

# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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## TOLEDO.

It was a fresh morning near the close of February when my friend the Rev. Mr. Jameson, of Madrid, met me at the railway-station in the south of that city for a trip to the ancient metropolis of Spain, Toledo. The sun shone with a comforting warmth, and the three hours' ride southward over the rolling plateau of Central Spain, which would have been pleasant in itself, was made doubly so by the society and conversation of my companion. His full information with regard to the country and people, freely given, shortened the way both happily and instructively. It was agreeable, too, to note the graceful courtesies of the Spaniards in that too often most selfish place the railway carriage. On entering they would lift the hat and salute all in the compartment; at leaving they did the same with a kindly *Adios!* Did one open a basket of refreshments, he offered it to all with a smiling face that was a gratification even though you might be expected to decline. Americans might learn something from Spaniards on the railway.

This elevated plateau of old Castile has little beauty or attractiveness. The Castilian farmer has no love for shade-trees: indeed, he looks upon them with apprehension; hence these

plains are treeless and cheerless. The villages are closely-packed clusters of houses with the church rising high above them, like a hen with her chicks about her. The open country is bare, and for nine months in the year barren of crops.

But the fifty miles are soon crossed, and Toledo suddenly rises to view—suddenly, for it has no suburbs. The rugged rock on which it is built is so encompassed (on three sides fully) by the dashing Tagus that the city stands out from the country about it like a fortress. Guarded by lofty walls, which surmount the granite cliffs, only the towers, and especially the huge Alcazar, appear as you approach the city.

The train draws up at the station outside of the city and its encircling river, but a rickety and rattling carriage drawn by mules receives you and dashes toward the portal, through it, over the historic bridge Alcantara, with the Tagus obafing its craggy banks below, through another arched and turreted portal, again through the noble Moorish gate of the Sun, between the solid walls, up and up, until you emerge within the defences and are deposited in the Zocodover, the little open space where the wits and gallants of Toledo in the olden time were wont to gather to exchange the

news and retail the gossip of the day.

Toledo is full of attraction to the visitor for what it is as well as for what it has been. Its Oriental aspect, its narrow, steep, winding streets, descending and ascending continually, the blank walls of the tall stone houses with their closed gates studded with iron spikes, the Saracenic arches, the old synagogues, the churches associated with Ferdinand and Isabella, the vast and magnificent Gothic cathedral, and all that meets the eye,—speak of wealth, luxury and power and of long centuries of exciting history. But the

Toledo of to-day is a city of the past, save as its buildings recall that past. A Roman army captured it before our Lord was born; Gothic kings reigned here; under the Moors it grew in grandeur, and under the Christian Spaniards it was a centre of learning and of ecclesiastical as well as of civil power for Spain. Goths, Jews, Arabs and Christians adorned it with palace, synagogue, mosque and church. The huge square building seen so conspicuously in our illustration was rebuilt by Charles V, doubtless on the site of a Moorish palace, as is indicated by the title, Alcazar, the title given by the Arabs of Spain

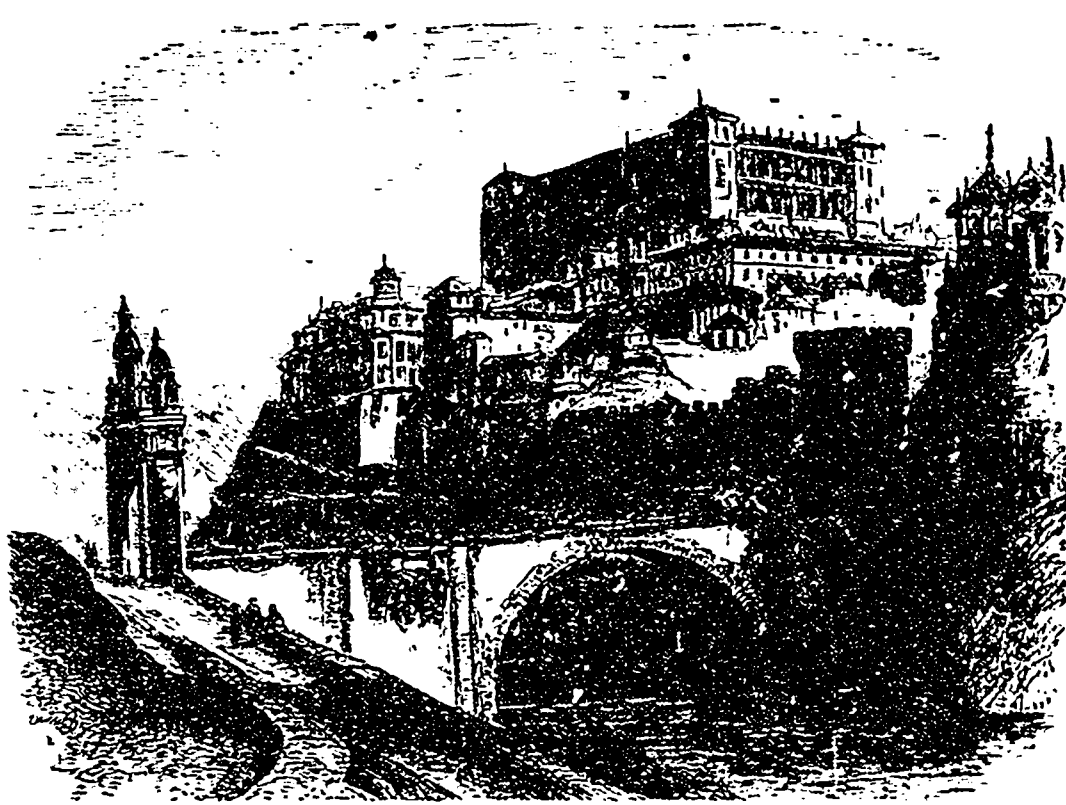
to their government houses. It is now used for a military school, a "West Point" for the army of Spain.

But with all these grand buildings rich in art and architecture, and with its lofty historic memories, Toledo is a dead city. No traffic resounds in its streets; even the manufacture of its famous "Toledo blades" is carried on without the walls. Its population has shrunk from two hundred thousand to twenty thousand. Many of its convents have been suppressed. Although it has more black robed priests than it needs, their numbers and wealth are so reduced that they cannot fill even its narrow streets and give them life. The rumble of cart or carriage is almost unknown. Many of the churches are unused and closed. The old Inquisition has become a *posada*—a tavern.

I do not know that there is one Protestant in all Toledo, though my companion recognized in a shopkeeper from whom I bought a small memento of Toledo's cutlery a man who had attended Protestant services and seemed interested in the truth, but it is a glorious fact that the gospel may be preached in Toledo if the Churches of Christ will send their messengers thither, whilst it is a sad fact that our zeal so far falls to enter the doors opening so widely and so appealingly even in the ancient strongholds of fanatical zeal and blind superstition.

JOHN W. DULLES.

HONOUR thy father and thy mother.



TOLEDO



SPANISH PAIR.



SPANISH LADY