THE BOOK NEWS MONTHLY

Three Color Frontispiece
"Fourth of July in Centre Square" by Krimmell

Special Articles on
Robert W. Chambers and John Oliver Hobbes

The Love Affairs of Alexander Pope
By Myrtle Reed

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Burgos—Paseo de la Isla

Burgos—The Gate of Saint Mary
AFTER a period of unsatisfactory search and wandering through that inexplicable mixture of hell and paradise which no outsider 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 populo 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 bevestedment 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 embazoned 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 medio 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
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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 parlance with the stern-bearded Campeador, saying:

Aic 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 Creador (creator) avail you and all his holy virtues.

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,
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 hung 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 Coroneria,” 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 mysteriously 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
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 Baviera, 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 ex-
plained 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 surely
that she had sent away the Campeador at
the king’s bidding.

After this I was shown postern wick-
ets and old stone cannon balls, deep wells
and secret stairs—very broken and bur-
rowing 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 for-
get 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 em-
broidered in gold and pearl. 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 Catholi-
cism 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 un-
sacred relic, the “Cofre del Cid,” is pre-
served. 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 munition
of the Casa de Cooke—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.