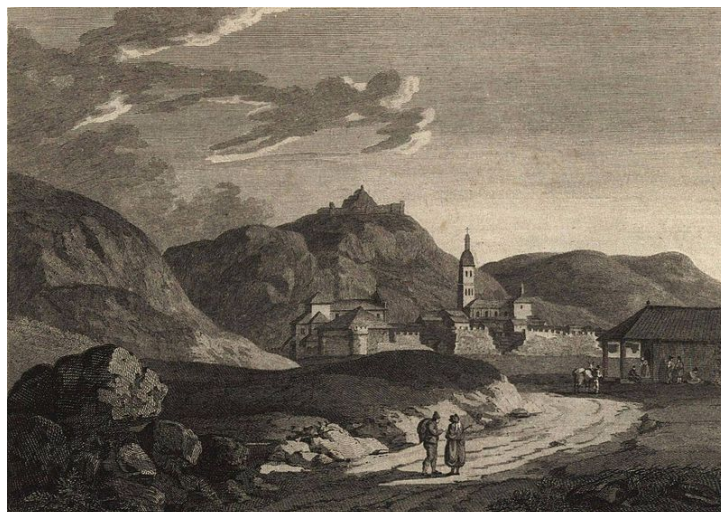


## CHAPTER 22

**Duenas - Children of Egypt - Jockeyism - The Baggage Pony - The Fall - Palencia - Carlist Priests - The Lookout - Priestly Sincerity - Leon - Antonio alarmed - Heat and Dust.**



*22.1 Dueñas in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by Swinburne*

After a sojourn of about ten days at Valladolid, we directed our course towards Leon.<sup>1</sup> We arrived about noon at Duenas, a town at the distance of six short leagues from Valladolid.<sup>2</sup> It is in every respect a singular place: it stands on a rising ground, and directly above it towers a steep conical mountain of calcareous earth, crowned by a ruined castle. Around Duenas are seen a multitude of caves scooped in the high banks and secured with strong doors. These are cellars, in which is deposited the wine, of which abundance is grown in the neighbourhood, and which is chiefly sold to the Navarrese and the mountaineers of Santander, who arrive in cars drawn by oxen, and convey it away in large quantities. We put up at a mean posada in the suburb for the purpose of refreshing our horses. Several cavalry soldiers were quartered there, who instantly came forth, and began, with the eyes of connoisseurs, to inspect my Andalusian entero. "A capital horse that would be for our troop," said the corporal; "what a chest he has. By what right do you travel with that horse, Señor, when so many

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<sup>1</sup> How long Borrow really stayed in Valladolid cannot be determined with certainty. In the previous chapter, he says he remained in the city a week. Here, he mentions 10 days. Yet in a letter written to Brandram from Astorga on 5 July 1837 [Darlow, 219] he claims he only stayed five days. His visit must, in any case have taken place round about the dates 13-18 June 1837.

<sup>2</sup> Dueñas lies to the north-east of Valladolid, on the banks of the Pisuerga river. It is not on the direct route from Valladolid to Leon and Galicia, where Borrow was headed. Probably, Borrow decided to make a small D-tour because he had a letter of introduction to a merchant of Palencia, as will be told below. The underground wine bodegas he mentions in the passage following may still be seen on the skirts of the mountain behind the town and are still in use.

are wanted for the Queen's service? He belongs to the *requiso*<sup>3</sup>." "I travel with him by right of purchase, and being an Englishman," I replied. "Oh, your worship is an Englishman," answered the corporal; "that, indeed, alters the matter; the English in Spain are allowed to do what they please with their own, which is more than the Spaniards are. Cavalier, I have seen your countrymen in the Basque provinces; Vaya, what riders! what horses! They do not fight badly either. But their chief skill is in riding: I have seen them dash over barrancos to get at the factious, who thought themselves quite secure, and then they would fall upon them on a sudden and kill them to a man. In truth, your worship, this is a fine horse, I must look at his teeth."

I looked at the corporal - his nose and eyes were in the horse's mouth: the rest of the party, who might amount to six or seven, were not less busily engaged. One was examining his forefeet, another his hind; one fellow was pulling at his tail with all his might, while another pinched the windpipe, for the purpose of discovering whether the animal was at all touched there. At last perceiving that the corporal was about to remove the saddle that he might examine the back of the animal, I exclaimed:-

"Stay, ye chabes of Egypt, ye forget that ye are hundunares, and are no longer paruguing grastes in the chardy."<sup>4</sup>

The corporal at these words turned his face full upon me, and so did all the rest. Yes, sure enough, there were the countenances of Egypt, and the fixed filmy stare of eye. We continued looking at each other for a minute at least, when the corporal, a villainous-looking fellow, at last said, in the richest gypsy whine imaginable, "the erray know us, the poor Calore! And he an Englishman! Bullati! I should not have thought that there was e'er a Busno would know us in these parts, where Gitanos are never seen."<sup>5</sup> Yes, your worship is right; we are all here of the blood of the Calore; we are from Melegrana (Granada), your worship; they took us from thence and sent us to the wars. Your worship is right, the sight of that horse made us believe we were at home again in the mercado of Granada; he is a countryman of ours, a real Andalou. Por dios, your worship, sell us that horse; we are poor Calore, but we can buy him."

"You forget that you are soldiers," said I. "How should you buy my horse?"

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<sup>3</sup> The government confiscation of horses for the army; the same which so dramatically lowered the prices of the horses, as was told in chapter 19. But note that these Gypsy soldiers are obviously taking advantage of the military *Requiso* as an excuse to confiscate a fine horse for their own enrichment....

<sup>4</sup> Burke [footnote to 304] translates: 'Hold hard, you gypsy fellows! You forget that you are soldiers, and no longer swapping horses in a fair.' Having instantly recognized these overzealous soldiers as Gypsies in uniform, Borrow identifies himself as an expert in their cheating ways by admonishing them in Caló.

<sup>5</sup> Burke [Glossary] gives the meaning of the various Caló words here: Erray = Gentleman; Calore = a Gypsy, one of the 'black blood'; Bullati = the anus (here an exclamation of surprise, as in 'shit'); Busno = a non-Gypsy.

"We are soldiers, your worship," said the corporal, "but we are still Calore; we buy and sell bestis; the captain of our troop is in league with us. We have been to the wars, but not to fight; we left that to the Busne. We have kept together, and like true Calore, have stood back to back. We have made money in the wars, your worship. *No tenga usted cuidao*<sup>6</sup> (be under no apprehension). We can buy your horse."

Here he pulled out a purse, which contained at least ten ounces of gold.

"If I were willing to sell," I replied, "what would you give me for that horse?"

"Then your worship wishes to sell your horse - that alters the matter. We will give ten dollars for your worship's horse. He is good for nothing."

"How is this?" said I. "You this moment told me he was a fine horse - an Andalusian, and a countryman of yours."

"No, Señor! we did not say that he was an Andalou. We said he was an Estremou<sup>7</sup>, and the worst of his kind. He is eighteen years old, your worship, short-winded and galled."

"I do not wish to sell my horse," said I; "quite the contrary; I had rather buy than sell."

"Your worship does not wish to sell your horse," said the Gypsy. "Stay, your worship, we will give sixty dollars for your worship's horse."

"I would not sell him for two hundred and sixty. Meclis! Meclis!<sup>8</sup> say no more. I know your Gypsy tricks. I will have no dealings with you."

"Did I not hear your worship say that you wished to buy a horse?" said the Gypsy.

"I do not want to buy a horse," said I; "if I need any thing, it is a pony to carry our baggage; but it is getting late. Antonio, pay the reckoning."

"Stay, your worship, do not be in a hurry," said the Gypsy: "I have got the very pony which will suit you."

Without waiting for my answer, he hurried into the stable, from whence he presently returned, leading an animal by a halter. It was a pony of about thirteen hands high, of a dark red colour; it was very much galled all over, the marks of ropes and thongs being visible on its hide. The figure, however, was good, and there was an extraordinary brightness in its eye.

"There, your worship," said the Gypsy; "there is the best pony in all Spain."

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<sup>6</sup> The correct Spanish word here would be 'cuidado'; the deletion of the last "d" is the typical popular pronunciation of Granada and Andalusia.

<sup>7</sup> I.e. from Extremadura, the province neighbouring on Andalusia on the Portuguese side, and more known for the quality of its pigs and hams than for its horses.

<sup>8</sup> Burke [Glossary]: English Romanny for 'Leave off!'

"What do you mean by showing me this wretched creature?" said I.

"This wretched creature," said the Gypsy, "is a better horse than your Andalou!"

"Perhaps you would not exchange," said I, smiling.

"Señor, what I say is, that he shall run with your Andalou, and beat him!"

"He looks feeble," said I; "his work is well nigh done."

"Feeble as he is, Señor, you could not manage him; no, nor any Englishman in Spain."

I looked at the creature again, and was still more struck with its figure. I was in need of a pony to relieve occasionally the horse of Antonio in carrying the baggage which we had brought from Madrid, and though the condition of this was wretched, I thought that by kind treatment I might possibly soon bring him round.

"May I mount this animal?" I demanded.

"He is a baggage pony, Señor, and is ill to mount. He will suffer none but myself to mount him, who am his master. When he once commences running, nothing will stop him but the sea. He springs over hills and mountains, and leaves them behind in a moment. If you will mount him, Señor, suffer me to fetch a bridle, for you can never hold him in with the halter."

"This is nonsense," said I. "You pretend that he is spirited in order to enhance the price. I tell you his work is done."

I took the halter in my hand and mounted. I was no sooner on his back than the creature, who had before stood stone still, without displaying the slightest inclination to move, and who in fact gave no farther indication of existence than occasionally rolling his eyes and pricking up an ear, sprang forward like a racehorse, at a most desperate gallop. I had expected that he might kick or fling himself down on the ground, in order to get rid of his burden, but for this escapade I was quite unprepared. I had no difficulty, however, in keeping on his back, having been accustomed from my childhood to ride without a saddle. To stop him, however, baffled all my endeavours, and I almost began to pay credit to the words of the Gypsy, who had said that he would run on until he reached the sea. I had, however, a strong arm, and I tugged at the halter until I compelled him to turn slightly his neck, which from its stiffness might almost have been of wood; he, however, did not abate his speed for a moment. On the left side of the road down which he was dashing was a deep trench, just where the road took a turn towards the right, and over this he sprang in a sideward direction; the halter broke with the effort, the pony shot forward like an arrow, whilst I fell back into the dust.

"Señor!" said the Gypsy, coming up with the most serious countenance in the world, "I told you not to mount that animal unless well bridled and bitted. He is a baggage pony, and will suffer none to mount his back, with the exception of myself who feed him." (Here he whistled, and the animal, who was scurrying over the field, and occasionally kicking up his heels, instantly returned with a gentle neigh.) "Now, your worship, see

how gentle he is. He is a capital baggage pony, and will carry all you have over the hills of Galicia."

"What do you ask for him?" said I.

"Señor, as your worship is an Englishman, and a good ginete, and, moreover, understands the ways of the Calore, and their tricks and their language also, I will sell him to you a bargain. I will take two hundred and sixty dollars for him and no less."

"That is a large sum," said I.<sup>9</sup>

"No, Señor, not at all, considering that he is a baggage pony, and belongs to the troop, and is not mine to sell."

Two hours' ride brought us to Palencia, a fine old town, beautifully situated on the Carrion, and famous for its trade in wool. We put up at the best posada which the place afforded, and I forthwith proceeded to visit one of the principal merchants of the town, to whom I was recommended by my banker in Madrid. I was told, however, that he was taking his siesta. "Then I had better take my own," said I, and returned to the posada. In the evening I went again, when I saw him. He was a short bulky man about thirty, and received me at first with some degree of bluntness; his manner, however, presently became more kind, and at last he scarcely appeared to know how to show me sufficient civility. His brother had just arrived from Santander, and to him he introduced me. This last was a highly-intelligent person, and had passed many years of his life in England. They both insisted upon showing me the town, and, indeed, led me all over it, and about the neighbourhood. I particularly admired the cathedral, a light, elegant, but ancient Gothic edifice. Whilst we walked about the aisles, the evening sun, pouring its mellow rays through the arched windows, illumined some beautiful paintings of Murillo, with which the sacred edifice is adorned<sup>10</sup>. From the church my friends conducted me to a fulling mill in the neighbourhood, by a picturesque walk. There was no lack either of trees or water, and I remarked, that the environs of Palencia were amongst the most pleasant places that I had ever seen.

Tired at last with rambling, we repaired to a coffee-house, where they regaled me with chocolate and sweet-meats<sup>11</sup>. Such was their hospitality; and of hospitality of this simple and agreeable kind there is much in Spain.

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<sup>9</sup> It was a tremendously large sum. At 20 reales to the Dollar, or Duro, it came to 5,200 reales. The two fine horses Borrow possessed at this point had cost him, respectively, 900 and 2,100 reales. It is of course no coincidence that the Gypsy soldier asked for this pony exactly the same outrageous price which Borrow had mentioned a few minutes before.

<sup>10</sup> Burke [footnote to 310] was adamant that no paintings of Murillo could be found in the Palencia cathedral. He does, however, record some by Ribera, Zurbaran and Mateo Cerezo, all hanging in the *Sala capitular*.

<sup>11</sup> Chocolate shops were much in fashion at the time and filled the niche of cocktail bars a century later.



22.2 A Palencia café in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century

On the next day we pursued our journey, a dreary one, for the most part, over bleak and barren plains, interspersed with silent and cheerless towns and villages, which stood at the distance of two or three leagues from each other.<sup>12</sup> About midday we obtained a dim and distant view of an immense range of mountains, which are in fact those which bound Castile on the north.<sup>13</sup> The day, however, became dim and obscure, and we speedily lost sight of them. A hollow wind now arose and blew over these desolate plains with violence, wafting clouds of dust into our faces; the rays of the sun were few, and those red and angry. I was tired of my journey, and when about four we reached -, a large village, half way between Palencia and Leon, I declared my intention of stopping

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<sup>12</sup> Borrow described this stretch of road in his letter to Brandram of 5 July 1837 from Astorga [Darlow, 220] in the following gloomy tones: ‘Quitting Valladolid, I directed my route to Leon by the Palencia road; the greatest part of the way was barren and uninteresting to a high degree, consisting of wide dusty plains scantily sown with barley, but unrelieved with trees or waters. The people are ignorant and brutal, though they boast themselves to be Old Castilians, which is however not the fact, as these desolate and benighted regions belong to what was once the kingdom of Leon. Their inhospitality is so great that I have been refused a glass of water in their villages, though I asked it in the name of God; though I have subsequently obtained it by paying for it, for their hearts can always be opened by the key of interest, though inaccessible to every noble and generous sentiment. I suffered dreadfully during this journey, as did likewise my man and horses, for the heat was the fiercest which I have ever known, and resembled the breath of the *simoom* or the air from an oven’s mouth.’

<sup>13</sup> Since Borrow was travelling roughly in a north-western direction these were some part of the *Cordillera Cantabrica*, the mountainrange between Castile and Asturias. (Burke’s footnote to 310, which identifies them as: ‘The Sierra de Oca, to the east of Burgos’ is nonsensical and should be ignored.)

for the night.<sup>14</sup> I scarcely ever saw a more desolate place than this same town or village of -. The houses were for the most part large, but the walls were of mud, like those of barns. We saw no person in the long winding street to direct us to the venta, or posada, till at last, at the farther end of the place, we descried two black figures standing at a door, of whom, on making inquiry, we learned that the door at which they stood was that of the house we were in quest of. There was something strange in the appearance of these two beings, who seemed the genii of the place. One was a small slim man, about fifty, with sharp, ill-natured features. He was dressed in coarse black worsted stockings, black breeches, and an ample black coat with long trailing skirts. I should at once have taken him for an ecclesiastic, but for his hat, which had nothing clerical about it, being a pinched diminutive beaver. His companion was of low stature, and a much younger man. He was dressed in similar fashion, save that he wore a dark blue cloak. Both carried walking sticks in their hands, and kept hovering about the door, now within and now without, occasionally looking up the road, as if they expected some one.

"Trust me, mon maitre," said Antonio to me, in French, "those two fellows are Carlist priests, and are awaiting the arrival of the Pretender. LES IMBECILES!"

We conducted our horses to the stable, to which we were shown by the woman of the house. "Who are those men?" said I to her.

"The eldest is head curate to our pueblo," said she; "the other is brother to my husband. Pobrecito! he was a friar in our convent before it was shut up and the brethren driven forth."

We returned to the door. "I suppose, gentlemen," said the curate, "that you are Catalans. Do you bring any news from that kingdom?"

"Why do you suppose we are Catalans?" I demanded.

"Because I heard you this moment conversing in that language."

"I bring no news from Catalonia," said I. "I believe, however, that the greater part of that principality is in the hands of the Carlists."

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<sup>14</sup> Since Borrow did not remember the name, and gives no clues as to the route he took, it is unclear which town this was. Several alternatives have been proposed. Robertson [*Tour*, 67] opts for Sahagun, which does indeed lie midway between Palencia and Leon by the northern route (the present N-120), at 60 km from the latter city. However, this prominent town, once favoured by kings, is altogether too big and contains many more monasteries and monuments than Borrow here mentions [compare Ford, *HB* 916]. Consequently Burke [footnote to 311] proposed, somewhat arbitrarily, 'Cisneros or Calzada', both highly unlikely as stopping places in Borrow's particular situation. Supposing, however, that he did not take the northern route, but instead regained the direct highway between Valladolid and Leon (the present N-601) after his D-tour to Palencia, an excellent alternative would be the tiny town of Mayorga. The description which Borrow gives below fits this most saddening of Castilian villages like a glove. 'Large and decayed' by the 1840s [Widdrington, vol. 2, 41], it stood at somewhat more than the 8 leagues (45 km) from Leon, and possessed both an old castle and a Franciscan convent (the two now disappeared), at the northern end of a single street of any importance, the Calle Derecha. (Incidentally, this was probably 20 June 1837, the day King William IV died and Queen Victoria succeeded to the throne of Britain.)

"Ahem, brother Pedro! This gentleman says that the greater part of Catalonia is in the hands of the royalists. Pray, sir, where may Don Carlos be at present with his army?"

"He may be coming down the road this moment," said I, "for what I know;" and, stepping out, I looked up the way.

The two figures were at my side in a moment; Antonio followed, and we all four looked intently up the road.

"Do you see anything?" said I at last to Antonio.

"NON, MON MAITRE."

"Do you see anything, sir?" said I to the curate.

"I see nothing," said the curate, stretching out his neck.

"I see nothing," said Pedro, the ex-friar; "I see nothing but the dust, which is becoming every moment more blinding."

"I shall go in, then," said I. "Indeed, it is scarcely prudent to be standing here looking out for the Pretender: should the nationals of the town hear of it, they might perhaps shoot us."

"Ahem," said the curate, following me; "there are no nationals in this place: I would fain see what inhabitant would dare become a national. When the inhabitants of this place were ordered to take up arms as nationals, they refused to a man, and on that account we had to pay a mulct; therefore, friend, you may speak out if you have anything to communicate; we are all of your opinion here."<sup>15</sup>

"I am of no opinion at all," said I, "save that I want my supper. I am neither for Rey nor Roque."<sup>16</sup> You say that I am a Catalan, and you know that Catalans think only of their own affairs."

In the evening I strolled by myself about the village, which I found still more forlorn and melancholy than it at first appeared; perhaps, however, it had been a place of consequence in its time. In one corner of it I found the ruins of a large clumsy castle, chiefly built of flint stones: into these ruins I attempted to penetrate, but the entrance was secured by a gate. From the castle I found my way to the convent, a sad desolate place, formerly the residence of mendicant brothers of the order of St. Francis. I was about to return to the inn, when I heard a loud buzz of voices, and, following the sound, presently reached a kind of meadow, where, upon a small knoll, sat a priest in full

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<sup>15</sup> The *Nacionales* were the Liberal militia, specially called into being to defend the new regime on the local level. Usually not very efficient when it came to military action against invading Carlists, they did police their hometowns as some sort of Soviet Commissars *avant-la-lettre*. Their complete absence in a town showed its staunch Carlist sympathies.

<sup>16</sup> 'For nobody at all'; 'Neither for one nor the other'. Burke thought this expression derived from chess, Rey being the King, Roque the rook or castle.



canonicals, reading in a loud voice a newspaper, while around him, either erect or seated on the grass, were assembled about fifty vecinos, for the most part dressed in long cloaks, amongst whom I discovered my two friends the curate and friar. A fine knot of Carlist quidnuncs<sup>17</sup>, said I to myself, and turned away to another part of the meadow, where the cattle of the village were grazing. The curate, on observing me, detached himself instantly from the group, and followed. "I am told you want a pony," said he; "there now is mine feeding amongst those horses, the best in all the kingdom of Leon." He then began with all the volubility of a chalan to descant on the points of the animal. Presently the friar joined us, who, observing his opportunity, pulled me by the sleeve and whispered, "Have nothing to do with the curate, master, he is the greatest thief in the neighbourhood; if you want a pony, my brother has a much better, which he will dispose of cheaper." "I shall wait till I arrive at Leon," I exclaimed, and walked away, musing on priestly friendship and sincerity.



22.3 Approach to Leon

From - to Leon, a distance of eight leagues, the country rapidly improved: we passed over several small streams, and occasionally found ourselves amongst meadows in which grass was growing in the richest luxuriance. The sun shone out brightly, and I hailed his reappearance with joy, though the heat of his beams was oppressive. On arriving within two leagues of Leon, we passed numerous cars and waggons, and bands of people with horses and mules, all hastening to the celebrated fair which is held in the city on St. John's or Mid-summer day<sup>18</sup>, and which took place within three days after our arrival. This fair, though principally intended for the sale of horses, is frequented by merchants from many parts of Spain, who attend with goods of various kinds, and amongst them I remarked many of the Catalans whom I had previously seen at Medina and Valladolid.

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<sup>17</sup> Archaic: a newsmonger, or person given to gossip.

<sup>18</sup> On Saturday 24 June 1837. Widdrington [vol. 2, 61] visited the same fair six years later and was not impressed at all.

[From *The Zincali*, part 2, chapter 3]

There is a celebrated cattle-fair held at Leon on St. John's or Midsummer Day, and on one of these occasions, being present, I observed a small family of Gitanos, consisting of a man of about fifty, a female of the same age, and a handsome young Gypsy, who was their son; they were richly dressed after the Gypsy fashion, the men wearing zamarras with massy clasps and knobs of silver, and the woman a species of riding-dress with much gold embroidery, and having immense gold rings attached to her ears. They came from Murcia, a distance of one hundred leagues and upwards. Some merchants, to whom I was recommended, informed me that they had credit on their house to the amount of twenty thousand dollars.<sup>19</sup>

They experienced rough treatment in the fair, and on a very singular account: immediately on their appearing on the ground, the horses in the fair, which, perhaps, amounted to three thousand, were seized with a sudden and universal panic; it was one of those strange incidents for which it is difficult to assign a rational cause; but a panic there was amongst the brutes, and a mighty one; the horses neighed, screamed, and plunged, endeavouring to escape in all directions; some appeared absolutely possessed, stamping and tearing, their manes and tails stiffly erect, like the bristles of the wild boar - many a rider lost his seat. When the panic had ceased, and it did cease almost as suddenly as it had arisen, the Gitanos were forthwith accused as the authors of it; it was said that they intended to steal the best horses during the confusion, and the keepers of the ground, assisted by a rabble of chalans, who had their private reasons for hating the Gitanos, drove them off the field with sticks and cudgels. So much for having a bad name.



22.4 *The Cathedral of Leon*

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<sup>19</sup> I.e. the fabulous sum of 400,000 *reales* (Borrow uses 'dollar' for the 'duro' of 20 *reales*)

**[Chapter 22 continued]**

There is nothing remarkable in Leon, which is an old gloomy town, with the exception of its cathedral, in many respects a counterpart of the church of Palencia, exhibiting the same light and elegant architecture, but, unlike its beautiful sister, unadorned with splendid paintings. The situation of Leon is highly pleasant, in the midst of a blooming country, abounding with trees, and watered by many streams, which have their source in the mighty mountains in the neighbourhood. It is, however, by no means a healthy place, especially in summer, when the heats raise noxious exhalations from the waters, generating many kinds of disorders, especially fevers.

I had scarcely been at Leon three days when I was seized with a fever, against which I thought the strength even of my constitution would have yielded, for it wore me almost to a skeleton, and when it departed, at the end of about a week, left me in such a deplorable state of weakness that I was scarcely able to make the slightest exertion. I had, however, previously persuaded a bookseller<sup>20</sup> to undertake the charge of vending the Testaments, and had published my advertisements as usual, though without very sanguine hope of success, as Leon is a place where the inhabitants, with very few exceptions, are furious Carlists, and ignorant and blinded followers of the old papal church. It is, moreover, a bishop's see, which was once enjoyed by the prime counsellor of Don Carlos, whose fierce and bigoted spirit still seems to pervade the place.<sup>21</sup> Scarcely had the advertisements appeared, when the clergy were in motion. They went from house to house, banning and cursing, and denouncing misery to whomsoever should either purchase or read "the accursed books," which had been sent into the country by heretics for the purpose of perverting the innocent minds of the population. They did more; they commenced a process against the bookseller in the ecclesiastical court. Fortunately this court is not at present in the possession of much authority; and the bookseller, a bold and determined man, set them at defiance, and went so far as to affix an advertisement to the gate of the very cathedral. Notwithstanding the cry raised against the book, several copies were sold at Leon: two were purchased by ex-friars,

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<sup>20</sup> The name of the bookseller of Leon has not yet been unearthed. Possibly it was Candido Paramio y Pascual, who had his print shop in the Calle de la Rua 36, and published the rather daring weekly *Fray Gerundio* in its first year (April 1837 - July 1838).

<sup>21</sup> Don Rafael Abarca, indeed one of the first and most prominent Carlists in Spain. In late September 1833, even before King Ferdinand died, he led a revolt of his city in favour of Don Carlos. Troops loyal to Isabel II quickly marched on the city, and the bishop had to fly over the border to Portugal, where Don Carlos at this time was holding court, out of reach of Liberal forces. Later, Don Rafael followed his king to the Basque countries and became one of his most trusted councillors, 'Universal Minister' and the *de facto* Nuncio of the Vatican in Spain [Gonzalez Lopez, *Reinado*, 91]. Borrow disliked Leon so much that later, in October 1838, he was to write in his *Account of the Proceedings* that 'I experienced no opposition [to sell New Testaments] except in the case of Leon, a town remarkable for its ultra-Carlism' [Darlow, 363].

and the same number by parochial priests from neighbouring villages.<sup>22</sup> I believe the whole number disposed of during my stay amounted to fifteen; so that my visit to this dark corner was not altogether in vain, as the seed of the gospel has been sown, though sparingly. But the palpable darkness which envelops Leon is truly lamentable, and the ignorance of the people is so great, that printed charms and incantations against Satan and his host, and against every kind of misfortune, are publicly sold in the shops, and are in great demand. Such are the results of Popery, a delusion which, more than any other, has tended to debase and brutalize the human mind.

I had scarcely risen from my bed where the fever had cast me, when I found that Antonio had become alarmed. He informed me that he had seen several soldiers in the uniform of Don Carlos lurking at the door of the posada<sup>23</sup>, and that they had been making inquiries concerning me.

It was indeed a singular fact connected with Leon, that upwards of fifty of these fellows, who had on various accounts left the ranks of the Pretender, were walking about the streets dressed in his livery, and with all the confidence which the certainty of protection from the local authorities could afford them should any one be disposed to interrupt them.

I learned moreover from Antonio, that the person in whose house we were living was a notorious "alcahuete," or spy to the robbers in the neighbourhood, and that unless we took our departure speedily and unexpectedly, we should to a certainty be plundered on the road. I did not pay much attention to these hints, but my desire to quit Leon was great, as I was convinced that as long as I continued there I should be unable to regain my health and vigour.<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly, at three in the morning, we departed for Galicia<sup>25</sup>. We had scarcely proceeded half a league when we were overtaken by a thunder-storm of tremendous

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<sup>22</sup> In the first Spanish review of *The Bible in Spain* (which was not, for sure, translated into Spanish until 1921) the Asturian scholar Balbín de Unquera remarked that 'the good missionary did not understand that many people probably bought these books in order to destroy them, and, like all his colleagues, counted all clients and recipients as so many converts.' [Balbin, 275; English translation in Missler, 'A Partial Judgement', in: *GBB* 30, 30-42.] This observation was not necessarily true for the purchasers in Lugo – in which context Balbín makes it (see chapter 25 below) – but in ultra-conservative Leon, which bought a surprising 56 copies of the New Testament, it may well have been the case. [See Missler, *Daring Game*, 45 & 119f.]

<sup>23</sup> Which posada this was is unknown. Ford [*HB*, 903] names several.

<sup>24</sup> It was indeed a wise thing of Borrow to put himself out of harm's way. While regular liberal soldiers might still be spared when caught by the Carlists, protected as they somewhat were by the traditional rules of warfare and the 1835 Elliot Treaty, spies – or those suspected to be so – were summarily shot. On top of that, Don Carlos, angered by the growing foreign support for the liberals, had promulgated the so-called Durango Decree on 15 July 1836. This prescribed that all foreign mercenaries and adventurers fighting in liberal ranks could be legally executed on the spot whenever caught. As a foreign traveller, out of uniform, and with no logical explanation for his presence in a battle area, Borrow would have had a hard time to talk himself back to safety had he been arrested; if – that is – he had been invited to talk in the first place.

violence. We were at that time in the midst of a wood which extends to some distance in the direction in which we were going. The trees were bowed almost to the ground by the wind or torn up by the roots, whilst the earth was ploughed up by the lightning, which burst all around and nearly blinded us. The spirited Andalusian on which I rode became furious, and bounded into the air as if possessed. Owing to my state of weakness, I had the greatest difficulty in maintaining my seat, and avoiding a fall which might have been fatal. A tremendous discharge of rain followed the storm, which swelled the brooks and streams and flooded the surrounding country, causing much damage amongst the corn. After riding about five leagues, we began to enter the mountainous district which surrounds Astorga: the heat now became almost suffocating; swarms of flies began to make their appearance, and settling down upon the horses, stung them almost to madness, whilst the road was very flinty and trying. It was with great difficulty that we reached Astorga, covered with mud and dust, our tongues cleaving to our palates with thirst.

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<sup>25</sup> According to his letter to Brandram of 5 July 1837 from Astorga [Darlow, 222] he rode forth from Leon 'at three o'clock in the morning of the fourth (yesterday).'