

Proceeding again through the *Puerto del Pico*, direct your steps towards the terrace, outside of the northern walls. Do you behold that large, though antique structure across the plains. Thither we direct our steps, it is the monastery *de la Incarnation*. Within its walls, Saint Teresa spent that portion of her life which preceded her work of the Reform. You are now walking upon the road which the maiden of Avila took, when, unknown to her father, she bade farewell to the world, to enter the monastery of Carmelite nuns. Reaching the monastery, you will not fail to notice a well, from which the water is drawn by means of horses. This no doubt suggested to Saint Teresa a well-known similitude in one of her works, taken from the various means of watering a garden: the drawing of water with horses is one of the means referred to. The monastery of the Incarnation is still occupied by nuns of the same order as those who inhabited it when Saint Teresa applied for the reception of the habit. They belong to the Order of Mount Carmel, but they never embraced the Reform of Saint Teresa. In the days of the Saint they were not cloistered, but today they observe the enclosure. Although the Saint considered a monastery of women without enclosure to be most dangerous on account of the liberty allowed the religious, she nevertheless speaks highly of her own. We cite her words: "What I say does not refer to my monastery, for therein are so many who truly and with great perfection serve our Lord. * * * And this monastery is not one of those which are most relaxed, for every kind of good discipline is observed in it." *

Thirty years of Saint Teresa's life were spent in this convent, and here she pronounced her vows on Nov. 3, 1534. Enter through the gate of the monastery, you will find yourself in the court-yard around which are the out-buildings, the house of the chaplain and those of the servants. Imagine nothing gorgeous nor splendid, not even artistic or tasteful, for everything breathes the utmost simplicity, though firmness and solidity characterize the entire edifice. On the right, a low doorway will admit you into the monastery itself. Ascend the flight of stairs on your left and you will find

yourself in a small parlor. The mother prioress will converse with you through the grating, and show you many objects that the monastery still possesses which were connected with its illustrious inmate, Teresa de Ahmada. O glorious monastery of the Incarnation! Hidden away midst the hills of Castile, in the obscure town of Avila, thou art one of the favored spots upon earth, for in thee dwell one of God's most privileged souls. This very parlor, reader, is sacred to her memory. How many a time did it not behold her at the grating, where her soul still clung to the earth; how often did it not hear her voice! Here it was that she conversed with the illustrious Jesuit, that master in the spiritual life, Father Balthasar Alvarez; here also took place her interview with that other son of St. Ignatius, St. Francis Borgia.

If you look through the grating, your eyes will fall upon a spot rendered sacred by one of the many visions of the Saint's life. You behold that corridor before you? About midway a staircase begins. At its foot St. Teresa once beheld an infant who inquired for her name. It was after the Saint had begun her Reform, and when she had been called back to the monastery of the Incarnation to govern it as prioress. Her answer to the infant was: "I am Teresa of Jesus." "And I," replied the child, "am Jesus of Teresa."

There is another parlor, still more interesting. It is situated on the lower floor. There it was that the saint once conversed with St. John of the Cross, when both were wrapped in ecstasy.

And where is Saint Teresa's cell? You may see the spot where it stood, reader, if you follow me to the church. This is the old church of the monastery, but it has undergone a change. The chapel in the rear did not exist in St. Teresa's time. The space it occupied lay then within the convent. In the centre stood her cell, where so many years of her life were spent. The spot is marked by that large square slab. Here the Saint of Avila suffered, struggled, prayed and finally, conquered.

Among the many relics of St. Teresa in the city of Avila, the convent of the Incarnation is to me the most interesting, for it has undergone the least change, and it is, more than any other, as it was during the life-time of the Saint.

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TO BE CONTINUED.

* St. Teresa's autobiography,--Chap. VIII.