

THE BIBLE IN SPAIN.

CHAPTER I.

ARRIVAL AT MADRID.—MARIA DIAZ.—PRINTING OF THE TESTAMENT.—MY PROJECT.—ANDALUSIAN STEED.—SERVANT WANTED.—AN APPLICATION.—ANTONIO BUCHINI.—GENERAL CORDOVA.—PRINCIPLES OF HONOUR.

ON my arrival at Madrid I did not repair to my former lodgings in the Calle de la Zarza, but took others in the Calle de Santiago, in the vicinity of the palace. The name of the hostess (for there was, properly speaking, no host) was Maria Diaz, of whom I shall take the present opportunity of saying something in particular.

She was a woman of about thirty-five years of age, rather good-looking, and with a physiognomy every lineament of which bespoke intelligence of no common order. Her eyes were keen and penetrating, though occasionally clouded with a somewhat melancholy expression. There was a particular calmness and quiet in her general de-

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meanour, beneath which, however, slumbered a firmness of spirit and an energy of action which were instantly displayed whenever necessary. A Spaniard and, of course, a Catholic, she was possessed of a spirit of toleration and liberality which would have done honour to individuals much her superior in station. In this woman, during the remainder of my sojourn in Spain, I found a firm and constant friend, and occasionally a most discreet adviser: she entered into all my plans, I will not say with enthusiasm, which, indeed, formed no part of her character, but with cordiality and sincerity, forwarding them to the utmost of her ability. She never shrank from me in the hour of danger and persecution, but stood my friend, notwithstanding the many inducements which were held out to her by my enemies to desert or betray me. Her motives were of the noblest kind, friendship and a proper feeling of the duties of hospitality; no prospect, no hope of self-interest, however remote, influenced this admirable woman in her conduct towards me. Honour to Maria Diaz, the quiet, dauntless, clever Castilian female. I were an ingrate not to speak

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Ch. I.]

MARIA DIAZ.

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well of her, for richly has she deserved an eulogy in the humble pages of "The Bible in Spain."

She was a native of Villa Seca, a hamlet of New Castile, situated in what is called the Sagra, at about three leagues distance from Toledo: her father was an architect of some celebrity, particularly skilled in erecting bridges. At a very early age she married a respectable yeoman of Villa Seca, Lopez by name, by whom she had three sons. On the death of her father, which occurred about five years previous to the time of which I am speaking, she removed to Madrid, partly for the purpose of educating her children, and partly in the hope of obtaining from the government a considerable sum of money for which it stood indebted to her father at the time of his decease, for various useful and ornamental works, principally in the neighbourhood of Aranjuez. The justness of her claim was at once acknowledged; but, alas! no money was forthcoming, the royal treasury being empty. Her hopes of earthly happiness were now concentrated in her children. The two youngest were still of a very tender age; but the eldest, Juan José Lopez, a lad of about six-

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teen, was bidding fair to realize the warmest hopes of his affectionate mother : he had devoted himself to the arts, in which he had made such progress that he had already become the favourite pupil of his celebrated namesake Lopez, the best painter of modern Spain. Such was Maria Diaz, who, according to a custom formerly universal in Spain, and still very prevalent, retained the name of her maidenhood though married. Such was Maria Diaz and her family.

One of my first cares was to wait on Mr. Villiers, who received me with his usual kindness. I asked him whether he considered that I might venture to commence printing the Scriptures without any more applications to government. His reply was satisfactory : “ You obtained the permission of the government of Isturitz,” said he, “ which was a much less liberal one than the present. I am a witness to the promise made to you by the former ministers, which I consider sufficient. You had best commence and complete the work as soon as possible, without any fresh application ; and should any one attempt to interrupt you, you have only to come to me, whom you may command at

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Ch. I.] PRINTING OF THE TESTAMENT. 5

any time." So I went away with a light heart, and forthwith made preparation for the execution of the object which had brought me to Spain.

I shall not enter here into unnecessary details, which could possess but little interest for the reader ; suffice it to say that, within three months from this time, an edition of the New Testament, consisting of five thousand copies, was published at Madrid. The work was printed at the establishment of Mr. Borrego, a well known writer on political economy, and proprietor and editor of an influential newspaper called *El Español*. To this gentleman I had been recommended by Is-turitz himself, on the day of my interview with him. That unfortunate minister had, indeed, the highest esteem for Borrego, and had intended raising him to the station of minister of finance, when the revolution of the Granja occurring, of course rendered abortive this project, with perhaps many others of a similar kind which he might have formed.

The Spanish version of the New Testament which was thus published, had been made many

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years before by a certain Padre Filipe Scio, confessor of Ferdinand the Seventh, and had even been printed, but so encumbered by notes and commentaries as to be unfitted for general circulation, for which, indeed, it was never intended. In the present edition, the notes were of course omitted, and the inspired word, and that alone, offered to the public. It was brought out in a handsome octavo volume, and presented, upon the whole, a rather favourable specimen of Spanish typography.

The mere printing, however, of the New Testament at Madrid could be attended with no utility whatever, unless measures, and energetic ones, were taken for the circulation of the sacred volume.

In the case of the New Testament, it would not do to follow the usual plan of publication in Spain, namely, to entrust the work to the booksellers of the capital, and rest content with the sale which they and their agents in the provincial towns might be able to obtain for it, in the common routine of business; the result generally being, the circulation of a few dozen copies in the

course of the year; as the demand for literature of every kind in Spain was miserably small.

The Christians of England had already made considerable sacrifices, in the hope of disseminating the word of God largely amongst the Spaniards, and it was now necessary to spare no exertion to prevent that hope becoming abortive. Before the book was ready, I had begun to make preparations for putting a plan into execution, which had occupied my thoughts occasionally during my former visit to Spain, and which I had never subsequently abandoned. I had mused on it when off Cape Finisterre in the tempest; in the cut-throat passes of the Morena; and on the plains of La Mancha, as I jogged along a little way ahead of the Contrabandista.

I had determined, after depositing a certain number of copies in the shops of the booksellers of Madrid, to ride forth, Testament in hand, and endeavour to circulate the word of God amongst the Spaniards, not only of the towns but of the villages; amongst the children not only of the plains but of the hills and mountains. I intended to visit Old Castile, and to traverse

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the whole of Galicia and the Asturias,—to establish Scripture depôts in the principal towns, and to visit the people in secret and secluded spots,—to talk to them of Christ, to explain to them the nature of his book, and to place that book in the hands of those whom I should deem capable of deriving benefit from it. I was aware that such a journey would be attended with considerable danger, and very possibly the fate of St. Stephen might overtake me; but does the man deserve the name of a follower of Christ who would shrink from danger of any kind in the cause of Him whom he calls his Master? “He who loses his life for my sake, shall find it,” are words which the Lord himself uttered. These words were fraught with consolation to me, as they doubtless are to every one engaged in propagating the gospel in sincerity of heart, in savage and barbarian lands.

I now purchased another horse; for these animals, at the time of which I am speaking, were exceedingly cheap. A royal requisition was about to be issued for five thousand, the con-

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ANDALUSIAN STEED.

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sequence being, that an immense number were for sale, for, by virtue of this requisition, the horses of any person not a foreigner could be seized for the benefit of the service. It was probable that, when the number was made up, the price of horses would be treble what it then was, which consideration induced me to purchase this animal before I exactly wanted him. He was a black Andalusian stallion of great power and strength, and capable of performing a journey of a hundred leagues in a week's time, but he was unbroke, savage, and furious. A cargo of Bibles, however, which I hoped occasionally to put on his back, would, I had no doubt, thoroughly tame him, especially when labouring up the flinty hills of the north of Spain. I wished to have purchased a mule, but, though I offered thirty pounds for a sorry one, I could not obtain her; whereas the cost of both the horses, tall, powerful, stately animals, scarcely amounted to that sum.

The state of the surrounding country at this time was not very favourable for venturing forth: Cabrera was within nine leagues of Madrid, with

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an army nearly ten thousand strong; he had beaten several small detachments of the queen's troops, and had ravaged La Mancha with fire and sword, burning several towns; bands of affrighted fugitives were arriving every hour, bringing tidings of woe and disaster, and I was only surprised that the enemy did not appear, and by taking Madrid, which was almost at his mercy, put an end to the war at once. But the truth is, that the Carlist generals did not wish the war to cease, for as long as the country was involved in bloodshed and anarchy, they could plunder and exercise that lawless authority so dear to men of fierce and brutal passions. Cabrera, moreover, was a dastardly wretch, whose limited mind was incapable of harbouring a single conception approaching to grandeur; whose heroic deeds were confined to cutting down defenceless men, and to forcing and disembowelling unhappy women; and yet I have seen this wretched fellow termed by French journals (Carlist of course) the young, the heroic general. Infamy on the cowardly assassin! The shabbiest corporal of Napoleon would have laughed at his generalship, and half a battalion of Austrian grenadiers