FAMILIAR SPANISH TRAVELS. By WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1913.

Mr. Howells's fine power of blending subjective impression with clearly visualized fact, yet of distinguishing the two in such a way that neither is the outward truth vitiated nor the personal impression dimmed, is a source of immediate pleasure and of critical admiration to his readers. Things incidentally mentioned become as real as if actually seen, and the comment, the personal view, shades unobtrusively, but never deceitfully, into the representation of the fact itself. The hard reality is evoked, with its emotional effect, its remoter associations, its perhaps jocular or sentimental suggestions, and the momentary circumstances of the occasion—in a mere paragraph or two. We take it all in with extraordinary ease, unconscious of the difficulties of the writer's art, though keenly appreciative of the richness of his style. No other writer, perhaps, is so skilled in reproducing the whole of an experience, as it completely affects us, without straining the medium of expression. Most narratives and descriptions rather artificially analyze and select; but Mr. Howells succeeds to a remarkable degree in conveying all the overlapping and more or less incongruous elements that make up our appreciation of a scene or an event—in other words, he writes like life.

No guide-book enumeration of the places visited by Mr. Howells in the course of his familiar Spanish travels can give anything like a true impression of the book he has written about them; for each paragraph of the book has its own unique quality. In the chance glimpses it gives of human character and behavior, there is as much enjoyment as in the deliberate viewing of the Escorial or the Alhambra. In the following brief, casual description of a wedding party, there is all the best charm of fiction, the charm of a truthful realization that deepens one's sense of such values as those set forth:

"All the faces had the quiet which the Spanish face has in such degree that the quiet seems national more than personal; but the women's faces were oval, though rather heavily based, while the men's were squared, with high cheek-bones, and they seemed more distinctly middle class. Men and women had equally repose of manner, and when the women came to put on their headgear near our corner, it was with a surface calm unbroken by what must have been their inner excitement. They wore hats and mantillas in about the same proportion; but the bride wore a black mantilla and a black dress with sprigs of orange blossoms in her hair and on her breast for the only note of white. Her lovely, gentle face was white, of course, from the universal powder, and so were the faces of the others, who talked in low tones around her, with scarcely more animation than so many

masks. The handsomest of them, whom we decided to be her sister, arranged the bride's mantilla and was then helped on with hers by the others, with soft smiles and glances. Two little girls, imaginably sorry the feast was over, suppressed their regret in the tutelage of the maiden aunts and grandmothers who put up cakes in napkins to carry home; and then the party vanished in unbroken decorum."

To view La Mancha with Mr. Howells and to share with him the warmth of his kindling memories of Don Quixote; to see the Alhambra, or part of it, as it indubitably and somewhat disappointingly is, and yet to feel more than ever before, perhaps, the glamour that Washington Irving has cast over the place—such enjoyments add as much in their way as does fiction or poetry to the richness of the imaginative life that is an integral part of real life.