Correspondence, 1892-1893

Boston Mass Jany 11th 1892

Prof F. N. Chandler
Dept of Architecture

Dear Sir:

I beg leave to report progress in the post-graduate course, submitted last October, as follows. for the first term 1891-2.

In architectural history, a careful and fairly complete study of the origin of the building habit in man; origin of architectural form, beginning with the lower animals, tracing it through savage races and prehistoric remains to the established forms of architecture proper; and an attempt to establish the relative importance of material climate and customs on those forms.

Taking up architectural history proper, I have carefully studied the geography, geology and climate of Egypt; the religion and customs of the ancient race; the history of the

of the country, especially those epochs remarkable for their architectural remains; made out lists of the monuments, and written descriptions of the more striking examples. Added to this a short study of the principles governing Egyptian arts of painting and sculpture.

In addition to the readings I have made a number of drawings from the examples of Egyptian sculpture in the Art Museum some of which were handed in with the written report; a map and several tracings to illustrate the report.

In Materials I have not done much owing to a lack of time, but have done considerable reading on building stone, made one test of a specimen of sandstone, and went through the preliminary laboratory work in the Laboratory of Applied Mechanics. as follows:

(1) One wrought iron I Beam

(1) Deflection (2) Moment of Inertia (3) Modulus of Rupture (4) Modulus of Elasticity.

(2) Wrought iron wire. Elastic limit, modulus, &c

(3) Tension tests on the Olsen machine

Wrought Iron, Machine Steel and Cast Iron.

(4) Cement tests

(1) Tension. Portland cement briquette.

(2) Compression Portland and Rosendale cubes.

In design. I have made preliminary sketches for plans, section and elevations and one study for the principal façade of the design selected.

In the History of Education, under advice of Prof Levermore, I have studied

(1) The History of Education. Painter,

(2) Educational Reformers, Quick,

Drawing &c.

Water Color under Mr Turner

Life Class at Cowles Art School

Sketching in pencil at Art Museum.

In Italian under Prof. Fugiuens. I have completed the work in grammar and read some 60 pages of Farina's "Il Signor Do."

Finally: I have attended regularly the lectures

(1) History of Philosophy Prof Levermore.

(2) Contemporary English and American Authors Prof Carpenter.

Yours respectfully

J. A. Meyer Jr.

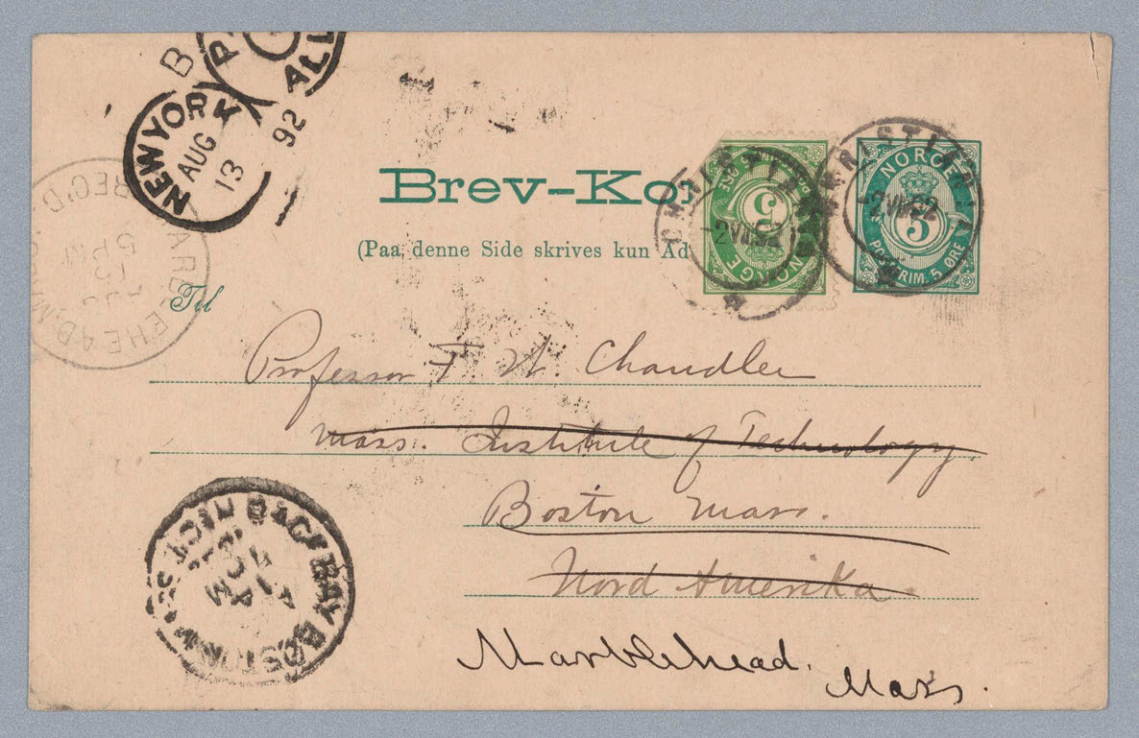
Dear Professor.

I only write to say that I have finished the monumental part of my journey - to North Cape - and have had a delightful time. It has not been entirely without architectural interest, for I have seen the home of jig-saw architecture, we are not the originators of it I am sure. Then the curious timber churches of the 12th century are characteristic to say the least. I have seen two of the most famous of them; the one in the Hitterdal and the Gol Kirke.

with regards to all friends Ever

Yours Jos A Meeper Jr.

Christiania
Aug 2nd 92



Brev-Ko

(Paa denne Side skrives kun Ad

Til

Professor F. W. Chandler

~~Mass. Institute of Technology~~

Boston Mass.

~~Nord America~~

Marblehead. Mass.

Berlin Dec 7th 1892

Dear Professor.

I will add only a line to remind you again not to take my reports as law and gospel, for they are written without much thought and absolutely no revision. I feel the want of reference books badly and must depend entirely on the incomplete and very often incorrect guide book information, and my own few notes taken on the spot.

I had expected to spend some time here in Berlin using the libraries, but my very limited time - I must hurry on again on Monday - and the tremendous red tape necessary to use the libraries has prevented my benefitting much by the stop.

I go on to Russia by way of Stettin Danzig and Königsberg

and will spend about a month in the "Czar's Country" returning to Austria and Germany by Warsaw Cracow and Vienna.

My health has been very good, and on the whole the weather favorable but cold, as I know to my sorrow, for I have some very bad fingers which I managed to freeze trying to sketch when the mercury was down in the 20s.

Please give my regards to all the department authorities - I suppose they are still the same -. I am very curious to know how things go in the new building but I suppose I shall never know for my mail seldom reaches me, I hardly know why. For three months I heard nothing not even from my immediate family & I now learn that the mail was sent but perhaps lost. But if any of the dept. have time and inclination I should be very glad to hear from them. Sincerely yours Jos. Pennell Jr.

Vienna Jan 16th 1893

Dear Professor:

Your letter has just reached me; to say that I was shocked to hear of Prof. Letang's death would only partly express my feelings. For I well realize what we have lost: for with all his peculiarities Prof. Letang certainly was a man with a genius for teaching design, and then he was heart and soul in the Institute. I am afraid it will be hard to fully replace him even if we do get a man of talent and energy. In a personal way I shall miss him when I come back for I had looked forward to interesting discussions with him on points that I have noticed in work that approaches our school design more nearly than buildings in America.

I feel that I was a little careless in not giving you my permanent

address, but thought I had written to Prof Tyler saying that it would be the London address – care of American Express Co. 35 Milk St London E.C. – but may be mistaken. I have had a bad time with my mail, for hardly any of it has reached me, but hope I have it arranged all right now. If you can I should like very much to have you write to me to the above address, for I expect to be in London sometime in Feb.

The intimation that the Scholarship has been continued for me was a very pleasant surprise, for I had hardly hoped it would be continued when I was on a "leave of absence". It will place me in a position to do some extra work, for by close management I am now inside of my calculated amount and one of the expensive tours finished.

I had a fearful time in Russia, the thermometer never reached zero and was nearly all the time – one month – between 20° and 40° below. I froze both my ears and a little of my nose in Moscow. But it was a surpassingly interesting trip, I certainly was out of the Western world for a short time, and although I cannot say that I picked up anything of practical value in our own work, I did see a country that is in its "mediaeval age" now. The church is the powerful factor in everything – I saw monasteries in the height of their prosperity, pilgrims as plenty as ever we read about, and a lavish wealth in the churches that I never dreamed of. Architecturally it was the imposing groups rather than separate buildings, and I am sure that my recollection of the Kremlin will not suffer when I have seen the Alhambra, the Capitol Hill and the Acropolis. At Warsaw and Cracow – by the way I was extravagant, ~~and~~ hired the whole outfit and saw the great salt mines of Wieliczka as the only visitor – fire guides – red and white fire, rockets and all the performance – the weather moderated to 10 above zero, but at Budapest it fell again, and tonight here in Vienna it is 13° below again with a wind.

I have fairly revelled in picture galleries, and feel quite familiar not only with the great men: Rembrandt, Rubens, Van Dyck, Titian, Corregio and Raphael but have placed Frans Hals in the first rank of my favorites, and can appreciate well Oliver, Quentin Massys Holbein and Cranach. Then Ruysdael has become a supreme favorite, and I have enjoyed Dou, Jan Steen and Wouvermans in the great number of their works that live here in the north-east. The Hermitage was all that I expected and much more, and the splendid new gallery here in Vienna, where all the scattered collections of the Belvedere &c are brought under one roof, there is study for weeks if one had them at disposal.

In regard to the scholarship money if the treasurer will kindly hold it for a short time I will arrange so that it can be sent to my bankers in America and then there will be no delay in regard to the returning of the receipts. With my best regards

Yours sincerely yours

Jos Meyer Jr.

London Mar 30th 1893

Dear Professor.

Enclosed you will find a little about Belgium, enough to let you know that I have been there. I also have something started on Germany and Russia which I will send a little later on.

I saw Seeler in Paris. He told me about your new professor in design. I hope you have found him, or will find him up to his reputation. I also saw Perkins who was just about to take the examinations. All the rest of the "Tech" boys were well, and much pleased with the Beaux Arts. By the way I was fortunate in seeing two exhibitions there – one a competition in clay, another a competition for the first class where I saw the work of all the best men. Seeler is doing remarkably well, his drawing was "on the wall" this time, which means that he is crawling up to the head of the line. There is not much doubt but that he will receive the diploma of the school before he leaves.

I have seen a large number of schools, but will not make any remarks at present, all I shall say is that ~~in that~~ I have learned a great deal – <u>negatively</u>, if I may use the word.

I have been here in London for some weeks mostly preparing for the summer, and leave in a few days for France again. I have my route well outlined for Normandy, Brittany, Southern France, Spain and Portugal.

The architectural people here have been very kind to me. Mr Spiers gave me notes to several people, and I was given a loan ticket for the R.I.B.A. library. As to weather I never have had such an experience. Ever since I left Norwich last February it has been warm, spring-like and dry. Here the leaves are coming out even on the elms.

I had a letter from the Boston enclosing a draft – the first payment on the fellowship. I don't know who I have to thank for the continuation of the appointment, but imagine that Prof Chandler did not oppose it very strongly at any rate. At the present time the amount I receive is worth four times what it would be to me at home, and I can assure you that I shall try to use it to the very best advantage. I hope for only one thing more, that is that sometime in the future I may be able to repay the liberality of the Institute in a small way at any rate.

Please give my best regards to Mr. Homer Lawrence, Miss Hunt & Shedd or any other friends who may enquire.

Sincerely yours Jos Meyer Jr.

Evreux Apr 27th '93

Dear Professor:

I enclose with this some-thing about Germany - very rambling and I do not doubt open to a good deal of criticism, for in reading it over I already see ~~places~~ statements that are not correct, but leave it as I wrote it - partly in London - I shall only ask that it does not go "outside of the family"; as in fact none of these so-called reports should, for even after seeing buildings, without a little more careful thought on the subject, I am very likely to display my ignorance on architecture. I have been in London for a short time, and for the past few weeks have had a delightful time in Normandy and Brittany. Mont St. Michel goes down by the side of the Kremlin for a picturesque group. The weather has been perfect. For two months it has been delightful cool spring weather.

Please give my regards to Mr Hamm

Lawrence and the rest of the "corps", and hand the enclosed ticket to Shedd with my compliments.

Sincerely yours

Jos Meyer Jr.

Perigueux May 9th 1893

Dear Professor:

It has just occured to me that my "leave of absence" was for one year only, and that this is the last month of the Institute year. I have enclosed a petition to have it extended. I send this to you instead of to the secretary because I believe you have to approve of it first and then the committee takes it in hand. Will you please send it in?

My French trip has proved most satisfactory so far and I have been at it from daylight till dark on account of the very favorable weather - for a traveller - not so for the farmers, for it is terribly dry. I have seen but one small shower since the first of March. This part of France is very interesting and I have made a number of excursions to see unfrequented places, often with most satisfactory results.

You can tell Mr. Homer that they have ruined St. Front here in Perigueu

— historically — for in carrying out a restoration they changed all the pointed arches to semicircular, and it is now a pure Byzantine building. As a building it is most impressive and reminded me very much of the larger Russian churches. I hope to send you the "report" on Russia in a few days.

I shall reach Spain in a short time now, and look forward to the trip with a great deal of pleasure.

By the way Professor you used to speak about seeing the churches of Asia Minor. If not too much trouble would you send me the names of towns where there is interesting work, to supplement my list. Also if there are any points either you or Mr. Horner wish to have looked up anyplace I hope you will give me a chance to do so.

My best regards to the department

Yours sincerely

Jos Meyer Jr.

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In Quarantine at Corfu Oct 12th 1893

Dear Professor:

Even quarantines of five days, I find, are not so very long and this one is nearly over and my back work, if I may call it that, is far from being finished. But for fear that I may not have another chance soon I will give you a short account of my two months in Spain and Portugal - two months all too short even for the hurried visits I made to the principal points of interest. I visited every province in Spain, and with the exception of the extreme south, every part of Portugal. It was after a short experience in the Pyrenees on the French side - I made one sentimental journey up the valley of the Tech - only on account of its name - but found a most romantic little river of that name, even enough architecture in the old churches to ease my conscience for the digression from my route. It was after all this that I crossed the range of the Pyrenees, almost exactly on Hannibal's route, and found myself fairly in Spain at the old and picturesque city of Gerona. The city is an excellent one to whet a visitor's appetite for Spanish things, for at one leap he finds himself out of France and in the surroundings that soon become familiar, and make up his impression of Spain. Here we find the arid landscape - the treeless almost grassless mountains, the dry river beds, the tall awning covered houses, the enormous churches with their characteristic renaissance façades and gorgeous interiors. From Gerona I went by rail to Barcelona, then, by way of the famous monastery on Monserrat with its remarkable scenery, to Lerida and Zaragossa. From the latter city I returned to Lerida and on to Tarragona. From this city I took the coast line of railroad - in sight of the sea nearly all the time, by way of Tortosa, Castellon, and Murviedo to Valencia where I spent the holiday of Corpus-Christi, one of the great days of the year in this city. From this point the railroad runs some distance inland through the famous region of Valencia - perhaps the garden of the world - to Alicante, Elche with its palm forests, Murcia and finally to Cartagena. Here the rail road ends, and after over two days coasting in a steamer I found myself in Malaga. From this point I took the railroad, by way of Bobadilla to Granada where I spent several days enjoying not only the architecture of the Alhambra and the city but the sublime scenery of the Sierra Nevada - snow covered even in this subtropical climate. From Granada I went by the new rail-road to Ronda, where I stopped to see the remarkable gorge and the stone bridge that spans it, and on through the cork forests to Gibraltar. I made the excursion to Tangier in Morocco from the latter port, where I had a taste

of not only eastern and Arab life, but my first sight of a mosque in use and the peculiar architecture of an eastern city. I think Tangier is an excellent episode in the Spanish tour to bring the visitor in sympathy with the moorish architecture he is to see on Spanish soil, for otherwise it is a little hard to harmonize the present population and customs to the airy delicate work that we see in Granada and Seville. Once having had a glimpse of the "turbaned Turk", however, and his black slaves, a little imagination furnishes the correct picture for this brilliantly colored background that is left to us in substance. Owing to bad connection of steamers I retraced my route by Ronda to Bobadilla and then went on to Cordova, later to Seville. The stop in Seville is, I think, one of the most satisfactory and enjoyable of all in Spain, for here we have true Spanish life in perfection - the city is most interesting, there is great variety in the architecture, and a stroll to the suburbs in the evening brings one to Spain as we imagine it to be - perhaps even to an adventure, as was my fortune when I got a little far from the beaten track, perhaps a little blood curdling at the time but all the more worthy for that to a place in the experiences of a trip to Spain. From Seville I turned north and made my next stop in Merida, full of imposing Roman remains, then Badajoz close to the frontier of Portugal. The next stretch by rail was a long one by way of Abrantes and Santarem through the greener landscapes of Portugal to the gem of seaports - Lisbon. Here I spent several days making an excursion to Almada and another to the royal summer palace at Cintra. I hesitated to make the long journey to the south for the sake of the single town of Evora which promised architecture worth examination, and by a strange oversight missed Mafra, but I went on to the station of Leiria and then left trains behind and walked to the famous monastery of Batalha. Like Maria-Laach in the Rhine country, this magnificent monument of architecture - the finest in Portugal - lies far from any town of importance, with only the few houses of a miserable village around it. Deserted as it is, it all the more repays the discomfort attending a visit, by the strange contrast of hovels with most delicate Gothic masonry, country boors with works of art intended for the enjoyment of cultured ecclesiastics or retired scholars. Returning to the rail-road I went on to the picturesque town of Coimbra, lying on a high steep hill crowned by the large buildings of

the university of Portugal. After Coimbra I visited Oporto - clean & prosperous but not of much interest architecturally, excepting in giving a number of examples of the Portuguese renaissance - a variation of the Spanish. Other cities that I visited in the north of Portugal were Braga, Vianna and Valenca. each with the fantastic buildings in renaissance ~~style~~ that give Portugal a distinctive architectural style. Immediately over the frontier I found the small but interesting town of Tuy and further on the sea-port Vigo. From this point I made the mixed trip of stage and rail by way of Pontevedra and Carril to the holiest city in Spain - Santiago da Compostella - in every way worthy of a visit. Here we have sublime scenery, a noble city and, not least, a place almost unknown to the outside world. The architecture may not be of the highest importance, but the interior of the magnificent romanesque cathedral with one of the richest and most beautiful portals in that style that I have seen, its imposing renaissance façade, as well as a number of civic buildings in the city would well repay anyone, making the tour of Spain, for the trouble of a visit. I left Santiago by stage over the old pilgrims route, and had my last view of the really beautiful city from the height where the pilgrims had their first glimpse of the shrine of the Patron of Spain. The next points on my route were the comparatively small towns of Lugo and Astorga - both however most picturesque in their decay, with ancient walls, charming old squares each with a stone fountain and arcaded streets that made up an interesting picture, to my eyes even more picturesque than anything in northern Italy at least. The next place of importance was Leon with its fine gothic cathedral, now being completely restored, and the many fine palaces and monasteries in and around the city, then on over the grand mountain chain of the Asturias to Oviedo where I had the pleasure of examining at length the interesting almost "prehistoric" churches of Santa Maria Naranco and San Miguel de Lino both several miles from the town. Oviedo itself has architectural attraction in the cathedral and a number of renaissance palaces, although perhaps the greatest enjoyment gained by this digression is the mountain scenery - the grandest in Spain - where the rail-road reaches a height of about 4000 feet and affords views into the profound depths of the valley below quite unapproached in my rail-road experience. From Leon I visited Palencia and its cathedral, then Valladolid and later retraced my steps partway and on to Burgos. The Cathedral at Burgos is all that I expected it to be, the interior even more, for I think the delicate open work of the dome as well other stone carving unsurpassed in Europe. and the Constables Chapel one of the most elaborate pieces of ecclesiastical work that I have seen anyplace.

From Burgos I went south again as far as Medina del Campo which is the centre for a number of points important in an architectural visit to Spain. I first visited Salamanca and found abundance of material for study in the large renaissance cathedral, the ancient university, the plateresque façade of San Esteban, the Casa de Conchas, covered with ornament in the shape of shells, and finally the highly interesting old Cathedral perhaps the finest romanesque building in Spain. The next point from Medina was Zamora, which for color and appearance of hoary antiquity I think unapproached in Spain. The cathedral I found a fine and large example of that peculiar development of romanesque that is seen in the old cathedral at Salamanca, but at few other places. Zamora has a number of interesting buildings, for example the small romanesque church of S. Magdalena erected by the Templars I believe, S. Ildefonso and other small romanesque churches. Medina del Campo itself I found well worth the time I was obliged to spend there - the brick churches which showed a peculiar development in the ornament of the east end - the arcaded streets and above all the splendid example of a Castillian fortress, from the time of Ferdinand and Isabella, that lies outside of the town. I should have mentioned Toro, curiously located on a high cliff between Medina and Zamora, and possessed of a fine Collegiate church in the romanesque style with peculiar and rich detail. Avila is a place not to be omitted even for the view of the town alone from the opposite heights. It is one that gives us a clear idea of the walled mediaeval town, complete in its details and in good preservation. Carcassone, Aigues Mortes and Ragusa may be more picturesque, but Avila with its desolate rocky surroundings and peculiar rusty color, characteristic of Spain, make it fully as interesting. In the town the old gates, the cathedral with its fortress-like apse and fine romanesque church of S. Pedro are worth study. I next stopped at Escorial, where the famous monastery occupied my attention for nearly two days. I found the "dreary bleak landscape" of most travellers quite the contrary - to me it was strikingly beautiful, and I can easily understand the choice of King Philip in selecting this spot for his place of retreat. The view of the imposing group of buildings from a small valley in the mountains behind it is one of the most striking I have ever seen - it almost seems as if the architect had placed it for this vista, it fits so perfectly, and in spite of the very apparent coldness of Herrera's design, is certainly not without effect and even beauty when seen, framed by the black rocks and dark foliage that surround it, from this point of view. From Escorial I went to Segovia, high lying on a natural fortress and full of important buildings - the Cathedral, the imposing Alcazar, lately restored and in

an unrivalled location, the churches of San Esteban, San Martin and San Millan all with fine romanesque work and the characteristic exterior loggias that afford so much material for study that a hurried visit seems almost a crime. For general appearance, as seen from the opposite side of the gorge that surrounds it, Segovia is one of the most striking cities in Spain, not even excepting Toledo. Madrid was my next point and I spent a number of days there mostly in the picture gallery where I think I at last saw what Murillo, Ribera and especially Velazquez really are. Madrid is a modern city, the principal architectural attractions are to be found in the Royal Palace a grand building in spite of small criticisms, and in the new buildings for the Academy of Arts or going up near the Picture Gallery. The latter are of chaste academic design almost Greek in general effect, and although open to criticism in some of the proportions, show that modern Spanish taste is not completely depraved. I made the trip to Toledo from Madrid as a centre and although a little disappointed in its location, due no doubt to the exaggerated illustrations of Doré and others that I had seen, I found the reputation of the old city well deserved. The cathedral is a magnificent work inside and out, the old synagogues and mosques strange and interesting, and the Puerta del Sol one of the rarest bits of architectural color that I had yet met. From Madrid I took the rail-road towards the north-east, with a stop at Siguenza - a strange, most picturesque old place that is so seldom visited that I was not even troubled by beggars, and was the object of undivided attention during my stay in the town. The cathedral here is an important building, and some of the smaller churches as well as what were apparently once palaces, show some strange and well designed detail. On my way towards France I stopped again at the town of Tudela where there is an interesting cathedral, especially in the matter of carvings, and from this town made an excursion back into this country to Tarrazona one of the most picturesque places that I saw in Spain and if once known I think would be placed on the regular list of points to be visited. The cathedral, although not designed in the best taste, has a remarkably effective dome at the crossing, and unique transept and nave wall. The tower at the west end resembles those at Zaragossa in a way and is a work not without merit. The old palace in the town, several small churches, but above

all the massing of buildings on the hill, the most remarkable market place and street vistas made me wonder that I had never heard of the place before. Tarragona is one of those places that may not reward the architectural pirate, but is one that gives the right kind of healthy enthusiasm for architecture as an art, and teaches the student that satisfactory effect is not confined to the best and accepted models, but may be found even in what we are accustomed to look on as debased forms, so long as they are used without affectation and with a freedom that fits them to their place. I stopped again at Pamplona, chiefly interesting for its location - on a high bluff overlooking a wide plain and the distant mountains, and where I must put a black mark in my journal, for my baggage was broken open here and the choice of my photographs stolen. I can't quite get over that. The last excursion that I made in Spain was, perhaps, one of the most pleasant and as it was in a district I had never thought of examining was all the more enjoyable when a mere accident made it possible. This was a short tour on foot through the Basque country in the north-east corner of Spain. I was favored with beautiful weather, found an agreeable surprise in meeting with a peculiar architecture and had my curiosity satisfied in seeing the people who are supposed to be a remnant of the prehistoric population of Europe. In a few words I can only say that the private houses of even these small villages are remarkable for their solidity. They are built of squared stone - are low and nearly always entered by a large round arch door with extraordinarily deep voussoirs. Many of these village houses bear sculptured armorial bearings over the door - for nearly every Basque claims to be of noble blood and is correspondingly proud. In the limited conversations I was able to carry on in Spanish I found them a very intelligent and on a whole progressive people interested in the outside world but intensely loyal to their own. The churches were most curious. High and narrow - of a single nave or with very narrow aisles - they were almost destitute of windows and presented the appearance of a buttressed fortress. A large porch is placed on one side where the meetings of the village council are held, and nearly always near by is a finely built wall of cut stone for the playing of the national game - "fives". So much for a bare idea of what can be gained by a trip through Spain - The innumerable details will never all be told, I never expect to do it and should not wish to, only hope you may all see them some day.

Journey error.