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A Spanish Christian Endeavorer

(The Rev. William H. Gulick, in 'Missionary Herald'.)

On the night of the 11th of October, I found myself entering Zaragoza, in Spain, on a train of some forty cars drawn by two locomotives, and overflowing with a noisy crowd that soon filled the station. I was told that this was but one of several special trains which, during that and the previous day, had been pouring into Zaragoza thousands of people in anticipation of the great annual festival of the 'Virgin of the pillar,' that commenced on the 12th of the month and lasted for a fortnight. It is said that for many years there had not been such a gathering of pilgrims at the

the Virgin for the maintenance of her shrine.

During the week I was there, the first bull-fight took place on Sunday, the 12th of October, the opening of the festival; and three others during the week were to be followed by another on the second Sunday, and during the following week another five were to take place. The newspapers of the city printed columns of rhapsodies of the most fervent and passionate devotion to the Virgin, and on the same page descriptions hardly less glowing in praise of the magnificent and bloody encounters in the bull-ring, in which scores of horses were gashed and gored, and torn to pieces by the beasts that had been infuriated by the steel-pointed arrows thrown into their quivering flesh. In this singular and hor-

centres where attractions were displayed to interest and divert the public, in the way of illuminations, cinematographs, artificial fireworks and street theatricals, besides the numerous theatres, in every one of which something especial was being performed each afternoon and evening. Indeed one group of strangers from the neighborhood of Zaragoza, on entering the chapel, politely remarked to the pastor who stood at the door, that they hoped he would pardon them if they left before the meeting was through, as they had taken seats in one of the important theatres, and which they would wish to occupy at about half-past nine.

In the meeting of the Christian Endeavor Society, I was particularly attracted by a young man in rough garments and with a rough but intelligent countenance, who commented tersely and well on the subject-texts of the afternoon. On inquiry I found that his is another of the many interesting personal histories in that congregation. Some four or five years ago his father, a blacksmith, began to attend the meetings in the chapel, at which he has regularly assisted for two or three years, and since then less regularly, so that, though not a member of the church, he may well be counted as one of the adherents. His son was his right-hand man at the forge, and was a sincere devotee at the shrine of the Virgin of the Pillar. One day, about two years ago, one of the tracts that his father brought from the chapel (in which the son had no interest whatever, and which indeed he hardly knew his father frequented) fell into his hands. On reading it, and never suspecting its heretical origin, he was deeply touched by its devotional spirit, which singularly stirred a greater fervor than ever in his naturally serious spirit, and increased the frequency of his visits to the shrine of his devotion and his participation in the religious functions of the cathedral of the Virgin of the Pillar. Observing this, the father remarked to him one day that, if he was so impressed by the teaching of the tract, he had better accompany him sometime to the meetings where the doctrines in it were especially advocated and practiced. The son went with his father. The seed fell into good ground and soon he became an acknowledged member of the congregation, and not long after, unlike his father, a member of the church by profession of his faith. From that day he has been one of the most earnest and consistent members of the Christian Endeavor Society, and a cheerful helper in all the activities of the church.

His father has transferred to him chiefly the business of the forge, by which this good son maintains in comfort his aged parents and two or three younger brothers and sisters. Formerly he had almost the monopoly of the manufacture by hand of the barbed, steel-pointed 'banderillas,' which are used by the bull-fighters for darting into the flesh of the baited beast, to torture him into greater fury, thereby



THE CATHEDRAL OF THE PILLAR AT ZARAGOZA.

shrine of this most notable of all the 'Virgins of Spain.' And certainly in my many previous visits to Zaragoza, several of which have been at the time of this anniversary, never have I seen the principal streets and centres of the city so densely crowded with people.

But let no one for a moment think that the exclusive or even the principal attraction is the shrine of the Virgin, that rests upon a jasper pillar under the dome of this cathedral which, with one exception, is the largest in Spain, and which has been built for the exclusive purpose of giving it protection and honor. For weeks before the festival all the cities of northern Spain as far west as Oviedo, the capital of Asturias, had been painted red with the large and brilliant posters announcing the extraordinary series of bull-fights that would be held during the fortnight in the notable bull-ring of Zaragoza, and in honor of

rible phenomenon was again presented a scene of mingled barbarity and piety, unequalled perhaps in any other civilized country of the world.

Our church in Zaragoza for several successive years has made a special effort to draw to its doors some of the many strangers who at this event annually fill Zaragoza. The young men of the Christian Endeavor Society had prepared several hundred of appropriate tracts for public distribution, on which was printed an invitation to attend meetings in the chapel, to be held every evening during the week, from half-past eight to half-past nine. The young men distributed these judiciously during the week. At every meeting not less than six strangers were present, and sometimes there were as many as twenty. It seemed to me remarkable that so many should have been induced to come to our chapel, somewhat distant as it is from the