesuits. Such is the origin of the university where I received my education.

"Slight, however, are the advantages which a young mind can derive from academical studies in Spain. To expect a rational system of education where the Inquisition is constantly on the watch to keep the human mind within the boundaries which the Church of Rome, with her host of divines, has set to its progress; would shew a perfect ignorance of the character of our religion. Thanks to the league between our church and state, the Catholic divines have nearly succeeded in keeping down knowledge to their own level. Even such branches of science as seem least connected with religion, cannot escape the theological rod; and the spirit which made Galileo recant upon his knees his discoveries in astronomy, still compels our professors to teach the Copernican system as an hypothesis. The truth is that, with Catholic divines, no one pursuit of the human mind is independent of religion. Since the first appearance of Christianity, its doctrines have ever been blended with the philosophical views of their teachers. The scriptures themselves, invaluable as they are in forming the moral character, frequently touch, by incident, upon subjects unconnected with their main object, and treat of nature and civil society according to the notions of a rude people in a very primitive period. Hence the encroachments of divines upon every branch of human knowledge, which are still supported by the hand of power in a great part of Europe, but in none so outrageously as in Spain. Astronomy must ask the inquisitors' leave to see with her own eyes. Geography was long compelled to shrink before them. Divines were made the judges of Columbus's plans of discovery, as well as to allot a species to the Americans. A spectre monk haunts the Geologist in the lowest cavities of the earth; and one of flesh and blood watches the steps of the philosopher on its surface. Anatomy is suspected, and watched closely, whenever she takes up the scalpel; and Medicine had many a pang to endure while endeavouring to expunge the use of bark and inoculation from the catalogue of mortal

sins. You must not only believe what the Inquisition believes, but yield implicit faith to the theories and explanations of her divines. To acknowlege on the authority of Revelation, that mankind will rise from their graves, is not sufficient to protect the unfortunate Metaphysician, who should deny that man is a compound of two substances, one of which is naturally immortal. It was long a great obstacle to the rejection of the Aristotelic philosophy, that the *substantial forms* of the schools were found an exceedingly convenient veil for the invisible work of *transubstantiation*; for our good divines shrewdly suspected, that if colour, taste, smell, and all the other properties of bodies were allowed to be mere *accidents*—the bare impressions on our sense of one variously modified substance—it might be plausibly urged that, in the consecrated Host, the body of Christ had been converted into bread, not the bread into that body. But it would be endless and tedious to trace all the links, of which the Inquisition has formed the chain that binds and weighs down the human mind among us. Acquiescence in the voluminous and multifarious creed of the Roman church is by no means sufficient for safety. A man who closes his work with the O. S. C. S. R. E. (*Omnia sub correctione Sanctæ Romanæ Ecclesiæ*) may yet rue the moment when he took pen in hand. Heterodoxy may be easily avoided in writing; but who can be sure that none of his periods *smacks of heresy* (sapiens hæresim)—none of his sentences are of that uncouth species which is *apt to grate pious ears* (piarum aurium offensivas)? Who then will venture upon the path of knowledge, where it leads straight to the Inquisition?[15]

"Yet such is the energy of the human mind, when once acquainted with its own powers, that the best organized system of intellectual tyranny, though so far successful as to prevent Spanish talent from bringing any fruit to maturity, fails most completely of checking its activity. Could I but accurately draw the picture of an ingenuous young mind struggling with the obstacles which Spanish education opposes to improvement—the alarm at the springing suspicions of being purposely betrayed into error—the superstitious fears that check its first longings after liberty—the honest and ingenious casuistry by which it encourages itself to leave the prescribed path—the maiden joy and fear of the first transgression—the rapidly-growing love of newly discovered truth, and consequent hatred of its tyrants—the final despair and wild phrenzy that possess it on finding its doom inevitable, on seeing with an appalling evidence, that its best exertions are lost, that ignorance, bigotry, and superstition claim and can enforce its homage—no plot of romance would be read with more interest by such as are not indifferent to the noblest concerns of mankind. As I cannot, however, present an animated picture, I shall proceed with a statement of facts.

"An imperfect knowledge of logic and natural philosophy was all I acquired at the university before I began the study of divinity; and like most of my countrymen, I should have completed my studies without so much as suspecting the existence of elegant literature, had it not been for my acquaintance with an excellent young man, much my senior at the university, who, by his own unassisted industry, had made some progress in the study and imitation of the classics.[16] To him I owed my first acquaintance with Spanish poetry, and my earliest attempts at composition in my own language. My good fortune led me, but a short time after, to a member of the *Colegio Mayor* of this town—another self-improved man, whose extraordinary talents having enabled him, at the age of nineteen, to cast a gleam of good taste over the system of his own university of Osuna, made him subsequently, at Seville, the centre of a small club of students.[17] Through the influence of his genius, and the gratuitous assistance he gave them in their studies, some of his private pupils rose so far above the mass of their academical fellows, as to shew by the fair, though scanty, produce of their minds, the rich promise which the state of their country yearly blasts.

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[15] … Il s'est établi dans Madrid un systême de liberté sur la vente des productions, qui s'étend même à celles de la presse; et que, pourvu que je ne parle en mes écrits ni de l'autorité, ni du culte, ni de la politique, ni de la morale, ni des gens en place, ni des corps en crédit, ni de l'Opera, ni des autres spectacles, ni de personne qui tienne à quelque chose, je puis tout imprimer librement, sous l'inspection de deux ou trois censeurs.—*Marriage de Figaro*, *Act 5*, *Sc. 3*.

[16] Don Manuel Maria del Marmol.

[17] Don Manuel Maria de Arjona.

"In all the Spanish universities with which I am acquainted, I have observed a similar struggle between enterprising genius and constituted ignorance. Valencia, Granada, the college of San Fulgencio at Murcia; Salamanca, above all, and Seville, the least among them; have exhibited symptoms of rebellion, arising from the undaunted ardour of some young members, who having opened for themselves a path to knowledge, would, at some time or other, make a desperate effort to allure the rising generation to follow their steps. The boldest champions in this hopeless contest, have generally started among the professors of moral philosophy. Government had confined them to the puny Elements of Jacquier and Heinnecius; but a mind once set on "the proper study of mankind," must be weak indeed not to extend its views beyond the limits prescribed by the ignorance of a despot or his ministers. With alarm and consternation to the *white-tasselled* heads,[18] and thrilling hopes to their secret enemies, connected series of Theses have of late appeared among us, which, in spite of the studied caution of their language, betrayed both their origin and tendency. Genuine offspring of the French school, the very turn of their phrases gave strong indications of a style formed in defiance of the Holy Inquisition. But these fits of restless impatience have only secured the yoke they were intended to loosen. I have visited Salamanca after the great defeat of the philosophical party, the strongest that ever was formed in Spain. A man of first-rate literary character among us,[19] whom merit and court favour had raised to one of the chief seats in the judicature of the country, but whom court caprice had, about this time, sent to rusticate at Salamanca, was doing me the honours of the place, when, approaching the convocation-hall of the university, we perceived the members of the faculty of divinity strolling about, while waiting for a meeting of their body. A runaway slave, still bearing the marks of the lash on his return, could not have shrunk more instinctively at the sight of the planters meeting at the council-room, than my friend did at the view of the cowls, 'white, black, and grey,' which partially hid the sleek faces of his offended masters. He had, it is true, been lucky enough to escape the imprisonment and subsequent penance in a monastery which was the sad lot of the chief of his routed party; but he himself was still suspected and watched closely. The rest of his friends, the flower of the university, had been kept for three or four years, in constant fear of their personal liberty, being often called before the secret tribunal to answer the most captious interrogatories about themselves and their acquaintance, but never put in possession of every count of the indictment. After this and a few such examples, we have, at last, perceived the folly of engaging in a desperate game, where no possible combination can, for the present, give the dissenting party a single chance of success.

"French philosophy had not found its way to the university of Seville, at the time when I was studying divinity. Even the knowledge of the French language was a rare acquirement both among the professors and their hearers. I have mentioned, at the beginning of this sketch, that one of the few books which delighted my childhood was a Spanish translation of Telemachus. A fortunate incident had now thrown into my hands the original of my old favourite, and I attempted to understand a few lines by comparing them with the version. My success exceeded my hopes. Without either grammar or dictionary, I could, in a few weeks, read on: guessing a great deal, it is true, but visibly improving my knowledge of the idiom by comparing the force of unknown words in different passages. An odd volume of Racine's tragedies was my next French book. Imperfectly as I must have understood that tender and elegant poet, his plays gave me so much pleasure, that by repeated readings I found myself able to understand French poetry. It was about this time that I made my invaluable acquaintance at our college. My friend had learned both French and Italian in a similar manner with myself. He was acquainted with one of the judges of our *Audiencia*, or provincial court of judicature, a man of

[18] A coloured tassel on the cap is, in Spain, the peculiar distinction of doctors and masters. *White*, denotes divinity: green, canon law: crimson, civil law: yellow, medicine; and blue, arts, i. e. philosophy. Those caps are worn only on public occasions at the universities.

[19] Melendez Valdez.

great literary celebrity,[20] who possessed a very good library, from whence I was indulged with French books, as well as Italian; for by a little ingenuity and the analogy of my own language, I had also enabled myself to read the language of Petrarch.

"Hitherto I had never had courage enough to take a forbidden book in my hands. The excommunication impending over me by the words *ipso facto*, was indeed too terrific an object for my inexperienced mind. Delighted with my newly acquired taste for poetry and eloquence, I had never brooded over any religious doubts—or rather, sincerely adhering to the Roman Catholic law, which makes the examination of such doubts as great a crime as the denial of the article of belief they affect, I had always shrunk with terror from every heterodox suggestion. But my now intimate friend and guide had made canon law his profession. Ecclesiastical history, in which he was deeply versed, had, without weakening his Catholic principles, made him a pupil of that school of canonists who, both in Germany and France, having exposed the forgeries, by means of which papal power had made itself paramount to every human authority, were but too visibly disposed to a separation from Rome. My friend denied the existence of any power in the Church to inflict excommunication, without a declaratory sentence in consequence of the trial of the offender. Upon the strength of this doctrine, he made me read the 'Discourses on Ecclesiastical History,' by the Abbé Fleury—a work teeming with invective against monks and friars, doubts on modern miracles, and strictures on the virtues of modern saints. Eve's heart, I confess, when

> ——her rash hand in evil hour
> Forth reaching to the fruit, she pluck'd, she ate,

could not have beaten more convulsively than mine, as I opened the forbidden book. Vague fears and doubts haunted my conscience for many days. But my friend, besides being a sound Catholic, was a devout man. He had lately taken priest's orders, and was now not only my literary but my spiritual director. His abilities and his affection to me had obtained a most perfect command over my mind, and it was not long before I could match him in mental boldness, on points unconnected with articles of faith.

[20] Don Juan Pablo Forner.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.