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George Henry Borrow
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The Bible in Spain

George Borrow (1803–81) was a British author, adventurer, and agent of the Bible Society whose journeys in the mid-nineteenth century took him to both Russia and Spain. His experiences are reflected in books including *The Zincoli* (1841) and his best-known publication, *The Bible in Spain* (1843). Described by Borrow as ‘the journey, adventures, and imprisonment of an Englishman in an attempt to circulate the scriptures in the peninsula’, it is mostly a compilation of his voluminous correspondence with the Bible Society. In this first volume, Borrow describes his arrival at Lisbon, his impressions of cities including Madrid and Cordoba and his interactions with the local population, including Gypsies, whose culture he found particularly fascinating. The book, at once an exotic travelogue and a document revealing the religious tensions of the period, was enthusiastically received by early Victorian readers.

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The Bible in Spain

*Or, the Journeys, Adventures, and
Imprisonments of an Englishman in an Attempt
to Circulate the Scriptures in the Peninsula*

VOLUME 1

GEORGE HENRY BORROW



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THE BIBLE IN SPAIN.

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VOL. I.

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THE
BIBLE IN SPAIN;
OR, THE
JOURNEYS, ADVENTURES, AND IMPRISONMENTS
OF AN ENGLISHMAN,
IN
AN ATTEMPT TO CIRCULATE THE SCRIPTURES
IN
THE PENINSULA.

BY GEORGE BORROW,

AUTHOR OF "THE GYPSIES OF SPAIN."

IN THREE VOLUMES,

VOL. I.

SECOND EDITION.

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR,
THE GYPSIES OF SPAIN;
THEIR MANNERS, CUSTOMS, AND CEREMONIES.
BY GEORGE BORROW,
LATE AGENT OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY IN SPAIN.
A New Edition, post 8vo. *Just ready.*

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PREFACE.

IT is very seldom that the preface of a work is read; indeed, of late years, most books have been sent into the world without any. I deem it, however, advisable to write a preface, and to this I humbly call the attention of the courteous reader, as its perusal will not a little tend to the proper understanding and appreciation of these volumes.

The work now offered to the public, and which is styled "THE BIBLE IN SPAIN," consists of a narrative of what occurred to me during a residence in that country, to which I was sent by the Bible Society, as its agent, for the purpose of printing and circulating the Scriptures. It comprehends, however, certain journeys and adventures in Portugal, and leaves me at last in "the land of the Corahai," to which region, after having undergone considerable buffeting in Spain, I found it expedient to retire for a season.

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PREFACE.

It is very probable that, had I visited Spain from mere curiosity, or with a view of passing a year or two agreeably, I should never have attempted to give any detailed account of my proceedings, or of what I heard and saw. I am no tourist, no writer of books of travels; but I went there on a somewhat remarkable errand, which necessarily led me into strange situations and positions, involved me in difficulties and perplexities, and brought me into contact with people of all descriptions and grades; so that, upon the whole, I flatter myself that a narrative of such a pilgrimage may not be wholly uninteresting to the public, more especially as the subject is not trite; for though various books have been published about Spain, I believe that the present is the only one in existence which treats of missionary labour in that country.

Many things, it is true, will be found in the following volumes which have little connexion with religion or religious enterprise; I offer, however, no apology for introducing them. I was, as I may say, from first to last adrift in Spain, the land of old renown, the land of wonder and mys-

tery, with better opportunities of becoming acquainted with its strange secrets and peculiarities than perhaps ever yet were afforded to any individual, certainly to a foreigner; and if in many instances I have introduced scenes and characters perhaps unprecedented in a work of this description, I have only to observe, that, during my sojourn in Spain, I was so unavoidably mixed up with such, that I could scarcely have given a faithful narrative of what befell me had I not brought them forward in the manner which I have done.

It is worthy of remark that, called suddenly and unexpectedly “to undertake the adventure of Spain,” I was not altogether unprepared for such an enterprise. In the day-dreams of my boyhood, Spain always bore a considerable share, and I took a particular interest in her, without any presentiment that I should at a future time be called upon to take a part, however humble, in her strange dramas; which interest, at a very early period, led me to acquire her noble language, and to make myself acquainted with her literature, (scarcely worthy of the language,) her history, and traditions; so

that when I entered Spain for the first time I felt more at home than I should otherwise have done.

In Spain I passed five years, which, if not the most eventful, were, I have no hesitation in saying, the most happy years of my existence. Of Spain, at the present time, now that the day-dream has vanished, never, alas! to return, I entertain the warmest admiration: she is the most magnificent country in the world, probably the most fertile, and certainly with the finest climate. Whether her children are worthy of their mother, is another question, which I shall not attempt to answer; but content myself with observing, that, amongst much that is lamentable and reprehensible, I have found much that is noble and to be admired; much stern heroic virtue; much savage and horrible crime; of low vulgar vice very little, at least amongst the great body of the Spanish nation, with which my mission lay; for it will be as well here to observe, that I advance no claim to an intimate acquaintance with the Spanish nobility, from whom I kept as remote as circumstances would permit me; *en revanche*, however, I have had

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the honour to live on familiar terms with the peasants, shepherds, and muleteers of Spain, whose bread and bacalao I have eaten; who always treated me with kindness and courtesy, and to whom I have not unfrequently been indebted for shelter and protection.

“ The generous bearing of Francisco Gonzales, and the high deeds of Ruy Diaz the Cid, are still sung amongst the fastnesses of the Sierra Morena.” *

I believe that no stronger argument can be brought forward in proof of the natural vigour and resources of Spain, and the sterling character of her population, than the fact that, at the present day, she is still a powerful and unexhausted country, and her children still, to a certain extent, a high minded and great people. Yes, notwithstanding the misrule of the brutal and sensual Austrian, the dotting Bourbon, and, above all, the spiritual tyranny of the court of Rome, Spain can still maintain her own, fight her own combat, and Spaniards are not yet fanatic

* “ Om Frands Gonzales, og Rodrik Cid,
 End siunges i Sierra Murene !”

Krönike Riim. By Severin Grundtvig. Copenhagen, 1829.

slaves and crouching beggars. This is saying much, very much: she has undergone far more than Naples had ever to bear, and yet the fate of Naples has not been hers. There is still valour in Asturia; generosity in Aragon; probity in Old Castile; and the peasant women of La Mancha can still afford to place a silver fork and a snowy napkin beside the plate of their guest. Yes, in spite of Austrian, Bourbon, and Rome, there is still a wide gulf between Spain and Naples.

Strange as it may sound, Spain is not a fanatic country. I know something about her, and declare that she is not, nor has ever been: Spain never changes. It is true that, for nearly two centuries, she was the she-butcher, *La Verduga*, of malignant Rome; the chosen instrument for carrying into effect the atrocious projects of that power; yet fanaticism was not the spring which impelled her to the work of butchery; another feeling, in her the predominant one, was worked upon—her fatal pride. It was by humouring her pride that she was induced to waste her precious blood and treasure in the Low Country wars, to launch the Armada, and to many other equally

insane actions. Love of Rome had ever slight influence over her policy; but flattered by the title of Gonfaloniera of the Vicar of Jesus, and eager to prove herself not unworthy of the same, she shut her eyes and rushed upon her own destruction with the cry of "Charge, Spain!"

But the arms of Spain became powerless abroad, and she retired within herself. She ceased to be the tool of the vengeance and cruelty of Rome. She was not cast aside, however. No! though she could no longer wield the sword with success against the Lutherans, she might still be turned to some account. She had still gold and silver, and she was still the land of the vine and olive. Ceasing to be the butcher, she became the banker of Rome; and the poor Spaniards, who always esteem it a privilege to pay another person's reckoning, were for a long time happy in being permitted to minister to the grasping cupidity of Rome, who, during the last century, probably extracted from Spain more treasure than from all the rest of Christendom.

But wars came into the land. Napoleon and his fierce Franks invaded Spain; plunder and

devastation ensued, the effects of which will probably be felt for ages. Spain could no longer pay pence to Peter so freely as of yore, and from that period she became contemptible in the eyes of Rome, who has no respect for a nation, save so far as it can minister to her cruelty or avarice. The Spaniard was still willing to pay, as far as his means would allow, but he was soon given to understand that he was a degraded being,—a barbarian; nay, a beggar. Now, you may draw the last cuarto from a Spaniard, provided you will concede to him the title of cavalier, and rich man, for the old leaven still works as powerfully as in the time of the first Philip; but you must never hint that he is poor, or that his blood is inferior to your own. And the old peasant, on being informed in what slight estimation he was held, replied, “If I am a beast, a barbarian, and a beggar withal, I am sorry for it; but as there is no remedy, I shall spend these four bushels of barley, which I had reserved to alleviate the misery of the holy father, in procuring bull spectacles, and other convenient diversions, for

the queen my wife, and the young princes my children. Beggar! carajo! The water of my village is better than the wine of Rome.”

I see that in a late pastoral letter directed to the Spaniards, the father of Rome complains bitterly of the treatment which he has received in Spain at the hands of naughty men. “My cathedrals are let down,” he says, “my priests are insulted, and the revenues of my bishops are curtailed.” He consoles, himself, however, with the idea, that this is the effect of the malice of a few, and that the generality of the nation love him, especially the peasantry, the innocent peasantry, who shed tears when they think of the sufferings of their pope and their religion. Undeceive yourself, Batuschca, (*Daddy*), undeceive yourself! Spain was ready to fight for you so long as she could increase her own glory by doing so; but she took no pleasure in losing battle after battle on your account. She had no objection to pay money into your coffers in the shape of alms, expecting, however, that the same would be received with the gratitude and humility which become those who accept charity.

Finding, however, that you were neither humble nor grateful ; suspecting, moreover, that you held Austria in higher esteem than herself, even as a banker, she shrugged up her shoulders, and uttered a sentence somewhat similar to that which I have already put into the mouth of one of her children, “ These four bushels of barley,” &c.

It is truly surprising what little interest the great body of the Spanish nation took in the late struggle, and yet it has been called, by some who ought to know better, a war of religion and principle. It was generally supposed that Biscay was the stronghold of Carlism, and that the inhabitants were fanatically attached to their religion, which they apprehended was in danger. The truth is, that the Basques cared nothing for Carlos or Rome, and merely took up arms to defend certain rights and privileges of their own. For the dwarfish brother of Ferdinand they always exhibited supreme contempt, which his character, a compound of imbecility, cowardice, and cruelty, well merited. If they made use of his name, it was merely as a *cri de guerre*. Much the same may be said with respect to his Spanish

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partisans, at least those who appeared in the field for him. These, however, were of a widely different character from the Basques, who were brave soldiers and honest men. The Spanish armies of Don Carlos were composed entirely of thieves and assassins, chiefly Valencians and Manchegans, who, marshalled under two cut-throats, Cabrera and Palillos, took advantage of the distracted state of the country to plunder and massacre the honest part of the community. With respect to the Queen Regent Christina, of whom the less said the better, the reins of government fell into her hands on the decease of her husband, and with them the command of the soldiery. The respectable part of the Spanish nation, and more especially the honourable and toilworn peasantry, loathed and execrated both factions. Oft when I was sharing at nightfall the frugal fare of the villager of Old or New Castile, on hearing the distant shot of the Christino soldier or Carlist bandit, he would invoke curses on the heads of the two pretenders, not forgetting the holy father and the goddess of Rome, Maria Santissima. Then, with the tiger energy of the Spaniard when roused, he would start up and ex-

claim: "Vamos, Don Jorge, to the plain, to the plain! I wish to enlist with you, and to learn the law of the English. To the plain, therefore, to the plain to-morrow, to circulate the gospel of Ingalaterra."

Amongst the peasantry of Spain I found my sturdiest supporters; and yet the holy father supposes that the Spanish labourers are friends and lovers of his. Undeceive yourself, Batuschka!

But to return to the present work: it is devoted to an account of what befell me in Spain whilst engaged in distributing the Scripture. With respect to my poor labours, I wish here to observe, that I accomplished but very little, and that I lay claim to no brilliant successes and triumphs; indeed I was sent into Spain more to explore the country, and to ascertain how far the minds of the people were prepared to receive the truths of Christianity, than for any other object; I obtained, however, through the assistance of kind friends, permission from the Spanish government to print an edition of the sacred volume at Madrid, which I subsequently circulated in that capital and in the provinces.

During my sojourn in Spain, there were others

who wrought good service in the Gospel cause, and of whose efforts it were unjust to be silent in a work of this description. Base is the heart which would refuse merit its meed, and, however insignificant may be the value of any eulogium which can flow from a pen like mine, I cannot refrain from mentioning with respect and esteem a few names connected with Gospel enterprise. A zealous Irish gentleman, of the name of Graydon, exerted himself with indefatigable diligence in diffusing the light of Scripture in the province of Catalonia, and along the southern shores of Spain; whilst two missionaries from Gibraltar, Messrs. Rule and Lyon, during one entire year, preached Evangelic truth in a church at Cadiz. So much success attended the efforts of these two last brave disciples of the immortal Wesley, that there is every reason for supposing that, had they not been silenced and eventually banished from the country by the pseudo-liberal faction of the Moderados, not only Cadiz, but the greater part of Andalusia, would by this time have confessed the pure doctrines of the Gospel, and have discarded for ever the last relics of popish superstition.

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More immediately connected with the Bible Society and myself, I am most happy to take this opportunity of speaking of Luis de Usoz y Rio, the scion of an ancient and honourable family of Old Castile, my coadjutor whilst editing the Spanish New Testament at Madrid. Throughout my residence in Spain, I experienced every mark of friendship from this gentleman, who, during the periods of my absence in the provinces, and my numerous and long journeys, cheerfully supplied my place at Madrid, and exerted himself to the utmost in forwarding the views of the Bible Society, influenced by no other motive than a hope that its efforts would eventually contribute to the peace, happiness, and civilization of his native land*.

In conclusion, I beg leave to state that I am fully aware of the various faults and inaccuracies

* In my account of the Spanish Gypsies, having to speak of Carlos the Third, I was indebted to Luis de Usoz for some curious facts, probably only known to himself, relative to that monarch. (See *Zincali*, pp. 209, 10.) Also for some interesting notices of the comuneros, of which I availed myself when speaking of Maria Padilla. (*Zincali*, pp. 95–102.) Perhaps no person living is more competent to elucidate obscure portions of Spanish history than this gentleman.

of the present work. It is founded on certain journals which I kept during my stay in Spain, and numerous letters written to my friends in England, which they had subsequently the kindness to restore: the greater part, however, consisting of descriptions of scènery, sketches of character, &c., has been supplied from memory. In various instances I have omitted the names of places, which I have either forgotten, or of whose orthography I am uncertain. The work, as it at present exists, was written in a solitary hamlet in a remote part of England, where I had neither books to consult, nor friends of whose opinion or advice I could occasionally avail myself, and under all the disadvantages which arise from enfeebled health; I have, however, on a recent occasion, experienced too much of the lenity and generosity of the public, both of Britain and America, to shrink from again exposing myself to its gaze, and trust that, if in the present volumes it find but little to admire, it will give me credit for good spirit, and for setting down nought in malice.

Nov. 26, 1842.

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NOTICE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE Author having received various letters from well-wishers to his work, in which, amongst much that is complimentary and gratifying, he finds complaints of his having too frequently made use of Spanish and other words, unintelligible to the generality of his readers, he has in the present edition done his best to remedy that inconvenience by giving, in most instances, the English equivalents; some few foreign terms and expressions, however, have been retained, but only where the force and spirit of particular passages would have been endangered by their omission.

Jan. 20, 1843.