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TOLEDO: THE SHEFFIELD OF SPAIN.

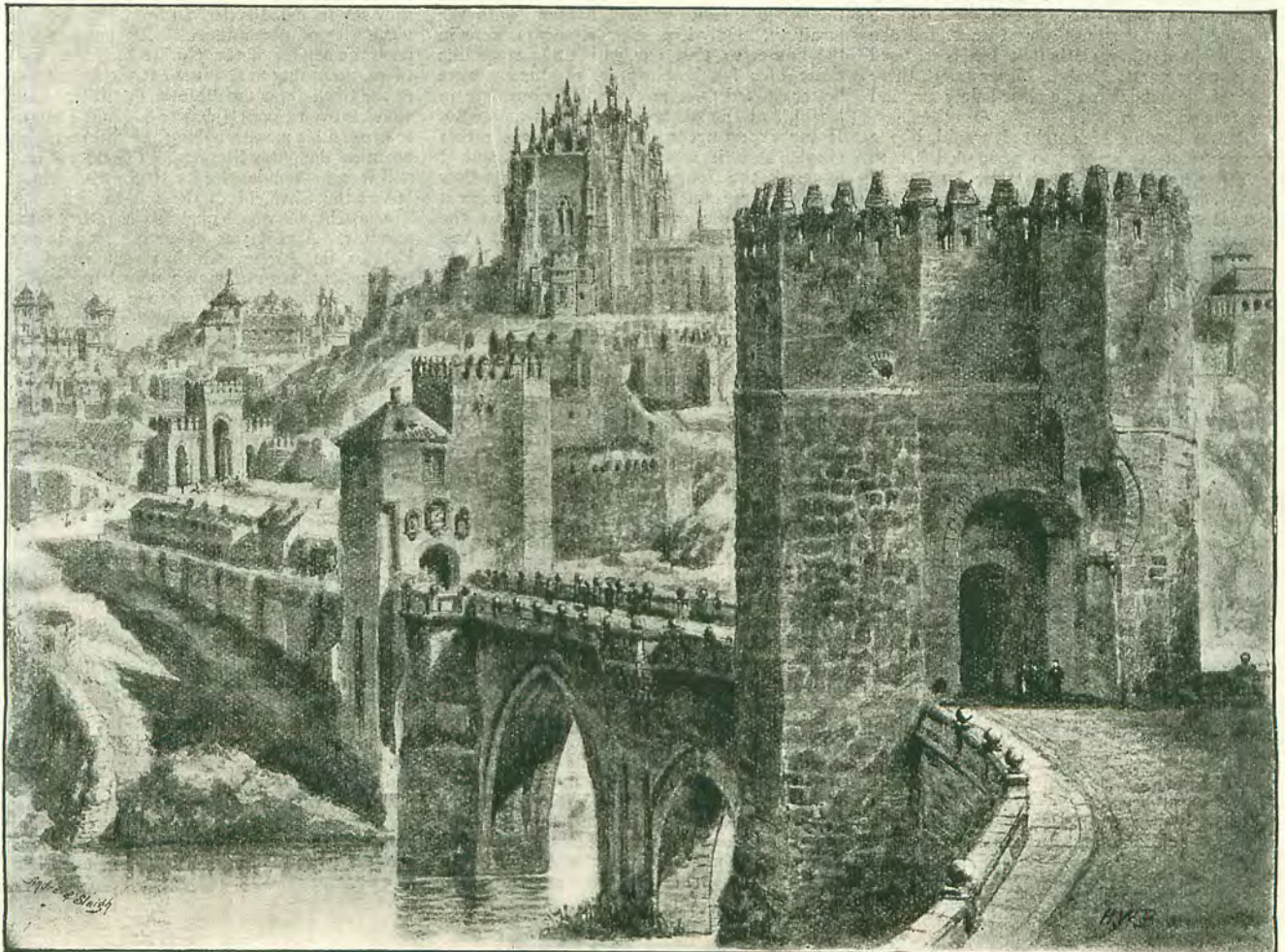
By FRED HASTINGS.

I HALTED at Castiglione about seven o'clock one evening. As this place was a railway junction, I thought I should find a resting-place for the night and then take the morning train to Toledo. There was a large square enclosure for cattle with a few cottages at the back. Outside these cottages several women were at needle-work, and four or five

girls and children were dancing. They danced in the peculiar Spanish style, using their voices and castanets. When they caught sight of me, they ceased and speedily hastened to bring a guitar; putting it into my hands they wished me to play for them, but this was beyond my powers.

The sun went down behind the hills, and

I had shelter to seek. Seeking in the gloom I stumbled over several mounds which proved to be "dug-outs," or dwelling-places of men employed on the railway and their families. Certainly these homes were not so good as the cave dwellings of the gipsies of Granada. After considerable difficulty I managed to find a room in a small house near the station.



TOLEDO.

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There was no bed in the room. It was arranged that a mattress should be laid on the floor, but there was one great objection to the place, viz., that it had been newly painted that day. I feared to sleep in it, and yet I was weary and wished to stretch my limbs. I accepted the great-coat of the old man for a coverlet and shut my door. The old-fashioned Roman lamp gave forth much smoke, and the basket in a corner with sundry paint brushes, rags and tins a dreadful smell. Opening the window I placed the basket outside, and then found I had no fastening. How about brigands and robbers?

Beetles began to run about, and I committed murder on them ere committing myself to sleep. It must be confessed that a slight sense of loneliness crept over me, and memories of what one had read of Spanish assaults began to float through the brain.

Pitching back my rush-bottomed chair, a survey of the room was further taken. On those shelves for ornaments are a number of bottles of all sorts and sizes. In the corner is a large stone jar with the drinking water of the household. The table is of rude construction, but that fireplace in one corner, with a projection half over the room is very odd. I had to be careful lest my head should suffer by contact with that square projecting corner.

But I must lie down and rest. That window is unfastened; never mind, I shall probably hear any intruder, and that little pistol is with my girdle-purse under the pillow. Sleep was sweet. It is five o'clock when I awake. My host and hostess are up before me, for I can hear them moving about. Here is water to wash, but a towel—no. I manage to make the old lady understand what I want, and she brings me a dirty cloth that has been used already for paint. Bah! Never mind, there is sunshine outside, and a clear balmy air, and my face will soon dry.

Before leaving I thought I would like a memento of my hostess, so persuaded her to sit down outside the house while I sketched her. She had a face broad enough for the largest smile and a form dumpty enough for the lowliest door.

At the restaurant attached to the station some sort of breakfast was obtained. The coffee was good and the bread of very fine flour, and made in cakes as is usual in shape like a flat-iron. One could take a number of them on a string like the loaves of Syria.

News of my portrait-painting had spread. A man brings one of the railway porters and intimates that I should try my hand on his face. I did not care for the subject. An old man came up and the porters said "paint him." He placed himself in position on the platform; soon his form was transferred to paper. He looked well in his very broad brim, which I afterwards tried on my heretical head. The old priest and myself afterwards rode together to Toledo, and as our knowledge of each other's language was limited we entered into no discussion to spoil the harmony of our brief acquaintance. Poor old man, he was in trouble too, for his house-keeper was going to have some operation performed on her upper lip in Toledo, and naturally his countenance was rather gloomy. I sympathised with both. The old priest tried to comfort himself with a cigarette which he made as deftly as any young *cabillero*.

It is tiresome to trudge through Toledo. The city is on a hill and a climb is inevitable, whatever way you go. But it is a most charming city. Nowhere, perhaps, save in

modern Jerusalem would more places of interest be found so close together. As we approach the city, we notice the romantic double-arched lofty bridge guarded by two gates which span the yellow-watered river running round the city in deep rocky channels. A little further and we pass under another Moorish gate with large gilded medallions of the sun and moon. Then we come to an old mosque; further on a Jewish synagogue in style like the Alhambra; then a church in rich Byzantine decoration; then to San Juan de los Reges, a church built by Ferdinand and Isabella after the battle of Toro, when they gained a victory over the Portuguese. Outside this church a number of manacles and fetters are hung, which has been struck from off the limbs of Christian captives when Granada was taken by the Moors. Then there is the cathedral, the palace of the Primate of all Spain, another romantic bridge and churches seemingly uncountable. Yes, Toledo is a charming place, although somewhat tiring.

As I only had my knapsack as impedimenta, I went to search out the place at which a friend had told me I should find comfortable quarters. The house was not easy to discover, probably because in asking for Isabel Street I omitted to say "Saint" Isabel, but I was rewarded when I found the place, for it was an old Moorish house with a courtyard shaded by evergreens and with a quaint old well in the centre. The broad stairway led to galleries which ran round the court. My bedroom was delightfully cool, for no sun could get in. The furniture of the whole house was in keeping with its age, and the two old ladies were in harmony with the furniture. Only five other strangers were in the house, so that our gatherings were like those of a family party. The dinners were better cooked than any we had elsewhere in Spain, and the charges were very moderate. If my experience at Castiglione was rather rough, here it was most pleasant, and I lingered the longer. Four of my fellow boarders were amateur artists, and our great pleasure in the evenings was to show the sketches we had made during the day. And we found subjects enough in Toledo. Every corner, lane, outlook is a picture.

The cathedral at Toledo is one of the largest in Spain, if not in Europe. It is a most elaborate building. Perhaps nowhere will better cutting in stone be seen. There are some wonderful relievos in Carrara marble of the thirteenth century in the large chapel behind the coro or choir. That place is a perfect mass of bewildering and exquisite carving, with richest colouring mellowed by age. Behind the choir is a sculptured design, of angels and the virgin, in marble and brass running up for about seventy feet. Above where light is let in from the roof is like a peep into heaven. As I entered from the north door and first caught sight of this, I had to stand for some minutes gazing on an arrangement, the like of which I had never seen elsewhere. It was a representation of the giving of the law to Moses on the Mount.

In the cathedral a service is still kept up for Moorish Christians. Various attempts had been made to set aside this liturgy, but the cathedral chapter conquered the Vatican. The ancient liturgy was in vogue all through this part of Spain until Isabella made it a condition, in obedience to the Vatican, that no church should be consecrated that used it. Now in only one little chapel of the cathedral is this liturgy used. I went to hear it. To me it was much like the other services, with

one or two exceptions, viz., the practice of having an acolyte to point out to the officiating priest with a silver wand the place in the liturgy to be read, and further the signalling by means of a number of silver bells attached to a wheel when the faithful are to kneel.

The sacristan pulled the ropes which moved the wheel very energetically, especially when he caught sight of one present who fell not prostrate before the elevation of the host. Directly he ceased ringing, he walked over to me, and although I was seated, with my body bent, that I might not disturb the worship of the five others of the congregation, and the ten ecclesiastics, he motioned to me to adore the host. As this was against my conscience I quietly slipped out.

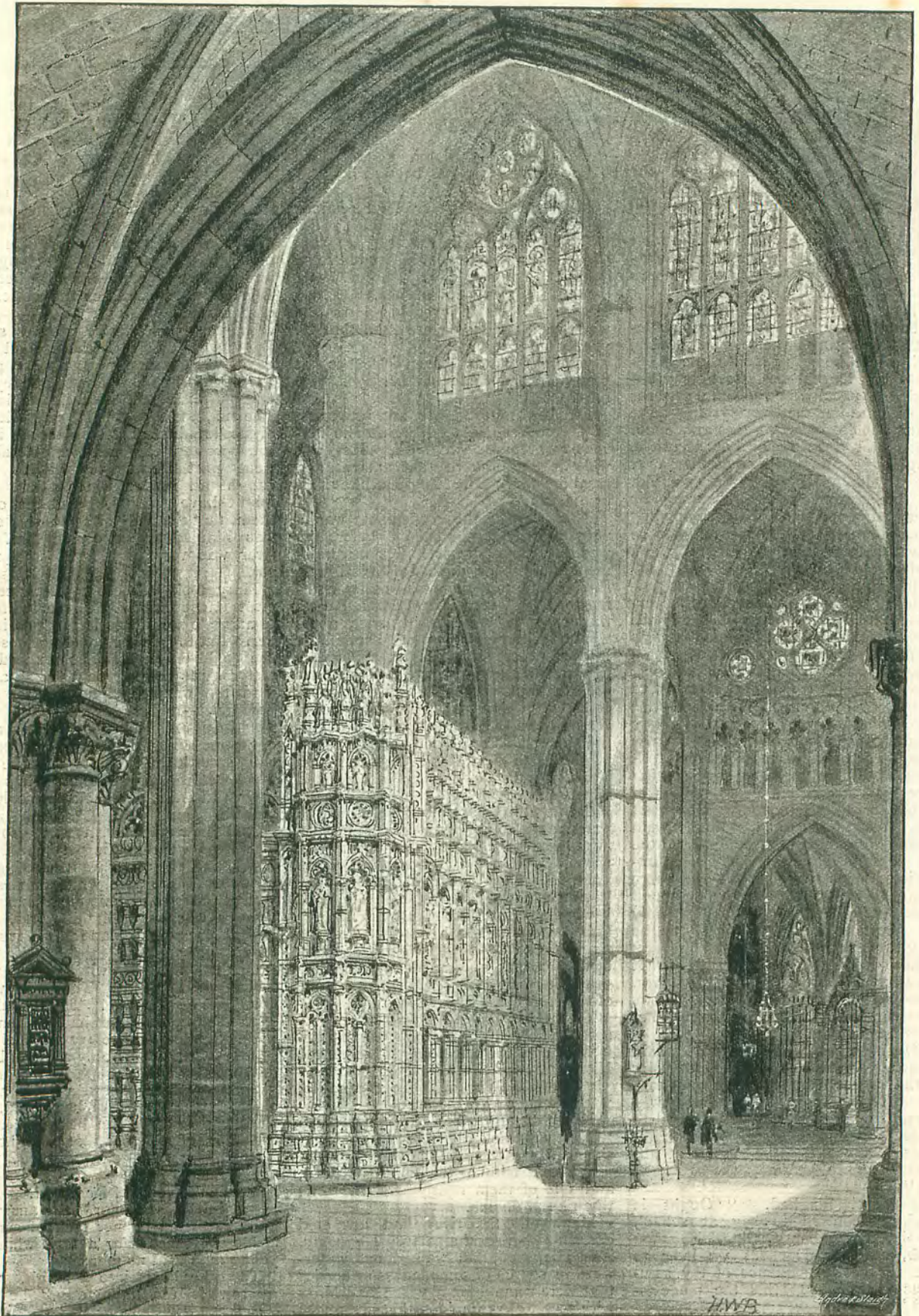
The sacristan of another chapel was much more affable. He showed me a sort of vestry where the business of the diocese was transacted, and it was a most gorgeous mass of colour with Moorish hangings, rugs, furniture, frescoes of the Resurrection, and numbers of portraits of all the various cardinals and archbishops who had had sway over this see. That of Cardinal Ximenes was pointed out with some pride. As this sacristan or ecclesiastic could talk French, we had a pleasant little chat, and at the end confessed that the one important thing for Catholics and Protestants was to seek by faith in Jesus Christ alone to get to heaven.

There is a tradition that Adam was the first king of Spain and that Toledo was the capital. The Jews believe that it was first settled by their forefathers who fled from Palestine in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, and they say its name is derived from Toledoth, or "the city of generations." Anyhow, it was once the capital of the Gothic kingdom, and there, according to tradition, Roderic, the last of the Goths, was unfaithful to his trust, an act which moved Count Julian to call in the Moors to avenge his private wrongs, and those of his beautiful daughter Florinda. Toledo was and still remains famous for its steel manufacture. It was the Sheffield of the middle ages. A Toledo blade was equal to a Damascene scimitar. A visit was of course paid to the Fabrica de Armes, which is subsidised by government, but although a very large place, is but a shadow of its former self. Here several hundred men are still employed in making swords, daggers, etc. We handled several antique blades and found they were for wear in the procession in honour of a poet. Others were ordered for duellists in France and Germany. One blade was so supple that it could be bent into a perfect circle without breaking.

A section of a blade was shown in which a strip of iron is laid between two of steel, and then being welded and heated together they form one blade. The careful inlaying of steel with gold wire was a very interesting process to watch.

Toledo perhaps more than any other town we visited in Spain exhibited traces of decay. It was a most important and populous place. This was first when the Moors had possession. When the Christians gained power in the eleventh century they promised at first protection to the Moors, but soon the terms of capitulation were neglected and violated, the property of the Moors was taken from them, and their mosques turned into churches. After a period of decline it rose again in the seventeenth century, until it had nearly two hundred thousand inhabitants. Now it has about twenty thousand, but it is as attractive as ever.





INTERIOR, TOLEDO CATHEDRAL.