

for purposes of irrigation. Having traversed the defile of Villa Velha do Rodão,

Fig. 197.—COIMBRA.



its valley gradually widens, and after having received its most considerable tributary, the Zezere, it becomes a tranquil stream, abounding in islands and sand-



Spanish Ciudad Rodrigo, was anciently one of the strongest fortresses of Portugal; and Vizeu is an important station between the Douro and the Mondego. Its fairs are more frequented than any others in Portugal, and in its cathedral may be seen the famous masterpiece painted by the mythical Gran Vasco. The herdsmen around Vizeu are noted for their strength and beauty. Their uncovered heads and bare legs give them an appearance of savagery, but their manners are as polished and dignified as those of the rest of their countrymen.

Coimbra (*Æminium*), in Beira-mar, is the most populous town between Oporto and Lisbon. It is known more especially for its university, whose professors and students impart to it the aspect of a mediæval seat of learning. The purest Portuguese is spoken there. The environs are delightful, and in the botanical garden the plants of the tropics mingle with those of the temperate zones. From the banks of the Mondego, upon which the city is built, visitors frequently ascend to the *Quinta das Lagrimas* ("house of tears"), the scene of the murder of the beautiful Inez de Castro, whose death was so cruelly revenged by her husband, Peter the Judge.

Few countries in the world can rival the beautiful valley of the Mondego, that "river of the Muses" held dear by all the Lusitanians, because it is the only one which belongs to them exclusively. Condeixa, a town near Coimbra, fully deserves to be called the "Basket of Fruit," for its gardens produce most exquisite oranges. In the north the ruins of the monastery of Bussaco occupy a mountain terrace covered with a dense forest of cypresses, cedars, oaks, elms, and exotic trees. This delightful place and the hot springs of Luso, near it, are a favourite summer residence of the citizens of Lisbon and Coimbra.

Figueira da Foz, the port of Coimbra, is well sheltered, but, like most other ports of Northern Portugal, is obstructed by a bar of sand. It is nevertheless much frequented by coasting vessels, and amongst its exports are the wines of Barraida. Ovar and Aveiro, in the "Portuguese Netherlands," on the banks of a lagoon separated by a series of dunes from the high sea, are the two other ports of this part of the coast. They were important places during the Middle Ages,

