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An architect and architectural theorist, George Edmund Street (1824–81) was one of the key proponents of the ‘High Victorian’ Gothic style in nineteenth-century Britain. He is best known as the mind behind London’s Royal Courts of Justice. Elected an associate of the Royal Academy in 1866, Street became its professor of architecture in 1880. In 1874 he received the gold medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and he served as the Institute’s president in 1881. This two-volume work was first published in 1865, and is reissued here in its 1914 version, edited by the American art historian Georgiana Goddard King (1871–1939), who reminds her readers that Street’s guide was pioneering in its time, and remains indispensable to the understanding of the Gothic era in Europe. The work takes the reader on a tour of Spain’s most ancient and architecturally important towns and cities.

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George Edmund Street, Edited by Georgiana Goddard King
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Some Account of Gothic Architecture in Spain

VOLUME 1

GEORGE EDMUND STREET
EDITED BY GEORGINA GODDARD KING



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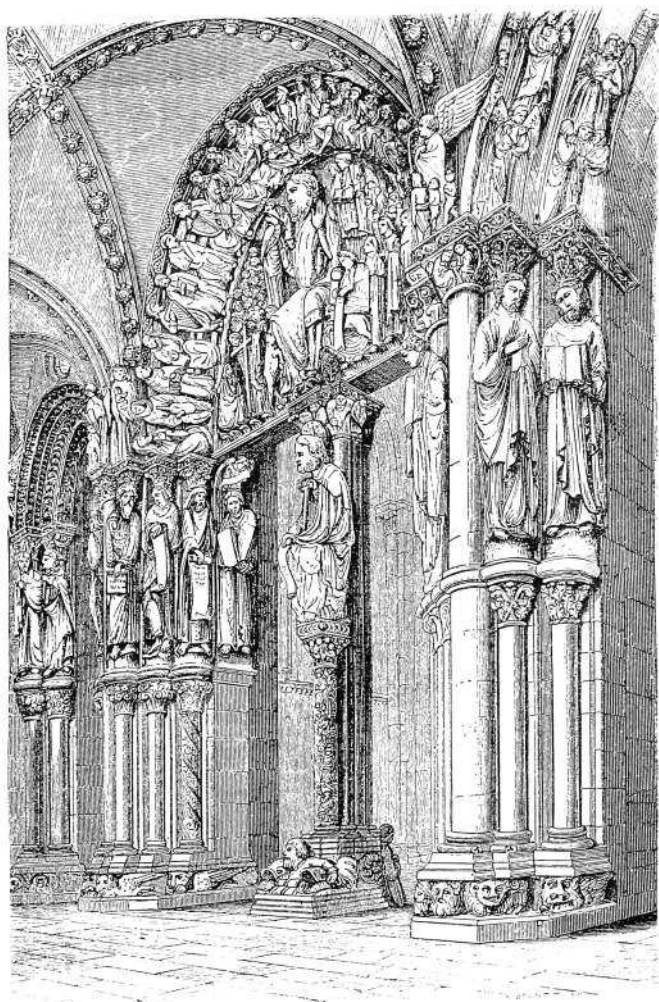
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GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE IN SPAIN

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SANTIAGO CATHEDRAL
PORTICO DE LA GLORIA

SOME ACCOUNT
OF
GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE
IN SPAIN

BY
GEORGE EDMUND STREET, F.S.A.

EDITED BY
GEORGIANA GODDARD KING



SEGOVIA FROM THE ALCAZAR

VOL. I

LONDON AND TORONTO
J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO. 1914

TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE
Esq. Esq. Esq.
THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED
AS A TESTIMONY OF THE AUTHOR'S RESPECT
AND ADMIRATION

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THREE sorts of people will read a book like this, of travel and criticism: those who think of going somewhere and want to know what to expect; those who cannot go, and feed their desire by what stirs new desire; and those who have been there already and want to recall the place or to follow up what they fancied there. The greatest motive for reprinting *Some Account of Gothic Architecture in Spain*, by George Edmund Street, lies in the need of the first sort, for whom very little exists in any language. *Murray* is Ford first spoiled and then superannuated; *Baedeker* is for the best part carved out of Street, and for the rest inaccurate as well as inadequate; few travellers' books give more than travellers' prejudices. This book is meant to be, what it has been always, the traveller's inseparable fellow.

The editor undertakes two things: first and chiefly to make it valid for the current year, and, secondarily, to widen, a very little, its range. Street and Baedeker the traveller can carry with him, more he cannot carry. Therefore whatever Baedeker omits, Street must supply. I set out to report where things are not as they were, and to add whatever new historical scholarship has brought to light. I have tried to see not only every place that Street saw, but every place that he expressed a wish to see—this sometimes was not possible—and to add in the third place a few notes on places still unseen where Baedeker avails nothing. Whatever I have described without seeing I have described, with infinite regret, from photographs. On books to which Street had access I have drawn little, knowing that he chose carefully and omitted judiciously.

That this is already the best work on the subject is a commonplace of connoisseurs and booksellers, but no one, without carefully reading most of the men who have been writing since, could believe how much they all depend on it. To try to correct or augment by later writers is like trying to lift oneself by one's own bootstraps. Spanish authors quote Street more, if possible, than do English or French, and the graver sort con-

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firm or accept his judgment in essentials. For this reason, amongst others, I have so little to add to a book published nearly fifty years ago. Street was very thorough, and Spain is very slow.

The greatest change has been the discovery, less than twenty years ago, of what are called *Primitives*, first the Flemish Primitives, then the French, lastly the Spanish. Here, more than anywhere else, the traveller stands in need of help, and if I offer a hint it is with the sense of being justified by at least two considerations. The first of these is that though in the days of Street Primitives had not been invented, yet whenever he saw pictures he looked at them, and liked, furthermore, the right ones. At Pamplona and Leon it is the author and not the editor who stops to record and discuss paintings, who does, precisely, at length what the editor ventures elsewhere. Moreover he dearly loved the early Italians.¹ The other consideration is that the painting from the thirteenth to the fifteenth and even the sixteenth century is in the strictest terms parallel to the architecture and related with it, is in Street's sense Gothic and in any sense ecclesiastical. Therefore a modest enumeration of retables painted or carved will not break in upon the discourse unduly, while it may serve a good turn to some future traveller bent on that closer study of individual painters and schools which is needed before Spanish painting can be estimated. While in absolute beauty it can never support comparison with the Italian, in freshness, in naïveté, and marked personality, and in the great charm of being yet "unspoiled"—unravaged by the common literary hack—it has inexhaustible interest.

Matter of controversy not being matter for an editor, on the vexed question of French influence in Spanish art, I have put very briefly such conclusions only as seem indisputable and are undisputed by the established critics, connoisseurs, and archæologists in Spain. The same facts are urged, as well, by such modern historians as Don Rafael Altamira. The case of the architecture, according to them, stands thus: First, during the Reconquest the monks of Cluny had immense influence with a number of important Spanish kings. Secondly, in the twelfth century the monks of Cîteaux and S. Bernard himself founded great Spanish abbeys from French houses, notably Fontefroid near Narbonne. Third, certain types of architecture which in France are "regional," *i.e.* recur frequently in a particular part, are found in Spain unique or isolated or without antecedent

¹ See, finally, Vol. II. pp. 255-257.

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or tentative approximations. The first and second points establish a presumption that workmen and master builders would be fetched from France; the third affords evidence that such have worked in Spain. It is not the least glory of Street that without the data he saw this in the stones. With him for example, and in confirmation of all this, I want to add another sort of testimony, that of the connoisseur's eye, trained to compare and detect essential likenesses. This may be helped out by photographs, and supported by what is called *qualitative* criticism, and the habit of distinguishing between a master's hand and an apprentice's, between first rate and provincial art, between works which are in the current of a great tradition and those which are individual, accidental, and without consequences. In the case of Santiago de Compostella, since it has lately broken out afresh I summed up the discussion. It is precisely in such instances as this, of conflicting or ambiguous documentary evidence, that the student is thrown back on a practised judgment and enabled to declare that as certainly two pieces of stuff are or are not of the same colour, so certainly two pieces of sculpture are of the same school, or are not. Many threads meet and mingle in the web of Spanish art, but a steady eye and hand can disentangle some of them.

Equally this last criterion, of the trained experience, is needed to supplement the documents on the no less vexed question of Spanish painting. Again the best Spanish authority is in agreement, affirming consistently that through commercial and political relations alike Tuscan influence—*i.e.* Florentine and Sieneze—was incessant and strong on the east coast, thence spreading inland and westward to the other kingdoms. French painting came in, from the courts of Provence, Burgundy, and the Royal Domain, inevitably, and the documents prove it. These also prove the Flemish intercourse. The German share was probably less than sometimes is asserted, because the evidence of documents is wanting, and the test of examining and comparing the early pictures does not show it.

The history of Spanish painting before the sixteenth century is yet to write for the most part, but some of the materials exist. There is, first of all, the great book on *Cuatrocentistas Catalanes* by Don Salvador Sanpere y Miguel, and his *Pintura Medieval Catalana* now publishing. There are articles in Spanish periodicals and other publications by Don Elias Tormo y Monso and Don Luis Tramoyeres y Blasco.

In the *Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne* between 1906 and 1909

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M. Emile Bertaux presented in French most of Señor Sanpere's conclusions even when he differed from them, and he has written the chapters on Spanish painting and sculpture in M. André Michel's *Histoire de l'Art*, and for this M. Camille Enlart has written on Spanish architecture. These two are the best authorities in French, I believe.

In Spanish there is one great book to add to Street's list: *Historia de la Arquitectura Cristiana Española en la Edad Media*, by Don Vicente Lampérez y Romea, which was summarised in French, for the *Revue Hispanique*, by Professor Desdevises du Désert. Unfortunately the first volume is already out of print. To every chapter and section in this, as in Michel, are appended such excellent special bibliographies that to set down the books I have consulted, before or after them, would be affectation. Parcerisa has been republished, without the delightful old views, and with later additions, as *España, sus Monumentos y Artes*, Barcelona, 1885 and onward. The best new book I know in English is called *Spain, a Study of her Life and Arts*, by Royall Tyler, 1909. It contains forty-three plans of churches, some of these not in Street.

To supply for the notes, plans drawn to scale and exquisitely, like those in the text, the editor was not competent. To make photographs that could replace the author's sketches the age is not competent, for until a camera shall be able to work around a corner, photography can be only a mechanical aid in the study and reproduction of architecture, and for the impression and the pleasure the burden will be still on the pencil. Those who have known this book before will applaud the editor's and publisher's conservatism, and will be glad equally that while the author's notes are retained at the foot of the page, the editor's, indicated by an arabic numeral, are relegated to the end of the chapter.

The business of an editor is to help out his author with as little ostentation as may be. If he disagrees in fundamentals, he is in the wrong place; if he knows more in details, though he has the better luck, yet his author is still probably the better man, and his corrections and additions should come in discreetly. It seems right in choosing new material and piecing out the old to match the stuff as far as possible—in other words, to insert simply a report made to the chief in his own terms. If the report is sometimes bald, sometimes garrulous, too often breathless, it is made at least rapidly and *sotto voce* and kept out of the way of the main business. This book is not mine. If I ever

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write a book about Spain it will be a different one, and not so good a one—but whether I like or no, it will be based on this.

To those who have not known it before, I commend this. Street is the best of companions—the least professional, or hackneyed, or egotistical. I testify after three journeys to Spain and many months spent there that he is never dull, never irritating, never fretful; and stimulating beyond the wont. If one flags after fourteen hours in a train, one remembers that he sat sixty-six in a diligence; if one turns from a lump of chocolate and a cold omelette as the long day's provision, one remembers that he lived for weeks on bread and grapes. He taught to Europe the *Gloria* of Santiago; he teaches to every fellow-traveller his patience with foreign ways and his entire devotion to exalted beauty. If one has more tolerance for the plateresque style than he, it may be because one has less passion for the Gothic, and that is not virtue on any count. Spain is not easy to understand; Spaniards say themselves that the very formulas they offer do not plumb the depth—but the best chance of understanding lies in knowledge and in such a spirit as informs the pages that follow here.

BRYN MAWR,
Vigil of S. Andrew, 1912.

PREFACE

THE book which I here commit to the reader requires, I fear, some apology on my part. I feel that I have undertaken almost more than an artist like myself, always at work, has any right to suppose he can properly accomplish in the little spare time he can command. Nevertheless, I have always felt that part of the duty which every artist owes to his mother art is to study her developments wherever they are to be seen, and whenever he can find the opportunity. Moreover, I believe that in this age it is only by the largest kind of study and range of observation that any artist can hope to perfect himself in so complex and difficult an art as architecture, and that it is only by studying the development of Gothic architecture in all countries that we can form a true and just estimate of the marvellous force of the artistic impulse which wrought such wonders all over Europe in the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries.

In a day of revival, such as this, I believe it to be necessary that we should form this just estimate of bygone art; because I am sure that, unless our artists learn their art by studying patiently, lovingly, and constantly the works of their great predecessors, they will never themselves be great. I know full well how much hostility there is on the part of some to any study of foreign examples; but as from my boyhood up I have never lost any opportunity of visiting and studying our old English buildings, and as my love for our own national artistic peculiarities rather increases than diminishes the more I study the contemporary buildings of the Continent, I have no hesitation in giving to the world what I have been able to learn about Spanish art.

What I have here written will no doubt be supplemented and corrected by others hereafter; and much additional light will, I hope, be thrown upon the history of Spanish buildings and their architects. It will be found that I have referred to many Spanish authorities for the historical facts on which the dates of the buildings I have visited can alone be decided. Of these

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authorities none is more useful to the architect, none is more creditable to its authors, than the *Notices of the Architects and Architecture of Spain*, by D. Eugenio Llaguno y Amirola, edited with additions by D. Juan Agustin Cean-Bermudez, in four volumes, compiled about the beginning of this century, but not published until A.D. 1829.¹

This work, full of documentary evidence as to the Spanish architects and their works, appears to me to be far better in its scheme and mode of execution than any work which we in England have upon the buildings of our own country; and, though it is true that neither of its authors had a very accurate knowledge of the art, they seem to have exercised great diligence in their search after information bearing on their subject, and to have been remarkably successful.

Mr. Ford's *Handbook of Spain* has been of great service to me, not only because it was the only guide to be had, and on account of the charm of his style, but because it had the rare excellence (in a Guide-book) of constantly referring to local guides and authorities, and so enabling me to turn at once to the books most likely to aid me in my work.

The other works to which I have at some pains referred are mainly local guides and histories, collections of documents, and the like. Of these a vast number have been published, and I cannot pretend to have exhausted the stores which they contain.

Unfortunately, so far as I have been able to learn, no one of late years has taken up the subject of the Mediæval antiquities of Spain in the way in which we are accustomed to see them treated by writers on the subject elsewhere in Europe. The *Ensayo Historico* of D. José Caveda is very slight and unsatisfactory, and not to be depended on. Passavant, who has published some notes on Spanish architecture,² is so ludicrously wrong in most of his statements that it seems probable that he trusted to his internal consciousness instead of to personal inspection for his facts. The work of Don G. P. de Villa Amil³ is very showy and very untrustworthy; and that of Don F. J. Parcerisa,⁴ and the great work which the Spanish Government is publishing,⁵ are both so large and elaborate as to be useless for

¹ I have quoted this book throughout as "Cean Bermudez, *Arg. de Esp.*"

² *Die Christliche Kunst in Spanien*. Leipzig, 1853.

³ *España Artística y Monumental*, por Don G. P. de Villa Amil y Don P. de la Escosura. Paris, 1842.

⁴ *Recuerdos y Bellezas de España*, por F. J. Parcerisa, 1844, etc.

⁵ *Monumentos Arquitectónicos de España*; publicados á expensas del Estado, bajo la direccion de una Comision especial creada por el Ministerio de Fomento. Madrid, 1859-65, and still in course of publication.

PREFACE

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the purpose of giving such a general and comprehensive idea of the features of Gothic architecture in Spain as it has been my effort to give in this work.

Seeing, then, how complete is the ignorance which up to the present time we have laboured under as to the true history and nature of Gothic architecture in Spain, I commit this volume to the reader with a fair trust that what has been the occupation of all my leisure moments for the last two or three years—a work not only of much labour at home, but of considerable labour also in long journeys taken year after year for this object alone—will not be found an unwelcome addition to the literature of Christian art. I have attempted to throw what I had to say into the form which has always appeared to me to be the right form for any such architectural treatise. The interest of the subject is threefold—first, Artistic and Archæological; secondly, Historical; and lastly, Personal. I have first of all, therefore, arranged the notes of my several journeys in the form of one continuous tour; and then, in the concluding chapters, I have attempted a general *résumé* of the history of architecture in Spain, and, finally, a short history of the men who as architects and builders have given me the materials for my work.

To this I have added, in an Appendix, two catalogues—one of dated examples of buildings, and the other of their architects, with short notices of their works; and, beside these, a few translations of documents which seem to me to bring before us in a very real way the mode in which these mediæval buildings were undertaken, carried on, and completed.