

The Letters of William Cullen Bryant



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Edited by

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of his whip. *Macho* shook his long ears and sometimes slightly mended his pace, and sometimes crept on as before, just as the humor took him.

From the brown expanse of stubble and ploughed fields around Victoria, we rode into a region of sandy hillocks, abandoned to pasturage and ragged with tufts of furze. Descending from this and following out the Zadorra through a pass among the hills, here and there made pleasant by a few trees, we reached at length the plain watered by the **Ebro**, an inconsiderable stream, a string of glassy pools connected by slender brawling shallows, on the banks of which the stubble-fields were interspersed with a few vineyards, heavy with their black fruit. A little beyond, we entered a wretched town called **Miranda de Ebro**. The moment our carriage stopped we were surrounded by a swarm of beggars, old and young, male and female, wrapped in yellow-brown rags, and with yellow-brown faces. I must do the Castilian beggar, however, the justice to say that, generally speaking, he does not whine like a French beggar. He first seeks to attract your attention, and then prefers his petition. Here, at **Miranda**, I was accosted with the epithet *Caballero! Caballero!* [Sir! Sir!] and once or twice I was touched on the elbow, but if I paid no attention, they went no further; the beggars of **Miranda** are too proud to ask alms of one who will not look at them.

At **Miranda de Ebro**, all baggage of travellers coming from the Basque provinces into Old Castile undergoes as strict an examination as when they cross the Spanish frontier from France. Besides opening and rummaging our trunks and travelling bags, a custom-house officer crawled into our carriage, and almost turned it inside out, looking into the boxes and pockets, peeping under the seats, and feeling all over the lining. At **Miranda**, miserable as the place appears, is a tolerable inn, where we got a good breakfast and some excellent pears, and after an interval of two hours, set out quite refreshed. At a little distance from our stopping place we descended into a little valley, so finely varied with gentle and graceful slopes, and overlooked by rocky mountain summits, so jagged, and toothed, and blue, that we involuntarily exclaimed: "How beautiful would all this be, if there were but a little green turf and a few trees!" Close by was the village of Ameyugo, and a little stream with a pretty name, the *Oroncillo*, flowed through the valley, on the brink of which grew several elms; but the peasants had stripped them of their side branches, and forced them to shoot up in slender columns of small twigs, like cypresses.

We were entertained by the sight of a man, who followed on horseback close to our carriage, as if to shelter himself from the wind, that blew a drizzling rain into his face. He wore the black velvet cap of the Castilian, with its two worsted tassels; an ample cloak made of black sheep's wool, which, having faded into a dull brown, had been refreshed by an enormous patch of the original color; knee breeches, and below them a pair of leathern gaiters, half open at the sides, to show the stockings. His com-