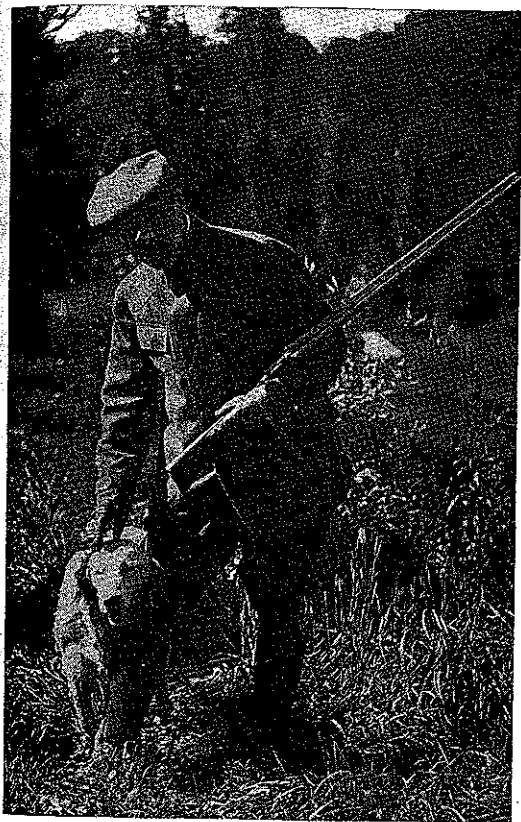


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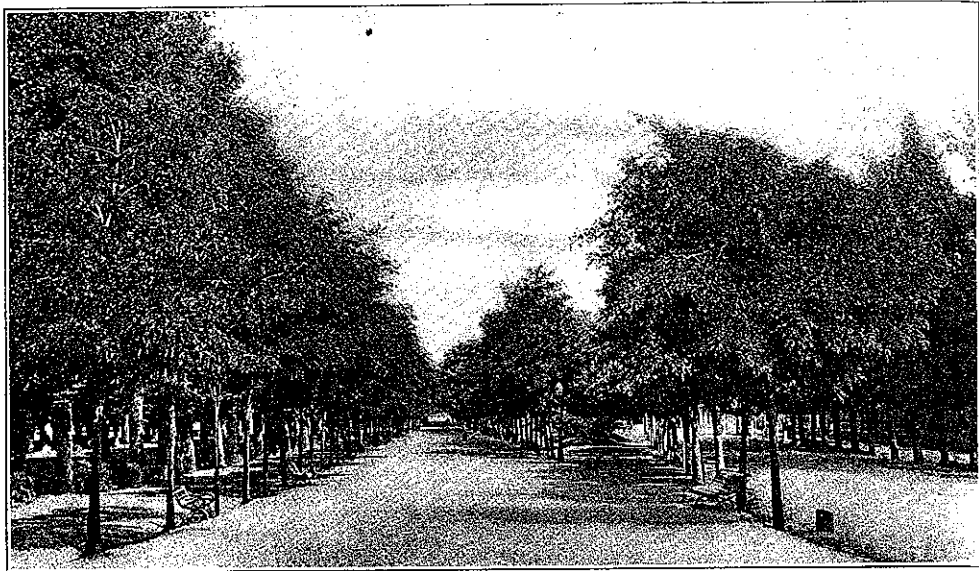
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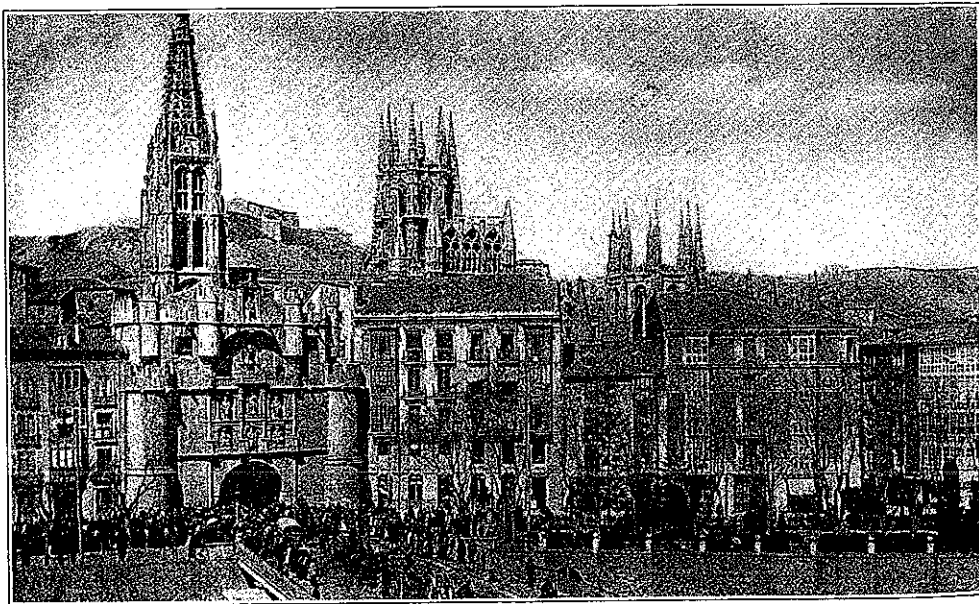
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# Burgos

A Dream City of Old Castile

By Ezra Pound

**A**FTER a period of unsatisfactory search and wandering through that inexplicable mixture of hell and paradise which no outlander can understand, but which for convenience we call "Spain of to-day," it is a pleasant thing to find that there is a dream Spain, just as real as Spain's old song-glory, and no more tainted with the appearance of modernity than a time-stained parchment psalter leaf.

I left Madrid about the time the anarchist suspects and uncatalogued foreigners began to be confused in the eyes of the law; and I assure you that the most fascinating view of that sun-baked, wind-swept capital is to be gained from the windows of the train that leaves for Paris, a little after sun-down. The course of the "Ferrocarril" permits one a view of the palace across the river, through a gray haze and a line of poplar trees, which, by the way, Miss Elizabeth Shippen Green did not invent, and which may truly be found in north Spain, and in one or two of the pictures of Velasquez.

I spent a night next to the earth—that is, with a representative body of the *populacho* that slumbered, and a brother from Segovia that opened his mouth but once, and then only to assure the inquiring head of a would-be fellow-compartmenter that "we already stood eleven," which we manifestly did not. The head disappeared, however, and we rumbled drowsily along, past the tombs of the Escorial, and into the night.

To change the number, and the uncomfortable half sleep of the compartment for the waking dream of the dawn, I came unto the Burgos of Myo Cid Campeador—a short while after the fifth hour of morning, midst the sound of matin bells.

Burgos is a marvel for a Spanish town, for it is clean and well-kept. There I found many quaint churches, and in all they were saying mass—not one mass, but two or three. And here and there

was a little acolyte who had no red shirt, or who had had no time to put it on, but who served God in corduroy and jeans, and rang his little service bell with as good a will as the most bevestmented of Our Lord's servitors.

The approach to the town is a tree-bordered "Paseo," down which I wandered, then crossed stream to the Gate of St. Mary—all in the cool of a perfect morning.

Although of the Cid's house there remains nothing but a "Solar," with a few emblazoned pillars to mark the place where it lay, there are still many doorways in Burgos to which he might have come, as in the old "Poema," battering with his lance butt at the door closed *por miedo del Rey Alfonso*—for fear of the king Alfonso, who had sent letters saying that "none should open to Ruy Diaz, and that whoso open to Ruy Diaz would lose his possessions, and the eyes of his head to boot." The only one of all



SOLAR DEL CID

Marking the place of the Cid's house

Burgos that dared tell these tidings to the Cid was a little maid of nine; and there are yet in Burgos window and balcony from which she might have leaned, with her black eyes wonder wide, and held par lance with the stern-bearded Campeador, saying:

Aie Campeador, in good hour girt ye on your sword.

The King hath forbidden it; last night came his letter

With great escort, strongly sealed.

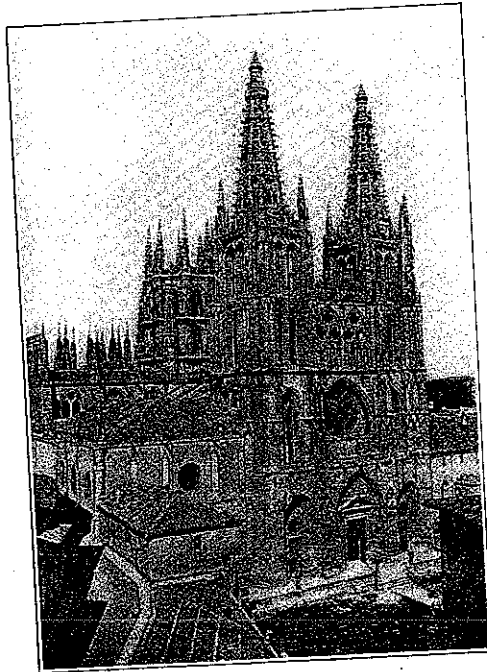
We dare not open to you nor in any wise give ye aid,

For we would lose our havings and our homes

And the eyes of our faces to boot.

Cid, in our ill you will gain nothing;

But the Criador (creator) avail you and all his holy virtues.



THE CATHEDRAL, BURGOS

So the Cid smiled and rode out of Burgos.

The little girl is still in the capital of "Castilla." I saw her, but she does not remember the Campeador. I know now, however, just how she fluttered over the centuries-old message, with little whirring sounds, and all the relative clauses out of place.

In Burgos there are other relics of the Campeador: some bones that do not belong to him, and a chest—one of those,

so the story runs, that he filled with sand, and pawned with the Jews, Rachel and Vidas, on pretense that it held booty which he should have turned over to the king, and which the Jews were to open as forfeit if he did not redeem it at the year's end. But the chest stayed unredeemed, at least to the end of the epic. We have here the record of the first successful deal of this bandit Cassie Chadwick, who never saw a barber through his long campaign, and who set all Spain a-rhyming—mostly of the deeds he did not do—not because he took Valencia, but because he embodied his Zeitgeist, and all the strife against Islam.

From the "Puerta Santa Maria" I wandered about the town seeking breakfast, and to see that web of spun stone, the cathedral, from its divers sides and angles. It is a white cob-web, delicate as no picture seems to show it.

One never realizes the marvelous detail of these old cathedrals until he comes upon some sheltered corner where time has not eaten the lines into a haze, and finds there little six-inch gothic arches with columns a half-inch thick, in perfect miniature of the great arches that tower above them, and in no wise detracting from the lines of the whole.

Victor Hugo has done "Notre Dame," but the cathedral of Paris seems crude when one is in Burgos.

The wonder that comes upon one entering the cathedral of Burgos, with the memory of dusky cathedrals of other towns upon him, is the light. Here when they worship, they will not hide themselves in midnight for the homage of noonday. Nor is the choir the great black mass that obstructs the vistas of Seville and Toledo, and ruins—were that possible—the remains of the old mosque in Cordova. But this choir is of light, clean-lined iron-work, and obstructs nothing but the footsteps of travelers and children from the inner place of sanctuary.

Beside this rail I found another link with the middle ages—a veritable palmer with stave and cockle-shells. He was very busy praying, this religious hermit and hobo, and judging from the shape of his habit he had a goodly number of this world's goods concealed beneath the dusty brown mantle of the church. The priests, however, showed him deference;

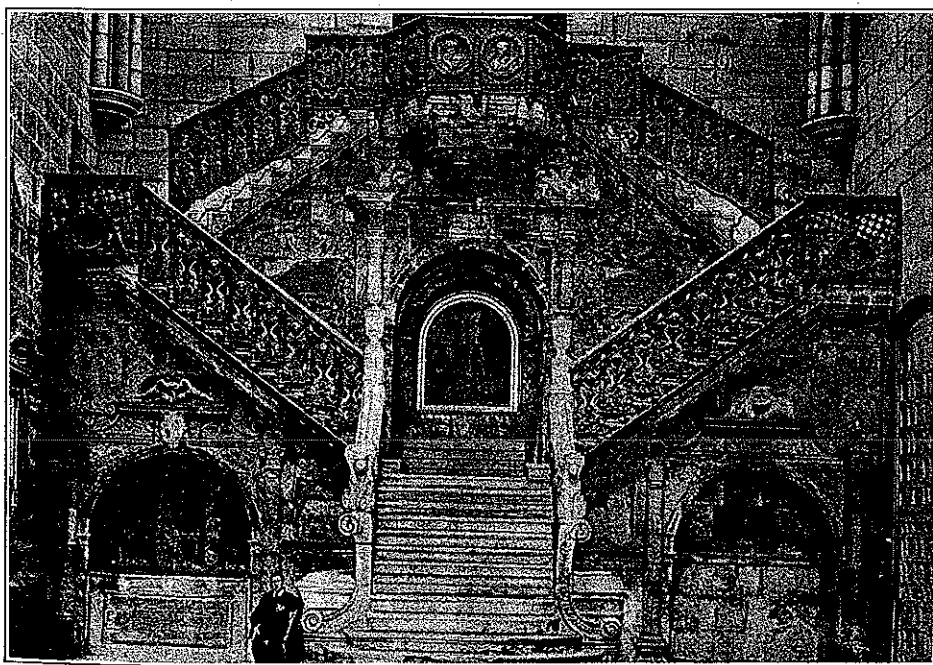
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and, giving him the benefit of the doubt—supposing him sincere—it is a rather pleasing thing in these days of skepticism to see a man follow an ideal, even if it is six centuries behind the times. In watching the palmer my thoughts went out to two other belated “followers,” one of St. Dominic, out of north Canada, the sort of man I think Gilbert Parker likes to meet in that rough north country; and the other a kindly padre, “of them that follow St. Francis,” a man that had done much for me in Madrid, that I can do little to repay. It was only by thoughts of the latter that I came back to Spain and to Burgos, and to its cathedral of high arches, with the drone of the responses, the rumble of echo, the tinkle of mass bells, and a very brown, dusty palmer kneeling by a choir-rail below the great luminous disc that is in reality the opening into the central tower which rises from the crossing of the nave and transept, and is in Burgos a mass of window arches, and a magnet for all the light of a Spanish morning. I think these window arches would draw starlight through the blackest night clouds that ever hang over

Burgos—but this matter cannot here be proven. Of the cathedral of Tours one remembers ever the wonderful blue of the apse windows; of Orleans the two great gold stars of the transept ends; but the cathedral of Burgos has over it and before its high altar ever this white crown of God’s sunlight. Another bit of witchery in the cathedral is the Golden Stairway of the High Door, or “La Coronaria,” forming a perfect base to one high-arched transept-end, and cunningly wrought as the Diana statue in the “Brut,” “whither came all the wondercrafty men.”

I left the cathedral and wandered up more quaint streets to “San Somebody-or-other,” where as usual they were saying mass, here varied and mingled with the clamor of some boys playing tag in the cloister—a cloister as mystically old-world as the little court of the Lowenhof in Cologne.

From here onward to the hill crest behind Burgos, and below me, lay the popular studded fields of Old Castile, with glimpses of “La Cartuja,” and the “Campo Santo,” and further the place



LA CORONARIA

In the Cathedral at Burgos

where lieth San Pedro Cardenas, "the shrine he loved the best," and whither,

From the battle he won  
After life was done  
They bear him to holy rest.

This is not from the story in the "Poema," but an old ballad tale to the effect that after the Cid's death the Moors made an immediate attack on the army of Bivar. But the men of Ruy Diaz set his corse in full armor, visor open, upon his good steed Bavieca, and the enemy fled in terror of the Cid—whether really dead, or risen from death to slay them, they knew not.

The hill crest itself is covered with fallen fortifications of various times. At the gate of these we were met by a very small and noisy dog. My guide, a boy of eleven, called: "Open! Open! for I come, and with me a Franthes"—spelled frances, and meaning French. I explained that I was not "Frances" but "Americano;" to which the boy replied: "It is all one. Here we know no other name for strangers save 'franthes'."

And then there came a pair of very big black eyes, and a very small girl tugging at the gate latch; and I knew of a surety that she had sent away the Campeador at the king's bidding.

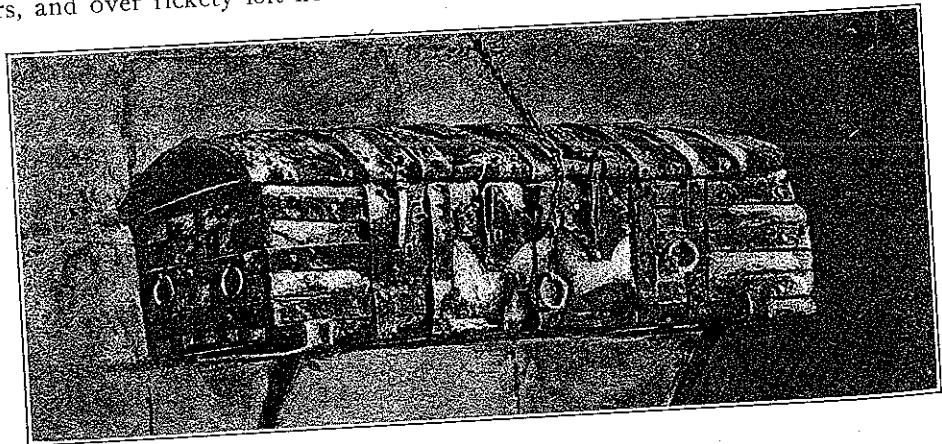
After this I was shown postern wickets and old stone cannon balls, deep wells and secret stairs—very broken and burrowing down into the ground so far that it took a stone a very long time to reach the bottom. These stairs all lead to the cathedral. And I was led up other dark stairs, and over rickety loft floors to see

"Los Campos" from different points of vantage.

Old Castile, as it lies spread before one from the castle of Burgos, is for the painter. I was indeed taken up into a very high mountain, and tempted to forget there were such prosaic things as doctors' theses to be writ, and did for some while give way unto temptation.

When we came down again toward the cathedral it befell that some good person had died in convenient season, and was being borne to the little church that crouches up-slope from the cathedral entrance. And there was a procession of robes, richly woven and cunningly embroidered in gold and vair. And all the folk stood bareheaded, and we likewise; for there is not in Burgos, as the padre says of the rest of Spain, "much Catholicism and very little religion."

From the procession I went forward—by vigorous use of my cigarette case—into the little museum that is hollowed out of the walls of the "Puerta Santa Maria," and through hidden ways into that part of the cloisters where the unsacred relic, the "Cofre del Cid," is preserved. And then, lest some little thing of the real world should intrude itself into this shadow of old time; lest the scorch of the Spanish sun should drive out the winds of dream, the hill winds that blow over Burgos; and lest some minion of the Casa de Cook—that we all use as a refuge, and curse as an intrusion—should shatter the mirror of this Shalott, I went out in the drowse of the siesta as I had come 'neath the cloak of the night.



COFRE DEL CID

A coffer which the Cid is supposed to have pawned with the Jews