

CHILDREN OF ALL NATIONS: THEIR HOMES, THEIR SCHOOLROOMS,  
THEIR PLAYGROUNDS.

## VI.—SPAIN AND PORTUGAL.

ONE of the first presents that a little Spanish child receives from its parents, when it shows indications of awakening to the consciousness that

tilled floor of the *patio*, or the rough pavement of the street, and is a precaution not to be despised in a country where the children grow up out of



A MULE-RIDE IN PORTUGAL. (See p. 343.)

its feet were made to stand upon and not merely to kick with, is a hat or cap of plaited straw, with a brim rolled up like a turban.

When the child falls, this elastic roll protects its head from coming into rude contact with the

doors, and where the burning sun dries up all the grass.

Not that all the streets and lanes are paved or hard. Quite the contrary!

Donkeys and village children could tell us a

different tale, rejoicing as they do in the opportunities they have of rolling about on their backs in a bed of dust, that is thick, and soft, and warm as a down pillow.

The little turban-like hat, however, may be of as much use in the soft dust as on the hard pavement, for if a Spanish baby had not something elastic round his head to make it bounce up again when he fell, he might very easily be suffocated before help arrived.

The next presents of importance, especially at Christmas, are the zambomba and castanets.

The zambomba is a very favourite toy, a kind of drum with a tube fastened and made to stand upright in the middle of the drum-head. When a child runs his hand up and down this tube, most extraordinary, if not very melodious, sounds are produced.

What with the zambomba and the castanets, the guitar, and the mandoline, the shouting and laughing, a Spanish household is not a quiet one; but the Spaniards love noise, and never scold their children into quietness. The castanets are concave shells of polished wood or ivory, fastened together in pairs. They are attached to the thumb, and, lying in the palm of the hand, are made to clatter together and beat time to the dance, which is the principal amusement in Spain.

There is even a religious ceremony performed every year in the Cathedral of Seville, called the dance of Los Seises.

On Corpus Christi day, the great festival of the Roman Catholics, and for eight days after, at set of sun, a great number of worshippers assemble and kneel down at each side of the dimly-lighted dome. A number of priests surround the altar, before which are drawn up two long rows of boys from eight to ten years of age, dressed as Spanish cavaliers of the middle ages, with plumed hats and white stockings. At a given signal, the sweet sounds of music proceeding from violins played in a distant part of the church break the profound silence, and the two rows of boys begin to move in graceful measure, beating time with their castanets.

But now I must describe the home of the little Spanish *niños* and *niñas* (boys and girls), and also tell you what a *patio* is.

Very simple is the home of the village children. A one-storeyed house painted white on the outside, openings for windows with wooden shutters, no glass, a large gate or door, which stands open all day and gives the passer-by a glimpse of the one common room that serves as kitchen, dwelling-room, and workshop during the day, and bedroom for the father and the boys by night.

A mat or two, or their *manta* (cloak), is their

only bed. In a small inner room the mother and the girls sleep, either on thin mattresses laid on the floor, or placed on a primitive bedstead of boards supported by trestles at each end.

In the large room there is sometimes a hearth, but oftener the fire is made on the clay floor, and the smoke has to find its way through the openings or door as best it may. One or two rush-bottomed chairs, a few hooks in the wall to hang up the *manta*, the *alforza* (bag for provisions), and the *bota* (leathern wine-pouch or pipe), without which the Spaniard seldom leaves home, a board adorned with the few cooking utensils of the household and the common drinking-cup, form the whole furniture, if we except a couple of stone water-jugs, half buried in the clay floor.

In Catalonia the common drinking-cup has a spout, and every one drinks without touching it with their lips. They hold the cup rather high, and let the water or wine flow from the spout into their mouths.

This is the simplest of the houses; then comes one with two storeys, balconies, and awnings, with perhaps a vine-covered porch or covered path, leading to the large entrance-room. This room is well filled with all the articles that are of use in a Spanish household. On the shelf above the hearth is a row of earthen jars and jugs of different shapes and sizes, and a can of oil. From a hook below hangs the great kettle, or pan, in which the "pulchero" is made. The walls are adorned with a clock, frying-pans, lids of kettles and pans, wooden spoons, and shelves with earthenware of strange shapes. The rough deal table is laden with more jars, coffee-pots, bottles, bread and eggs. There is a mat in the middle of the floor on which little Pedro's go-cart is placed; and in our illustration on page 345, Juanita, his sister, who is left in charge of him, has just placed him in it, and is giving him a draught of milk out of a strange-shaped bottle. She is dressed in true Spanish style, with huge comb, side plaits, short gaily-bordered skirt, embroidered stockings, and shoes fantastically adorned with bows and buckles. Juanita is not very industrious, or she thinks it quite enough to do to amuse her little brother, for the stocking she ought to be knitting lies on the floor among Pedro's playthings; but she is not the only one that is lazy, for Caro, the strange, lean-looking dog, laps his soup quietly at the back, and seems to think there is no occasion at all to hurry.

After these the houses in the old Moorish towns must be mentioned, with beautiful gates, many of them gilt, and of such exquisite workmanship that they remind one of lacework, through which the passer-by obtains a glimpse of a sparkling fountain,

orange-trees, oleanders, bright flowers, marble pillars, &c., and many merry children at play in the *patio*.

This *patio* (yard) is the favourite resort in the summer months of all the members of a Spanish family.

This has often a beautiful inlaid floor of Florentine marbles; it has no roof, except such as the balconies form, that, resting on marble pillars, and draped by rich awnings and curtains, surround it on every side, and below which are the bedrooms and kitchens. It is a delightful, free, open space, where all the family can be together, and yet not interfere with each other; where the zambomba and the castanets, the mandoline, and the guitar take turn and turn about; where Don Alfonso, the father, smokes his cigar, while Donna Juanita, the mother, fans herself, and where the little *niños* and *ninas* play at ball or at skipping-rope, and feed the gold fish in the fountain-basin from the time their nurse, an ancient *duenna*, gives them their *desayuno*, which means literally breakfast, till they are put to bed at night.

The homes of the children in Portugal are the same as these, only the fronts of the houses, instead of being dazzlingly white, are made of Fayence tiles, *azulejos*.

The effect is prettier, but there are fewer balconies. After the *desayuno*, which consists of a cup of milk or chocolate and a biscuit, the children go to school. If the school be at some distance they ride on mules. Three or four boys sit behind each other on one animal, and the boy who acts as mule-driver generally runs along by the side.

The mules have all names, and the boy talks to them continually, addressing them as if they were human beings, and encouraging them by word and whip.

"Now, Antonio," says he, "what has come into your stupid head? Don't you know that the *niños* must be at school by nine? Now, just hurry on, you lazy fellow, I'm ashamed of you! Do make haste!"

The mule pricks up his ears and hurries on, as if conscious that in a case of learning he must exert himself somewhat; but if he come to a nice dusty lane (and there are many such) he may feel inclined for a roll.

Down he goes, and the *niños* with him. Each one laughs, the mule enjoying it as well, and all have a good roll, till the mule feels inclined to return to his duty, take up his burden again, and then trot along.

But however much a mule may enjoy a roll, he is careful not to indulge in it on a mountain-path or

pass. There he is sedate and steady, looks neither to the right nor the left, but jogs along quietly, never making a slip or a false step. He walks near the edge of the path, because he is accustomed to have a pair of great panniers strapped on his back, and if he went too near to the steep rocks on the one side there would be no room for his burden. He has no fear of slipping over the deep, deep precipice on the other side, for he is sure-footed and careful. This the mountaineers know, and, placing their little children in one of the deep panniers, they often entrust them to the care of the boy muleteer, whose daily duty it is to go backwards and forwards between the various mountain villages.

What a happy ride the little ones have! they are too young to know anything of the beauty of the snow mountains at the back, or the valley lying deep below them to the right, or the rocks and the overhanging bushes, and the rustic cross to the left; but they feel the pleasant mountain-breeze, and the young muleteer laughs and plays with them, and the dog runs on before, and little Pedro smacks his mimic whip, and cries "Arre! arre!" (gee up! gee up!) to the mule, who does not think it worth his while to pay the least attention to either whip or voice.

The mountaineers and the muleteers place great faith in the sagacity of the mules; but this is not always the case with travellers.

It is not long since an Austrian prince, travelling over the Spanish mountains, and observing with some fear that his mule's legs were quite at the edge of the precipice, called out to his guide—

"Hallo! my friend, will you look after your animal, or he and I will both be over the precipice before long?"

"Don't trouble yourself," answered the guide, quietly continuing to smoke his pipe. "The beast has more sense than you!"—a remark that was certainly more forcible than polite.

The schools are good, if not, especially in the south, over numerous.

Many of the cloisters were converted into school-houses (*colegios*), years ago, when the citizens, determined to be priest-ridden no longer, turned the lazy monks and nuns out of them. These cloisters are fine, roomy buildings, the refectory of the "Kloster de Belem" (cloister of Bethlehem) in Portugal, for instance, being large enough to be dining-room and schoolroom, as it is, for nearly four hundred orphan boys.

The school-hours are from nine to twelve; then a couple of hours are given for second breakfast and recreation, after which school duties are

recommenced, and continue from two to four, unless in the hot days of summer.

After four the children return home to dinner, which usually consists of *un pollo con arroz* (fowl with rice), *patates de Malaga* (sweet potatoes), or *pulchero*, the national dish. This dish is composed of a piece of boiled beef, the wing of a fowl, a piece of *ghorizo* (Spanish pepper), bacon and vegetables, and a slice or two of ham. A bottle of wine for papa and mamma, *agua de limon* (lemonade) or *agua de orchata* (barley-water) for the children, and a dessert of oranges, with a green leaf on the stalk to show that they have been freshly gathered, green figs, dates, almonds, grapes, &c., finish the repast.

After dinner the children play or dance, rattling their castanets to the sound of a guitar, or drive or walk with their parents on the Alameda (promenade).

If they play, it is very often the cruel bull-fight, to which their fathers and mothers have often taken them, that they imitate.

One of the party plays bull. Another, mounted on the shoulders of a comrade, is the *espada*, literally "sword," a word that has taken the place of *matador*.

A number of other boys with pointed sticks represent the *picadors*, others, the *chulos* and *banderilleros*, whose office it is to tease and excite the bull by waving gay-coloured handkerchiefs and flags in his face.

In Valencia, where the people have the reputation of being very cruel indeed, the boys played, a few years ago, a fearful game. They thought that they would imitate the real bull-fight as closely as possible, so the boy *espada* got a long knife, *navajas*, instead of the stick he usually played with, and the boy bull had two shorter ones given him, which he held at each side of his head to represent horns.

The dreadful game continued without interference from the citizens till many of the boys were wounded, and one killed.

During the play bull-fight the *ninas* stand round applauding, waving their handkerchiefs and fans as they have seen their mothers do in the real circus, and as they have been instructed to do themselves, however cruel the scene may be that they are witnessing.

If the children do not dance or play at home, they go with their parents to the Alameda or promenade, where young and old, rich and poor, assemble to walk about and enjoy the cool of the evening.

Here many picturesque groups are formed of *dons* and *donnas* in their pretty costume (for not all

have adopted French fashions), of children with their nurses, of citizens and peasants with sandals, short petticoats, gay shawls, and black mantillas, of gipsies and beggars.

As a rule it is the gipsies who are found to beg in Spain.

The Spaniard himself is too proud, and certainly never begs of a Spaniard. If he be very poor he may allow his children to ask alms of strangers, whom they are quick to recognise.

"Oh, my dear caballero," said a little fellow of six, running up to an Englishman, who was wandering about the streets of a town he was visiting for the first time, "oh, my dear caballero, I do love you so much!"

So saying the pretty little dark-eyed boy put his hand confidently into that of the Englishman, and looked up smiling.

"Why, my boy?" exclaimed the gentleman, flattered, but considerably astonished; "you never saw me before in your life. Pray why do you love me?"

"Because I know you will give me something!" was the reply.

"But," said the stranger; "how do you know that?"

"Because, because," replied the child, seeking for a reason, "because you have a red book under your arm."

The Englishman laughed, put his red-covered guide-book into one pocket and drew out of the other some *quartos* (small coins) to give to the boy.

After the Alameda it is possible that the father may take his family to the Glorietta, a beautiful garden, where they rest on marble benches placed under oleanders and orange-trees, among roses and myrtles, by sparkling fountains and beneath vine-covered bowers, or dance to the sound of the guitar till the night advances. And the stars shine forth three times more brilliantly in the clear southern atmosphere than with us, while, if it be the month of August, meteors flash in rapid succession across the sky, bursting like rockets into brilliant many-coloured balls of light, and Pedro, and Carmina, and José, and Nita, tell each other fairy tales, and the father, smoking a cigar, and the mother, playing with her fan, speak in wise proverbs, as is Spanish custom, as they return home.

Then the children kiss their parents' hands, and wish them *buenas noches* (good night), and the last thing they hear as they get into bed is the monotonous voice of the *sereno* (watchman) as he cries out—

"Ave Maria! Lás diez y serena!" (Ave Maria! ten o'clock and serene!) L. LOBENHOFER.



SPANISH CHILDREN AT HOME. (See p. 342).