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PICTURESQUE SPAIN.

"AFRICA begins with the Pyrenees," says a French proverb; and certainly in crossing that mountain barrier one seems to have entered another continent rather than another country. Everything has a strange, half-oriental look. The blazing summer sun, the broad and arid plains, the dried-up river-beds,* and sterile and verdureless mountains, have all a strikingly African appearance. Indeed, it has been said that geologically Spain is an extension of the Sahara. The hedges of cactus and prickly pears, narrow streets, and flat-roofed, windowless Moorish houses, heighten the illusion. In the country is heard the creaking of the Moorish water-wheel, and in the hotels servants are summoned, as in the tales of the Arabian Nights, by the clapping of hands.

Everywhere the traveller is struck by the contrast between the past and present. Three hundred years ago the Spanish monarchy was the most powerful in the world. The sun never set upon her dominions, and the eastern and western hemispheres poured their wealth into her lap. Now decay and desolation are everywhere apparent. We are confronted with the evidences of a glorious past and an ignoble present. What their ancestors built the degenerate descendants do not even keep in repair.

*"What! has the river run away, too?" asked the French troops when they entered Madrid. "Pour it into the Manzanares, it has more need of it than I," said a Spanish youth, fainting at a bull-fight, in quaint parody on Sir Philip Sidney, when a cup of water was handed him.