

NAVARRRE

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16 December 1768

I left Pamplona about noon, and went to Tafalla to sleep. When Navarre had its own kings, and before it belonged to Spain, Tafalla was a town of some note, and had a university. At present it contains nothing remarkable that I could see but a posada, which is one of the best I have found in Spain. The Biscayan language ceases entirely there, and the Spanish begins. Both at Pamplona and Tafalla I was somewhat troubled by the flies. You may judge of the mildness of the climate by such a circumstance at such a time of the year. The country between the two towns is chiefly sowed with corn, and is flat throughout. The high mountains that surround that plain on all sides offer a coup-d'oeuil very magnificent.

17 December

Dined at Caparroso, and supped at Baltierra, or Voltierra. The road in the morning ran through a barren plain, and through a fertile one in the afternoon. Both at Baltierra and Caparroso they burn great quantities of rosemary by way of fuel, which perfumes their kitchens sweetly, and an ass-load of it costs but a réal, or three-pence English. I asked a handsome young woman at Caparroso whether she was married, and was answered in the negative. Don't you wish to be married, replied a by-stander. *El deseo no falta*, said she sternly, *mas los hombres buenos faltan*. "Desire is not wanting; but good men are wanting." I liked the precision of the expression, and took it down in my memorandum-book. Caparroso is a place famous throughout Spain for a breed of Perdigueros, or setting-dogs, that are reckoned the best in the kingdom.

18 December

I went in the morning along a desert that produces nothing but thyme, and here and there a plant of rosemary; crossed the river Ebro in a boat; dined at Cintruénigo, and supped at the Venta del Portacillo, or de Cervera, as others call it. Cintruénigo, a village in a very rural situation, is surrounded with fine vineyards and olive-groves. I never saw such fine olive-trees anywhere, and had no idea of their ever growing so large and high as they do in that neighbourhood. Walking about while dinner was making ready, I saw many men on those trees striking down the olives, that were gathered beneath by women and children in wicker-baskets, and successively carried home.

The olives there, when full ripe, are of a bluish colour, and emit a fine crimson-coloured liquor when gently squeezed. I tried that liquor with the tip of the tongue. It has an offensive taste, and a nauseous smell, together with a caustical quality, that would soon raise a blister on the roughest skin. 'Tis surprising how such a matter can turn sweet and inoffensive, when flowing from under a press after a short fermentation.

At dinner I had some excellent mutton, an omelet sauced with oil instead of butter, and some purple-grapes as good as fresh, the grains of which were of a size uncommonly large. In the room where I dined, there was a wooden St. Francis, or St. Anthony, as big as the life, with a wooden child in his arms, not quite a span in length. The disproportion was absurd; but the women of the posada seemed not aware of it, and courtied to it with great reverence every time they crossed the room, and the men pulled off their hats and bowed.

The Venta del Portacillo is the very worst lodging that ever I was in. Travelers must take care to avoid it, if possible, especially at night, because the few rooms in it are so loathsome as I would not permit my dog to sleep in them.

'Tis not necessary to tell what makes them loathsome. There I passed the night sitting and dozing in my chaise in company with my calessero, who has a right to sleep in it every night, and chooses to do so, rather than lie on the bare ground in the stables, as the muleteers generally do, wrapped up in the coverings of their mules. The supper that was offered me there, was of a piece with the lodging, as it consisted of some chopped goat-flesh, fried in an iron pan with some rank bacon, the strange mess highly seasoned with garlic, onions, and pepper. A delicate ragout, I assure you; and yet a band of muleteers fell upon it very bravely. For my part I soaked some bread in chocolate, and called it an evening breakfast.

That venta stands alone in a bottom of a rocky valley. I beguiled the evening chatting with those muleteers by the fire-side in a dark kitchen on the ground-floor that was paved with pebbles of various sizes. No frolicksome coquettish girls there, as in many other parts of Navarre, and in the País de Basque. Only two ugly women, both out of humour with their husbands, with their guests, with their cats, and with themselves. I was glad when the morning appeared.

The whole road from Pamplona to Venta del Portacillo, is as broad and as fine as any in France. The brave General Gages, late viceroy of Navarre, had it made a few years ago. He intended to have all the road throughout his government enlarged and repaired: but death hindered the laudable scheme from having its effect. He forced the peasants to work at that road by turns, as they do in France; but, to keep them from grumbling, distributed so much of his money to them that he beggared himself, and died quite poor. A noble monument was erected to him at the public expense in a church at Pamplona. 'Tis pity that all the viceroys, and governors of provinces throughout Spain, are not actuated by the same noble spirit.

19 December

Dined at Ágreda, and supped at Hinojosa. From the Venta del Portacillo to Ágreda, the road was stony, and very bad, and still worse from Ágreda to Hinojosa, up a steep hill, that goes by the name of Monte Madero. I had another hill in sight the whole day, that is called La Sierra de Mayo, whose elevated top is covered with everlasting snow, like the highest summits in the Alps.

Ágreda is an ugly town built on the side of an eminence. I never saw streets so ill-paved and inconvenient: but its territory looks fertile, and offers many romantic prospects. The inhabitants bear great devotion to a female saint, called Mary of Ágreda, of whom they tell too many idle and absurd stories. 'Tis strange how Padre Fray Ximenes de Samaniégo could venture upon the tales he has invented, to honour that country-woman of his in the life that he has written of her. I never read a more ridiculous book, which is alone sufficient to warrant the French proverb leveled at great liars: *Il est menteur comme la Vie d'un Saint*. The walls of the rooms in the posada at Ágreda are chalked with much verse and prose. I ran with my eye over part of it, and never saw such a medley of nonsensical piety and nonsensical ribaldry. Travelers are obliged at Ágreda to go to a public office to procure a *guia*, or passport, for themselves and their baggage. Such *guias* are granted gratis; and the gentleman who gave me mine used me with great civility, after having quitted his dinner to write it out.

Hinojosa is a poor village built on the summit of a hill. The people at the posada treated me kindly, and did their best to accommodate me at night, filling a mattress on purpose with new straw. They all wondered at my writing with a *pluma de palo sin tinta*, "a wooden pen without ink;" so they termed my pencil; and the good-natured posadera seemed much affected by my great generosity in presenting her son with one, after having taught him to sharpen it. None of them had any idea of it, and all inspected it very attentively, to my no small diversion. In Several other parts of Spain, and in the Pais de Basque I found also many people that wondered at the uncommon ingenuity of such a thing as a pencil.

20 December

Dined at Almaray, and supped at Almazán. From Hinojosa to Almaray the country abounds with springs to such a degree, that they render the road almost impassable; and it was by an unremitted continuation of efforts, that the mules dragged the chaise out of the numerous bogs. Both at Almaray and at Almazán the posadas are very bad. Bad bread, bad wine, bad victuals, bad rooms, and bad beds.

21 December

Dined at Barahona, commonly pronounced Barauna, and supped at Rio Frio. Barahona has got the whimsical appellation of Lugar de Brujas, "The witches' town." When you read in a Spanish play of a Barahona-woman, remember that it means an old witch, an old hag, and old sorceress. 'Tis one of the standing jests of the Spanish nation, of which I have not yet been able to trace the origin. Doctor Aldrete in his Spanish etymologies only says, under the word Barahona, that *en este campo ay sama de juntarse los brujos y las brujas a sus abominaciones, llevados por ministerio busterui de el demonio*: "In this territory, they say, witches of either sex join to carry on their abominations, assisted by the devil." To these words he adds with a gravity very necessary in Spain, *Es hablilla, y no ay que darle credito*, 'Tis a fable that must not be credited."

Though the sun shone very bright without doors, yet we could not see each other in the kitchen at the *posada*, because it has been so contrived that it has no other light, except what comes in at a small hole in the ceiling, through which the smoke of the chimney finds its way out with much difficulty. By the fire of that kitchen I dined with a Spanish officer upon some hard eggs and pimentón, or pickled Spanish-pepper. The officer revenged himself of the meagre fare by plaguing the old *posadera* with a thousand jests on the old women of the place, and made her so angry that she loaded him with the grossest abuse, to the no small diversion of some soldiers he had with him, who laughed very heartily. I never heard a more comical dialogue.

My supper at Rio Frio was little better than my dinner at Barahona; but I had a merry dance by the table at which I ate, and that made the evening agreeable enough. I slept at night in a room without windows, and in a very short

bed, which was worse. The Castilians, as well as the Navarrans, are in general pretty tall; yet both in Navarre and Castile the beds are so short, that a man of ordinary size cannot lie extended.

As I was coming along in the morning I met with three men who were going a-foot to Madrid. I walked a while with them after having granted them the permission of putting their capas or cloaks, in my chaise, which proved troublesome in walking. Besides his *capa* one of them put down also his hat; but placed it so carelessly, that it dropped unperceived and was lost. *Alabado sea el Santissimo*, (praise to the most Holy) said the poor fellow the moment he was aware of his misfortune: and spoke the words so feelingly, and gave such a look of resignation, that it went to my very heart. Upon such an occasion an Englishman would have uttered an oath rather than an ejaculation: but the Spaniards are far from being so addicted to swearing and cursing as the English. Sudden recollection, and humble patience in adversities that cannot be helped, are virtues, as far as I have observed, much oftener practiced in Spain, than in any other Christian country. My calessero in the most difficult passes, seldom or never lost his temper, but exerted himself vigorously in supporting the chaise and encouraging the mules, which he never cursed, but only called them Demonios when he thought that they did not obey him with the promptitude he expected.

22 December

Dined at Jadraque and supped at Padilla. The morning-ride was six full hours through a mountainous country, some parts of which were covered with several kinds of overgrown trees, and some cultivated and sowed with wheat. It is observable in Spain that the ploughing husbandman does not make his furrows so straight and even as they do in England and Italy. This kind of rustic negligence prevails much in the corn-fields that I have seen to-day.

At Jadraque I sent for a barber to put my head a little in order; but he sent me word that he could not come, because the sun was so fine that it was pity not to enjoy it after the many days of cloudy weather they have had. Did you ever hear of such a heliotrope? No man of any other nation would have thought of such a reason for his forbearing to get a penny upon occasion.

Not far from Padilla I saw a woman selling apples by the weight. Her scales were two small wicker-baskets; the beam a stick; and the baskets hung on packthread. I thought the invention very simple.

Giuseppe Marco Antonio Baretti. *A Journey from London to Genoa: Through England, Portugal, Spain, and France* (1770), II:356–365.