

Matthew Digby Wyatt

**An Architect's
Note-Book in Spain**

 **Publio**

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Minden jog fenntartva!

My dear Owen,

The last book I wrote I dedicated to my brother by blood; the present I dedicate to you—my brother in Art. Let it be a record of the value I set upon all you have taught me, and upon your true friendship.

Ever yours,

M. DIGBY WYATT.

37, Tavistock Place, W.C.

October, 1872.

CONTENTS PREFACE.

BEFORE quitting England for a first visit to Spain in the Autumn of 1869, I made up my mind both to see and draw as much of the Architectural remains of that country as the time and means at my disposal would permit; and further determined so to draw as to admit of the publication of my sketches and portions of my notes on the objects represented, in the precise form in which they might be made. I was influenced in that determination by the consciousness that almost from day to day the glorious past was being trampled out in Spain; and that whatever issue, prosperous or otherwise, the fortunes of that much distracted country might take in the future, the minor monuments of Art at least which adorned its soil, would rapidly disappear. Their disappearance would result naturally from what is called "progress" if Spain should revive; while their perishing through neglect and wilful damage, or peculation, would inevitably follow, if the ever smouldering embers of domestic revolution should burst afresh into flame. Such has been the invariable action of those fires which in all history have melted away the most refined evidences of man's intelligence, leaving behind only scanty, and often all but shapeless, relics of the richest and ripest genius.

It is difficult to realise the rapidity with which, almost under one's eyes, the Spain of history and romance "is casting its skin." Travelling even with so recent and so excellent a handbook as O'Shea's of 1869, I noted the following wanton acts of Vandalism and destruction, committed upon monuments of the greatest archæological and artistic interest since he wrote. At Seville, the Church of San Miguel, one of the oldest and finest in the city, was senselessly demolished by the populace as a sort of auto-da-fé, and by way of commemoration of the revolution of September, 1867. In exactly the same way the fine Byzantine churches of San Juan at

Lerida, and of San Miguel at Barcelona, have been "improved off the face of the earth." Church plate, Custodias and Virils of the D'Arfés, Becerrias, and other Art workmen, have vanished from the treasuries of all the great ecclesiastical structures; whether sold, melted down, or only hidden, "quien sabe?" The beautiful Moorish decorations of the Alcazar at Segovia had been all but entirely destroyed by fire, attributed to the careless cigar-lighting of the Cadets to whom the structure had been abandoned. The finest old mansion in Barcelona, the Casa de Gralla, probably the masterpiece of Damian Forment, and dating from the commencement of the fourteenth century, has been pulled down by the Duke of Medina Celi to form a new street. The beautiful wooden ceiling of the Casa del Infantado at Guadalaxara, the finest of its kind in Spain, in the absence of its owner, who I was told lives in Russia, is coming down in large pieces, and once fallen, I scarcely think it will be in the power of living workmen to make it good again. The exquisite Moorish Palace of the Generalife at Granada, second only to the Alhambra and the Alcazar at Seville, is never visited by its proprietor, and is now one mass of white-wash, a victim of the zeal for cleanliness of a Sanitary "Administrador." In short to visit a Spanish city now, by the light shed upon its ancient glories by the industrious Ponz, is simply to have forced upon one's attention the most striking evidence of the "vanity of human things," and man's inherent tendency to destroy.

One of the most painful sensations the lover of the Art of the Past cannot but experience in Spain, is the feeling of its dissonance from, and irreconcilability with, the wants and economical necessities of to-day. The truth is that at the present moment, amongst the many difficult problems which surround and beset the ruling powers, one of the most puzzling is to find fitting uses for the many vast structures which have fallen into the hands of the Government. Churches in number and size out of all proportion to the wants of the population, monasteries entirely without monks,

convents with scarcely any nuns, Jesuit seminaries without Jesuits, exchanges without merchants, colleges without students, tribunals of the Holy Inquisition with, thank God! no Inquisitors, and palaces without princes, are really "drugs in the market;" too beautiful to destroy, too costly to properly maintain, and for the original purposes for which they were planned and constructed at incredible outlay they stand now almost useless. For the most part, the grand architectural monuments of the country are now like Dickens' "used-up giants" kept only "to wait upon the dwarfs." Among a few instances of such, may be noticed the magnificent foundation of the noblest Spanish ecclesiastic, Ximenez. His College at Alcala de Heñares (see etext transcriber note) is turned into a young ladies' boarding-school; the splendid Convent of the Knights of Santiago at Leon, the masterpiece of Juan de Badajoz, dedicated to Saint Mark, and one of the finest buildings in Spain, is now in charge of a solitary policeman and his wife, awaiting its possible conversion into an agricultural college; the grand Palace of the Dukes of Alva at Seville is let out in numerous small tenements and enriched with unlimited whitewash; the Colegiata of San Gregorio at Valladolid, another of the magnificent foundations of Cardinal Ximenez, and the old cathedral at Lerida, the richest Byzantine monument in Spain, are now both barracks;—the vast exchanges of Seville and Saragossa are tenantless and generally shut up; the beautiful "Casa de los Abades" at Seville is converted into a boy's school and lodging-house for numerous poor tenants, the Casa del Infante at Saragossa, containing the most richly sculptured Renaissance Patio in Spain, is chiefly occupied as a livery stable-keeper's establishment; Cardinal Mendoza's famous Hospital of the Holy Cross at Toledo is now an Infantry College; the great monastery of the Cartuja near Seville, with one of the finest Mudejar wooden ceilings in the country, is turned into Pickman's china factory; the "Taller del Moro" a model Moorish house with its beautiful decorations, at Toledo, is now only a carpenter's workshop and storehouse; the

celebrated establishment of El Cristo de la Victoria at Malaga, with all its glorious associations with the "Reyes Cattolicos," is occupied as a military hospital; and so on '*ad infinitum*.'

Every record the pen and pencil of any accurate observer can preserve at this juncture of the fading glories of the past in Spain is, as it were, snatching a brand from the inevitable fire which has already consumed inestimable treasures upon its soil. It was to give a stamp of truth and authenticity to the few such records I might be enabled to make, that I determined to complete them in the actual presence as it were of the object illustrated, and to admit of no intervention between my own hand, and the eye of any student willing to honour my work with his attention. My sketches might no doubt have gained in beauty by being transcribed on stone or wood by some artist more skilful than I am, but as any such alteration would detract from their simple veracity, I preferred to make them at once upon the spot with anastatic ink, in order that they might be printed just as they were executed. Working with such ink in the open air is difficult, and the result capricious, I have therefore to ask for some indulgence, and to express a hope that any shortcomings in the drawings may be overlooked in the obvious interest of the subjects portrayed. Could I but have known, on leaving England, that my sketches could have been so successfully transferred to collodion, and printed therefrom by the beautiful Autotype mechanical process, as they have been since my return, I might have spared myself much extra trouble and anxiety, and have probably attained a much better result with less effort. In order to retain as much "local colour" as possible, I have preferred, even in the binding of this volume, to take its ornament in fac-simile from a beautiful little Mudejar casket of which I am the fortunate possessor, rather than to trust to my own powers to design something specially characteristic.

I have further to ask corresponding indulgence for any literary

insufficiencies my text may present. Although for some years a not inattentive student of Spanish art and literature, I could not, and cannot but feel that my acquaintance with the country was, and is insufficient for writing worthy notes even upon its architectural monuments, after the excellent works which have been already written by such of my countrymen as Ford, Street, Stirling, and O'Shea. At the same time, considering that to publish my sketches altogether without explanatory letter-press would greatly detract from their interest and consequent usefulness, I have brought into their present shape the scanty notes made upon the spot, more or less directly illustrative of the subjects upon which my pencil found occupation.

It will be obvious, it is hoped, that in the selection of subjects for illustration, an endeavour has been made to avoid in any wise trenching upon or clashing with those already fully treated in the admirable work on Spanish Ecclesiastical Architecture by Mr. G. E. Street. Whilst he has turned from, I have turned towards, the Plateresque and later styles of Spain, and whilst he has sought specially for what might be useful to church-builders, my aim has been rather to collect hints for house-builders. Thanks to him, and others like him, we have now been left with more to learn in the latter direction than in the former.

The following was my line of tour, and as it comprises most of what is, I believe, best worth seeing in Spain in the way of Art, with the notable exceptions of Santiago, Oviedo, Murcia, Cuenca, Placencia, Alicante and Valencia, which want of time did not permit me to include, I do not hesitate to commend it to those, desirous, as I was, of seeing as much as possible of what was excellent or curious within a short space of time. It was as follows, from London via Paris, Bordeaux, and Bayonne to Spain, beginning with Burgos, then successively visiting Valladolid (rail), Venta de Baños (rail), Leon (rail), Zamora and Salamanca, (by "diligence" from Leon) Avila (by "diligence" from Salamanca) Escorial (rail),

Madrid (rail), Segovia (by "diligence" from Madrid and back), Alcala de Henares (by rail from Madrid and back), Toledo (by rail from Madrid and back), Cordoba (rail), Sevilla (rail), Cadiz (by the Guadalquivir steamer), Gibraltar (by steamer), Malaga (by steamer), Granada (rail and "diligence,") Andujar ("diligence,") Madrid (rail), a second time, Guadalajara (rail), Saragossa (rail), Lerida (rail), Barcelona (rail), and Gerona (rail), thence to the frontier by "diligence," and home by rail, viâ Perpignan, Carcassonne, Toulouse and Paris.

To preserve some sort of order, I have arranged my sketches as they were executed in point of time, and thrown my notes into a corresponding sequence.

To assert that Spain can teach the lessons to the architect which may be gained from Italy, or even from France would, I think, be to claim too much for her, but on the other hand, it should be remembered, that it is a mine which has been very much less exhausted. To the interest and grandeur of its Northern Gothic buildings, Mr. Street has done a justice long denied to them; while Girault de Prangey, and above all Owen Jones, have helped us to a right appreciation of the works of those masterly artificers, the Moors, who seem to have possessed an intuitive love for the beautiful in structure.

It is with no small pleasure that I have laboured to direct attention to other monuments, than those they have so satisfactorily illustrated, of a land from travelling in which I have derived great delight, and much instruction.

If asked what predominant sensation Spanish Architecture had produced in my mind, I think I should be inclined to say, that of the manifestation of an entire indifference to expense. No one appears to have counted the cost of the work upon which he engaged. Whether it was a mediæval architect entering upon the vast

construction of Cathedrals, such as Seville, Toledo or Leon, a Renaissance architect dashing upon the immense laying out of buildings such as the Cathedrals of Salamanca or Granada, or an Herrera plunging into such stone quarries as the Escorial or the Cathedral at Valladolid, not a shadow of doubt ever seems to have crossed the mind of the beginners, that some one would complete what they began.

Such peculiarities of national character are apt to beget proverbs, and we accordingly find the grave ponderosity, and at the same time power, of the Spaniard in the undertakings of his palmy days, thus characterised in comparison with those of the other peoples of Europe.

"In their undertakings," says "Der curieuse Antiquarius durch Europam,"[1] the natives of different European countries are assumed by old legends to proceed thus:—

"Der Frantzose wie ein Adler, Der Deutsche wie ein Bär, Der Italianer wie ein Fuchs, Der Spanier wie ein Elephant, Der Engelländer wie ein Löw."[2] To some, and but few, Spanish architects was it given to see ended what they commenced, and even such favourites of fortune generally suffered from a curtailment of their too ambitious designs.

I could not but feel, in looking at the works of Herrera, and indeed at those of several other men, such as Diego de Siloe, Gil de Ontañon, Henrique de Egas, Alonso Covarrubbias, and Juan de Badajoz, that there exists for architecture a just mean between their frequent extravagance, and the sordid and shabby spirit in which we from time to time approach the question of expenditure upon "public works." The economy which consists in sobriety and simplicity of parts, especially in structures destined to subserve ordinary uses, is as much to be admired, as the economy which aims at the combination of magnificence with "cheese-paring" is to

be deprecated and despised.

PLATE I.

BURGOS. THE ARCO DE SANTA MARIA.

IT is sad to notice how few traces beyond its magnificent Cathedral are left in this, the capital of old Castile, of those "Castellanos rancios y viejos," who once so splendidly represented the pride and power of Spanish chivalry. Of the sixteen golden castles the city bears upon its stately arms how insignificant are the relics? The remains of its walls and bastions attest the many centuries during which it held its own against all comers, Christian or Infidel. Of these walls, our sketch represents a portion in which there is little doubt the Renaissance frontispiece and archway replaced an older and sterner portal, better suited probably for defence than decoration. The legend runs that this façade was executed by the citizens, who had been exhibiting proclivities of far too Communistic a character to be agreeable to so high-handed a sovereign as Charles V., in order to propitiate that potentate, and to commemorate a visit, on his part at least, of a conciliatory character. It would seem, however, that in spite of the loyalty which induced the Burgalese to assign the post of honour (always under the invocation of the "Virgen sin pecado concebida)" to the statue of the King, they took good care to give him for companions Nuño Rasura, and Lain Calvo, whom they had themselves elected in the tenth century to rule over them, and protect their Communal rights. The maintenance of these had been somewhat interfered with by the King of Leon, Fruela II., who had invited the chief citizens to a banquet, and then quietly removed them out of his royal way by summarily putting them all to death. Amongst other statues which adorn this gateway are to be found those of Don

Diego Parcelos, the founder of the city in 884, of the Cid—the pride of Spain and especially of Burgos, in which city he was born, and where his bones still rest—and of Fernan Gonzalez who redeemed the district from the yoke of the Kings of Leon, to whom it had been tributary, and who constituted himself and his family its protectors, under the style and title of Condes de Castilla.

The architecture of this frontispiece which gains great importance and much picturesque effect from its association with the bartizans and turrets of the mediæval gateway, has been attributed to Felipe de Borgoña, not apparently on any other grounds than the facts that he was an inhabitant of the city in whom his fellow-citizens felt great pride, and that he was employed upon the "Crucero" of the cathedral at about the period when this grand portal was probably erected.

PLATE 2 BURGOS CASA DE MIRANDA MDW 1869

PLATE II.

BURGOS. PATIO OF THE CASA DE MIRANDA.

THIS plate introduces us to the most striking feature of all important Spanish houses, the Patio, or internal courtyard, answering to and perpetuating the Atrium of Roman architecture, with its impluvium and compluvium, and corresponding with the ordinary Cortile of the Italians. It is usually rectangular in plan, and entirely surrounded upon at least two stories by arcading, behind which run passages into which open the doors of every principal set of apartments of the house. There are rarely many windows in the walls of the Patios, as the rooms generally occupy the whole width intervening between the Patio walls, and the external walls of the house from which the light is mainly derived. There are, however, usually more windows on the lower story of the Patio than on the upper, since the chief saloons requiring most light were on the first floor, while much of the lower floor was occupied as was also usual in Italy, by retainers, servants, poor guests, mendicant friars and administrators—to say nothing of mules, and horses with stores and munitions of all sorts.

Nothing can be more picturesque or better suited to the climate than these Patios, since owing to the deep arcades which surround the open part (the Cavædium) of the court-yard upon more stories than one, there is always some portion of the arcade in which shelter can be obtained from sun, rain, or wind, and in which the occupants of the several apartments can sit and work, or lounge and smoke, in abundant but not unbearable light, and perfect comfort. This facility of outlet enables them, during the hours

when the sun shines most fiercely, to keep their living and sleeping rooms dark and cool, and in exactly the state to make the midday meal and subsequent siesta truly luxurious and refreshing.

One open staircase usually connects the upper and lower arcades; admission is rarely given to the whole building at more than one point, the great door, adjoining which is almost always to be found the concierge, the janitor of the old Roman house, upon the model of which the Spaniards probably founded their notion of a residence at once noble and comfortable.

Little need be said concerning the particular house sketched. It is one of the few left in Burgos to bear witness to the grandeur of its old aristocracy. Though once the residence of the powerful Condes de Miranda of the family of the Zunigas, it is now but a half ruined and entirely dirty lodging-house for the lower classes in a poor and neglected part of the city. A fine dedication to the most illustrious "Señor Don Francisco de çuñiga y Avellaneda, Conde de Miranda, Señor de la Villa Daça, y de la Casa de Avellaneda, by Pedro Martinez the Printer of Seville, in 1565," sets forth the arms as well as the style and title of the nobleman by whom, or by whose next descendant the "Casa de Miranda" of Burgos was probably built.

The present representative of this family is no other than the Conde de Montijo, head of the house to which Her Majesty the Empress of the French belongs. The remarkable "Casa solar" of Peñaranda de Duero, within an easy excursion from Burgos, once a magnificent villa of the Zunigas, was one of the hereditary possessions of her sister the Duchess of Alba.

There are some few other old houses remaining in Burgos, the most remarkable, for oddity rather than beauty, being the "Casa del Cordon;" so called from its façade, which exhibits a gigantic rope representing the "Cordon" of the Teutonic order, encircling

and uniting, the arms of the Velascos, Mendozas, and Figueras with those of Royalty. It was erected by a Count Haro, Constable of Castile, at the end of the fifteenth century. It is now the residence of the Capitan General of the Province, and the property of the Duca de Frias, a descendant of Count Haro.

The Casa de Miranda is to be found in Burgos, in the "Calle de la Calera," not far from the "Barrio de la Vega." No English visitor to Burgos should omit to see the Convent of las Huelgas, most interesting not only as founded by an English Princess, (Leonora, daughter of Henry II, married to Alfonso VIII), in 1180; but as evidencing in its design, which is exceptionally grave, simple, and well proportioned, an unquestionably English architectural influence.

Of the Cathedral, remains of the Castle, and the Convent of the Cartuja it is needless to speak here, since they are certain not to be overlooked by the traveller. Mr. Waring, who has so well drawn the marvels of the last mentioned building,[3] has given some pretty illustrations of ornamental detail from the fine Renaissance "Ospedal del Rey," which may be found not far from the Convent of las Huelgas.[4]

PLATE 3 VALLADOLID COLLEGE OF SAN GREGORIO MDW 1869

PLATE III.

VALLADOLID. COLEGIO DE SAN GREGORIO.

FROM early in the fifteenth century, through the reigns of Juan II. and his successors, until the elevation of Madrid into the Capital by Charles the Fifth, and into the only and official seat of the Court by Philip II. Valladolid was emphatically the Royal city of Spain. It is there, accordingly, that the traveller would naturally look for relics of Royal and courtly magnificence as displayed in the stirring times during which the over-elaboration of Gothic Art began to merge itself, in sympathy with the Medicean energies of Rome and Florence, into the style of the Renaissance as practised at a later date by many citizens of Valladolid, such as Antonio de Arphe, and Juan de Arphe y Villafañe, master-workers in gold and silver; as Juan de Juni, and Hernandez, the marvellous wood-carvers and sculptors, authors of the peculiar gilt painted groups for which the city became so famous; and as Alonzo Berruguete, Henrique de Egas, and Macias Carpintero "masters of works" of no mean repute. Of all the glorious objects these men and their disciples and contemporaries produced in Valladolid a few "disjecta membra" alone remain. Of the very building, an outlying fragment of which forms the subject of the sketch under notice, all but the actual structure was destroyed by the French under Napoleon I. in person, who in 1809 inaugurated a reign of terror in the city. "No where," in Spain, as Ford writes in 1845, "has recent destruction been more busy (than in Valladolid); witness San Benito, San Diego, San Francisco, San Gabriel, &c., almost swept away, their precious altars broken, their splendid sepulchres dashed to pieces; hence the sad void created in the treasures of art and religion which are

recorded by previous travellers while now-a-days the native in this mania of modernising is fast destroying those venerable vestiges of Charles V. and Philip II. which escaped the Gaul." The situation of this city on the direct line of railway communication between France and Madrid has greatly helped forward this "modernising" and even as this is written, numerous old streets are being pulled down to make way for the convenient, but far from picturesque monotony in which the nineteenth century usually writes its date upon its street architecture. In one respect, especially, the glory of Valladolid has entirely departed. In this, the city of the Arphes, in which as Navagiero[5] says, (writing in 1525), "Sono in Valladolid assai artefeci di ogni sorte, é se vi lavora benissimo di tutte le arti, e sopra tutto d'argenti, e vi sono tanti argenterieri quanti non sono in due altre terre," no gold or silversmith's work is to be found worthy a moment's attention. The "Plateria" still remains, and the shops of the Plateros still abound, but, with the exception of two or three little old fragments saved from the melting pot, the elegant types of the "Varia commensuracion" of Villafañe have disappeared, giving place to poor imitations of bad French work.

PLATE 4 VALLADOLID PATIO DE SAN GREGORIO. MDW 1869

PLATE IV.

***VALLADOLID. DETAIL FROM THE
"PATIO DE SAN GREGORIO."***