CHAPTER 19

Arrival at Madrid - Maria Diaz - Printing of the Testament - My Project - Andalusian Steed - Servant Wanted - An Application - Antonio Buchini - General Cordova - Principles of Honour.

On my arrival at Madrid I did not repair to my former lodgings in the Calle de la Zarza, but took others in the Calle de Santiago, in the vicinity of the palace[1]. The name of the hostess (for there was, properly speaking, no host) was Maria Diaz, of whom I shall take the present opportunity of saying something in particular.

19.1 Maria Diaz's boarding house on Calle de Santiago nº 16

[1] Borrow arrived in Madrid, after his difficult winter journey, on 26 December 1836. He took up quarters in the house of Maria Diaz, but not, as he here suggests, for the first time. Between June 1836 and his departure to England the following August, he lodged in the rooms originally occupied by Lieutenant James Graydon, his sometime collaborator and future archenemy. The house – which Antonio Giménez Cruz located at the height of the present nº 12 – no longer exists, but Shorter [page 192] reproduces the narrow picture included here as illustration 19.1. Borrow's rooms were on the 3rd floor, and at one point he complained they were not exactly comfortable [Darlow, 216]. He was still there in May of 1838 [chapter 39 below; *Zincali*, Part 2, chapter 4], but by February 1839, he had moved to the 1st floor [Knapp, II : 289].

She was a woman of about thirty-five years of age, rather good-looking, and with a physiognomy every lineament of which bespoke intelligence of no common order. Her eyes were keen and penetrating, though occasionally clouded with a somewhat melancholy expression. There was a particular calmness and quiet in her general demeanour, beneath which, however, slumbered a firmness of spirit and an energy of action which were instantly displayed whenever necessary. A Spaniard and, of course, a Catholic, she was possessed of a spirit of toleration and liberality which would have done honour to individuals much her superior in station. In this woman, during the remainder of my sojourn in Spain, I found a firm and constant friend, and occasionally a most discreet adviser: she entered into all my plans, I will not say with enthusiasm, which, indeed, formed no part of her character, but with cordiality and sincerity, forwarding them to the utmost of her ability. She never shrank from me in the hour of danger and persecution, but stood my friend, notwithstanding the many inducements which were held out to her by my enemies to desert or betray me. Her motives were of the noblest kind, friendship and a proper feeling of the duties of hospitality; no prospect, no hope of self-interest, however remote, influenced this admirable woman in her conduct towards me. Honour to Maria Diaz, the quiet, dauntless, clever Castilian female. I were an ingrate not to speak well of her, for richly has she deserved an eulogy in the humble pages of THE BIBLE IN SPAIN.

19.2 Madrid houses in the mid 19th century

She was a native of Villa Seca, a hamlet of New Castile, situated in what is called the Sagra, at about three leagues' distance from Toledo: her father was an architect of some celebrity, particularly skilled in erecting bridges. At a very early age she married a respectable yeoman of Villa Seca, Lopez by name[2], by whom she had three sons. On the death of her father, which occurred about five years previous to the time of which I am speaking, she removed to Madrid, partly for the purpose of educating her children, and partly in the hope of obtaining from the government a considerable sum of money for which it stood indebted to her father, at the time of his decease, for various useful and ornamental works, principally in the neighbourhood of Aranjuez. The justness of her claim was at once acknowledged; but, alas! no money was forthcoming, the royal treasury being empty. Her hopes of earthly happiness were now concentrated in her children. The two youngest were still of a very tender age[3]; but the eldest, Juan Jose Lopez, a lad of about sixteen, was bidding fair to realize the warmest hopes of his affectionate mother; he had devoted himself to the arts, in which he made such progress that he had already become the favourite pupil of his celebrated namesake Lopez, the best painter of modern Spain.[4] Such was Maria Diaz, who, according to a custom formerly universal in Spain, and still very prevalent, retained the name of her maidenhood though married. Such was Maria Diaz and her family[5].

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[2] Juan Lopez, who will play a prominent part in Borrow's peddling of countryside gospels in the summer of 1838 (see chapters 43 and 44 below).

[3] One of these two children was Eduardo Lopez, born about 1830, who in 1908 was interviewed by A.G. Jayne in the alms house of Villaseca de la Sagra. Lopez had vivid, if somewhat vague memories of the time when Borrow stayed in his mother's boarding house 70 years before. 'El ingles' as he called the British missionary, 'was tall and robust, with fair hair turning grey. (…) Eduardo and his brother regarded him with both respect and fear, for when they misbehaved, Borrow, doubtless thinking the mother too lenient with them, used to administer punishment by setting them on the table and making them sit perfectly quiet for a considerable time.

'He mentioned that Borrow had two horses, "la Jaca" and "el Mondragón" (…) [and that he] used to bring to the house his trunk full of books, which were beautifully bound, but as to their contents he knew so little that he was not even aware whether they were in Spanish (…)

'Borrow often recited a chant which nobody understood, and of which Eduardo only remembers the following fragments: "*Sed un la in la en la la, sino mokhamente de resu la*". Possibly this is the Moslem *kalimah* or creed which he had heard sung from the minarets. It is recited as follows: "*La illaha illa Allah, wa Muhammad rasoul Allah*" ("There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is the messenger of Allah").' [A.G. Jayne, 'Footprints of George Borrow' in: *The Bible in the World*, July 1908; summarized in Shorter, 202, and Jenkins, 270f.]

Note that as far as we know, Borrow had not yet been to an Islamic country when he lived in Madrid, so could not have heard the *Kalimah* recited from the minarets, as Jayne suggests. If nowhere else, he could have picked up the chant in the Alhambra of Granada, where it is written dozens of times on the walls by way of decoration. Alternatively, he may have learned it from his Moroccan friend mentioned in chapter 17 above.

[4] Burke [footnote to 258] identifies this artist as Vicente Lopez Portaña (Valencia 1772 - Madrid 1850). Lopez Portaña was court painter under Ferdinant VII. His most famous portrait is of his colleague Goya. The fame of Juan Jose Lopez Diaz has not come down to our age…

[5] Maria Diaz does indeed strike one as a very special lady. A village girl, she could read and write and composed her letters in a most respectable style [Knapp I : 262]; this at a time when barely 15 % of Spaniard were literate, and fewer women still. According to a letter from Ford to Borrow of 8 January 1845, Maria Diaz died in late 1844 [Fraser, *Unsung*, 30; Knapp II : 340].

19.3 Andres Borrego Moreno

One of my first cares was to wait on Mr. Villiers, who received me with his usual kindness. I asked him whether he considered that I might venture to commence printing the Scriptures without any more applications to government. His reply was satisfactory: "You obtained the permission of the government of Isturitz," said he, "which was a much less liberal one than the present. I am a witness to the promise made to you by the former ministers, which I consider sufficient. You had best commence and complete the work as soon as possible, without any fresh application; and should any one attempt to interrupt you, you have only to come to me, whom you may command at any time." So I went away with a light heart, and forthwith made preparation for the execution of the object which had brought me to Spain.

I shall not enter here into unnecessary details, which could possess but little interest for the reader; suffice it to say that, within three months from this time[6], an edition of the New Testament, consisting of five thousand copies, was published at Madrid.[7] The

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[6] Rather much has been made, by Borrow Bashers then and now, of the fact that Borrow never mentions the sensational suicide on 13 February 1837 of the poet Mariano José de Larra, one of the mayor 'romantic' events of the decade, even though Larra, who lived in the Calle de Santa Clara nº 3, shot himself through the head at a stone-throw's distance from Borrow's boarding house. Apart from the fact that it is perhaps a trifle unfair to demand from an author that he records *every* single incident which later ages deem emblematic, Borrow was simply too busy at this time to pay much attention to such affairs; something which is also born out by the fact that in this entire period, between 14 January and late April, he, the compulsive correspondent, only tossed off two letters to his employers: a long one on 27 February and a shorter note on 16 March. On the other hand, it should be noted that Borrow moved very much in the same circles as Larra, who regularly published in Borrego's *El Español*, frequented the Café del Principe (on the spot of the present north wing of the Teatro Español on Plaza Santa Ana, across the road from Borrow's later *Despacho*) and was a friend of various people Borrow knew, such as Ambassador Villiers and Baron Isidore Taylor (see footnote 31 to chapter 15 above).

[7] For details of the printing process, see Missler, *A Daring Game*, chapter I.2, 4-14. The printing and binding started shortly after 14 January 1837 and lasted until late March or early April. Cost price was nearly 18 *reales* per copy. Each book weighed 472 grams, and its size was 18.5 x 11 cm, so it is usually called a 'large octavo'. The work was officially published on 1 May 1837.

work was printed at the establishment of Mr. Borrego, a well-known writer on political economy, and proprietor and editor of an influential newspaper called El Espanol. To this gentleman I had been recommended by Isturitz himself, on the day of my interview with him[8]. That unfortunate minister had, indeed, the highest esteem for Borrego, and had intended raising him to the station of minister of finance, when the revolution of the Granja occurring, of course rendered abortive this project, with perhaps many others of a similar kind which he might have formed.

The Spanish version of the New Testament which was thus published, had been made many years before by a certain Padre Filipe Scio, confessor of Ferdinand the Seventh[9], and had even been printed, but so encumbered by notes and commentaries as to be unfitted for general circulation, for which, indeed, it was never intended. In the present edition, the notes were of course omitted, and the inspired word, and that alone, offered to the public[10]. It was brought out in a handsome octavo volume, and presented, upon the whole, a rather favourable specimen of Spanish typography.

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[8] Andrés Borrego Moreno (1802 – 1891) was quite a character, probably the closest a Spaniard ever got to the politically active American pioneer-entrepreneur. A convinced liberal, he returned to Spain from exile in France and England after the demise of Ferdinand VII. Having learned the trade of printer abroad, he set up the *Compañia Tipográfica* in 1835 with British operatives and the most modern machinery imported from London, and started the *El Español* newspaper in which many prominent liberals and artists published their articles. In 1836 Prime Minister Isturitz appointed him Ambassador in London, and at several moments in later years, Borrego was considered for the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer. After a long and tempestuous career, Borrego died in poverty in 1891 [Jenkins, 192; Missler, *Daring Game*, 5]

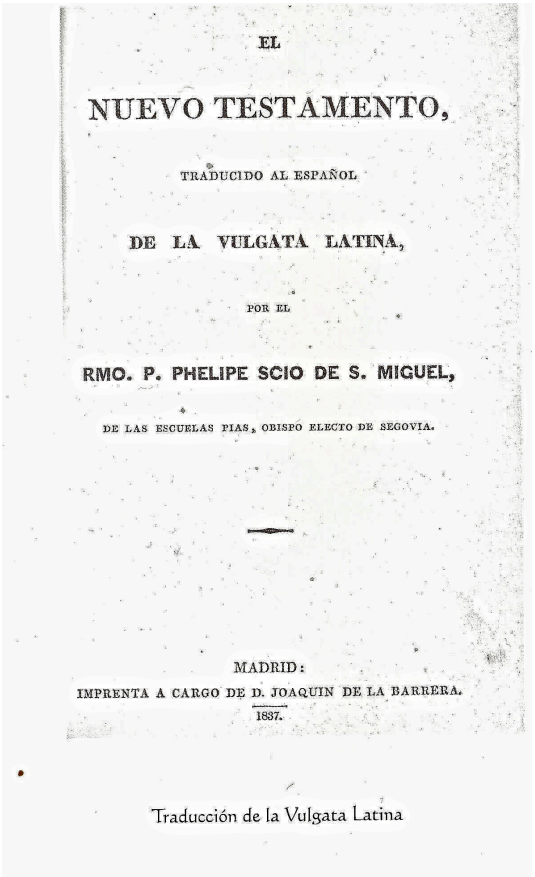
Borrow placed the considerable order with Borrego's print shop (located in the Calle de Leon nº 21) not only because it was 'the most fashionable printer in Madrid' and the only one specialised in English type, but also because – this being the formal government printer – everybody could count on his discretion. As already observed in chapter 14 above, Isturitz recommended Borrego because he 'would keep the matter secret; as in the present state of affairs he would not answer for the consequences if it were noised abroad' [Darlow, 165].

[9] Felipe Scio y Riaza, later Father Felipe Scio de San Miguel 'de las Escuelas Pias' (1738-1797). He was the son of Lorenza de Riaza and Sebastian Scio, a Greek-born royal dancing master who had come to Spain in the train of Isabella Farnese, the Queen of Philip V. He was born in the palace of San Ildefonso and had the king himself for a godfather (hence the baptismal name Felipe). At age 14 he joined the order of the *Escolapios*, studied in Alcala de Henares and Rome, before returning to Spain in 1768. In 1780 king Charles III charged him with the translation of the entire Bible into Spanish, for which he was perfectly prepared given his knowledge of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac, among many other skills. He completed the project in 13 years with the collaboration of Father Benito Feliu de San Pedro. The 10-volume work, which appeared in Valencia between 1790 and 1793, contained the bilingual text in Latin and Spanish, copious explicatory notes, and many luxurious colour illuminations. It was extremely expensive, yet the whole first edition was sold within a year. A second edition appeared in Madrid after his death. Scio was a one-time confessor of King Ferdinand VII and childhood tutor of the infante Carlota (future Queen of Portugal) and of Don Carlos Isidro, the present Carlist Pretender to the throne of Spain. He was appointed bishop to the see of Segovia, but died a few days after taking possession, by proxy, in Valencia, where he lies buried.

[10] See footnote 28 to chapter 1 on this controversial 'notelessness'.

[**From: 'Account of the Proceedings', presented to the Bible Society in October 1838, in: Darlow, 360**]

This work, executed at the office of Borrego, the most fashionable printer at Madrid, who had been recommended to me by Isturitz himself and most particularly by my excellent friend Mr. O'Shea, is a publication which I conceive no member of the Committee will consider as calculated to cast discredit on the Bible Society, it being printed on excellent English paper and well bound, but principally and above all from the fact of its exhibiting scarcely one typographical error, every proof having been read thrice by myself and once or more times by the first scholar in Spain.[11]



EL

NUEVO TESTAMENTO,

TRADUCIDO AL ESPAÑOL

DE LA VULGATA LATINA,

POR EL

RMO. P. PHELIPE SCIO DE S. MIGUEL,

DE LAS ESCUELAS PIAS, OBISPO ELECTO DE SEGOVIA.

MADRID:
IMPRENTA A CARGO DE D. JOAQUIN DE LA BARRERA.
1837.

Traducción de la Vulgata Latina

19.4 Title page leaf of Borrow's 1837 New Testament

[11] Dr Luis Usoz y Rio, who was engaged to assist with the corrections and the reading of proof sheets, a mayor task, given the urgency of producing a faultless text of Scripture (see footnote 42 to chapter 12 above). Borrow was indeed impressed by Usoz. In his letter of 25 December 1837 he wrote to Brandram: 'Of this gentleman I cannot speak in too high terms of admiration; he is one of the most learned men in Spain, and is become in every point a Christian, according to the standard of the New Testament' [Darlow, 276]. But see footnote 42 to chapter 12 for Borrow's later treatment of the learned linguist…

[Chapter 19 continued]

The mere printing, however, of the New Testament at Madrid could be attended with no utility whatever, unless measures, and energetic ones, were taken for the circulation of the sacred volume.

In the case of the New Testament, it would not do to follow the usual plan of publication in Spain, namely, to entrust the work to the booksellers of the capital, and rest content with the sale which they and their agents in the provincial towns might be able to obtain for it, in the common routine of business; the result generally being, the circulation of a few dozen copies in the course of the year; as the demand for literature of every kind in Spain was miserably small.

The Christians of England had already made considerable sacrifices in the hope of disseminating the word of God largely amongst the Spaniards, and it was now necessary to spare no exertion to prevent that hope becoming abortive. Before the book was ready, I had begun to make preparations for putting a plan into execution, which had occupied my thoughts occasionally during my former visit to Spain, and which I had never subsequently abandoned. I had mused on it when off Cape Finisterre in the tempest; in the cut-throat passes of the Morena; and on the plains of La Mancha, as I jogged along a little way ahead of the Contrabandista.

I had determined, after depositing a certain number of copies in the shops of the booksellers of Madrid, to ride forth, Testament in hand, and endeavour to circulate the word of God amongst the Spaniards, not only of the towns but of the villages; amongst the children not only of the plains but of the hills and mountains[12]. I intended to visit Old Castile, and to traverse the whole of Galicia and the Asturias, - to establish Scripture depots in the principal towns, and to visit the people in secret and secluded spots, - to talk to them of Christ, to explain to them the nature of his book, and to place that book in the hands of those whom I should deem capable of deriving benefit from it. I was aware that such a journey would be attended with considerable danger, and very possibly the fate of St. Stephen might overtake me[13]; but does the man deserve the name of a follower of Christ who would shrink from danger of any kind in the cause of Him whom he calls his Master? "He who loses his life for my sake, shall find it," are words which the Lord himself uttered. These words were fraught with consolation to me, as they doubtless are to every one engaged in propagating the gospel in sincerity of heart, in savage and barbarian lands.

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[12] Needless to say, this great project for the Glory of the Lord also enabled him to satisfy his insatiable thirst for travel and adventure.

[13] The first Christian martyr, stoned to death for his ‘outrageous’ defence of Christianity during a trial before the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, roughly in the year 35. [Acts of the Apostles, 7 : 54-60]

I now purchased another; for these animals, at the time of which I am speaking, were exceedingly cheap. A royal requisition was about to be issued for five thousand, the consequence being, that an immense number were for sale, for, by virtue of this requisition, the horses of any person not a foreigner could be seized for the benefit of the service[14]. It was probable that, when the number was made up, the price of horses would be treble what it then was, which consideration induced me to purchase this animal before I exactly wanted him. He was a black Andalusian stallion of great power and strength, and capable of performing a journey of a hundred leagues in a week's time, but he was unbroke, savage, and furious[15]. A cargo of Bibles, however, which I hoped occasionally to put on his back, would, I had no doubt, thoroughly tame him, especially when labouring up the flinty hills of the north of Spain. I wished to have purchased a mule, but, though I offered thirty pounds for a sorry one, I could not obtain her; whereas the cost of both the horses, tall powerful stately animals, scarcely amounted to that sum[16].

The state of the surrounding country at this time was not very favourable for venturing forth: Cabrera was within nine leagues of Madrid[17], with an army nearly ten thousand strong; he had beaten several small detachments of the queen's troops, and had ravaged La Mancha with fire and sword, burning several towns; bands of affrighted fugitives were arriving every hour, bringing tidings of woe and disaster, and I was only surprised that the enemy did not appear, and by taking Madrid, which was almost at his mercy, put an end to the war at once. But the truth is, that the Carlist generals did not wish the

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[14] See the *Eco del Comercio* of 15 February 1837, p. 3, and 16 February 1837, p. 2. Horses were needed for at least 4,000 cavalrymen who could ride but had no mounts. Foreigners, meanwhile, were not the only ones exempted. The rich could also buy their horses' liberty for the fabulous sum of 4,000 reales.

[15] This black stallion, bought in mid February 1837, cost Borrow 2,100 reales [Missler, *Daring Game*, 166; Darlow, 204; *GBB* 40, 59]. It certainly was a splendid animal, and Borrow made sure to show him off. The Marques de Santa Coloma, Borrow's friend, remembered many years later that 'in Madrid, Borrow used to ride a fine black Andalusian horse, with a Russian skin for a saddle, and without stirrups; altogether making so conspicuous a figure than Santa Coloma (…) needed all his courage to be seen riding with him.' [Webster, 151; *GBB* II : 7, 19].

[16] Mules had other disadvantages as well. In his letter to Brandram of 14 January 1837 from Madrid [Darlow, 200] Borrow explains: 'I confess I would sooner provide myself with mules, but they are very expensive creatures. In the first place, the original cost of a tolerable one amounts to 30 pounds; and they, moreover, consume a vast quantity of fodder, at least two pecks of barley in the twenty-four hours with straw in proportion, and if they are stinted in their food they are of no manner of service; the attendance which they require is likewise very irksome, as they must be fed once every four hours night and day; they are, however, noble animals, and are much in vogue amongst the principal nobility.'

[17] According to Burke [footnote to 262] this was 'not Cabrera himself but his subordinate Zariategui, an old friend and comrade of Zumalacarregui.' Burke dates the event, however, to 11 August 1837, when General Juan Antonio Zariategui took the city of Segovia. This being more than three months after the period about which Borrow is writing, one gets the impression it is not what was meant here.

war to cease, for as long as the country was involved in bloodshed and anarchy, they could plunder and exercise that lawless authority so dear to men of fierce and brutal passions. Cabrera, moreover, was a dastardly wretch, whose limited mind was incapable of harbouring a single conception approaching to grandeur; whose heroic deeds were confined to cutting down defenceless men, and to forcing and disembowelling unhappy women; and yet I have seen this wretched fellow termed by French journals (Carlist of course) the young, the heroic general. Infamy on the cowardly assassin! The shabbiest corporal of Napoleon would have laughed at his generalship, and half a battalion of Austrian grenadiers would have driven him and his rabble army headlong into the Ebro[18].

[**From letter to Hasfelt of 29 April 1837 from Madrid, in: Fraser, *Hasfeld*, 25**]

Spain at present, I am sorry to say, is in a more distracted and convulsed situation than at any former period, and the prospect is gloomy in the extreme. The Queen's troops have sustained of late grievous defeats in the Basque provinces and Valencia, and a Carlist expedition of 18,000 men, whose object is to ravage Castile and to carry the war to the gates of Madrid, is shortly expected to pass the Ebro[19]. From what I have seen and heard of the demoralised state of the Cristinos forces, I believe they will meet with no effectual resistance, and that Cristina and her daughter will be compelled to flee from the capital to Cadiz, or to some strong frontier town. Nevertheless, such is the nature of the Spanish people, that it is impossible to say whether the liberal cause (as it is called) be desperate or not, as neither one party nor the other knows how to improve an advantage. Twice might Don Carlos have marched to Madrid and seized the crown; and more than once his army has been at the mercy of the Cristinos; yet still is the affair undecided, and will perhaps continue so for years. The country is, as you may well conceive, in a most distracted state; robbery and murder are practised with impunity, and the roads are in such an insecure state that almost all communication has ceased between one town and another; yet I am going forth without the slightest fear, trusting in God; for if He is with me, who shall stand against me?

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[18] Opinions of Ramon Cabrera vary with the political sympathies of the observer. The young 'Tiger of the Maestrazgo' was indeed a nasty little fellow with a pronounced cruel streak when it came to settling scores, and as such fully deserves Borrow's spite. Yet as a guerrilla leader he was sublime, and only got beaten in 1840, once the Spanish government had been freed from all other enemies, and could bring its entire army to bear on Cabrera's small band of irregulars.

[19] This was the so-called Royal Expedition, led by the Pretender himself, which set out from the Basque Countries into Catalonia and Castile in the middle of May 1837, i.e. some two or three weeks after Borrow wrote this letter to Hasfeld.

[Chapter 19 continued]

I now made preparations for my journey into the north.[20] I was already provided with horses well calculated to support the fatigues of the road and the burdens which I might deem necessary to impose upon them. One thing, however, was still lacking, indispensable to a person about to engage on an expedition of this description; I mean a servant to attend me. Perhaps there is no place in the world where servants more abound than at Madrid, or at least fellows eager to proffer their services in the expectation of receiving food and wages, though, with respect to the actual service which they are capable of performing, not much can be said; but I was in want of a servant of no common description, a shrewd active fellow, of whose advice, in cases of emergency, I could occasionally avail myself; courageous withal, for it certainly required some degree of courage to follow a master bent on exploring the greater part of Spain, and who intended to travel, not under the protection of muleteers and carmen, but on his own *cabalgaduras*. Such a servant, perhaps, I might have sought for years without finding; chance, however, brought one to my hand at the very time I wanted him, without it being necessary for me to make any laborious perquisitions.[21]

[**From letter to Hasfeld of 29 April 1837 from Madrid, in Fraser, Hasfeld, 25f.**]

> I have a servant, a person who has been a soldier for fifteen years, who will go with me for the purpose of attending to the horses and otherwise assisting me in my labours. His conduct on the journey is the only thing to which I look forward with uneasiness; for though he has some good points, yet in many respects a more atrocious fellow never existed. He is inordinately given to drink, and of so quarrelsome a disposition that he is almost constantly involved in some broil. Like most of his countrymen, he carries an exceedingly long knife, which he frequently unsheaths and brandishes in the faces of those who are unfortunate enough to awaken his choler. It is only a few days since that I rescued the maid-servant of the house from his grasp, whom otherwise he would undoubtedly have killed, and all because she too much burnt a red herring which he had given her to cook. You perhaps wonder that I retain a person of this description, but, bad as he is, he is the best servant I can obtain; he is very honest, a virtue which is rarely to be found in a Spanish servant, and I have no fear of his running away with the horses during the journey, after having perhaps knocked me on the head in some lone *posada*. He is moreover acquainted with every road, cross-road, river, and mountain in Spain, and is therefore a very suitable squire for an errant knight, like myself.'

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[20] Time is always elastic in *The Bible in Spain*. Whereas this chapter began with Borrow's return to Madrid on Christmas Day 1836, we have now, in the course of a few paragraphs, arrived at late April 1837. Borrow of course had to solicit permission for this trip from his employers, who would have to pay for it. Despite certain misgivings (at one point Brandram famously asked 'Can the people in these wilds *READ*?') it was granted by letter on 3 April. For a full survey of Borrow's elaborate travel preparations, see Missler, *GBB* 40, 58-77.

[21] In reality, Borrow had already engaged a servant at an earlier moment, a former soldier whom he described to Hasfeld in the remarkable terms quoted below. Ten days after writing that letter, however, Borrow fired the 'atrocious fellow' due to his 'misconduct' as he wrote to Brandram in a letter of 10 May 1837 from Madrid [Darlow, 213f].

[Chapter 19 continued]

I was one day mentioning the subject to Mr. Borrego, at whose establishment I had printed the New Testament, and inquiring whether he thought that such an individual was to be found in Madrid, adding that I was particularly anxious to obtain a servant who, besides Spanish, could speak some other language, that occasionally we might discourse without being understood by those who might overhear us. "The very description of person," he replied, "that you appear to be in need of, quitted me about half an hour ago, and, it is singular enough, came to me in the hope that I might be able to recommend him to a master. He has been twice in my service: for his talent and courage I will answer; and I believe him to be trustworthy, at least to masters who may chime in with his humour, for I must inform you that he is a most extraordinary fellow, full of strange likes and antipathies, which he will gratify at any expense, either to himself or others. Perhaps he will attach himself to you, in which case you will find him highly valuable; for if he please he can turn his hand to any thing, and is not only acquainted with two but half a dozen languages."

"Is he a Spaniard?" I inquired.

"I will send him to you to-morrow," said Borrego, "you will best learn from his own mouth who and what he is."

The next day, as I had just sat down to my "sopa," my hostess informed me that a man wished to speak to me. "Admit him," said I, and he almost instantly made his appearance. He was dressed respectably in the French fashion, and had rather a juvenile look, though I subsequently learned that he was considerably above forty. He was somewhat above the middle stature, and might have been called well made, had it not been for his meagreness, which was rather remarkable. His arms were long and bony, and his whole form conveyed an idea of great activity united with no slight degree of strength: his hair was wiry, but of jetty blackness; his forehead low; his eyes small and grey, expressive of much subtlety and no less malice, strangely relieved by a strong dash of humour; the nose was handsome, but the mouth was immensely wide, and his under jaw projected considerably. A more singular physiognomy I had never seen, and I continued staring at him for some time in silence. "Who are you?" I at last demanded.

"Domestic in search of a master," answered the man in good French, but in a strange accent. "I come recommended to you, my Lor, by Monsieur B."

MYSELF. - Of what nation may you be? Are you French or Spanish?

MAN. - God forbid that I should be either, mi Lor, J'AI L'HONNEUR D'ETRE DE LA NATION GRECQUE, my name is Antonio Buchini[22], native of Pera the Belle near to Constantinople.[23]

MYSELF. - And what brought you to Spain?

BUCHINI. - *Mi Lor, je vais vous raconter mon histoire du commencement jusqu'ici*: - my father was a native of Sceira[24] in Greece, from whence at an early age he repaired to Pera, where he served as janitor in the hotels of various ambassadors, by whom he was much respected for his fidelity. Amongst others of these gentlemen, he served him of your own nation: this occurred at the time that there was war between England and the Porte.[25] Monsieur the Ambassador had to escape for his life, leaving the greater part of his valuables to the care of my father, who concealed them at his own great risk, and when the dispute was settled, restored them to Monsieur, even to the most

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[22] According to Fraser [*Sleeping*, 27], the real name of this remarkable person was Antonio Buchino; and as Burke [footnote to 265] observes, rather than Greek, he will have had Italian roots. Could enough data be collected, Buchino's own life would make an excellent book of adventures. As Jenkins [page 196] put it in a fine phrase: 'Antonio's vices were sufficiently obvious to discourage anyone from attempting to discover his virtues'. And yet Antonio served many of the great and powerful throughout his career. Apart from the diplomat Cea Bermudez (mentioned below), Buchino served General Cordoba (commander in chief of the northern front before Espartero), then George Borrow, then the Duke of Frias, and later still General Narvaez, Spain's perennial dictator in the 1840s and 50s. Here in *The Bible in Spain*, Borrow says he was introduced to Buchino by Borrego; in his letter of 10 May 1837 to Brandram, however, he mentions that the Greek 'formerly waited on Mr. O'Shea'. Of course, Borrego and O'Shea themselves were close friends. [See also *GBB* 40, 65f.]

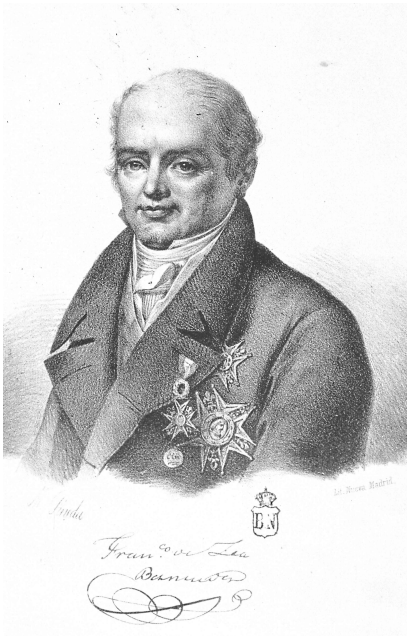
[23] Burke [footnote to 265] observes that 'Pera can hardly be said to be *near* Constantinople', since 'it is the Franc quarter of the city, separated (…) from Stambul by the Golden Horn.' Pera – which nowadays is called Beyoğlu - means 'the other side' in Greek, indicating its position on the European side of the waterway.

[24] Burke [footnote to 265]: 'more usually spelt Syra'. Other spellings are Syros or Siros. One of the main islands of the Cyclades, and an important maritime centre in the 19th century, it was mainly peopled by Roman Catholics from Venice until the Greek independence of 1821. On that occasion, many of the inhabitants changed their Italian names for Greek ones, without, however, changing their religion.

[25] [Author's note] This was possibly the period when Admiral Duckworth attempted to force the passage of the Dardanelles. [Editor's note] This incident took place during the Anglo-Turkish War of 1807-1809. The Royal Navy came to the help of the Russian Empire which was threatened all at once with a Napoleonic invasion and war with the Great Porte. Admiral Collingwood, commander of the Mediterranean fleet dispatched eight ships of the line and four frigates under Admiral Sir John Thomas Duckworth, to bombard Istanbul and neutralise the Turkish fleet. The British squadron entered the Dardanelles on 19 February 1807, fought it out with fortresses and cruised around the Sea of Marmara for a week and a half hoping for battle with the Turkish flotilla, but left again on 3 March when the enemy would not come out. Due to heavy losses and few results, the expedition was considered a failure. The British Ambassador in question was Arbuthnot, who was evacuated from Istanbul, along with the other British residents, on 29 January 1807 by the frigate *Endymion*.

inconsiderable trinket. I mention this circumstance to show you that I am of a family which cherishes principles of honour, and in which confidence may be placed. My father married a daughter of Pera, *et moi je suis l'unique fruit de ce mariage*. Of my mother I know nothing, as she died shortly after my birth. A family of wealthy Jews took pity on my forlorn condition and offered to bring me up, to which my father gladly consented; and with them I continued several years, until I was a *beau garcon*; they were very fond of me, and at last offered to adopt me, and at their death to bequeath me all they had, on condition of my becoming a Jew. *Mais la circoncision n'etoit guere a mon gout*; especially that of the Jews, for I am a Greek, am proud, and have principles of honour. I quitted them, therefore, saying that if ever I allowed myself to be converted, it should be to the faith of the Turks, for they are men, are proud, and have principles of honour like myself. I then returned to my father, who procured me various situations, none of which were to my liking, until I was placed in the house of Monsieur Zea.

MYSELF. - You mean, I suppose, Zea Bermudez, who chanced to be at Constantinople.[26]



19.5 Francisco Cea Bermudez

[26] Francisco de Paula Cea Bermudez y Buzo (1779 – 1850), career diplomat and politician (not to be confused with the painter of the same name). After being posted in Russia for many years, he was appointed Spanish ambassador in Constantinople during the *Trienio Constitutional* (1820-1823). He served a very short stint as Prime Minister in 1824, and was then once against sent abroad as Ambassador in Dresden and London. In 1832 he was recalled to Spain to act as Prime Minister in the final days of Ferdinand VII, to prepare the take-over of the government by the liberals under Queen Regent Maria Cristina. In January 1834 he was relieved of his post and went into exile in France, where he died many years later.

BUCHINI. - Just so, mi Lor, and with him I continued during his stay. He put great confidence in me, more especially as I spoke the pure Spanish language, which I acquired amongst the Jews, who, as I have heard Monsieur Zea say, speak it better than the present natives of Spain.[27]

I shall not follow the Greek step by step throughout his history, which was rather lengthy: suffice it to say, that he was brought by Zea Bermudez from Constantinople to Spain, where he continued in his service for many years, and from whose house he was expelled for marrying a Guipuscoan damsel, who was fille de chambre to Madame Zea; since which time it appeared that he had served an infinity of masters; sometimes as valet, sometimes as cook, but generally in the last capacity. He confessed, however, that he had seldom continued more than three days in the same service, on account of the disputes which were sure to arise in the house almost immediately after his admission, and for which he could assign no other reason than his being a Greek, and having principles of honour. Amongst other persons whom he had served was General Cordova, who he said was a bad paymaster, and was in the habit of maltreating his domestics. "But he found his match in me," said Antonio, "for I was prepared for him; and once, when he drew his sword against me, I pulled out a pistol and pointed it in his face. He grew pale as death, and from that hour treated me with all kinds of condescension. It was only pretence, however, for the affair rankled in his mind; he had determined upon revenge, and on being appointed to the command of the army, he was particularly anxious that I should attend him to the camp. *Mais je lui ris au nez*, made the sign of the cortamanga[28] - asked for my wages, and left him; and well it was that I did so, for the very domestic whom he took with him he caused to be shot upon a charge of mutiny."

"I am afraid," said I, "that you are of a turbulent disposition, and that the disputes to which you have alluded are solely to be attributed to the badness of your temper."

"What would you have, Monsieur? *Moi je suis grec, je suis fier et j'ai des principes d'honneur*. I expect to be treated with a certain consideration, though I confess that my temper is none of the best, and that at times I am tempted to quarrel with the pots and pans in the kitchen. I think, upon the whole, that it will be for your advantage to engage me, and I promise you to be on my guard. There is one thing that pleases me relating to you, you are unmarried. Now, I would rather serve a young unmarried man for love and friendship, than a Benedict for fifty dollars per month. Madame is sure to hate me, and so is her waiting woman; and more particularly the latter, because I am a married man. I see that mi Lor is willing to engage me."

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[27] Seventy years later, in the interview mentioned in footnote 3 above, Eduardo Lopez said, however, that Borrow's 'Greek servant Antonio Guchino (sic)' spoke Spanish very badly.

[28] Better: *un corte de mangas* [Burke, Glossary]. Essentially this is a more elaborate way of giving someone the finger, with the left fore-arm being hinged by the right hand. There is probably no better way to get into a fist fight in Spain than to make this vulgar gesture. Antonio boasting of using it here is a clear sign that he was not exactly a polite man!

"But you say you are a married man," I replied; "how can you desert your wife, for I am about to leave Madrid, and to travel into the remote and mountainous parts of Spain."

"My wife will receive the moiety of my wages, while I am absent, mi Lor, and therefore will have no reason to complain of being deserted[29]. Complain! did I say; my wife is at present too well instructed to complain. She never speaks nor sits in my presence unless I give her permission. Am I not a Greek, and do I not know how to govern my own house? Engage me, mi Lor, I am a man of many capacities: a discreet valet, an excellent cook, a good groom and light rider; in a word, I am *Ρωμαϊκός*.[30] What would you more?"

I asked him his terms, which were extravagant, notwithstanding his *principes d'honneur*. I found, however, that he was willing to take one half.

I had no sooner engaged him, than seizing the tureen of soup, which had by this time become quite cold, he placed it on the top of his forefinger, or rather on the nail thereof, causing it to make various circumvolutions over his head, to my great astonishment, without spilling a drop, then springing with it to the door, he vanished, and in another moment made his appearance with the puchera, which, after a similar bound and flourish, he deposited on the table; then suffering his hands to sink before him, he put one over the other and stood at his ease with half-shut eyes, for all the world as if he had been in my service twenty years.

And in this manner Antonio Buchini entered upon his duties. Many was the wild spot to which he subsequently accompanied me; many the wild adventure of which he was the sharer. His behaviour was frequently in the highest degree extraordinary, but he served me courageously and faithfully: such a valet, take him for all in all,

"His like I ne'er expect to see again."

KOSKO BAKH ANTON.[31]

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[29] According to Borrow's expense accounts with the Bible Society, Buchino received 2,160 *reales* for his six months service during the Northern trip (i.e. 12 *reales* daily over 180 days), half of which was indeed paid out to his wife by the Madrid banking house of O'Shea & Co. [Missler, *Daring Game*, 168].

[30] Greek: 'Roman'. The editor confesses that the meaning of the remark escapes him. Knapp, in his list of Gypsy words added to the notes on *Lavengro*, explains that 'Romano' is a simple adjective for 'Gypsy'; but why Buchino would want to put that word into Greek, or mention it in this context, remains a mystery. Burke [footnote to 269] says: 'Nowadays he would call himself a Ελλην.'

[31] 'Good luck to you, Antonio' in English Romany. Burke, Glossary: *Bakh, Bok* = Luck; *Kosko, Kooshto* = Good.