The Canary Islands as a winter resort

John Whitford

THE

CANARY ISLANDS

LONDON : EDWARD STANFORD
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Frontispiece

ON THE SAN MATEO ROAD, LAS PALMAS

THE

CANARY ISLANDS

AS A WINTER RESORT

BY

JOHN WHITFORD, F.R.G.S.

With Maps and Illustrations

LONDON: EDWARD STANFORD
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1890

PREFACE

THE book which the author is now submitting to the public had its origin during a four months' residence in Las Palmas, Grand Canary. The visit was undertaken in the first place in search of relief from acute rheumatism, and was so successful in this respect that a tour through all the islands of the group was then projected, and carried out in the manner herein recorded.

The author's experiences were communicated in the form of letters to the columns of a provincial English newspaper; but the dearth of, and increasing demand for, literature on the subject led to their being collected, re-written, and extended into the present work, which is intended for the benefit of all who for a similar reason, or purely in pursuit of change or pleasure, are contemplating a visit to these charming islands.

Thanks mainly to the enterprise of the author's old and dear friend, Mr. Alfred L. Jones, of Liverpool, the transport between the islands of the group is now carried out with punctuality and comfort to the passengers; and the numerous ocean-going steamers which call at Tenerife and Grand Canary afford easy access from England with comfort and

even luxury. There can be little doubt that, owing to these facilities, the number of visitors will shortly increase enormously.

No little proportion of the pleasure derived from the tour was due to the use of the author's constant travelling companion—his camera. Some of the results are visible in the cuts which adorn this volume. The author, however, desires to add that he has received the greatest assistance from Mr. E. H. Fitchew, whose skilful pencil has so beautifully interpreted the photographs submitted to him.

Being somewhat of a tyro in the literary art, the author deprecates a severe criticism of his style. His desire is that his little book should find a humble place in the ranks of useful as apart from ornamental or elegant literature; and he is not without hope that those who follow in his footsteps may find his experiences as here recorded both entertaining and valuable.

'ANGORFA,' OLD COLWYN:
October 15, 1890.

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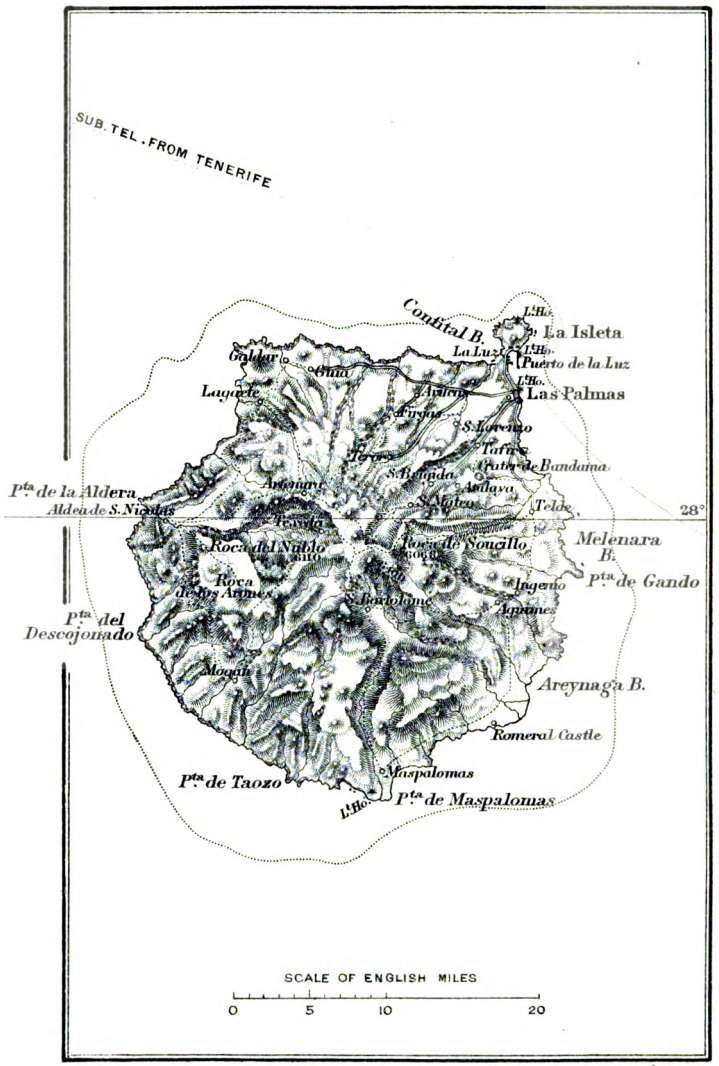

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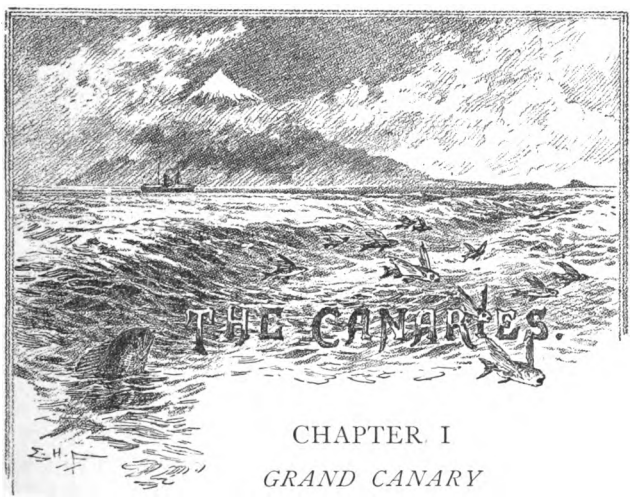


CHAPTER I

GRAND CANARY

Creation's mildest charms are there combin'd.

THIS island, as it looms in sight, resembles a cluster of rugged, inhospitable mountains. So do all the Canaries : they are totally unlike the eye-refreshing Emerald Isle as seen after days of ocean ; but it is only with the islands of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura that barrenness and utter desolation are the ruling features of their interiors. Grand Canary, Tenerife, Palma, Gomera, and Hierro, stern and rock-bound though they be, contain plains, valleys, and mountain forests of exquisite beauty ; their interest is further enhanced to Northern minds by the prevalence of semi-tropical vegetation in their lowlands.

Grand Canary rises abruptly from the Atlantic in latitude 28° N., longitude $15\frac{1}{2}^{c}$ W. It is 1,500 miles from Cornwall, 320 miles south of Madeira, 50 miles south-east from Tenerife, and 100 miles west of Africa.

Steamers from England perform the voyage in from five to eight days, varying according to the port of embarkation, and also taking into consideration the speed of the vessel An Atlantic greyhound could readily accomplish the trip, from the English Channel, in four days.

Those who desire to abbreviate the sea route and avoid the much-abused Bay of Biscay can take passage from Lisbon to Madeira, and also from Cadiz, Gibraltar, Barcelona, Marseilles, and Genoa, to Tenerife and Grand Canary. There are many opportunities during every week of obtaining conveyance between Madeira, Tenerife, and Grand Canary; and travelling to each of the Canary Islands is simplified by a line of local steamers starting from Santa Cruz, Tenerife, and also from Las Palmas, Grand Canary, to the western and eastern islands of the archipelago respectively.

Ocean steamships constructed of the stoutest materials, fashioned after the most approved models combining strength with speed, adorned with and possessed of all the appliances for personal comfort and luxury that the heart can desire, and commanded and manned by the bravest of seamen, offer to the traveller those safe and satisfactory facilities of voyaging which until comparatively recent times were utterly unknown. Indeed, there is no portion of existence so well spent or so well remembered as that passed on board one of these floating palaces when skimming the sea like a thing of life.

A handsome steamer is an object worthy of admiration as she sits upon the water like a swan. The least breath of white vapour playing over her steam pipe indicates that she is ready for the signal to start. It creates a feeling of suppressed happiness to embark and arrange one's allotted berth or cabin, so that wraps, books, and comforts are within reach. Begone, dull care—letters, newspapers, and telegrams vanish! All day and all night, during sunshine, darkness, calm, and storm, the faithful propeller performs its duty.

The receding land may be hidden by snow, and cold perhaps bitterly felt when fondly whispering 'Adieu, my native land, adieu, but every revolution of the engines urges the beautiful swan onward into warmer weather. Probably Madeira is the first place of call where, for a few hours, or a whole day, to wander through avenues of roses, to seek the grateful shade of gardens, and to marvel at the brightness of all surroundings, afford a welcome change from sky and ocean, and a striking contrast to home. Those who are new to such scenery deem it a vision of delight.

The first day at sea is generally monotonous, for, apart from the total change from life on shore, to many the motion of the vessel is bewildering ; but gradually the play of the machinery resolves itself into music, and even the gentle heave of the ship, in concert with the majestic undulations of the great solemn waves, becomes agreeable. Kindred spirits hold converse, and although acquaintanceship rarely extends beyond the termination of a voyage, still it is comforting to find that there are more good people in the world than in one's native village. Lost appetites return to the jaded ; the bell announcing meals becomes a feature of interest often amounting to anxiety. Sea-gulls shriek with revelry and hover over the vessel's wake to pick up table-cloth shakings. Upon sighting sailing-vessels they hoist their flag numbers if they are desirous of being reported as spoken, but passing steamships generally only flutter their national ensigns out of compliment. Mother Carey's chickens gracefully appear and disappear like swallows. Invalids led on deck to enjoy the pure air and consoling conversation are wrapped up in the cosiest of easy-chairs. Everybody is smiling, and all life begins to go merrily, or should do so. On the second or third day winter clothing disappears as the sunshine perceptibly gives more warmth, and then the customary deck sports commence. Shoals of porpoises, swimming swiftly, race with the ship ; now they are on one

side of her, and then on the other ; their forms are traced away down in the clear deep, and occasionally the liveliest of them jump clean out of the sea, as if desirous of being photographed, causing exclamations of delight, especially from children. Peradventure a fountain jet spouts into the air, and the glimpse of a darkly coloured mass, surrounded by a white fringe of foam, reveals a whale. On approaching the Canaries, awnings affording welcome shade are spread fore and aft. The region of flying-fish is now reached, where dolphins and *bonitas* flash their gold and silver hues in chase, and the crystal sails of the nautilus, called by sailors 'Portuguese men-of-war,' sparkle over the dark blue waves. Verily the sea creates intense interest in all human beings, and, however a voyage may be dreaded by the nervous, its termination is usually a break in entertainment. But the time arrives for desirable variety; disembarkation takes place at Tenerife or Grand Canary, and the whole of the seven islands are there to choose from, either for a quiet health-resort, or for active mountaineering, as inclination and ability prompt.

But for a remarkable adjunct at its north-east corner, called Isleta, a mountain forced upwards by tiers of tiny volcanoes, Grand Canary forms an irregular circle of forty miles in diameter.

Coming from the north, and rounding Isleta, there suddenly appears a busy hive of concrete blocks, coal sheds, marine stores, and labourers' hovels. They pertain to the chief harbour of the island, the Port de la Luz, for brevity's sake known as the Port.

The natural formation of Isleta, assisted by its isthmus and the main island, presents the appearance of half a bay, which the Spanish Government, by running a breakwater pier from each side, is converting into a well-sheltered harbour. These piers, as far as they have advanced, are solid, massive, and broad. They look as if they would last as long as the world. In their embrace, when finished, the

largest steamship will be enabled to ride at anchor in smooth water.

The present advantage of the harbour improvement is that boats and steam-launches now convey passengers from vessels riding at anchor in the roadstead to spacious steps inside, and under the shelter of the northern pier where carriages are waiting for hire. Boatmen charge one shilling for conveying each person between the ship and the steps, and coachmen levy a similar tribute to or from any hotel in the city of Las Palmas. Although one shilling is the recognised charge for each of those operations, yet extortion prevails, especially with the boatmen. Notwithstanding the universal, popular, and generally correct idea that all who ply oars for hire must partake of the good nature of and rank as gallant sailors, yet here the waterside men do not deserve that title. A better arrangement is absolutely necessary Of course, there are drawbacks in all travel, as well as delights, and this trifling irregularity is more than counter-balanced in that no customs' examination of bag gage takes place on landing in any of the Canary Islands.

Las Palmas, the capital of Grand Canary, stands upon the sea-shore, four miles south of the Port. The road to it soon after landing passes by an old fortress—the Castle de la Luz—where there are soldiers enough to hoist the royal standard of Spain, but not sufficient to fire a royal salute. That fortification once stood solitary in the sea—warlike ; now it is in the midst of commercial coaling wharves—peaceful and gloomy. Close to the fort, on what was until recently the beach, is a quaint little old church, bearing evidence that ancient mariners have offered up thanksgiving in it. Either in that very building, or in the church of San Sebastian, in the Island of Gomera—indeed, it is extremely likely in both of those sanctuaries—Christopher Columbus and his crew attended mass before sailing upon the great voyage to discover America.

Driving through a straggling village, the isthmus is crossed, whence the Peak of Tenerife, seventy-five miles distant and 12,180 feet high, forms a wondrous object of beauty on the horizon. The glorious peak remains in sight, unless it happens to be obscured by clouds, until a change of direction, as well as mountain land on the right-hand side, shuts it out from view. The road then skirts the sea-shore, in most places rocky, but here and there are stretches of bright sand suitable for bathing purposes.

This panorama, as far as the eye can reach over hills and flat lands, now almost entirely desolate, affords great variety of sites for building. The more elevated positions will be selected for cooler air, and those lower down for genial warmth and sea-bathing. The Santa Catalina Hotel has just been erected upon this spot ; it is the forerunner of many others. The mountain scenery by which this part is surrounded is rugged, barren, and repulsive, but both highlands and lowlands are capable of high and quick cultivation, and the grand ocean yields contrast of colour always refreshing and pleasant to look upon.

Here is Fort Santa Catalina, fast falling to ruins, but only in its upper works. Its foundation, good as ever, is on rock surrounded at high tide by the sea. It is no longer wanted for defensive purposes, and by permission from Madrid could easily be built up into one of the most romantic and glorious marine residences that can be imagined, where the weary would be lulled to rest by the music of the sea and invigorated by balmy airs all the year round.

As one approaches Las Palmas, the cathedral, a very imposing but unfinished pile of stonework, towers prominently above the houses skirting the shore. The city extends inland, in front of, and up the sides of two hills, and also along the valley formed by them. The bottom of that valley is a tolerably wide ravine—a barranco—which divides the city into two distinct parts, and is bridged over in two places con-

necting the principal thoroughfares on either side. Although when sunshine prevails, which it does for the greater part of the year, this barranco exhibits only dry boulders where washerwomen spread clothes to dry, or where flocks of sheep are turned loose before being sent as live-stock on board ship or required for local consumption—yet, when the six-thousand-feet-high mountains, forming a picturesque grey-blue, sometimes purple, background in the centre of the island, split clouds into water, down it comes a muddy, turbulent torrent, driving everything before it, and discolouring the pure blue sea for a considerable distance.

There are four hotels within the precincts of this city of Las Palmas ; two are conducted by English people, and two by Spaniards. During the summer these hotels are not crowded, but as winter approaches they fill rapidly ; then the proprietors open one, two, three, or any number of private houses, as annexes, to accommodate surplus guests. As far as their appliances go these caravansaries are comfortable ; they are in a transition state between the old fashions and the new, between highly objectionable arrangements for health and the latest sanitary improvements. Food is plentiful and good, but the beef really requires muscular ability to appreciate it. The abundance of fruit,

however, supplied at every meal at every hotel, and also enjoyed by the poorest inhabitant, fully compensates for that fault. One gradually becomes so fond of bananas, oranges, figs, and grapes, that joints of beef are passed without regret. The wine of the country is on the table, generally free of charge, at all meals and at all times. The tables fairly groan with épergnes and dishes laden with whatever fruit is in season, and flowers continually smile in all directions—a perfect eye-feast of colours. The Spanish hotels charge from five shillings per day, including room, board, attendance, the run of the drawing-rooms, corridors, and flat roofs; and the English landlords levy from eight shillings upwards for occasional guests. To those who remain for any length of time abatement is made. For families who desire houses to themselves, either for seclusion or economy, or for both, nothing can be simpler than to hire one wherever they choose. There are plenty to be had everywhere in all the islands. They can bring with them from England, bedding, soft pillows, knives, forks, spoons, and other portable requisites, and purchase ordinary bulky articles, such as bedsteads, chairs, and tables, excellently tanned sheep and goat-skin rugs, and useful grass matting, upon the spot. Carpets are not desirable. The climate is luxury and comfort in itself, and sufficient of the Spanish language can be picked up in a few weeks to make ordinary purchases.

Just before sunrise is the pleasantest time either to go on to the flat house-top and admire the mountains and the sea, and with a glass make out any fresh vessels that may have arrived at the distant port; or to sally forth. The Alameda, fashionable at night by lamplight, and then the resort of youth, beauty, and music, is a favourite retreat at any time—

> With seats beneath the shade,
> For talking age and whispering lovers made.

There is another public garden, and there are also many green spots of refreshing shadow throughout the city, all of which resemble Kew conservatories uncovered. The other small park is in front of an unfinished building intended as a palace for the Governor of the Islands. On the far side of it is the old mole, an unfinished pier jutting into the sea and bending inwards—an ancient and poor attempt to form a harbour; but that place is full of interest to those fond of bustle and excitement. There can be studied the trade operations of the town—piles of charcoal in baskets from some of the other islands, and also from local forests; boxes of cigars and tobacco; bags of sugar from the new factory at Arucas; heaps of limestone and porous filters from stony-hearted Fuerteventura; white and yellow wicker-work chairs, tables, baskets, and sofas from Madeira; timber and corn from America; and crockery, coals, hard-ware, and bale goods from Europe—regulated by a small custom-house, constructed out of a railway carriage, part of a cargo of railway materials wrecked on the adjacent African coast. Boys and men, women, children, and dogs, boats, carts, horses, mules, donkeys, and goats, are there mixed up with merchandise. When waves run high, it is good to take a seat out of their reach, and gaze at them spellbound for hours—especially are they grand when they break into foam and fly over everything. Not far away is a little old church with stone seats outside it, where ancient mariners and aged priests are seated in the shade engaged in quiet conversation,

Full of wise saws and modern instances.

They look as if they enjoyed what is left of life calmly and peacefully.

The markets afford a never-ending delight. There is the fish market with its strangely bright-coloured denizens of the deep. Some of that mullet will appear for your

breakfast, and a better kind is not to be had. Then the fruit market, with its cartloads and great heaps of oranges, grapes, figs, melons, bananas, and everything in season in profusion, strikes a beholder for the first time with a feeling of surprise, and desire to partake of each kind in turn, that is never forgotten. Fruit, in addition to choice early vegetables, will speedily appear in such abundance in these realms that the Canaries will be held in high esteem as new market gardens opened by swift steamers.

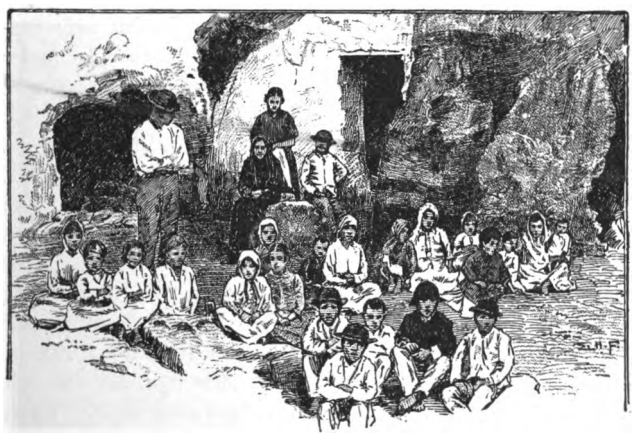
There is a third building, a large shed with open sides, where fresh milk, beans, boots, shoes, empty bottles, tinware, stoneware, leather-work, cloth-work, and clocks are sold. It appears to be a mixed market, conducted somewhat after the manner of an Eastern bazaar. All these places are crowded in the early morning. They stand close by the sea, on the southern side of the barranco already mentioned. On the opposite side, also by the sea, with a grand promenade in front of it, is a very superior new theatre not quite finished. It is said to have cost 20,000*l.*, and to be capable of holding three thousand people. The old theatre accommodates one thousand.

Then, again, the streets are always entertaining. There are very few signboards, and hardly any show windows. The shops are unostentatious, but they contain a great variety of English, French, German, and American goods, and the prices are moderate. All doors are wide, high, and open. Passing by them you observe at work, inside, shoemakers, tailors, joiners, smiths, and every trade demanded by a population with simple wants. Indeed, Las Palmas is a thriving, industrious little city; the principal streets are well paved, the sidewalks, though narrow, are good, and tolerably well lit at night by petroleum lamps.

The most striking objects of interest are the mountains, the Guanche cave-dwellings of Atalaya, and the dragon-trees. But that which startles a stranger with approving wonder

and admiration is the excellent engineering displayed in the construction of the modern roads. From Las Palmas there are four of these highways all leading to mountains, viz.: the Telde road, eleven miles long; the Tafira, Monte, Atalaya, Santa Brigida, and San Mateo road, eighteen miles long; the Arucas and Guia road (branches to Teror and Firgas not included), twenty-four miles long; and the Isleta road, seven miles long.

The last-mentioned branches off to the port at the



CAVE-DWELLERS

village on the isthmus. It terminates at the lighthouse on one of the mountains of Isleta. From that lighthouse a magnificent prospect spreads around. First is a bird's-eye view of the city of Las Palmas sleeping on the sea margin, backed by tiers of mountains; those nearest are brown and dull green, and the distant ones purple and grey, varied in intensity according to the time of day and the state of the atmosphere. Westwards is a faint outline of the Peak of Tenerife; and eastwards, part of the long island of Fuerte-

ventura. All else in the immediate vision is Mother Earth torn and blown up into misshapen mounds and hollows of cinders and lava—frightful desolation—the work of five distinct craters. Beyond is the ever-beautiful, boundless sea, merging into sky. On one side of the isthmus, on Isleta, as already described, is the port; on the other side, still on Isleta, is Confitur Bay—an excellent spot for picnics. Between these two places, immediately above the village fountain, is a belt of broken lava sprinkled with cairns containing Guanche mummies.

Public conveyances—waggonettes fitted with side curtains, holding ten people, or as many more as can be crammed together—start for villages along the Telde and San Mateo roads at 7 A.M. and 3 P.M. from the bridge close to the cathedral. Similar carriages for Teror, Firgas, Arucas, and other places on, or branching from, the Guia road, start from the principal street, the Triana, from nearly opposite to the British Consulate, also at 7 A.M. and 3 P.M. Return carriages depart from the far end of those roads at the same hours. The charges are according to distance—one shilling may be reckoned as the fare for ten miles. Conveyances on the level Port Road are legion, so they need not be further specified. The drivers will take $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ for the fare instead of 1*s.* when strangers know their dark ways. There are always three horses abreast to draw each mountain coach, and frequently a fourth horse leading. Sometimes, as fancy strikes the coachman, generally where he has an extent of level spin before him, he makes his animals travel like the wind. It feels, slightly, like flying on a locomotive. At other times he emulates the tortoise. So that whenever any one wanders afoot in the vicinity of these roads and wishes to intercept a coach, it is well to make sure of it by arriving at the desired spot half an hour before its time. It does not take long to become acquainted with short-cuts across the country and to know when the coaches are due.

When exploring beyond the villages named it is requisite to carry food, and also ulsters or rugs to sleep in, in any house that may be convenient when tired by the day's journey. For that purpose a mule is requisite. A better plan still is to form parties, carry a tent, pitch it each evening near to a supply of water, and be independent of houses, taking a map for guidance, cooking your own food, and enjoying life to perfection.

It is well to add that there are neither wild beasts nor reptiles to trouble one, that there is no damp to dread, and that the inhabitants are invariably civil and kind-hearted.

The village of Atalaya consists of terraces of cave-dwellings scooped out of soft sandstone underlying lava. Perched on a steep mountain-side, it is a most romantic and interesting sight. Here are potters at work, where, four centuries ago, and no one knows how far beyond that period, their predecessors, the Guanches, worked at the same trade. Atalaya is two miles away from the San Mateo coach road, at a distance of about six miles from Las Palmas. Travelling by stage, the driver will pull up at the junction of an old side road leading to it. Should a carriage be preferred, it can be run on that old side road for one mile farther, to its end, where it dwindles to a rugged mountain path which can only be ridden or walked up. It is better to ride all the way. Two miles east of Atalaya stands the most perfect caldera, or crater, in the islands. It is one mile in diameter, is perfectly round, and there exists a flourishing farm, including an orange grove at the bottom of it. It is worth while walking down to the bottom, fairly wading through fine cinders, if only for the sake of listening to the wonderful echoes. It is also good to ascend the hilltop to the east of the caldera, whence a grand panoramic view is obtained.

Dragon-trees flourish in many village gardens. The owners take great care of these eccentric productions of

Nature, and are pleased to exhibit them to visitors. The two finest on this island are at Telde, one each in adjoining gardens close to the Alameda. The largest is 150 years old. If one of these remarkable trees—peculiar to the Atlantic islands, and to some parts of the tropics—could be

DRAGON-TREE

transplanted to the interior of the Crystal Palace, it would revive the fortunes of that agreeable resort; and it is very probable that it could be managed—at any rate, it is worth the trial.

For those who care not for public stage-coaches, car-

riages are plentiful, and the fares are moderate. For excursions to various parts of the island, as far as good roads extend, a three-horse waggonette, accommodating six people, for a whole day costs at the most one pound, and for half a day ten shillings. Refreshments for excursions are always supplied free, by the landlord of the hotel. When two, or half a dozen, or more conveyances are required for picnics —the almost daily delight of everybody—it is better to let one man make the bargain with the coachmen, in which case the cost will be very much less.

Ascending to the hill country, you feel new life rushing, like mild electricity, even to the tips of your fingers. The pure mountain air acts like a charm, especially with the young, and even old age rejoices in the refreshing atmosphere. It gives the delightful sensation of restored youth, and if that feeling only lasts for a time, it is gratifying to think of, and it induces all who are able to drive out again and again.

The roads are quite as good as the king's highway in Norway, or as the excellent roads of Ireland—in truth, there are none better anywhere. They wind gracefully and gently among and around the hills, and their ascent is so gradual as to be almost imperceptible until you find yourself at a great altitude. The great ocean spreads out beneath; ships and steamers dwindle down to tiny black specks on the bright blue water. It gives one the impression as of a new birth, and in a better world. Everything that meets the eye is an object of interest—craters of extinct volcanoes, belts of lava, cinder hills covered with grape vines, cave-dwellings of rustics (formerly inhabited by the Guanches), quaint old villages, old churches, old and young peasants, children, dogs, cats, and goats; the cactus plant, covered with cochineal insects; running streams, carefully trained for irrigation and domestic purposes; fields of tall maize, with the ripened ears like fairies done up in foliage; fields of bananas

with their wide, long leaves, and their ponderous bunches of luscious fruit, all green, but soon turning to yellow and purple; fig trees and orange groves—which latter can be scented afar off—abounding with the green and yellow fruit so much beloved by all. Indeed, wherever one wanders, new and pleasing and strangely jagged and rugged forms of scenery create panoramic views, enlivened in the most extraordinary manner by groups of graceful palm trees. There are many pretty villa residences peeping out of the landscape, the proprietors of which heartily welcome strangers, and present them with boughs of orange trees laden with golden fruit, and fill their hands with flowers, and take delight in the astonishment of their visitors at such unlooked-for bounty. In some of these beautiful retreats fairy bowers surround fountains playing on to gigantic lilies, floating like water queens, beneath which gold and silver fish flash their colours. So enchanting are they—age has so taken away all appearance of their being artificial—that the firm belief is created that everything is natural.

These carriage roads yield variety of scenery sufficient to last, without becoming wearisome through repetition, for an entire winter. To revel in closer acquaintance with the picturesque nature of the mountains, it is requisite to take to steep paths, but that delight is limited to the strong.

Beyond the usual round of resident hotel life, there is not much to interest anybody who does not possess within himself, or herself, the means of useful or, at any rate, agreeable employment for the mind; but that is the case everywhere.

The ability to walk to and fro, during the day or the night, clad in summer attire, without the danger of catching cold, is not sufficiently appreciated until subsequent experience of the bitter winter of home recalls the sunny South, and lends enchantment even to the very thought of it.

Here there are many attractions to entice the young into

keeping late hours, which their medical advisers would strongly object to. Indeed, the hospitality extended is difficult to decline. Cool corridors surrounding gardens, illuminated by lanterns, yield that soft luxury redolent of the 'Arabian Nights Entertainments.' Music and dancing brighten the eyes and cheer up those inclined to be melancholy. But as balls and evening parties in balmy lands are generally prolonged to the small hours, many invalids receive injury instead of good by their manner of life in the Canaries.

The model invalid is on the house-top at daybreak, alternately spying over the sea for ships, sipping a cup of tea, and admiring the glorious sun, like a great wheel of white fire, gradually rising over Africa, transforming grey dawn to brilliant sunshine and azure, sprinkling the firmament and the mountains with golden and crimson tints. He breakfasts at nine, partakes of luncheon at one, unless engaged at a picnic. At four o'clock tea is dispensed by ladies in the drawing-room, and dinner commences at half past six; and between nine and ten o'clock he tears himself away from the evening amusements, and seeks the seclusion of his room. The intervals between walking, talking, and sleeping depend, for their happiness or wretchedness, entirely upon the individual, and 'therein the patient must minister to himself.' On Sundays he attends divine service at the British Consulate, or elsewhere.

Allusion has been made to enclosed gardens; they form a most attractive feature of the better class of city houses. Each story has its corridor overlooking and surrounding a central square or oblong court, which is generally adorned with trees and flowering plants of beauty, among which bougainvillea is plentiful. As the bedroom windows usually open on to the corridors, those rooms are dim but cool; and the beds are provided with gauze curtains—seldom used—to exclude stray mosquitoes. There is no

occasion for fires in any of the dwelling-rooms near to the sea level, consequently there are no fireplaces, and no chimneys exist, excepting those pertaining to kitchens; should heat be required, braziers containing red-hot charcoal are used, as in Eastern countries. It is only up in the mountains that artificial heat is sometimes desirable for comfort, and there the good residences are furnished with the cheerful grates, glowing with bright coal fires, peculiar to the happy homes of the British Isles.

The inmates of one hotel invite those of others to afternoon tea, and thus acquaintances multiply, and frequently lasting friendships commence. New-comers are welcomed, and gradually fall into or improve upon existing arrangements for mutual cheerfulness. Thus no one need feel lonely, for even if taken ill, kind friends—hitherto strangers, perhaps—are at hand to speak words of comfort. And, as nearly everybody receives home newspapers and magazines, and scatters them in the reading-rooms, there is abundance to read and to talk about.

The hospital of this city is a model of cleanliness and comfort. The wards are lofty, light, airy, and free from noise. Sisters of mercy do the nursing, and from their benevolent faces it is certain that the sick and the afflicted are tenderly cared for by them. The dates of numerous life-size portraits adorning one of the galleries suggest that the place is very old. It adjoins the Foundling Hospital, where the cheerful voices of children are heard, in strange contrast to the silence pervading the next building. A passage on the ground floor, near to a pretty little chapel, leads from one building to the other.

The smallest copper coin is one centimo; its value is the tenth part of a penny, and that something to eat or to drink can be purchased with it proves how cheap living is. And as for drink: the milk of cows and goats is abundant; the white and red wine of the islands is, bulk for bulk, cheaper

than small-beer is in Britain—it can be bought at any wine shop for threepence the quart bottle. Mineral water from Firgas, clear, sparkling spring water, is a very popular and soothing beverage, either taken alone or mixed with wine or spirits. It resembles Apollinaris water in its taste, and probably will shortly be imported into England. Maize is the staple food; it is imported as well as grown. It is heaped up for retail sale on the floors of many shops, as well as several kinds of beans, lentils, peas, and potatoes. Strings of packed mules, donkeys, and carts bring in fruit and produce from the country, and they take back city supplies. So it follows, as there are neither railways nor tramways on the islands, that the roads are anything but solitary.

The inhabitants of Grand Canary, Tenerife, and Palma, and of the other islands, perhaps in a lesser degree, or in a different way, enjoy their lives in a far better manner than do the people in our hives of industry. They have more playtime. Saints' days are religiously kept as holidays. On those occasions it is difficult to hire a carriage, and during Carnival week it is impossible to do so. Then every conveyance is filled with merry-makers. The entire population is inclined for revelry; there are processions, the members of which are disguised in masks and costumes; some of these lively individuals strum upon guitars, others sing; the houses are brilliant with banners; carpets and curtains of gay colours are suspended from windows and balconies. Everybody, old and young, is bent upon amusement, and night is made bright and joyous by fireworks, illuminations, and dancing. At certain times a band plays on the Alameda. There is an excellent club-house for the more favoured classes, adjoining the theatre, to which hotel residents are eligible for election to temporary membership. Balls, during the winter months, are frequently given by this club, and the courtesy and kindness extended by its

stewards towards their guests is very gratifying. It fully proves that the high Castilian code of good manners exists in the Canary Islands. Indeed, from the most exalted dignitary of the Church to the lowliest beggar of the caves, politeness prevails towards all strangers.

Nine o'clock on Sunday morning is the best time to attend service at the cathedral, for an excellent band and the best singers then assist the organ. The dresses of the officiating priests, the canons, and the bishop, are grand, and, however one may differ in the belief, High Mass in a cathedral is the most solemn and impressive service on this earth—no wonder that the Roman Catholic Church is the most universal and enduring.

The museum of Las Palmas contains several rooms devoted to Guanche relics. They are exceedingly interesting. There are hundreds of mummies. Many are unrolled into skeletons, strung on wire, and placed in various positions inside glazed wardrobes. Skulls and bones are arranged for view on shelves. Almost everything is under glass. The mummy coverings are of thin parchment, sewn together so finely that it is requisite to examine very closely to discern the seam. Some of the heads are in as good preservation as those of Egyptian mummies.

The stone implements and the pottery, ornaments for the neck and body, wooden stamps carved with tattoo patterns, exactly the same as those now in daily use by Arabs for tattooing their persons in all places where Arabs are to be found, and a number of articles used in the domestic life of the extinct Guanche race, are well worth studying. There are stone axes of the same size and shape as North American Indian tomahawks. There are also large stones, in pairs—one round, somewhat resembling a Dutch cheese, and the other hollowed out lengthways, so as to allow space for the round one—to crush corn, yams, &c.; they are in use all over Africa. Then there are hand-mill

stones, the upper and the lower, as described in the Bible. They are still used all over these islands. Two similar ones were dug up some years ago by a friend of the writer's at Riverside, Kilkeel, co. Down, Ireland, and they are there now, one on each side of the road, whitewashed, to indicate at night the side road leading to the house. The articles of pottery—especially the water-jars—are of ancient Greek and Egyptian patterns. They are also common in Africa.

Guanche heads are, according to our notion, well shaped. They are totally unlike those of any African race. They resemble those pertaining to North American Indians, especially in their pointed chins.

Funerals generally commence just after sunset on the day of death. From outside villages they are so timed as to arrive in the city when lanterns show light. With the young and the beautiful the lidless coffin is carried uncovered through the streets, and flowers—the choicest of this isle of flowery wealth—are lovingly and abundantly displayed. Those containing once wealthy adults are covered with a large pall, which conceals the bearers, and the thing appears to crawl of itself, like a mysterious centipede—a gliding tabernacle of woe. Occasionally there is a procession of priests chanting the solemn service for the dead, and also acolytes swinging smoking censers, disseminating cathedral-scented fragrance by the way. The lights, the white dresses of the clergy and their attendants, the symbols of religion, and the banners held aloft, assisted by the white faces of the crowd, render these pageants very impressive. The mourners follow. Upon arrival at the cemetery the coffin is placed upon a table in a large mortuary; the lid, in two halves, is laid by its side, and then friends take their last look and disperse. On the following morning the interment takes place. No mourners attend. The service is conducted by the church authorities, and stonemasons and labourers complete the proceedings. There are graves, catacombs,

and vaults. Before closing the coffin-lids—which fold double at the top, and are only tied by black tape—a white handkerchief, held in the hand of the deceased for that purpose, is placed over the face, then quicklime is filled in and pressed tight, the tapes tied, and the grave, catacomb, or vault receives its tenant.

This cemetery bears, from the outside, the appearance of an extensive stone fortress. It is situated about one mile south of the city, is oblong in shape, and one side of it stands upon rocks washed by the sea. The walls, of massive construction and high, are built double, with spaces of about twenty feet wide between them. These double walls surround the cemetery, excepting where the entrance gates are, and where chapels and vaults exist, and also where tiers of stone cavities, called catacombs, tower above the other buildings. The central graveyard is prettily laid out in walks, and planted with cypress trees and weeping willows; as it becomes filled, in order to provide space for fresh funerals, certain graves are emptied. The coffins from those graves are opened, the bodies are taken out, and—divested of all clothing excepting the boots and the socks—are cast over a wall on to the top of thousands of other bodies in process of being sun-dried and gradually resolved into dust.

The vaults are family property, subject to reservations, but the so-called catacombs are held upon a different tenure. A yearly rent is due for them to the cathedral authorities, and if that rent falls into arrear eviction takes place. Then the coffin and the clothing—all but the booted body, as previously remarked—are thrown into a space between high walls, situated on the side next to the sea, and there, as the stock increases, it is periodically burnt. The wild waves, as if to vent their disgust, dash high over the sea wall into this dismal old clothes and old coffin den.

There are two spaces in this cemetery, both simply open

pits between high walls, and both used for castaway bodies. The largest of these, now almost full of dry bone-dust, has upon its surface a collection of open coffins, with each tenant, as it were, glued to the woodwork. It takes sun action and time to separate clothing, features, and framework. In the other pit freshly withdrawn corpses appear on the top. The writer will not attempt to describe it ; it is better left to the imagination. The mixture of skulls and old boots beneath those human carcasses, to use the mildest language, makes the melancholy inclined to feel sadder, ordinary persons to become disgusted, and reflective folks to feel it a pity that, with so much waste land on the island, any disinterment should take place. It certainly affords matter for surprise and meditation. Anyhow, the living know the treatment that they may undergo. And, as they do not complain, foreigners can only deem it a strange custom—a custom strangely at variance with the respect paid to the dead on All Saints' Day in the same cemetery.

For the interment of the poor—in all these islands—a hinged box of the orthodox Spanish shape, fixed to a substantial frame for the convenience of handling, is used to convey remains to the grave-side, where they are taken out and placed in the earth.

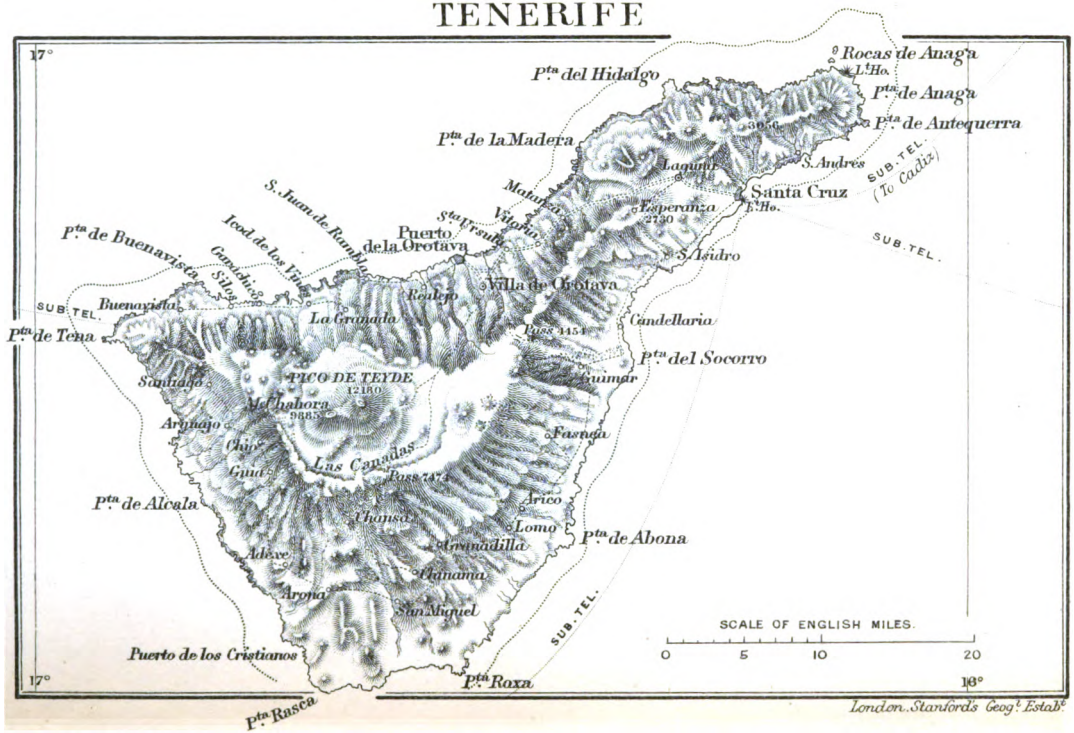
On the evening of All Saints' Day every tomb and catacomb is illuminated. The private chapels containing vaults are adorned with carpets, curtains, lamps, and easy-chairs. Crowds assemble, great quantities of sweetmeats are consumed, and the mourning does not appear uncomfortable.

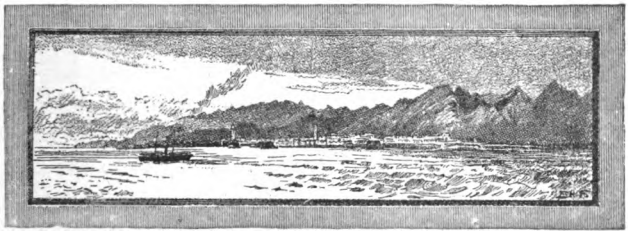
At a little more than one mile south of the town, on a mountain-side overlooking the sea, is a small high-walled enclosure belonging to the British Consul, in which he kindly allows interment to those who are not eligible for the Spanish burial-place. As if to show detestation by the powers that be of those who go by the cheerful name of

heretics, this place is difficult of access. A stony pathway to it leads uphill from the main road. Once there the outlook is glorious. Although all around is rocky wilderness, yet clumps of waving palms are in front rising from green banana plantations and widespread corn-fields. Beyond is the bright blue sea bordered by the horizon. Africa, unseen, is there, and over it and over all is the universal sky of gladness and of sorrow.

The population of Las Palmas is 28,000; that of the whole island is 90,000.

TENERIFE





SANTA CRUZ

CHAPTER II

TENERIFE

On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds,
With a diadem of snow.

THE island of Tenerife consists of one great mountain, the Peak, surrounded by lesser mountains radiating from it in every direction. It presents the appearance, at a distance, of a pyramid ; and on a map that of an equilateral triangle dragged out longer at its north-east corner, where the mountains do not belong to the peak range, but rise abruptly from the sea in rugged, ragged, and jagged fantastic shapes. The total length of its three sides of sea coast is 163 miles. At its thickest end it is 36 miles across, and its population is 112,000.

Santa Cruz is—but during the palmy days of Spain Laguna was—the capital ; it numbers 24,000 inhabitants, and boasts of four hotels, two English and two Spanish. These establishments are fairly good, but each requires improvement, which rivalry is speedily effecting. It is situated on the eastern side of Tenerife, at about six miles round Cape Anaga, its northern corner. The harbour is simply an

open roadstead, where vessels can anchor under the lee of high land in safety, and remain so, as long as southerly and south-easterly winds are not too boisterous. A mole, or pier, commenced several centuries ago and not yet finished, runs into the sea. On the sheltered side of it are excellent sets of boat-steps, from which passengers can step into carriages. An exceedingly good road starts from the town uphill through Laguna (6 miles), and across the island to Orotava (28 miles), and further to beyond Rambla (34 miles). It is intended to continue this main highway round the western, southern, and eastern sides of the island, and connect it with another one already made for a considerable distance in a south-westerly direction from Santa Cruz, thus completing by 70 or 80 miles of excellent road the circuit of the circle of mountains surrounding the Peak. Another modern highway runs some little distance northwards from Santa Cruz, along the sea-front. It is intended to be twisted up mountain spurs and around crags to the extensive plateau where Laguna stands.

Half an hour's experience either in walking or driving over one of the old roads is sufficient for any one, more especially those who dislike jolting, to appreciate the immense advantage and comfort afforded by the recently constructed highways.

It has already been stated that the island of Grand Canary is remarkable for four similar new roads, branching from its chief town, Las Palmas, and that they afford magnificent drives in every direction. The island of La Palma has an excellent road, uphill from its principal town and across its most beautiful valley ; and Lanzarote has got one extending for eighteen miles across from Arrecife to the enormous lava bed in front of the celebrated burning mountain. Gomera, Hierro, and Fuerteventura are without roads, but mules in the two former and camels in the latter island convey travellers to all accessible places. Thus those fond of

romantic adventure can revel to their hearts' content. The same remark applies to the wretched, stony old roads and mountain-paths in the islands of Tenerife, Grand Canary, La Palma, and Lanzarote. The infinite variety of mountain and valley, forest and desert, landscape and sea view, torrents and dry watercourses, cultivated lands and lava beds, cinder-hills and craters, is a continual delight to all who love nature bordering upon the primeval. Then the abundance of semi-tropical vegetation, especially graceful palms and great spreading fig-trees in the lowlands ; and laurels, pines, firs, heather, and Scotch mist in the cloud-lands ; and the sunrise, sunset, and moonlight over all—all is so different from what the inhabitants of Northern countries are accustomed to, that intense enjoyment is afforded.

The appearance of Santa Cruz from the sea is not particularly captivating. Indeed, the eastern and southern sides of the island are barren-looking—at the south-western part are forty-four craters in one view—yet there are many pretty spots lurking in out-of-the-way corners, visible occasionally from the water in detail, but lost to sight in a general view. From Anaga Point to the city, wicked-looking rugged crags rise abruptly in pinnacles from the sea. Between those serrated hills are fruitful valleys, and prettily situated villages. Those on the immediate sea-board naturally pertain to fishermen. Santa Cruz spreads out somewhat like Douglas, Isle of Man, but its houses are coloured white, sky-blue, and yellow. Private gardens somewhat relieve the glaring monotony of the light-coloured buildings. The numerous flat roofs give it, like Las Palmas and other towns in the Archipelago, the appearance of an Eastern city. There are many fine dwellings belonging to the wealthy class, but, beyond the abundance of fruit, and the same variety of good shops as at Las Palmas, Grand Canary, there is not much of interest. English visitors go to look at Nelson's flags in the Church of the Conception. They can gaze upon two long boxes in a dark

part of the building, and exercise faith that the flags are there. They are seldom taken down to satisfy the curiously inclined. The officiating priests kindly permitted the writer to photograph the interior. Two views were taken of that part where Nelson's flags are, one upon an ordinary Ilford half-plate with five minutes' exposure, and the other upon a quarter-plate of the same description, which received three and a half minutes' exposure. Both pictures developed splendidly. The church is extremely dark, so shadowy and dense, that in focussing it was difficult to make out anything distinctly. This is mentioned for the information of tourist photographers.

Tenerife is in the centre, and commands views of every island of the group. It and Grand Canary, Hierro, Gomera, and Palma are abundantly supplied with fresh water from heaven. They are also tolerably well clothed with vegetation, and they produce very fair cattle. Their utility as a welcome source of supplies to mariners has been proved ever since ocean navigation was invented. Hark to the song about the great sea snake :—

Some seamen who this snake did note,
Thought 'twas famed Tenerife,
So straightway sent the jol-ly boat
For fresh wa-ter and beef.

On the other hand, the remaining islands of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura are short of rain, scant of trees, abundant in stones, and they are very barren and repulsive-looking ; but still, they have their good points, to which allusion shall be made.

Hierro, Gomera, and Palma are the coolest islands, on account of their western position ; next in the gradation of heat come Tenerife and Grand Canary. The islands of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, nearest to the coast of Africa, are decidedly the warmest ; but their heat is tempered, as that of each island is, by delightful sea breezes.

Run the eye over a map of the world, on the same parallel of latitude as these islands. You will observe that it passes through the most salubrious parts of the earth. On one side are Southern Morocco, the Desert of Sahara, Northern Egypt and Arabia, Southern Persia, Northern India, the Himalaya Mountains, Northern Burma, Southern China, and the Pacific ; and on the other hand, Florida, the southern tip of Louisiana, Southern Texas, Northern Mexico, Lower California, and the Pacific.

The experience of several winters spent both in California and Florida enables the writer to institute a comparison between the climates of those States and that of these islands. Briefly, Florida only requires two or three Alps planted amongst its swamps and orange groves to be perfection. California is perfection. The western Pacific slope, from and including British Columbia down to the tropics, may be put down as one of the most highly favoured regions on the globe. The abundance and variety of food and fruit, their excellence and cheapness ; the luxurious hotels, the solid comfort which the writer fearlessly asserts is not to be equalled anywhere ; the superb means of travel, whether by rail, river, or sea ; and the absence of abject poverty, added to the fine climate, create a feeling of happiness and content which it is difficult, if not impossible, to experience elsewhere. The only drawbacks are the distance and, in some cases, the expense.

The climate of these islands is like that on the Pacific coast between San Francisco and San Diego. But the advantage of the Canaries over California is their nearness and their easy access.

Let the visitor take a carriage for Orotava. The hire of one with three horses costs twenty-four shillings. It will hold four or five people. A stage-coach—or, rather, half an omnibus—runs twice daily, at 6 a.m. and 1.30 p.m.; the charge by it is four shillings and threepence. The other

half of the omnibus, from the other end, meets it halfway. These very queer stagers are drawn by three horses abreast and a leader in front.

Santa Cruz looks its best at a distance, and from the elevation behind it. With the bright blue sea for relief it forms a pretty picture—just the aërial site for Guido's Aurora. It takes two hours driving the six miles to Laguna, but one must remember that during that time the horses, carriage, and contents are raised 2,000 feet above the sea. The writer travelled by coach on the old track in 1853, and it occupied between three and four hours to reach Laguna. Ascending by the splendid new road, one cannot help observing the irregular, stony nature of the old one, and young folks naturally feel glad that they were not born earlier. It requires genial conversation and observation of incidents *en passant*, such as women with weights on their heads, men wrapped in blanket cloaks, or carrying them if the weather be too warm, coaches going downhill with speed, occasional wine-drinking shops, herds of goats, and the like, to keep interest alive, for the region you ascend is volcanic and ugly, and the progress is slow, but lively talk relieves the monotony of the road.

The visitor stops at the English hotel at Laguna to rest the horses, and also to give the driver a drink, usually ending in one all round, for the road has been dusty, creating a sensation as if cobwebs had collected in the throat and interfered with conversation.

The arms emblazoned on tombstones ; the numbers of churches, in working order, half-built, and in ruins ; the neglected plazas ; the great buildings belonging to the clergy ; and the fine old mansions of dead and gone merchant princes and Spanish grandees, testify to the high position of Laguna when Spain was a leading Power. In the streets grass growing between the stones of the exceedingly rough boulder pavement calls aloud, Desolation ! Desolation !

The good road only commences outside the city; for comfort's sake the streets should be macadamised. It is a city of the dead, almost as melancholy as Pompeii. The writer notices no change in it during thirty-six years. But now it gives signs of resuscitation, for not only is it the favourite summer resort of the leading families of Santa Cruz, and of other parts of the island, but foreign visitors are beginning to like it. Its elevation, and the extensive plateau of pleasing tableland which encircles it, and which again is surrounded by higher rocky land, where sparse forests grow, will speedily cause it to be a favourite health resort at all times of the year. More rain falls than on lower levels, but there is no occasion to go to picnics on wet days, and, for walking out in rain, what were umbrellas, waterproofs, and india-rubber soles invented for? Where invalids find comfort there will they flock and revel in relating their woes to one another.

There is every prospect that Laguna will become popular. What benefit it bestows each person must find for himself or herself. Given the elevation, the climate, the facility of access, and its ready-built homes, it is a very agreeable place to live in, and offers a rare combination of advantages for comfort.

Few neglected buildings in the Canary Islands can with truth be called ruins, because none of them are much over four hundred years old. As a rule they are constructed of such lasting materials that only doors, windows, floors, and roofs get worn out, which modern timber-work can readily replace. The aboriginal inhabitants—the Guanches—lived in caves; and remarkably good, solid, dry dwellings they were and are. There are rude stone hovels pointed out here and there as of Guanche construction, but it is probable that modern goatherds threw the stones together of which they are formed.

It makes one feel melancholy to look upon such com-

fortable old Spanish towns as Laguna gradually going to decay. It may be attributed to the want of energy on the part of the inhabitants, but the failure of the cochineal insect to fetch its former price as a dye, and temporary failures of the vine crops, are very probably the immediate causes.

It is marvellous that in these poor islands so many churches exist. It plainly demonstrates that when the inhabitants were prosperous in commerce, their wealth went cheerfully in that direction, and assuredly as money becomes more abundant they will again gladly contribute largely. It is recorded that the clergy oppressed and fleeced their flocks so much—there were so many drones to be fed by the active bees—that when hard times came the latter arose in their wrath, destroyed the monasteries, and cruelly scattered their ghostly advisers.

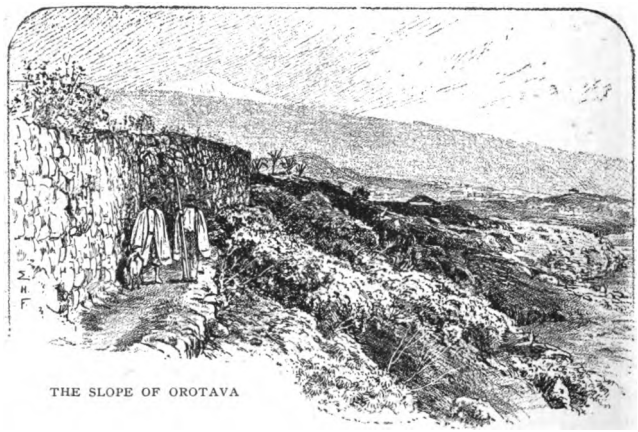
Since that time the Church has been supported by the parent Government, and it has lost some of its authority. This is the opinion of residents capable of judging. Masonic lodges have arisen during recent years, which have materially affected local church collections, and, singular to relate, the brethren pay remarkable heed—far more than our Northern lodges do—to the religion which dates back to the building of King Solomon's Temple. But lovely woman, being more impressionable, more believing, having more faith, hope, and charity than the male persuasion, clings fondly to Holy Mother Church; hence the priesthood is still supreme, and, as Eve tempted Adam and he did eat, so in these latter days she manages to obtain shekels from Adam to give to the clergy.

The inhabitants of these beautiful gems of the ocean can neither grow nor earn enough to buy food sufficient to create comfort, so a system of emigration goes on, and many houses are only tenanted by mice. But the day of prosperity has dawned. The numerous steamers calling at Las Palmas and Santa Cruz require supplies, their passengers

flock on shore and spend money; and fruit, vegetables, and live-stock find many new outlets to good markets.

We rattled uneasily over the jolting streets of the city of Laguna, wishing that they could be rendered as smooth as the new road. Welcome once more the easy-going mainway away from the houses. Now eucalyptus trees appear on each side, but they are stunted in growth—they do not thrive well in the Canaries. On, across cultivated table-land until the Atlantic appears, its horizon apparently halfway up the sky, on the other side of the island. When, *presto!* what a difference! In winter, travelling over the snow-clad Sierras and opening up the genial Pacific slope, the change is glorious. Palace car stoves, which kept the passengers warm for six days and six nights, all the way from New York, are allowed to die out, and all windows and doors are opened to admit the welcome mild zephyrs. The change creates astonishment, comfort, and delight. So it does here, but in a different manner. Santa Cruz side is left behind. There is too much volcanic surface defacement and brown barrenness about it to be very enjoyable, but speedily we now enter upon a region of verdure and luxuriant landscape. The road trends south-west, along the sides of hills, at an elevation of from 1,000 to 1,500 feet above the sea. Here is first obtained a fair view of the Peak, and, excepting where the road descends occasionally into deep gorges, it is kept in sight all the way to Orotava; and, further, right round that end of the island. From the blue ocean up to the margin of the forests—even away up to the snow line (March)—there are farms, hamlets, villages, and churches dotted over the emerald country. 'In florid beauty groves and fields appear.' It is so bright and beautiful that one does not notice, until in their midst, stern, black, disfiguring clumps of lava, and red cinder hills. But the fields of grain, fields of vines, spreads of lowly fig trees, and clusters of palms, so to speak, bury the

lava and cinders. Trained streams of living water add life to the scenery, and the Peak, towering above all, a pyramid of pure white, unsullied snow, with azure sky beyond and around it, completes the panorama. It is grand. It is beyond the power of language to describe. One looks at it in wonder and joy. Thus revelling in pure love of nature, dinner or breakfast, as the case may be, is mechanically partaken of in one of the two inns at Matanzas, a wayside village.



THE SLOPE OF OROTAVA

On we are transported through living extravaganza. The picturesque costumes of the peasantry, and their general out-of-door life, incline one to the belief that each individual of the party is taking part in a pantomime, and that feeling culminates to the intensity of 'Away, away, to the mountain's brow,' upon entering the valley or slope of Orotava. As Humboldt says, 'It is one of the finest sights on this earth.'

In describing these fair-weather islands, the instinct or inspiration to overpraise them is very great, not so much

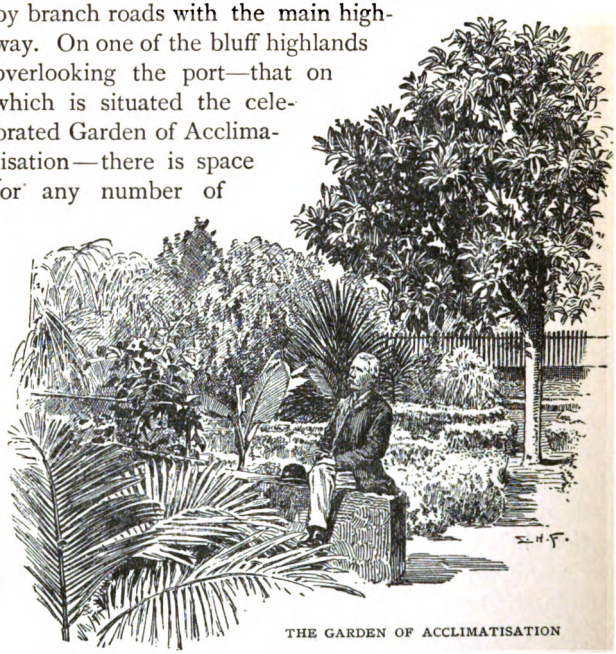
when one is basking in their genial winter sunshine, or reposing in their welcome shade, because the mind is then too much absorbed in thinking happiness rather than speaking of it; but, upon returning to the chilly North, and being obliged to cover the feet with rubber shoes to paddle through snow and unpleasant dampness, then the striking contrast with the beauty and mildness of this gorgeous climate is fondly spoken of.

On one occasion, crossing the last ridge and overlooking the plain of Orotava, the sun was setting over the distant island of Palma, illuminating the face of ocean, mountain, and valley with those wonderful floods of golden tints only depicted on canvas, with any approach to truth, by Turner.

On viewing another sunset from the same spot, masses of dark clouds obscured Palma and also the lower mountains of Tenerife, but the majestic snowy peak was still covered with sunshine. As far as earth was concerned, the sun had gone down into the sea. One of the first books read by children, wherever the English language is spoken, is 'Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.' How tenaciously it clings to memory all through life! The rule of three eventually comes naturally, and fractions do not drive mad. They are solid recollections pertaining to daily life. But for exalted retrospection belonging to the higher existence what can be more worthy of contemplation than the bright celestial city far up in the heavens? This view of the peak illustrates it vividly. It is Jacob's dream with the angels ascending into glory.

The Orotava slope from the mountain forests to the sea averages eight miles in width, and twelve or fourteen miles the other way. It abounds in romantic spots and comfortable residences. About its centre is the Villa or town of Orotava. On the sea coast, as its name implies, and four miles from the Villa, is the Port of Orotava. The port con-

tains many fine old mansions, evidences of departed wealth in wine and cochineal; but were it not for the half-dozen hotels which are situated there it would be a melancholy and uninteresting place. So great is the influx of visitors, that several new hotels are about to be built on more elevated sites, and each of them will be connected by branch roads with the main highway. On one of the bluff highlands overlooking the port—that on which is situated the celebrated Garden of Acclimatisation—there is space for any number of



THE GARDEN OF ACCLIMATISATION

hotels, boarding-houses, and private residences. A new town of great beauty will there arise to take advantage of that superb botanical garden—that fairylike park.

There are various accounts given of the origin of the Garden of Acclimatisation. Probably the true story is that towards the latter part of the last century a wealthy man

established it. He imported and planted a variety of trees, bushes, shrubs, and flowers from different countries, chiefly those of tropical and semi-tropical growth, and at his death he bequeathed the plantation to the Spanish nation. It gradually fell into neglect, and remained so for many years. Some enterprising people undertook its restoration, and an unlooked-for event happened which favoured them in doing so. A skilful young botanist was sent out from Europe to act as gardener to the Sultan of Morocco. The vessel in which that youth embarked was wrecked, and the young man, having lost everything but what he stood in, made his appearance in Orotava. It is stated that there and then he was snapped up, as one may say, and appointed, at a small rate of pay, to perform the duties of a well-paid Government official—a sort of poorly-paid curate-in-charge for an absentee rich rector. That curate has done his work well. It is not generally known what the official receives; but Mr. Wildpret, the curator, is only paid a salary of two hundred dollars annually. Exactly like the pastor of Sweet Auburn—

> A man he is to all the country dear,
> And passing rich on forty pounds a year.

This happened upwards of thirty years ago. The stipend has not increased. Mr. Wildpret is a Swiss, he is a man of remarkable genius in horticulture, and, as is the nature of those who devote existence to a speciality, he is kind, gentle, and courteous in his manner. An infant, on looking into his eyes, would open its arms to him. He has made it the object of his life to bring this charming place to such a state of perfection that it enchants all who pass through the high walls enclosing it. It is a welcome retreat, a rest for the weary, a place of meditation where no noise from the outer world is heard. There are bowers of rare floral beauty, positively inviting lovers to repeat the old old story. Above all, there is the Peak framed in a great variety of exquisite

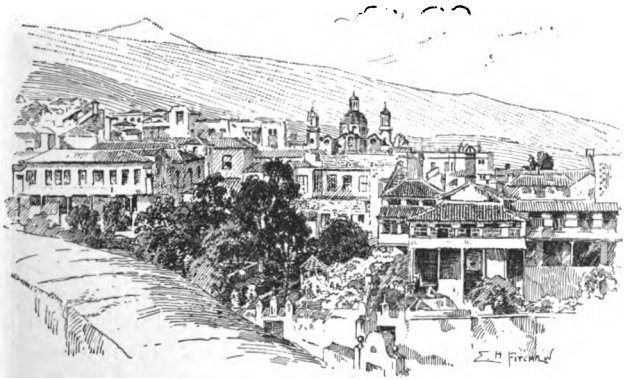
foliage. It is a gem, set in the midst of brilliant scenery, exactly where it ought to be. A statue should be raised to the man who invented that park pleasure-ground; and Mr. Wildpret should be properly remunerated. Of that garden may be truly said:—

> Whatever fruits in different climes are found,
> That proudly rise or humbly court the ground;
> Whatever blooms in torrid tracts appear,
> Whose bright succession decks the varied year;
> Whatever sweets salute the Northern sky
> With vernal lives that blossom but to die—
> These, here disporting, own the kindred soil,
> Nor ask luxuriance from the planter's toil;
> While sea-born gales their gelid wings expand
> To winnow fragrance round the smiling land.

There are two very fair inns at the Villa de Orotava. As visitors increase, other places of accommodation will open. Fine old buildings are plentiful not only here, but in nearly all the islands, upon which wealth has been freely scattered in times gone by. Some of them are adaptable for hotel purposes, but where the owner is a fierce and proud hidalgo, he is naturally averse to allowing his pretty gardens, cool corridors, and lofty apartments to be converted to public uses. Since the aniline dyes destroyed the profit in the cultivation of cochineal, it is melancholy to relate that many old family owners of property have become poor, and, like the apothecary in 'Romeo and Juliet,' not their will, but their poverty, consents to the sale of their hereditary lands and houses. There is no difficulty in renting premises suitable for private residence, and as provisions are cheap and abundant, families of moderate means may take up their abode at any place in the vicinity of a market and live economically. One winter's residence for a family, including ocean passage money, need not cost more than it would by staying all the while shivering at home, even if that home

be made as snug as the most modern appliances for limiting the admission of fresh but cold air can effect. In writing thus, allusion is made to common-sense people who can do with or without the many little comforts only to be had at home, without complaining.

For those who are so blessed by Dame Fortune that the cost of daily life is a matter of indifference, the best hotels are their proper abodes. When youth is combined with bins full of ducats and rouleaux of doubloons, it is a very delightful day-after-day existence—a succession of picnics,



VILLA DE OROTAVA

garden parties during daylight, and social gatherings in the evenings.

The streets of the Villa de Orotava are steep, and, as usual in all Spanish towns, churches are numerous. The houses are solidly built, the stonework is massive; so it is throughout the islands. The Alameda is a pretty, flat garden terrace, overlooking the valley and the sea. The Church of St. Augustine stands at one corner of it; close to that church is an old convent named after the same saint. It contains a luxuriantly grown-over courtyard garden, with

a silent fountain in its centre, appropriately capped with a bottomless kettle. The writer entered several of the lower rooms. They were unoccupied and going to ruin, but it takes centuries before ruins arrive at the not-to-be-mended stage. The wooden floors have disappeared, the light through fortress-like slit openings is very dim, and the perfume of rats and cats is perceptible. The upper story is tenanted by a few soldiers and their families. With a little outlay of money this convent could be transformed into a commodious residence. From its top there are three hundred and sixty degrees of wondrous panorama. Behind are mountains with the peak rising over them, and, turning round, there is the valley—which one never tires of looking at—sloping down to the sea.

It is as well to repeat that the Villa de Orotava—pronounced Vee-yah—and the Port of Orotava are two distinct towns separated by four miles of valley slope. The Vee-yah has been the residence of the wealthy, and a kind of West-End or Fifth-Avenue feeling pervades it still. The port, on the contrary, has been the industrial part; the commerce, when they had any worth alluding to, was conducted there, and is, and will still be, naturally, from its abutting on the sea. That portion of the port immediately over the sea level is possessed with an ancient and fishlike smell. Although rejoicing in a luxuriant Alameda close to the shaky harbour piers, yet the perfume indicated and the presence of poorer dwellings on the same low level make it objectionable; but that is really of no consequence to visitors, because all the hotels are higher up in pure air, and future hotels will be erected upon bluffs still higher.

Apart from resident medical practitioners in the chief towns of the Canary Isles, men qualified by Spanish law, and also two resident Englishmen in practice at Las Palmas, Grand Canary, and one at the Port of Orotava, English doctors are generally to be found among the guests at the

principal hotels, but they do not offer advice unless in cases of emergency, and then their services are cheerfully rendered. Thus invalids need never be without advice. It may here be observed that clergymen of various denominations are always to be found in some of the hotels, and that they

PORT OF OROTAVA

arrange for service on Sundays; also that Mr. Reid, the British vice-consul at the Port of Orotava, is noted for his urbanity to strangers.

The excellent carriage roads over this beautiful place afford invalids diversity of scenery in shade or sunshine; but an infinitely greater variety can be enjoyed by those who are

fond of horse exercise in exploring the rugged old roads and the mountain paths. Mules and donkeys are preferred by many for the same purpose. Palanquin-hammocks give a gentle swinging motion, somewhat like riding on a camel, and for slow but pleasant gliding over the hard, rough-paved ancient highways, there are luxurious carriages on sleds drawn by oxen. Thus visitors have every opportunity of daily exercise, either away to the highest mountain, wandering by the sea-beat shore, or strolling in level gardens.

Realejo, whence parties start to ascend the Peak, consists of two villages, one on each side of a deep gorge, down which a fierce torrent runs whenever rain falls. On one side is a tall square church tower, on the other is a very fine old dragon-tree. It well repays the fatigue of the steep ascent from the carriage road to photograph that dragon-tree, for it is an excellent specimen, and is said to be 500 years old.

From the western side of the mountain range bordering Realejo, an uninterrupted view of the Peak is obtained. It looks like one continuous incline or descent from the summit, but the rugged nature of the surface, in the immediate vision, plainly indicates that it is distance which smoothes the intervening chasms, cañons, and gorges into apparent uniformity. At Ecod is a moderately good house of entertainment, and, as the place is becoming very popular with strangers and foreigners, no doubt other inns will be opened. The sea-coast fronting Ecod is exceedingly bold and craggy. There is only one place, round the corner of a projecting rock, at the entrance to a great cavern, where it is possible to land in a ship's boat, and from which it is necessary to climb a steep path. The writer approached this spot by water, but the waves ran too high to attempt landing. The most complete and uninterrupted view of the Peak is obtained at sea about five miles straight out from Ecod. Boating on this coast is too dangerous to be practised for

pleasure. The lava rocks on the front of the Orotava slope are extremely rugged and wild. A line of white foaming breakers skirts the shore, only broken at one very limited spot

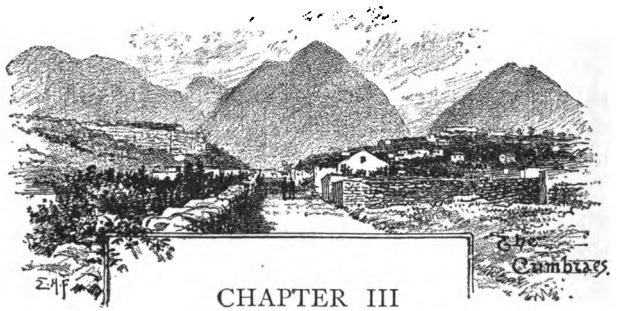
FOUNTAIN OF MARTINIEZ

by the Port of Orotava, where two stone piers form a small but almost useless harbour. These piers are gradually being washed away by the fierce Atlantic rollers. Nothing will be left of them in a few years.

Further north of the Port of Orotava—outside the town, a mile round the corner, at the foot of the road leading from the Grand Hotel—is a smooth bathing beach, sheltered by a steep hill landwards and by a reef of lava seawards. If Orotava increases, to justify the expense, this is the proper place for a harbour. Nature points it out distinctly and plainly. It only requires a breakwater to be built on the lava reef or ledge, and extended into deep water. A pathway from this bathing place is cut in the face of the hill; by its side, about halfway up, and from beneath a mountain mass of lava, there issues the celebrated fountain of Martiniez. Two round and never-ceasing solid streams of, as it were, imprisoned quicksilver rush into the air. All who look on recognise sparkling water in its most life-giving form. The black rocks, relieved by slight fernery verdure, enhance their brilliancy and beauty. These springs give that truly great luxury in a warm climate—pure drinking water. Well may the inhabitants of the Port of Orotava rejoice in their inexhaustible fountain.

A very ancient stage-coach plies twice daily between the Port and the Villa; it creaks and groans in every movement, like a wooden ship in a gale; its doors, high-perched, require a peculiar turn, twist, and wriggle to open and shut, reminding old boys of dear good Robson in the 'Wandering Minstrel' putting on his ragged coat 'two turns to the left and one to the right.' They (the doors) have a painful affinity for the hind wheels, and squeak. The driver is the only man who knows their little ways and can let a fare in or out. There is no fear of any one escaping without paying one shilling. Altogether it looks like the ghost of a mail-coach described by Dickens, and phantoms fill it. One feels their presence instinctively, and offers up thanks when the distance is run. It is an experience to remember. Half a mile below the Villa, at a junction of roads, victims conveyed by this curiosity, and also by another rattletrap from Rambla, change

into the half-omnibus already mentioned for conveyance to Santa Cruz. The stage leaves the Port at 6 A.M. and at 1.30 P.M.; its through passengers are supposed to cross the island in five or six hours; but that is a pleasing fiction, for the journey takes eight or nine hours. It is therefore better, if quick travel is desired, to take a carriage, or ride on horseback.



CHAPTER III

LA PALMA

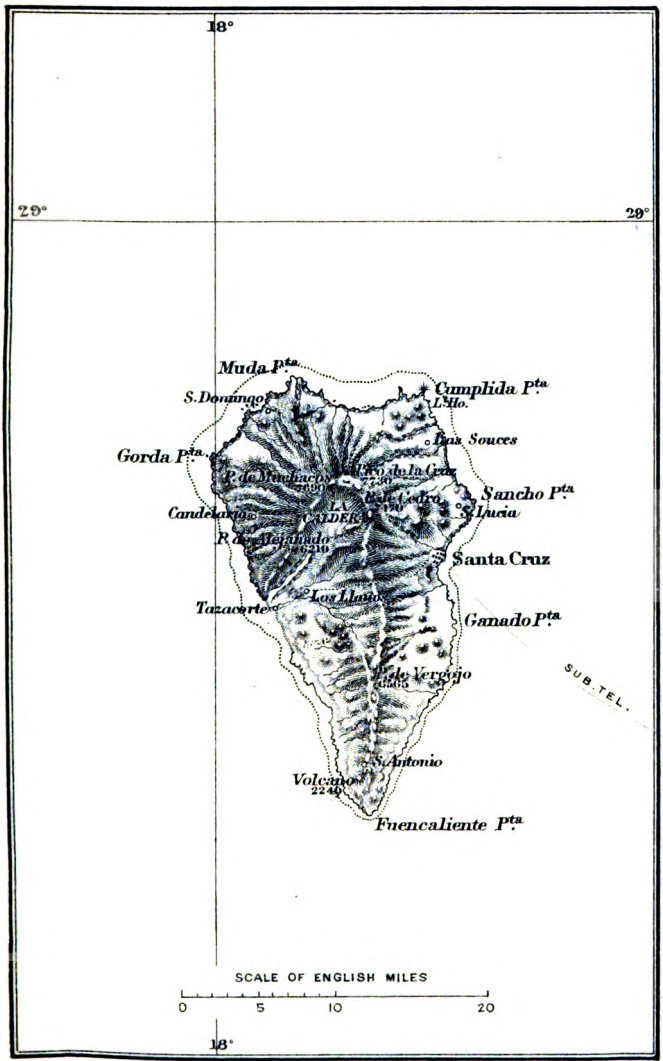
Its uplands sloping deck the mountain's side,
Woods over woods in gay theatric pride.

THE name of this exceedingly romantic and beautiful island, from its similarity to Las Palmas, the chief town of the island of Grand Canary, is apt to mislead; and the sacred appellation of its capital town, Santa Cruz, bewilders the intellect, because it is also frequently mistaken for another Santa Cruz—the chief city of the adjacent island of Tenerife.

La Palma, about the size of the Isle of Man, has a population of 30,000. It is shaped somewhat like a pear, the narrow end pointing to the south. A ridge of mountains, rising to the height of from 4,000 to 7,000 feet, runs up and down the centre, and at the northern end of the island, where the pear is the thickest, this ridge curves round towards the west in the form of a horseshoe. On the map, or viewed from a balloon, that elevated rocky vertebra presents the appearance of a pastoral staff, the crook or horseshoe end of which is formed by the celebrated crater called the Caldera.

The most convenient approach to the Caldera is along

PALMA



London. Stanford's Geog.l Estab.t

the banks of the turbulent current which flows from it. At the top, in the clouds, this extraordinary cavity is six or seven miles in diameter, probably more; but when one is so unusually high up in the sky, it is unreliable to judge distances by the eye.

The distinct character of the highlands of La Palma is pinnacle steepness and ruggedness. They go by the Scottish name of Cumbraes. On both sides of the cumbraes, not including the inner side of those forming the edge of the Caldera, there are rough but beautiful valleys stretching away down to the sea, which are tolerably well cultivated. These valleys are so mixed up with cracked lava-beds and dry watercourses that the paths along them, and also up their sides, are naturally irregular, and difficult to travel over.

Santa Cruz stands on the eastern side of La Palma, fronting the Peak of Tenerife. Its harbour is therefore very much sheltered from the direct violence of Atlantic rollers. A mole or pier runs into the bay, allowing boats to land and embark goods and passengers at excellent steps, in smooth water, to and from vessels anchored outside. Like all the piers in these islands, this one was commenced a long time ago, and it is not yet finished. Possibly the original plan of it formed a banquet for rats a couple of centuries ago. In these modern days blocks of concrete are run by flat trucks on rails to its end. As the inner pier side becomes masonically and therefore properly built, the rest of the blocks are cast into deep water, and when they rise well above the surface they are broken, and the interstices filled up, and thus the work goes on, but it progresses very slowly. The proprietors, contractors, or money-finders lack that go-ahead manner displayed by the French in constructing similar but more extensive works at Port Said, Phillipville, Algiers, Marseilles, and other harbours, enclosed by massive piers of larger concrete blocks.

The town is situated on the extreme slope of several

cumbraes ; it spreads out like a fan along the sea-shore, and houses extend up the valleys formed by these exceedingly fantastic mountain spurs. It is thus very erratic in its appearance, and somewhat resembles Dartmouth. The front door of many town residences is in a lower street, and an entrance from the flat roof of the same opens on to the level of a back street two or three stories higher. There are several detached houses, semi-detached villas, and a terrace at Douglas, Isle of Man, near to Derby Castle, with rocky precipices arising from their back gardens. There are many similar in this Santa Cruz de la Palma, but the back rocks are of lava with great bubble holes, which are utilised as cool cave resorts for siestas or for conviviality, and some of them are decorated with trees, plants, and fountains in a most romantic and pleasing manner.

The valleys naturally form watercourses, and they are called barrancas and barrancos. At the risk of repetition in describing them, it is to be borne in mind that there are no rivers in the Canary Islands. Rains commence in November and cease in May. Plains are few and limited in extent, so it is all tumbledown water when it comes. Of course, showers do not fall every day during that period, nor does the downfall interfere to any great extent with travel ; and, strange to say, the heaviest downpour takes place generally during the night-time. A barranco, when dry, is simply a bed of large and small boulders, and its width, as it advances downward to the sea, is regulated both by the formation of the landscape and the quantity of water dropped by the clouds. As rain falls in the elevated districts and gathers in its course, a fierce torrent results, sweeping everything before it, sometimes devastating villages and fertile regions. On account of the mountainous nature of these islands barrancos are numerous ; and, singular as it may appear, comparatively very little of the valuable water is intercepted for irrigation, so it tears down unmolested to the sea, accu-

mulating great force, until, upon meeting its level, it is swallowed up in the ocean.

The all but treeless islands of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura are frequently afflicted by a water famine, but that is never the case with La Palma, neither does it ever happen to any of the other islands.

The streets of Santa Cruz are very roughly paved. It is unpleasant to walk upon them, and the sidewalks are too narrow to be agreeable ; but a splendid modern road—the only good one on the island—suitable for the most fragile carriage or bicycle, winds from the mole upwards, and across the various ravines bordering the town, and into the country. That excellent highway continues right across one of the most fertile slopes or valleys in the archipelago. Indeed, for variety of mountain, plain, and ocean scenery, it ranks next to Orotava. Upon driving up towards that delectable district the rise is so gentle, and the mind is so absorbed, that the elevation attained is not perceived. Charming views of the bay on one hand, and of the mountains on the other, afford intense delight. The sudden and frequent changes from sunshine to shadow caused by clouds separating on the cumbrae tops, the backbone ridge of the island, yield marvellous effects of beauty and grandeur. One moment the steep and deep valleys are bright with verdure, and the next cast into deep gloom.

There were formerly two hotels at Santa Cruz de la Palma, now there are three ; the third is a large mansion recently opened under English management. The writer can only speak from personal experience of one house of entertainment, and although it is imperfect in every respect excepting the sea view from its balcony, yet it has sufficed hitherto for its patrons. The second was reported as better —and it had need to be ; he was urged to change to it, but for a brief stay it was not worth while.

At Sunday morning's mass at the venerable but ugly

—excepting the great entrance—church of San Salvador the building was about half full. Upon entering from sunshine the darkness is felt, but one's eyes soon get accustomed to dim religious light. The congregation was quiet, and behaved with reverence. The graceful head-dress of the females of the lower orders, all of white, and apparently of the same material, and those of the higher classes, consisting of what looked like black lace veils, formed a striking feature of the scene. The women all knelt together, but they were separated into their respective mantilla, light and dark shades, gentle and simple, rich and poor. The men clustered in groups, generally standing, but at certain parts of the service they dropped reverently on both knees, the poorer of them on the bare stone pavement, and those who possessed white handkerchiefs fluttered them from the pocket to the ground and knelt upon them. Little children sat beside their mothers on pieces of carpet or upon the cold stones, and they gazed with eyes of wonder—thus they learn reverence and good behaviour.

It was announced by a friend that at noon cock-fighting would commence. Sunday is the favourite day for this diversion. In many towns a special building is devoted to the purpose, and such places are invariably crowded, whilst the churches are not so. This appears very remarkable, as the latter are free, whilst to the former payment is requisite; but thus public taste is indicated. The tabernacle set apart for rooster combats in this town is circular in form, holds 500 spectators, and is well lighted by a glass dome. The pit where the battles take place is in the centre; it is railed round and wired in, and as the most interesting detail view of a small picture is obtained without raising or depressing the eyes, so the best sight of the gallant birds is immediately surrounding them, on nearly level vision. The seats in that part, therefore, command the highest prices. An all-round gallery, with rows of benches, rises by degrees to the under-

side of the dome, and as the occupants thereof sit upon their own shadows, the general light is excellent. Each gladiator bird is brought into this temple of joy covered by a cloth, through which can be heard awful imprecations and boasting. The chanticleers are not permitted to gaze upon each other's features until the proper time arrives—it would be injudicious, too cruel, too much for the feelings, and the men holding the wildly excited fowls would be certain to get pecked at, scratched, and spur-torn. The name and description of each feathered warrior is printed in the bill of the play. Feathered, did one say? That is not the proper term, for the poor victims are shaved behind the neck, also from beneath the wings down the legs to the gristle, and in addition to that indignity—verily, their own mothers would not know them—their combs are abbreviated close to the beak; so the sharp bright eye, from its bald head, looks fiercer than it does when ornamented by its usual plumage, and that eagle-like eye means business—strict business—no nonsense. Gamecocks thus mutilated look extremely ridiculous; survivors returning to private life must be objects of scorn to all well-fledged and well-conducted poultry.

Before the encounter bets are made, amidst shouting and yelling as fierce as at an election or on a race-course, and almost as ferocious as in a Stock Exchange. The writer does not exactly understand the routine, but showers of hard dollars, halves, and quarters are cast into the sanded pit, and picked up by brokers. These coins are the pledges of the backers.

The manager or president announces the names of the candidates for crowing cock of the walk. The pit is swept clean and freshly sanded. Silence prevails. A man holding each rival bird carefully covered over enters the pit, and the strugglers for liberty are then uncovered and brought face to face. Their wriggles to be free increase, and they are put down just inside the pit but at opposite sides, the men

retiring. Silence reigns supreme—not a sneeze, breathing is suppressed and held, a pin could be heard to drop—a rolling-pin. Meantime the two birds eye each other all over, their neck feathers ruffle and swell, and their solitary bunches of tail feathers wave to their utmost sweep, showing like an index that the fierce temper in their bosoms is about to burst into fury.

Sometimes they close at once, peck and strike with wings and spurs. Then a scuffle ensues ; the few feathers left fly like the distant view of emptying a pillow, partly obscuring and puzzling the view of the inexperienced. Sometimes one utters its battle-cry and receives its death-stroke at the same moment ; other fights are of a prolonged nature. As the conqueror's name is passed to the crowd of people outside, for whom there was no room inside, roars in tones of rage or joy rend the building and its vicinity.

Gamecocks are expected to fight to the bitter end. The eyes seem to be the favourite targets for pecking at. When both optics are destroyed, the unfortunate one wanders irresolutely and at random, wildly pecking at the air—this is a pitiful sight to witness. The other more fortunate Canary cock has the advantage, but it is not endowed with generosity ; it shows no mercy, but, using wings, beak, and spurs, it tramples its rival beneath its feet, and claws like a hen busy excavating, until it is pulled off by force. The vanquished one bows its sanguinary beak to the sand, or falls helplessly upon its back, and then the pit is cleared for a fresh pair. Screeching had been renewed all through the heat of the battle, and the same thing went on over and over again, hour after hour.

A cockfight is not pleasant to look upon after blood is drawn. The birds generally appear determined to extinguish each other, so when one is disabled the cruel war should be declared over, fighting should cease, and the victor be allowed to crow in peace. These game-birds are carefully

trained for their Sunday out. Each, when it arrives at the fighting period of life, is set apart underneath a wicker basket, so that it can gaze upon the world without partaking of its joys and sorrows. Amongst the latter may be included the formal visits of fond hens. Barnyard fowls possess a code of etiquette. It is pathetically described by Hans Andersen in his 'Ugly Duckling.'

The faces of the audience were not expressive of charity; probably their gentle manners and their best feelings were left at home, so as to revel in cruelty unrestrained.

The fishing community, their boats, their quaint manners and customs, and especially their catches, are always picturesque; and the tiny shipbuilding operations, denoting industry, all by the sea margin, are always objects of great interest. Here, those who love the sea and all pertaining to it may pass spare hours very pleasantly simply looking on. The building of small wooden vessels is more extensively carried on at Santa Cruz de la Palma than anywhere else in the islands.

It is good to examine some of those peculiar and pleasing old mansions, which are ornamented by wonderful carved doors and wainscotting—ideas brought by the ancestors of the present settlers of the island from the mother country and from the original La Palma of the Balearic Isles. Before America was discovered, the Canaries afforded a small but welcome outlet for a few of the overcrowded Mediterranean nations. In some of the great rooms of the residences alluded to—those used for ordinary entertainment—there are window embrasures larger than the bedrooms of modern Welsh lodging-houses; there are also extensive, roomy, and strong projecting balconies to correspond. A pair of double doors at the head of one wide staircase bears the wood-carved date of fourteen hundred and something. There is a very fair museum founded by one of the leading merchants, at present it is limited to the lower rooms of his residence; this collection

is only in its infancy, but, as much curiosity is excited and interest taken in everything pertaining to the Guanches, it promises to increase.

Beyond what has been but slightly noticed, and the customary and always pretty Alameda, there is nothing to invite long stay. La Palma will be much visited, not so much for the sake of its little port with its cock-fights as for the valleys, the cumbraes, and the Caldera, for in truth they afford views so grand, and yield astonishment so great, as to rank among the finest of any country.

After two days' abode in the very queer *fonda, posada*, or rookery at Santa Cruz de la Palma—already slightly commented upon, and the less the better, because it is not exactly the place that any happy mortal would select, without compulsion, as a haven for declining years—a start was made for El Campo, which, being interpreted, means the country. So, at nine o'clock on what may, with truth, be called an English autumn-like morning in a Canary March, a Norwegian, a Spaniard, and the writer set out for the Caldera. The Spaniard, a gushing youth of two-and-twenty, was the son of Señor Don Juan Cabrera Martin, to whom the writer had a letter of introduction. The Norwegian, a chance fellow-traveller, was, like the writer, well stricken in years. A very good man was he, and a well-informed ; and, in addition, he was also a very agreeable companion so long as he had everything done after his own manner ; but, for a growler —a prize growler—he wears the Canary and the Norse belts, for from the North Cape to the Tropic of Cancer it would be puzzling to find his equal. This extraordinary descendant of all the Vikings found fault with the eggs, the cheese, the biscuits, the pickles, the cloth, the napkins, the coffee, the mules, the dogs, the cats, the chairs, the balconies, beds and boulders ; and before he approved of liquor to fill his pocket-flask he worried in and out of a dozen wine shops, to the amazement of the merchants, clerks, and little boy

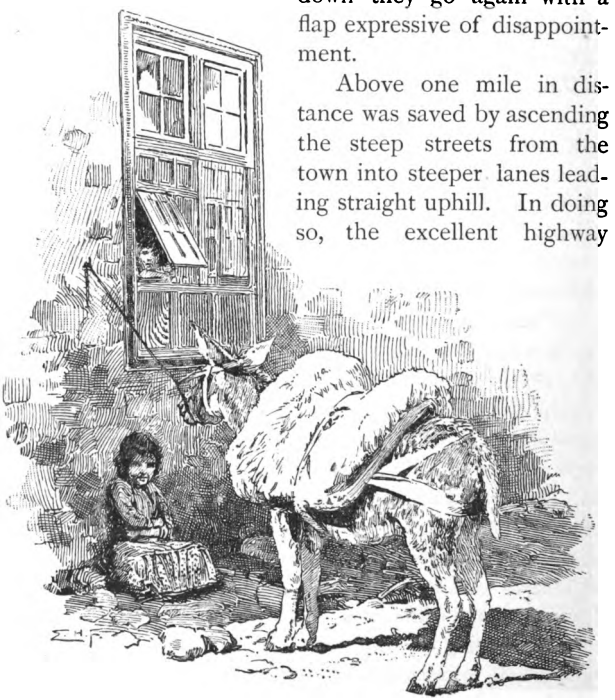
apprentices therein. But when he became better known to his fellow-tourists, good-nature shone through all his little eccentricities. This man, as is usual with educated Norwegians, spoke several languages, including Spanish, fluently; he was able, therefore, to abuse the good folk roundly—which he did.

The Spaniard conversed a little in English ; he had been in London and New York, and was full of admiration for high civilisation ; he made himself very agreeable, and sang the love songs of youth, hope, and joy, nearly all the time. His two friends rode mules, whilst the writer was favoured with a small but wiry horse. An active young brigand-like mountaineer attended to each animal, and, in addition, carried the baggage required for three days' absence. For convenience of stowage strongly made cotton-cloth saddle-bags were purchased, which the men slung over their heads. They are in universal use throughout the islands.

The starting of the cavalcade created a wonderful local commotion, especially amongst the boys and dogs who followed it along the main street through which its course ran. The clatter of the hoofs upon the pavement, and the barking of four-footed domestic admirers, brought to the windows those of the residents curious to see what the excitement meant. Lattices were raised, behind which pairs of eyes were visible, and nothing more. Sometimes the faces belonging to the eyes shone forth dimly but very prettily. It appears to be the chief delight of the females of Spanish countries—as well as it is, moderately so, of the ladies of other lands—to sit in window embrasures, gazing out at anything passing. *Postigos*, or lattices, throw a shade over peepers which enhance their appearance in a mysterious manner. Such little feminine freaks are welcome to both lookers-on and the observed, and they furnish agreeable subjects for conversation. Even when the streets appear dead, and the houses, as it were, buried in silence, liveliness

is created by the clatter of the *postigos*. As a footstep of man, woman, horse, or donkey sounds, instantly up rise the little shutters, and if the object is not worth looking at, down they go again with a flap expressive of disappointment.

Above one mile in distance was saved by ascending the steep streets from the town into steeper lanes leading straight uphill. In doing so, the excellent highway



A POSTIGO

already alluded to was several times crossed at right angles, until, no further advantage being gained by continuing that at first difficult feat of horsemanship, the new road for about three miles was trotted over. Here an ancient and evil *camino* branched off to the west, but before taking departure from that good one, the valley spreading out towards the south de-

manded attention and admiration. Its resemblance to that of Orotava has been suggested. It is a fertile slope studded over with vineyards, hamlets, villages, and farms, extending as far as the curve of the island permits vision ; bounded on its border by the white foam of the restless sea breaking upon rocks, and upwards by forests girding the cumbrae sides. The tops of the mountains are hidden now and then in the clouds. Many farms appear in the form of terraces built up with stone walls. Here, as at Orotava, there is a great scarcity of trees. Here and there are clusters of palms which always add exquisite beauty to any scenery, and occasionally there are stunted but wide-spreading fig-trees, but it lacks umbrageous oaks, or elms, or large trees of any sort to be called good landscape. Looking backwards, the straggling town of Santa Cruz shows away beneath, with the tiny vessels resting on the blue waters of the bay. The cumbraes to the north are dotted over with white spots surrounded by green, the suburban residences of the well-to-do class. Then the Peak of Tenerife appears sixty miles distant, snow-clad, and floating in space like a vision. The land beneath it is invisible ; only the sea-line and the haze above it indicate that the intensely delicate pyramid-shaped bride-cake belongs to an island. It is, indeed, a wonderful and a glorious sight—one that never can be forgotten. Struggling through the forests right up to the summit, every minute we glance back at that enchanting prospect. At every turn in the path our eyes instinctively seek out the Peak, and there it is framed in an ever-charming and infinite variety of romantic foreground.

Departing from the good main road means leaving civilisation behind. The rugged mountains are in front, and they must be travelled over. They appear as if densely covered with forest, but in this case appearances are not to be relied upon, for when entering 'woods over woods in gay theatric pride,' disappointment is the result. The trees

are small, and not so closely packed together as sight and imagination pictured them at a distance.

The paths are execrable. All the materials exist upon the spot for converting them into smoothness, but they are just as the Guanches left them. In rocky places, and over lava beds, the same holes are now stepped into and out of by donkeys, mules, and horses that existed hundreds of years ago. But, look in whatever direction one will, the scenery is superb. Ascending by one of the mountain spurs in the usual corkscrew manner, the path appears to hang over—nothing ; anon it winds among graceful clusters of ferns. Trees of the laurel species give way to pines, and above all are heather bushes. There is great abundance of these hardy plants ; many specimens are twenty and thirty feet high, and they are mostly covered with lovely white blossom. The charm of the forest is enhanced by the singing of birds. Nightingales and blackbirds are numerous. Their sweet songs are interrupted occasionally by the croak of the raven and the shriek of the eagle. Most of the cliffs are clothed with strange vegetation of singular beauty. We are presently enveloped by clouds so thick that it is impossible to see one another, so progress is made slowly and cautiously to avoid stumbling—feeling the way, as it were. When about halfway up, a piece of level rock is reached; here we dismount, take rest and refreshment, and gaze and breathe joy. At length the summit, 4,000 feet high, is attained, and luckily the clouds vanish like colossal ghosts, and there is revelry in the blue azure. We are too glad to speak, and feel as insignificant as tiny midges. The grandeur of the position impresses each with golden silence. The best feelings of man are in his heart during such oases in the desert of life. Clouds from the Atlantic again envelop and shut out all view. The thermometer showed 50°. In the hotel at Santa Cruz, just before starting, it registered 67°.

Descending on the other side, the path presented such a frightfully steep, stony, slippery, ugly aspect that the author dismounted and walked. So did the Norwegian, but the Spanish caballero stuck to his mule until he came to where man and beast would be cheerfully entertained to a succession of somersaults, and then he promenaded likewise.

Emerging from the shade of straggling firs, a shrine, built beneath an unusually large tree of that species, is respectfully looked at. We now fairly enter upon the western slope of the island. It is similar to that on the other side, but richer in cultivation. Fruit trees in blossom add materially to the beauty of the homestead farms and vineyards. Clouds from the Atlantic drop rain more freely upon the western sides of these islands, hence the improved condition of agriculture thereon. Tobacco is extensively grown, and sugar-cane moderately so. We passed through many picturesque villages, in one of which the children from a national school were just rushing out to their mid-day interval for refreshment. It was cheerful to witness their gambols. They appeared as pleased as we were. But their voices and our clatter roused up the sleeping dogs of the neighbourhood. Disturbed from their siesta they bestowed upon us the usual imprecations which, with true canine etiquette and sagacity, are reserved for strangers.

At two o'clock in the afternoon—thus having taken five hours to travel less than a dozen miles—weary and hot, Los Llenos, one of the several villages convenient for putting up for the night before starting to the Caldera, was heartily welcomed.

In the present condition of rural inns on these islands, it is strongly advisable for invalids to rest satisfied wherever they can find a residence to please them in or about towns. For all those fond of rough travel, and who are able to make the best of everything, from an orthodox bed to the

shelter of a cavern, the case is entirely different, for certainly no life can be better suited to their taste than wandering in romantic regions to pastures new wherever fancy inclines.

Our house of entertainment at Los Llenos was a fair sample of what one may expect in leaving comfort behind. Probably the roadside inns of England were no better a couple of hundred years ago. In an attic of the Old Cheshire Cheese Inn at Wallasey, recently pulled down by the sapient local authorities to enlarge the road—why not have widened the highway, and left the Cheese in the middle thereof as a relic, if even only for the refreshment of Macaulay's New Zealander?—King William III. slept before embarking for the battle of the Boyne. It was a small three-cornered garret nest, dimly lighted by one small square of glass deep set in the gable. This inn of Los Llenos is infinitely superior to that Old Cheshire Cheese, for it contains three lofty bedrooms, all on the ground, the only floor. We were lucky in having the best room allotted for our accommodation, but not as sole tenants, for another man assisted in the music of dreams. That apartment, about twenty-five feet square, was furnished with four trestle-beds, things which fold up readily, one planted in each corner. No sooner had we stretched our weary forms on those rickety apologies for beds, to rest for a while before dinner, than an inundation of visitors took place, composed of friends of our young Spanish companion. They were kind in their enquiries, and were much interested in wanting to know all about us, and much more than we knew ourselves or than anybody could tell them. Repose was out of the question. These village heroes remained so long that their wives and daughters, no doubt becoming anxious, came, ostensibly, to call for them, but really to hold converse with our gay young Don Juan, who was evidently a great favourite, and as full of news and as ready to impart it as a walking budget could be.

At length dinner was announced in a dismal saloon situated at the back of the house. A small opening in the wall led to the kitchen. That opening was used to pass in the provisions. It passed in, as well, the conversation of numerous women, who screamed to each other rather more than the occasion warranted. Truly we were much honoured, for the preparations were more than customary. It might have been a Lord Mayor's banquet, there were so many cooks, cooks' mates, and cooks' advisers. Several babies left neglected by their natural guardians in odd corners, on the floor, and outside, began to cry, and call out 'Mamma, mamma.' Theirs were home-like, pleasant tones, and strangely refreshing to hear rising above the other voices. The majority of the courses served up were highly flavoured with garlic, but being all so wildly hungry that generally objectionable flavour only added zest to the appetite. Whatever was placed upon the table vanished, and no questions were asked. It was a thoroughly enjoyed banquet. During the progress of dinner, and subsequently, the attentions of our friend's friends became rather too noisy and embarrassing. At length two of these worthies quarrelled about the description of a serenade; so, not being deeply interested in their local loves, the writer escaped, unnoticed, to the universal dormitory, the only other room to go to, and fell asleep, notwithstanding the loud conversation and banging of doors, which did not cease until long after midnight. The host and hostess of this small inn are really obliging people, but comforts and cleanliness are unknown to them. Doubtless they will improve as visitors increase. At any rate, there are abundance of private houses where lodgings can be obtained in Los Llenos, and also at villages in its neighbourhood.

At half-past seven on the following morning, after hot coffee and very tough beefsteak for breakfast, the final start for the Caldera was made, and the happy return safe and

sound to the same *fonda*, for the second night, took place at half-past five.

The path leading to the Caldera is one of the worst that can be imagined, but the animals are so sure-footed that there is very little danger. Leaving Los Llenos, it winds along the bottom of a narrow steep-sided barranco for about one mile, and then it stretches uphill to the very edge of a frightful precipice, along which it continues for some distance. Looking backwards, there was a panoramic view of the fruitful plain which had been crossed on the previous day, revelling in the brightness of the morning sun, and stretching from the mountain base to the sea foam. Immediately beneath, in front, away far down, and along a rough, rugged valley, like an irregular silver band, ran a small stream. It came from the very bottom of the Caldera. In descending to the lowest part of the Cañyon an artificial open ditch was crossed ; it is about thirty inches wide and two feet deep, and it contains a silent stream of clear, cold water ; dismounted and kneeling down with lips to it and drinking, is like drinking of the fountain of life, joyful and refreshing. This is evidently an old piece of engineering, for it has much vegetable growth on either side, and in many places fairy bowers conceal it altogether from view. Higher up the Cañyon, from the other side, there can be observed two of these aqueducts in parallel lines running at different heights, through which the water meanders around the sides of the mountains, to irrigate the sloping plain fronting the Atlantic.

Arrived at the margin of the river—for it is deserving of that honourable name at this time of the year (March), and although small, it makes a wonderful noise for its size—there suddenly appears a farmhouse perched on the bank, well over and out of reach of the fierce running water. There is no mistaking this homestead, as it is the first in the Cañyon. A middle-aged dame was there, one of benevolent aspect, and the mother of three plump daughters.

They welcomed us into a stone-built room, as roughly constructed—in comparison—of pieces of lava and boulders, as a very primitive log cabin is out West. Eight chests are ranged round it for seats. Ascertaining that we were thirsty, the dame had some oranges culled from the nearest tree, and, in addition, she ordered in three goats, which were milked not by the gentle señoritas, but by a man of strength, for those butting beasts sometimes require rough handling. The matron, accepting a cigar, commenced to smoke with much relish. Her eldest daughter's husband, a handsome, lithe, active man of about thirty-five years of age, offered his services as guide to the Caldera and back, just for the fun of the thing. He was born upon that spot, but had lived for fourteen years in Cuba. Experience of other lands has imparted a firmness of character to him which all who explore the Caldera under his guidance will appreciate. It inspires confidence, and unless one has that in a cicerone, it is just as well to do without one. Mounting a kicking horse, our gallant leader led the way up the barranco, sometimes by one side of the stream and sometimes by the other, selecting the smoothest and shallowest places for the animals to wade across.

Upon striking up the hill from the narrow valley, we could not keep anything like pace with our hero, who frequently appeared on cliffs, far up in the air, looking like a flying Pegasus. Our excited mountaineering guardian was evidently loth to wait, but very often he kindly did slacken speed for his laggard followers. Occasionally he vanished out of sight, round corners. These paths, for there are several, are only wide enough for half a horse, so it requires much dexterity, with eyes right and left, to preserve one's balance and keep from rolling over. A negro poet remarks, 'Jordan is a hard road to travel, I believe.' It is so, but Jordan cannot be compared in roughness and the scattering of profanity to the approach to this Caldera.

Few people have ever seen anything like it; it is a pure and simple steep and ugly mountain path, without the slightest protection. It is much more sensible to walk, because in doing so there is no risk, and short cuts, abbreviating distance considerably, can be made by climbing the easiest of the steep places.

THE CALDERA

At length, upon arriving at a plateau, very similar to Inspiration Point, hovering above the Yo-Semite Valley, California, and looking down four thousand feet, there is the Caldera. It takes one's breath away, for it is so unusual a sight, and so utterly unlike God's smiling earth. One can imagine

fixing one's eyes upon it long enough to turn into a pillar of sulphur. Rugged hills form a circle, one of seven miles across—a circle difficult to grasp, it is so like eternity, so incomprehensible. That great round is only broken by the Cañyon, with the river flowing through it. Each of the mountain tops is recognised by a separate name, and each is a kingdom of its own. They are, in truth, princes of the air, cloud-splitting scenery creators. The name of the highest is Pico del Muchachos. Their sharp edges, of vast precipitous incline, cause those deep shadows so truthfully depicted by Gustave Doré. There is no level ground at the bottom. A child would decide that the infernal regions must be there or thereabouts. All is weird and fantastic, as if a great city had been hurled headlong, mingling churches, palaces, terraces, mosques, synagogues, and temples; and all turned brown and black with antiquity.

> Swimming shadows and enormous shapes,
> Some fully shown, some indistinct, and all
> Mighty and melancholy.

A few of the steep hillsides surrounding this dreadful place are sparsely timbered with pines. Others are masses of cinders of brown and scarlet hues. Others again are gigantic heaps of black lava.

Clouds at times obscured the peaks; they also swept over and thoroughly drenched the lookers-on, but the author was fortunate enough to obtain a few photographs between the cloud acts.

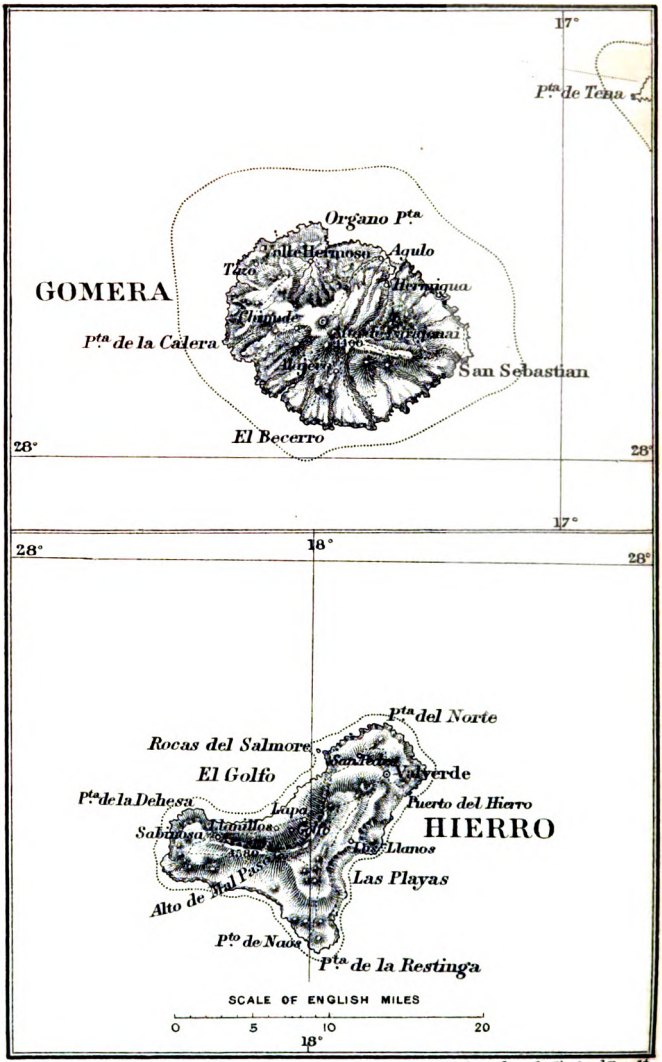
The sunshine and the clouds, the rain and the rainbows, throw marvellous effects of light and shade into the abyss in every direction. The cloud-masses moving solemnly through the sky, and being divided by the pinnacles, covering and uncovering them high up and low down for miles upon miles, and all done in perfect silence—painful silence—impresses the mind in such a mysterious manner that it baffles description.

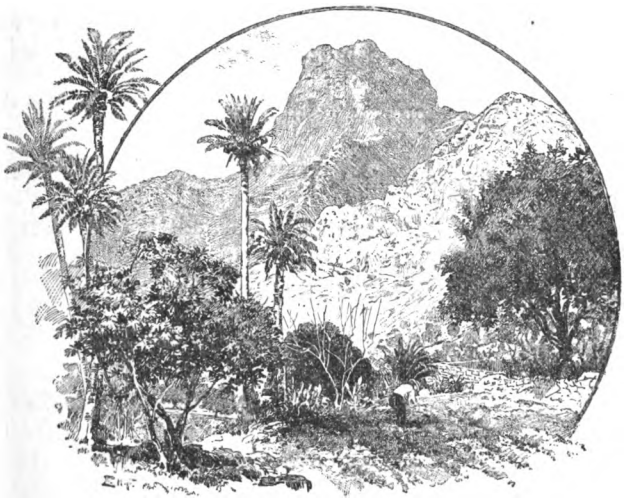
A longer stay than a couple of hours is necessary to appreciate the grim and savage picturesqueness of that colossal cavity. Its panorama varies from moment to moment, for ever and ever. It is awful—sublime! All the artificial forces of mankind combined are as nothing in the presence of that almighty upheaval and subsidence.

There are not many farmhouses in the Cañyon leading to the Caldera, but favoured spots are chosen where terraces are under cultivation.

For active men a trip to the Caldera of Palma is a most enjoyable one, but they should take a tent with them and camp out. In several uncanny spots they can satisfy the most romantic desires by residence in roomy, well-ventilated caverns, where it is possible to live like the Count of Monte Cristo, or after the manner of Friar Tuck, wandering at will wherever fancy leads, and enjoying pure air in one of the most delightful climates in the world. It is just the place for all who love mountains to feel happy and contented in.

On the following day the nature of the return to Santa Cruz was similar to that of the sheep lost by Little Bo-peep. A different and a much longer route was travelled, over mountains of pure cinders, through laurels, pines, firs, and heather; but as the clouds persistently enfolded us when in the highlands, the journey, as forcibly expressed by the Norwegian, was not agreeable. Wet garments cling closer than a brother, and they tend to damp the most lively spirits; but upon descending towards Santa Cruz welcome sunshine dispelled the clouds, and cheerfulness speedily followed.





VALLE HERMOSO

CHAPTER IV

GOMERA

Where the mermaid is decking
Her green hair with shells.

THIS pretty little island, a conglomeration of mountains rising grandly from the sea, is shaped like a plum-pudding, a round one which had burst with joy upon its envelope being removed. Its surface, according to the space occupied on the map, measures about the same as the Isle of Wight, and its inhabitants number 15,000.

As approached either from Hierro or Tenerife, Gomera presents a stern and forbidding aspect, especially if the sea exhibits wildness. The outline of its mountains is steep and abrupt. Coming from Hierro, one view very much resembles the Old Man of Hoy in the Orkneys. Sailing along

towards its chief town, San Sebastian, the only variations in the monotonous rocky coast are the mouths of barrancos, the principal one forming a small valley, at the mouth of which the village of Santiago appears. Strata of yellowish brown sandstone show out beneath lava, and cross ridges of brittle slaty stone, as described hereafter, are numerous. The eastern side, like that of Tenerife and Hierro, is barren in appearance; and, as in those islands, it is only in occasional patches that cultivation is visible to the eye or that trees are to be discerned. The beautiful valleys of Gomera front to the north and to the west.

San Sebastian harbour is a break in the mountains of three-quarters of a mile in width, fronted by a tolerably smooth beach of shingles and black sand. The town is built close to the sea shore, on the north side of a valley which extends two miles inland. The bottom of that valley is a wide barranco, terminating in a swamp, water from which forms a brook flowing across the beach. On both sides are hills terraced on their steep slopes for farming purposes, but the upper terraces have not been operated upon for many years past. Neglect of this character meets the view in every one of these islands, showing that agriculture, conducted under the difficulty of climbing, was not profitable enough for continuation, and it may therefore be inferred that the discouraged toilers migrated to better yielding lands in the New World. There are enormous quantities of round stones in the valley of San Sebastian, which have been hurled down from the mountains, and carried along and rounded in their progress by barranco torrents. A few millions of them have been picked up here and there, and built into walls, some of which are twenty-four feet wide and from five to seven feet high, leading one to believe, from a distance, that they are elevated roads; but that is not the case, the boulders were collected so as to utilise the soil beneath. On those reclaimed spaces three crops of onions are annually

gathered, chiefly for export to Havana. For the better health of the town the marshy portion of this valley should be reclaimed, and brought under cultivation.

A very solidly constructed square tower, built A.D. 1470, rises from the margin of the morass; it is three stories high, and is occupied as a barrack. This building bears evidence of being part of a tolerably extensive castle, the remainder of which has been obliterated, probably by floods, for the formation of the valley, draining the mountains rising from it away at its back, invites sudden inundations.

Fort San Cristobal is built upon a rock at the northern end of the harbour, but its guns are dismounted and rusty. Projecting from this rock is a small curved promontory of black lava affording shelter to vessels from northerly and westerly winds, as well as safe landing and moorings for fishing-boats; and at the other side of the promontory, facing the Peak of Tenerife, is a third old fort.

The church of San Sebastian of itself is commonplace-looking, but when it is taken into consideration that, inside its walls, Christopher Columbus and his crew last worshipped before venturing upon the great voyage of discovery, it becomes a monumental record and a relic of interest to the whole world—a sanctuary well entitled to rank as one of the most celebrated in history. The floor is of brick, built over vaults now disused. Among the paintings on its walls is a fresco much damaged by time; it represents ships of war attacking Fort Cristobal. Cannon-balls and chain-shot are pictured as flying about promiscuously, some are bounding on the rocks, others are in mid-air. No human eyesight could possibly discern so many all at once. The flags flying from the vessels are nearly as large as the ships themselves, and the same coloured ensign—red all over—is depicted as floating over the fort. If any of those flags are meant for the British ensign, the paint of the Union Jack has vanished. Boats filled with men appear in that terrific

work of art as if about to land. It is a strange medley, and impossible to say whether it is intended to commemorate the English or the Dutch attack on Gomera.

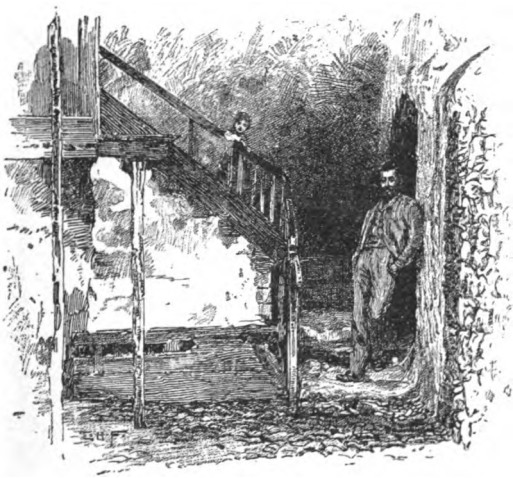
The town of San Sebastian consists of one main street and three back alleys. With but few exceptions the houses are mean and wretched, very little, perhaps just a shade, better than the habitations in Hierro hereafter to be described.

THE HOUSE OF COLUMBUS (FRONT)

At a dozen doors distance above the church in the main street stands the house of Christopher Columbus. It has been re-roofed during the last hundred years, but the floors and the window embrasures bear evidence of the use of centuries. It consists of two stories. The lower rooms are used as chambers, and the upper ones for the storage of cochineal and grain. The back part, upstairs, including the balcony corridor overlooking the courtyard, is turned

into a joiner's workshop. The property belongs to a lawyer, who resides in the adjoining house. Here Columbus lived when he traded to the coast of Guinea, and here he doubtless pondered over the limited charts of the period before sailing out of them and into the unknown. On each of his three celebrated voyages to America, Columbus made stay, filled up his final supplies, and sailed last from here.

About one hundred yards behind the castle tower (A.D



THE HOUSE OF COLUMBUS (COURTYARD)

1470), in the midst of a grove of very tall and very magnificent palm trees, and adjoining a small, old cemetery, stand the ruins of a monastery. Monasteries and convents are always found in the most desirable spots, illustrating the wisdom of their founders. But few of the rooms of this one are tenantable, and they are inhabited by paupers and beggars. Those of them who are able to walk waylay the unwary stranger for a restoration subscription, but not for the building. The floors and staircases have given way. In several

parts the roof has fallen in, admitting rain through the first floor into the lower rooms, some of which are desolate in the extreme.

There is but one *fonda* in San Sebastian, planted where it generally is in homely hamlets in other Christian lands, appropriately opposite the church, in order that dry discourses may be intelligibly and quickly moistened. It is an ancient hostelry, and very suggestive of rats, for the floor in the bedroom was old, worn, patched, and full of holes. Those holes admitted light from a bedroom beneath where several women abode, so that it was a case of waiting patiently until they ceased talking and extinguished their light, before changing the camera plates.

To give the reader a clear and definite idea of how the clerk of the weather behaves himself in these charming islands, and now having arrived at what may be called the halfway island in this short description of the Canaries, it appears opportune to state the result of observations taken during the author's longest stay in the island of Grand Canary. These remarks apply equally to the climate of Tenerife; and, as before mentioned, this island of Gomera, together with Hierro and La Palma, is cooler; and Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, on the other hand, warmer.

The writer landed at Grand Canary in the middle of October, and left at the end of the following May. Three months of that time were spent in visiting the other islands. During October and until November 15, at about two o'clock every morning—the coolest time of the night—the thermometer in a room in the city of Las Palmas showed 70° to 72°; and at two o'clock in the afternoon—the hottest hour of the day—from 72° to 77°—thus exhibiting a range of seven degrees. The heat daily absorbed by the land is given forth at night, and replaced by the cooler sea-breeze naturally rushing in. That is the cause of the evenness. On November 15, the barometer fell half an inch, from 29·5

to 29. Dark clouds came rolling up from south-west to north-west. Presently lightning flashed, thunder rolled, and rain came down abundantly. That operation of nature reduced the temperature. Residents announced it as the beginning of winter. The daily range of the thermometer to the end of November was at 2 A.M. from 65° to 68°, and at 2 P.M. from 69° to 72°. During December, January, and February it did not fall at any time more than five degrees lower. In March a rise commenced in the same ratio as the fall, and the merry month of May ushered in the same temperature as October.

For the general convenience of travel over these islands, excepting Grand Canary and Tenerife, which two may be considered as easy for the tourist as the Isle of Thanet, and much more convenient than the Shetlands and Orkneys, it is advisable to carry letters of introduction to men of local influence. By so doing over-charges on the part of muleteers and guides are avoided ; information is also imparted as to routes to be taken, and much hospitality is freely given and accepted ; and, better than all, the quiet and graceful Spanish domestic life, simply delightful to witness, is enjoyed.

The author presented a letter of introduction to Señor Don Manuel Marcias, one of the leading men in the island, and, like King Cole, he proved a merry old soul. Don Marcias imparted much knowledge, and gave many valuable directions as to visiting interesting localities in Gomera. He also furnished the writer with a letter of introduction to Don Manuel Casanova y Bento of Hermigua. So, on the third morning after the writer's arrival (April), he hired a mule and a muleteer for one week or more, and sallied forth—as he loves to do—in quest of adventure, with no definite plan where to go to, but armed with a pipe and tobacco, and provided with plenty to eat by the way, trusting to chance and the weather.

A simple levelling of lumps, intended for a road, is now going on for one mile from San Sebastian. It cannot, even out of compliment to the man who is making it—for he is a good fellow, and doubtless a capable engineer—be called a road. There is, strictly speaking, no road in the island, although an attempt at one has been made at the Valle Hermoso, but it leads nowhere. When the end of that lump-levelling is reached, one has to take to the barranco. A clear babbling stream flowed through part of it, eddying in liquid music around boulders.

Upon rising ground at the foot of the hill leading to the mountains is a farm, with its orange groves, banana plants, maize, onion, and potato fields. The buildings contain rooms for preparing and storing cochineal, and a *gofio* mill is worked by a stream of water fresh from a mountain. The estate belongs to Don Marcias, and he gave a picnic there on the writer's return from the interior of the island. It is delightfully situated, with a peep of the sea over San Sebastian. A full sweep of the valley is in front of it, and behind are the mountains and the clouds. Mountain-lands create the love of clouds, because it is only there that it can be perceived how much they contribute to vary the picturesqueness of the landscape, as a veil varies the beauty of a young bride. The rough region around abounds with romantic donkey walks, goat paths. and perhaps—very likely—fairies, for there are the glens and the wild flowers belonging to them which they love so well.

On this eminently appropriate elysium Don Marcias is about to build an hotel; he intends to make a proper road down to the seashore, and to import an omnibus to fit the road. It is a solemnly comical reflection to think that that omnibus will be the first wheeled vehicle on this island since its creation, or eruption. Perambulators will follow. When this hotel is opened it will be a most delightful spot for those who are in search of health combined with quiet,

for although San Sebastian is looked upon with awe by the rustics of the isle as a majestic metropolis, still it is not exactly a desirable abode for those who prefer to enjoy life in a better manner with more enticing surroundings.

As previously remarked, the beautiful places in Gomera are situated on its northern and western sides; but how to get at them from San Sebastian, the only good harbour which the island possesses, is the present difficulty. That difficulty, however, will be speedily overcome. The way to those lovely spots lies over the highlands, but the paths are so utterly bad, so rugged and steep, that they are only fit to be traversed on foot for enjoyment, or on mules for luxury, and only so by active people. Of course, such fortunate folks are sure to revel in delight and excitement, as they always do, amidst brilliant scenery; but what is pleasure to them would be torture to the delicate in health; yet it is absolutely necessary that they, too, must be enabled to go over those elevations, else what was the island made for? They, too, must breathe the air high up above the clouds, bracing the mind, body, and nerves to a feeling amounting almost to intoxication; and they, too, must drink of the clear, cold springs of living water by the wayside. To effect this purpose the most eminent engineering cannot very well remove the mountains without inflicting injury upon the scenery; but hammocks and skilled hammock-bearers can be organised. Those extremely useful conveyances are already in use in Tenerife and Grand Canary. They have been brought from Madeira, and there is no doubt of their being on hire, sooner or later, as cabs are in Great Britain, in every island in the Archipelago; meantime, whoever desires one can import it.

Leaving the farm of Don Marcias on the right, you cross, recross, and ride through the water of the barranco. San Sebastian, for the present, is lost to view, and the cumbraes are in front. The writer's mule here acted in such an unruly

manner, tossing its head back at the flies tormenting it, and, when remonstrated with, kicking up its hind-legs, falling upon its knees as if performing penance duty, and objecting to face the mountain, that he dismounted, and sent it back to San Sebastian, with a note to Don Marcias requesting him to send a better animal. This happened near to the hamlet Atajo. The inhabitants good-naturedly flocked around, and formed interesting foreground groups in picturing the scenery. A singular mass of slate rock attracted attention ; it resembled an old castle wall, and extended as far as vision carried from the top of one mountain, across the valley, to the top of the opposite one, varying in height from four to fifty feet above the surface, excepting where the stream ran over it, and preserving a tolerably uniform thickness of from six to ten feet. As already stated, similar formations had been observed from the sea when coasting along the island. They are ridges crossing lava at right angles, and are composed of horizontal layers of grey, slaty, brittle stone, browned at the top. Upon loosening several flat pieces with a pocket-knife they came out perfectly square, and in slabs. Probably beneath the surface, away from the action of the atmosphere, there may be good hard slate, fit for commerce, but it requires pickaxes and delving to ascertain that.

A stranger is struck with wonder at some of the enormous masses of lava, underneath many of which is a stratum of yellow and light-red coloured sandstone. Sea-shells abounding in the sandstone, high up in the hills, tell in the plainest language that it was the seashore which was thrown up there in the great boiling upheaval of Nature.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the muleteer returned with a better animal. It was then raining heavily, and threatened to keep at it all night. To proceed up the mountain waste and be caught in darkness where no dwelling is, meant dampness and trouble, and to return to a bed at San Sebastian was open to the natural dislike which most

folks have of the very idea of going back when once on the wing, no matter where to. Perceiving the forlorn condition of the mule, the muleteer, and the author, an aged goatherd kindly offered the shelter of his mountain hut, graciously adding :—

> Though my portion is but scant,
> I give it with good will.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Then turn to-night and freely share
> Whate'er my cell bestows;
> My rushy couch and frugal fare,
> My blessing and repose.

And the invitation was gladly accepted. The good old man and his good old wife gave us to eat of what they had. It was indeed a frugal supper, composed of thick soup made of lentils, onions, yams, and garlic, supplemented by the standard *gofio*, of which anon. Hunger, and the generous manner of entertainment, made it very acceptable. It was apparent that the addition of two unexpected guests, without counting the mule, to partake of their evidently scanty supper had curtailed the sufficiency, but they showed it not. After their food had entirely disappeared, and that operation was very speedily effected—for the cooking-pot was well scraped by a well-worn spoon accustomed to the work—the saddle-bags were produced, whence came forth meat, Abernethy biscuits, and wine, which the worthy couple, loth to partake of at first, afraid of using up the provisions meant for travel, at length thoroughly enjoyed. It was to them a banquet. Tobacco then appeared, and the host made cigarettes (pipes are seldom used, even by the poorest), and then the incense of satisfaction arose in whiffs, which speedily, by the aid of an old briar, became small clouds ascending through the open door into the still evening air.

It is a wild habitation, perched upon the very edge of a

precipitous rock, directly beneath which a commodious cave opens, where the mule was comfortably sheltered from rain, bedded, and fed. A jump from its only door would land one fifty feet straight down in a second; but there was no occasion to adopt that hurried manner of exit, and no advantage to be gained, for by holding on by the hands to the inequalities of the rude masonry, and planting the feet dexterously in cavities of the narrow base of rock, its entrance was successfully arrived at and departed from in comfort. How the neighbours manage to call after dark without breaking their necks is a mystery. After supper the good old hostess, in bare feet, made several journeys to the stream below, bringing back, mathematically balanced on her head, small jars of water to fill a larger one, beside which was a tin dipper for the use of whoever wanted to drink.

That abode, wherein pure love truly dwells, is built of loose lava stones, plastered on the inside with mud, and although the roof is of thick thatch, yet it needs repair, for here and there one can discern stars in the firmament through well-worn openings. At the corner next to the door was a small charcoal fire, allowed to go out after the soup had been cooked. There was neither a chimney nor a window. The interior, blackened like an old clay pipe, gave rather a dismal appearance to the dwelling. A hand-mill stood in one corner, for grinding parched maize into the meal called *gofio*. This ancient and effective contrivance consists of two round, cheese-like, flat stones, the upper and the lower; a wooden handle in the upper one, fixed loosely into a roof beam, works the mill. It is exactly the same as those described in the Bible. Two bed-places filled one half of the hut; they were screened by mats. One was tenanted by the old folks, and the other by their daughter—a buxom young woman. The sweetheart of that girl—they had been out walking (or more correctly speaking, climbing, for level space to promenade on it is impossible to

find) during supper—reposed by the author's side on the earthen floor, and on the other side of that happy swain slept the muleteer. The author was favoured with a mattress, which he has good reason to believe belonged to one of the beds; but that fact, with the generosity supposed only to pertain to the highly refined portion of humanity, was carefully kept from him. The mattress gave that comfort to old bones which hard Mother Earth refuses; it also afforded a better view of the surroundings, until the last man up blew out the tiny oil-lamp.

Besides two chests, which the author fronted closely, two home-made chairs, a few cooking-pots, water-jars and dishes, and what has been mentioned, there was nothing in the hut. Not a book, not a picture, nor the scrap of a newspaper. The worthy old couple possessed neither a garden nor a cow, nor shoes nor stockings, and their clothing was thin and scanty. They were very poor and ignorant, but very simple; very good, innocent of guile, and full of natural kindness for their fellow-creatures. The door, composed of various woods, of various ages, was fastened by a string and bobbin like that used by Little Red Riding-Hood; it admitted air as freely as the roof. Ventilation was as perfect as the most scientific and rabid lecturer on oxygen could desire. The writer fell asleep, soothed and lulled to rest by a musical chorus from the surrounding sleepers, and awoke as day dawned. Thinking that there might be divided interests even in that happy dwelling—separate banking accounts, so to speak—the author gave a similar coin each to his host and hostess. They refused to accept, but he prevailed upon them to do so; truly, their poverty, but not their will, consented. They were profuse in their thanks, and, to the author's delight, the kind-hearted old man handed to his tender-hearted wife, his affectionate partner and trusty banker, the image and superscription which was meant for his own special dissipation. Of a verity the author never before

witnessed poverty so combined with all that is noble and desirable in man or woman, and the remembrance of it will always be gratifying. Before sunrise my host and hostess walked with me down to the margin of the stream at the bottom of the valley, where the mule was in waiting. They showed the best place to ford the water, and as the travellers disappeared up on the other side their cheerful cries, 'Adios, caballero, adios!' sounded comforting to the parting guest.

Leaving the palm region below, the country became rocky and barren until the elevation of 1,000 feet was attained. From that height to the top the path led through laurel and heather trees, ferns and undergrowth. At nine o'clock the summit, a very narrow ledge of rock, was reached; several men were at work there levelling the rock so as to make a wider platform. The view was one to be remembered for ever with delight. It is a scene that photographs itself on the memory. The sea on both sides of the island, the valleys sloping down to the sea, and the clouds drifting about made it grand, and a distant peep of San Sebastian alone showed that the island was inhabited, for not even a hut was in sight. Bread, fancy biscuits, and Bologna sausage, with cool water from a spring, yielded the muleteer and myself a substantial breakfast. Then the group of men working was photographed. Speedily clouds overshadowed us. The elevation is somewhere between two and three thousand feet. A cold north wind reduced the thermometer to 50°. The Canary-Scotch mist caused numbness, especially after toiling up from the genial warmth of the valley. It is better to walk if one can do so without distress. Now we are on the western slope, or rather on a mountain spur forming part of it, and hemmed in by dense forest. This shaded part of the path continues in a very romantic manner for some distance, until a prominent spot, free from trees, is arrived at. Here a grand view of the Valley of Hermigua spreads out almost immediately beneath.

There is not much level land in this valley, nor in the numerous smaller branch valleys leading into it. Agriculture is practised on terraces built up exactly like those in the valley of Bethlehem beneath the Church of the Nativity. These terraces extend up the mountain-sides in some parts as far as the edge of the forest. As before noted, many of the upper terraces are not now cultivated, probably on account of the emigration of the former occupiers. Water is so abundant in Gomera that it can be used for irrigation at great heights—much more so than in any of the other islands. From this point until descending to the head of the Valley of Hermigua the path is so dangerously steep that it is only prudent to dismount and walk. As in the other islands, the material for rendering these rough paths smooth exists upon the spot, on the surface—actually on the ground before the noses of the people who daily cross it—but since the Guanches were overcome by the Spaniards no improvement has been made in them.

The Valley of Hermigua is about four miles long ; it is farmed the whole way, excepting where lava is and where barrancos run. There are several straggling villages in it, the chief of which—the one where the church stands—is one mile from the seashore. At one o'clock in the afternoon the writer entered the house of Don Manuel Casanova y Bento, and was in his absence heartily made welcome, and immediately—very thoughtfully, too—supplied with refreshments by his three daughters. Shortly afterwards Don Manuel came in, and his geniality made the author feel at home at once. He is a very intelligent and good fellow ; has lived twenty-four years in Cuba ; but that climate being too hot for him, he came to this pure, mild air, and here he thrives by growing potatoes, onions, bananas, figs, grapes, tobacco, sugar-cane, oranges, and cochineal. Although his house is a ramshackle but strongly built old tenement, yet the abundance of good food, and the family love shown by his three daughters and

his two sons, and the hearty welcome extended to the stranger within his gates—even to that stranger's mule and man—made it unusually agreeable. The writer stayed one day and night, enjoying his hospitality, on his way to the Valle Hermoso. It was the writer's intention to vary the route on returning to San Sebastian, but clouds descended, and rain broke from them so abundantly that he preferred—and so did the mule—steering for beautiful Hermigua, and remaining there for three days. Meanwhile heavy floods made the barrancos unsafe for man or mule. Señor Don Manuel Casanova y Bento—pleasantly liquid and appropriate name—lives as Job did in his prosperous days. May his prosperity continue! His kindness is cherished in the writer's memory as a white mark in a long life of much rough, but, upon the whole, fascinating travel.

The farm of Don Manuel consists of a sloping platform of land, the lower edge of which is elevated about thirty feet above the valley barranco. That barranco is now a fierce river, rushing boulders along towards the sea as easily as if they were chips. As the loose stones encounter fixed ones they bob up in froth for a moment, looking for all the world like porpoises obstructed in their wild career, and trying to swim against rapids. Through the middle of this farm runs a small aqueduct, elevated sufficiently to irrigate the fields on either side as required; it receives its supply, of course, at a higher level, from one of the mountain torrents. Naturally, a supply of water means matter of life for land, and farmers pay for it. Here the arrangements for its distribution are very primitive. In Tenerife and Grand Canary open streams are turned into banana fields, or wherever wanted, for so many hours daily, or periodically; and, in addition, water in pipes is conveyed to public fountains for the poor, as well as for ornament, and to the better class of dwellings also.

During a three days' stay in wet weather it was interesting

to watch the cascades apparently gushing from the very tops of the mountains ; the heavier the downpour the more numerous were those falls, spanning the hillsides in jumps, and crashing on to the rocks beneath, sounding like those tearing cracks of compressed, angry, and wickedly meant thunder which penetrate the ear with discomfort. Then the roaring of the barranco was like that proceeding from the mouths of an assembly of hungry lions, and the deep-mouthed and continuous bellow of the sea, breaking on its rocky shore, added more noise to this outbreak of the elements. The trees whistled and whispered their secrets. The tempest fairly howled, and great echoes made it uncanny and weird-like, but the play became monotonous.

During evenings the *cura* of the village popped in for a friendly visit, as also did several spruce young men, gaily attired after the manner of gentlemanly Mexican lasso-slingers. They paid much attention to the wise words which fell from the good Don Manuel, in order probably, nay, very likely, to win approval from his daughters ; for, in addition to listening, they also cast loving eyes upon those beautiful señoritas, who supplied all the guests with coffee, and *gofio* mixed up with honey in the form of thick cakes. This preparation of *gofio* is remarkably good ; it resembles Scotch short-cake in its solidity, and Turkish delight in its flavour.

Each morning, after breakfast interviewing the mule and the man in charge of it, and after dinner going through the same ceremony, Don Manuel and I made our way to a general store opposite to the church, where the important men of Hermigua met to settle the affairs of State. They were all there, seated upon counters, sacks of corn, and boxes of merchandise, and their talk was incessant, only interrupted by the occasional entrance and departure of a customer. Indian corn, groceries, tobacco, peas, and petroleum, were the articles most in demand. American

tobacco in the leaf, pure as imported, was retailed at tenpence the pound; it is very strong, but very good. Pity it is that the poor men of Great Britain and Ireland cannot enjoy that greatest luxury of life at a moderate cost! No sooner was any sale concluded than national debates were resumed. These meetings somewhat resembled the assembly of frequenters at old Willet's Maypole Inn—'the man with the dull, fish-like eyes, the little parish clerk and bell-ringer' of Hermigua, 'the general chandler and post-office-keeper,' and a few landed proprietors of rank as high and noble as the mountains whence they came. 'They argued right, they argued left, they also argued round about.' All were good fellows in their way, but the writer could make out very little of what they said.

The so-called harbour—or, to assimilate nearer to the customary word in Spanish, the port—of Hermigua is not deserving of either title, for it is simply a break between rocks where there exists an excellent beach of black sand, extending about the width of that of Scarborough. It is, in fact, the mouth of a barranco. This beach possesses natural advantages for bathing, and also for boat-landing, so long as the wind does not blow *from* the sea—for northerly winds render both those operations unpleasant and dangerous. The construction of a pier or a breakwater is desirable, so as to make the place accessible by water at all times, and this would be a great boon to those who cannot cross the mountains.

Hermigua is the central and the most convenient place—when accommodation can be found—for making excursions and picnics to all the grand scenery by which it is surrounded.

Now that a line of local steamers runs from Tenerife and Grand Canary—where ocean steamers call—to and from all the other islands, visitors who do not care about voyaging in small sailing-vessels can inspect the Archipelago, and all

the time enjoy comfort, in so far as the steamers are concerned. It is upon landing that discomforts unfold themselves. The majority of those who go south in winter, either for change or for health, will not stand the wretched inns, which are scarce even in the villages of these islands. To them inferior cooking, stuffy bedrooms, and wretched attendance mean misery, and destroy all the good effects of climate, and take away all the romance from the mountains and all beauty from the valleys. Some of the more enterprising of the inhabitants are beginning to perceive the necessity of creating better accommodation for strangers ; but as few of them know even the nature of the most ordinary requirements, there are thus numerous openings for people of other nationalities who do understand the hotel and boarding-house business to set to work and prosper. Hermigua is the best place in the Island of Gomera for that purpose.

At eight o'clock in the morning the writer started from Hermigua, uphill, skirting the side of a bare mountain overhanging the sea. Beneath was the port, unapproachable by water, because of a strong northerly wind which dashed the great waves on to the rocks, making that margin of the island a mass of white foam. An hour's easy ride round this mountain, and Agulo is reached. This village is situated upon a plateau of exceedingly fine land, which appears to be well tilled. It looks straight across twenty and odd miles of sea to the Peak of Tenerife. Behind the town are steep mountains encircling the horseshoe-shaped plateau at their base. From these mountains two cascades tumble down their waters in jumps of several hundreds of feet at a time. Thus the district is richly watered. The surplus flows down a steep barranco into the sea, where the Port of Agulo is, but at present this port is unapproachable for the same reason as at Hermigua. A trading schooner is outside, hove to, waiting for the weather to moderate, so that her boat may land

and take away the farm produce awaiting shipment. Agulo itself is a most uninteresting town—a collection of rickety houses, an old church, and a couple of ancient *fondas*; but its outlook towards the island of Tenerife is grand. It is the favourite summer residence for the islanders, on account of its elevation and its coolness. The mule-path now twists round very curious hills, still over the sea. After three or four miles it strikes inland, where, ascending to and crossing a pass, the scenery changes. Now comes a better land—a land of rich undulating valleys, dotted over with small, thriving farms, with cattle grazing, sheep browsing, and goats climbing. There is not much forest here, and the lack of trees diminishes interest in the landscape. The path over this part is fairly good, and it continues so up to higher lands, where, after entering forest, enjoying shade, and listening to the songs of birds, suddenly there looms in sight, but far beneath, the Valle Hermoso. It is a deep, hazy gorge. Anon, that dim expanse resolves itself into a series of tiny hollows, each of which is a picture of beauty in itself. It may be better described as a system of irregular cavities enclosed by a circle of mountains. There is not much level land at the bottom of the cavities, but that little is well attended to and utilised. Groups of palm trees scattered about in them suggest similarity to African villages. The mountain-sides are terraced up to the lines of forests, and the lower terraces show growing crops. Ragged pinnacles and heaps of lava and hills of cinders mingle with the wooded parts. The mountains, though not so high, converge as they do in the Caldera of Palma. About the lowest centre of the Valle Hermoso—towards its northern end—sheer up from the village, a great cone rises, which, at a distance, may readily be mistaken for a colossal cathedral dome. It is well worth travelling round the world just to look at that wonder. It is 2,000 feet high. Its top is a mass of black lava. Where this lava falls in pieces on one

of its sides, on account of the wearing away beneath it of the soft sandstone, the colour changes to that of dull, hard grey granite. The road now runs along a kind of isthmus, a ledge from one spur of the mountain to the middle of the cone; it then diverges to another mountain-side, and thus is the descent made to the bottom, to a village containing a

ROCK IN THE VALLE HERMOSO

tolerably good inn, where the beds are clean, the food fair, and the charge one dollar per day.

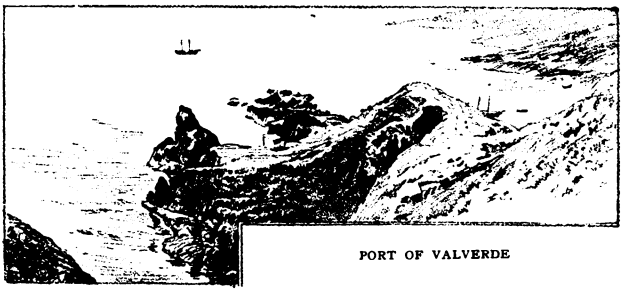
It takes six hours and a half to ride leisurely from Hermigua to the Valle Hermoso. The *cura* of Hermigua, a young man, performs the same journey in three hours, and he takes the same time between Hermigua and San Sebastian, but then he knows the scenery so well that he does not loiter by the way admiring it. Two miles an hour, over these rugged mountains, is fair work for any laden

animal. Should strength permit, it is quicker and more enjoyable to walk.

The Valle Hermoso resembles the Caldera of the Island of Palma, not only, as already remarked, in the range of mountains surrounding it, but also by the existence of a similar stream of water rushing down through a similar opening in the same direction to the sea. But, unlike the Caldera, it is a smiling region of abundance, tolerably well cultivated, and well sprinkled with homesteads.

Upon returning to San Sebastian, the barranco, within two miles of that not at all pleasant collection of dwellings, was swollen and wide, by reason of the recent rains. The muleteer had disappeared to call upon his relatives, and the puzzle was to select the shallowest fording places, for the water was muddy, and boulders large and small made the bottom uneven and invisible. It appeared best to allow the mule to select its own route, and it did so in a praiseworthy manner, and, with singular sagacity, picked its way safely, either across the stream, or down the middle of it as occasion required. The writer was detained five days waiting for the mail schooner to convey him to Santa Cruz, Tenerife. Don Marcias kindly offered him the hospitality of his house, and he was glad to accept it, more especially because he was not favourably impressed by the two nights following his arrival on the island, which were passed in the hotel, even with the inducement that the shade of Columbus may have been hovering about that venerable restaurant.

That old hostelry, as well as the Church of San Sebastian and the house of Columbus, should be carefully preserved, in the same manner that buildings of a similar character pertaining to Shakespeare are held for the remembrance, gratification, and contemplation of every generation.



PORT OF VALVERDE

CHAPTER V

HIERRO

The breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock-bound coast.

THIS is another but a tinier gem of beauty, being the smallest of the Canary Islands, while the population only amounts to 5,000, of whom not one speaks English. Fifteen miles in length by nine miles in width, and shaped like an elbow, it is surrounded by an edge of lava rock leading up to a mountainous middle.

Valverde, the capital, is situated on the eastern side of the island, at an elevation of 2,000 feet above what, although called its port, is really only a portion of the rugged coast, consisting of a stretch of forty feet of mixed rocks and shingle between greater rocks, sheltered by an enormous bulkhead promontory of black lava. This eccentric port is five miles distant in a slanting direction from Valverde. The only building in sight, approaching from the sea, is a small white church perched on the very top of the lava promontory. Immediately beneath the church there is a great cavern formed by a gigantic bubble left as the lava cooled after boiling. Its entrance is on a level with the

small shore, and slightly above where visitors are landed on sailors' shoulders from boats. The inner and darkest part of the cave is partly enclosed by a wall constructed of loose lava stones. Here goods in transit are warehoused and shelter afforded, without other entertainment, for man and beast. It is a weird, uncanny-looking cavern, suggestive of the days when probably smugglers and pirates held high revel therein.

The harbour-master resides at Valverde, and no wonder, for he would of a surety wax insane with sheer loneliness at his port; so does the *cura* of the little church, probably for the same reason. Vessels can safely ride at anchor in smooth water close to the rocks, so long as the land and the lava stand between them and fierce winds, otherwise they must up anchor and run for it out to sea, so as to escape destruction.

The writer was glad to land there, or upon any spot more substantial than water, one fine spring morning, after spending four nights on board a wretched little schooner coming from Santa Cruz, Tenerife.

The steerage-passengers on board that hooker—and there were many of them, men, women, and babies—slept upon mattresses, or whatever they had brought with them as substitutes, placed for comfort on a level bed of ballast stones in the tiny hold. The cabin passengers were huddled together in a den about eight feet square, surrounded by ten very low berths, upper and lower.

On the second night out from Tenerife, in the middle thereof, in pitch darkness, and blowing hard, several men, their wives, and little ones were literally fished out of the hold and landed by the schooner's boat at Santiago, in the island of Gomera. The writer never saw people so glad to escape from a vessel. The men were professional mountain-climbers, engaged to collect orchilla weed from cliffs inaccessible to ordinary mortals.

As the distance between Tenerife and Hierro was about one hundred miles, the writer only laid in provisions for such a voyage—one small tin of biscuits, three ditto tins of potted meat, one large tin of sardines, three penny loaves, and a few bananas, oranges, and figs. On the second evening he had nothing to eat. The crew rejoiced in abundance ; so he partook of their fare, and it was good.

The morning meal, at ten o'clock, consisted of salt fish, boiled after being well steeped in sea water, potatoes with their jackets on, and *gofio*, the standard food of the Canary Islanders. Gofio is Indian corn ground finer than oatmeal, but the corn has been previously slightly roasted or burnt. It is prepared for food either by simply mixing it with water, when it is eaten as dough, or by pounding it up with honey into cakes, or boiling it like porridge. Sailors' gofio is used in the first-mentioned manner on account of the simplicity of its preparation. Dinner is at five o'clock. For the convenience of the limited galley, it is cooked in a huge iron pot with a lid to it. The writer watched the process with the deepest interest. First, curious-looking pieces of meat are thrown in and left to boil, then cabbages and other vegetables are added. There are several cooks. A little boy, a child, about nine years old, and always a pet with the crew, is supposed to be the chief operator—poor child, he was not strong enough to do more than lift the lid, but with a brass pestle and mortar he pounded up garlic, hot peppers, and oil, and cast the mixture into the cauldron. After being frequently tasted, and the soup pronounced good, a dishful is served out to each. Peeled potatoes are afterwards added in great quantity, and when the hardness is boiled out of them the contents of the pot are emptied into a tub, and each man helps himself. Gofio, as at breakfast, ekes out the festivity. Hardly any passengers tasted anything—they simply starved for four days—but a couple of pet dogs and the same number of cats fared sumptuously on the remains of meals.

Sailing-vessels have been the only means of conveyance between the Canary Islands since before the days of Columbus. A line of local steamers has now superseded the ancient craft, and the writer has merely alluded to the mode of existence on board tubs without engines, so that those who enjoy life—real life, in modern travel with modern luxury, in the steamers—may understand and appreciate the improvement. The want of modern means of travel has been the cause why the Canary Islands, although so near to Europe, have hitherto had but few visitors.

Upon coming to anchor at daybreak, in very deep water, at about fifty yards distance from the shore, there were no friends to meet any of the passengers. Like Robinson Crusoe's island, not a sign of life was visible. The boat was canted off the little vessel's deck into the water, and the patron, with a mail-bag slung over his shoulder, and the rest of the passengers, overjoyed at the near prospect of liberty, were taken ashore. The patron was a very obliging captain, for he very kindly took the trouble to send a man and a mule from Valverde to convey the writer to that place, where we breakfasted together before parting, like old friends. The writer hopes to meet him again, but not in a sailing-vessel.

Behold that mule! The baggage was balanced on its back behind the individual who was perched on the top of a very clumsy pack-saddle. Neither stirrups nor bridle adorned it, but a rope answered for the latter. The path—a villanous one—led up and down barren hills studded with several species of dull green *euphorbia*. Only in scarce, sheltered nooks was there any sign of habitation or of cultivation. A few herds of goats, with little girls in charge of them, and an occasional eagle overhead, were the only tokens of existence.

In a room of the inn, or *fonda*, at Valverde, breakfast was speedily prepared. The food was fairly good, but the

apartment was very unclean. Cats, dogs, goats, fowls, and one small pig wandered about it perfectly at home. It was only a small den branching from a dismal shop. One end of it, too, was curtained off. The heads of two pretty girls peeped out, one at either end of the curtain, from two beds, and it was intimated that they were ill, poor things. They liked peeping, though, and it evidently did them good, for they got up a few laughs for their own amusement behind the scenes.

After breakfast, the mule resumed its load to crawl with it across the island to Golfo, accompanied by the muleteer, who walked, carrying the camera, and acting as guide, philosopher, and friend. During twelve days' stay on the island this man was extremely useful and obliging. The writer instinctively took a liking to him, and has much pleasure in recommending him to others—his name is Vicente Hernandez. About halfway uphill from the sea Vicente pointed out his dwelling, a little stone cot built in a well-sheltered valley. There was his fig-tree, and a very small piece of land under tillage. He very thoughtfully milked a goat, and presented the writer with a most refreshing and welcome drink.

The east side of Hierro is bleak, barren, and wretched. On its tableland—the divide—are extensive undulating grazing lands. Then comes the western side, opening out a valley of wonderful beauty, enclosed by two points of the island, which form an extensive bay—the Bay of Golfo.

Ascending straight uphill from Valverde, the path—for road there is none on this island—is uneven and hard to climb. Presently cinder hills are passed. A perfect crater of about half a mile in diameter appears with a farm in it. There are many farms at the bottoms of craters, the shelter of which favours luxuriant cultivation. Homesteads become more numerous, fig-trees loom larger, and flocks of sheep, herds of goats, and a few herds of good-looking cattle appear spread about. All this at an altitude of considerably

over 2,000 feet. At one elevation, whence the sea was visible on both sides of the island, there could be seen on the eastern side four sailing-vessels bound southwards, and on the open ocean side five vessels, one of them a steamer, bound northwards. This being the most westerly island of the group, many ships sight it, so as to correct or verify their reckoning.

Far, far away is the Peak of Tenerife—distance lends enchantment to the view, now it appears but a faint outline of snow on pale blue. Nearer is the blue-grey island of Gomera —both are well over the horizon sea-line. It has been the author's fortunate lot occasionally to steam on outward voyages between Tenerife and Gomera, and those occasions have always been times of intense wonderment on the part of passengers and crew, from the captain on the bridge to the boy of the boots, from the most woe-begone invalid to the liveliest kitten—a feast to eyesight, and something to dwell upon with joy as a background for exquisite dreams. When calm prevails, the thud of the screw propelling the majestic floating village is the only sound heard, the steam-pipe reverentially breathes gently, and the living freight is hushed into silence by pure admiration of that singular handiwork of the Creator. Should the trade wind blow fiercely—for in this latitude it commences ; like an Æolian harp of magnitude—it howls grand overture-to-hurricane music through the taut wire-rigging. The steam-pipe sighs in concert. Dark clouds, like a solid wall, obstruct the lower view of land ; but away aloft, like the soul of poor Tom Bowling, there are silver linings to them ; and as they drift, from their fleecy edges out peeps the Peak—the glorious Peak, apparently not a fixture, but wandering in azure blue, of the most delicate, brilliant, and varied tints that the eye can delight to dwell upon. Beneath the lower clouds the sea assumes the colour of indigo. Wave tops fiercely worked into wicked tips of white, and glimpses

of the steep outline of frowning headlands, at the base of which are rocks churning the angry breakers, denote Mother Nature lashed into fury. On such a night everybody retires to his or her cradle on the deep, rocked to sleep, and for many a night and year afterwards they enter dreamland with one more wonderful experience for imagination to build into new islands and new worlds.

Most of the tableland of Hierro is of a cindery nature. Food for cattle and goats grows sparsely. Farmhouses are scarce, but occasionally, in favoured hollows, are gems of beauty, quaint old cottages peeping forth from small plots of tillage, and from the choicest of fruit blossoms and flowers. In one rough desert part smoke-heat issues from fissures in the cinders, similar, but in a lesser degree, to the burning mountain of Lanzarote—of which in due course. But there, on account of the extreme dryness of the climate and consequent lack of moisture, the heat is only visible simmering upon the surface, like the fiery air silently frizzling over sheets of molten iron; whilst here, in a constantly moist atmosphere caused by clouds from the Atlantic, actual smoke appears issuing from what may or may not be smouldering fire beneath. On the higher elevations surrounding this undulating plateau are great numbers of goats. The goatherd is somewhere about. It may be a man enveloped in his blanket cloak—a capital covering for cloudland, very much in use by the peasantry, especially in Tenerife—a woman with a shawl over her head, or a child scantily attired. Many of the peasants use long poles for jumping over steep places. Their agility is wonderful. It is pleasant to stand still and listen to the goat bells, the sheep bells, and the cattle bells, mingled with the wild songs of these innocent country folk. It is pastoral opera, music from the mountains. The vessels on the sea, going to and fro on their respective voyages, are apparently motionless. All is exhilarating in the extreme, and it is

just the spot to dismount, stretch yourself upon the ground, look up at the sky and build a castle there—but whilst considering whether to do so or not, the unreliable mule beneath you kicks up its hind legs and dispels the romance.

Suddenly, without a moment's warning, a sharp turn in the path opens out one of the most magnificent views in these islands. As one emerges from level land upon the edge of a precipice, right and left are mountains abruptly descending to a slope. These steep places are, to the eye, densely covered with trees, and the slope springing from them is one mass of cultivated verdure. After the unkindly, inhospitable appearance of the Valverde side of the island, this is indeed a substantial vision of delight. The forests extend from one to two thousand feet beneath you ; then the valley, or, more properly speaking, the slope of Golfo, begins and gently inclines for about four or five miles farther to the sea. This tract of country contains the most productive land in the Canary Islands. Its sea margin, to the eye at this distance, is simply one continuous line of white breakers, for the great Atlantic continually crashes against barriers of solid black lava fifty to sixty feet high. Not a break in it is visible for its entire width of seven or eight miles.

Now, although the general view, as in the foundation tints of a water-colour drawing, consists of masses of dark-green woods, bright-green middle distance, running into black lava edged with white foam, and a sapphire sea running far up into the sky, yet, when upon closer inspection, entering into details as it were, it is found that the trees are not so closely packed together as expected, that the valley is broken up by barrancos, fields of lava, and cones of cinders, and that the black lava on the ocean margin, apparently so smooth and Whitby-jet looking, is a mass of very ugly dark-brown and coal-black rocks, with great chasms and fissures—disappointment is the result. Perhaps it would be better to pitch a tent and remain on the tops of the mountains, morning,

noon, and night, admiring the ever-changing beauty of the panorama as the clouds vary it, than to descend. But then again, the views of crags, cliffs, and forests from below would be missed. Let us descend.

Descending—it is descending with a vengeance. Do not be alarmed at a shrine let into the rock on the very

SLOPE OF GOLFO

edge of the precipice, and surrounded by crucifixes, large and small, for there are many of them, of attractive nature and ingenious construction, erected and planted at romantic spots in all the islands.

Before going down, look over the sea, and reflect. This very spot was the last land seen by Columbus before he set

eyes upon the New World. He sailed from Gomera on September 6, A.D. 1492, and, after three days' calm, on the 9th, he lost sight of this island of Hierro. Three little ships idly floating in that water in front for three days.

Absorbed in meditation, lo ! a steamer comes from the South, she crosses the track of Columbus and rushes past the length of the isle in less than an hour. Thus she appears and vanishes during the descent, anon framed by foliage, then by cracks of lava, and sometimes, like a fly upside down, between the ears of the mule. What would good old Christopher have said had he possessed prophetic vision to foretell that ? And, in four centuries hence, how much more will the man who looks from this very mountain-top know ? He will not tolerate a mule, his conveyance will probably be of the aerial order with its motive power of electricity.

The dangerous nature of the path very quickly appeared, and as it looked too much like going down the Pyramid Cheops on horseback the author dismounted and walked, so as to give the mule an opportunity, if it wanted a jump, to take it alone. It is a sheer impossibility to go straight up or down the mountain face ; hence the seesaw, zigzag nature of the progress, and being on a narrow spur made it all the more abrupt, exciting, life-stirring, and dangerous. One would not try to joke with the mule going down this mountain. How the trees take root is a marvel. Heather trees, laurel trees, a few pines, and undergrowth of small bushes and ferns vary the scene. A few tiny streams of water trickle or rush over the irregular line of down-climb. Now comes a split in the mountain, each side of which presents a dark mystery of brilliant fernery foliage. Birds sing sweetly. There must be fairies about, for there is abundance of wild flowers for their accommodation. 'Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn.' There are many

enticing bowers where life could be dreamed away, charmed into forgetfulness by the continual roar of the distant sea—like the voice of London; but neither man nor mule can be comfortably sent to sleep without a blanket or beans; besides, the ground is hard, and hunger compels both to move towards food and shelter.

It took six hours to travel from Valverde to Golfo. The distance is said to be nine miles, but people in a hurry can perform the journey in half that time. On the way down-hill a goatherd appeared, blowing a trumpet made out of a sea shell, a conch shell with the small end filed open for a mouthpiece. He blew this horn when he was desirous to collect his herd, and it made a hideous row—any goat would know it. The author wanted to purchase this musical instrument, but the sturdy rustic would not sell it. However, for a small sum of money, he willingly gave him an excellent iron-shod staff, which assisted him in making the descent much better and safer than by riding the mule.

Arrived at Golfo, the writer presented a letter of introduction to Señor Don José Medina Padron, who welcomed him to his house, where he stayed during Easter week, and daily rode or walked to interesting places in every direction. His host introduced him to his uncle, the *cura* of Golfo, with whom they dined twice. With an introduction to one good man, acquaintance with neighbours speedily follows. Golfo is the chief of the numerous villages which are spread over the valley bearing the same name. Its houses are not set compactly together, but are built in a straggling fashion. Each contains a cistern beneath it, or beneath its courtyard, or beneath both, for the storage of rain-water. There are few springs in the island; but one of them, of a mineral nature, and called El Paso, is celebrated throughout the archipelago. Its water tastes very like the Buffalo lithia springs of Virginia, and its medicinal properties are

thus described by the *cura*, Señor Don Valentin Padron, Beneficiado del Golfo :—

'Diciembre, Enero, Febrero y Marzo es mala época para desembarcar por Punta Grande en la Isla del Hierro. En los demás meses se puede embarcar y desembarcar con mucha comodidad, advirtiendo que desde dicha punta á todos los caseríos del Valle, los caminos son muy cómodos, y con especialidad el que conduce al pozo de Sabinosa tan celebre por sus aguas medicinales para muchos males y con especialidad para las enfermedades cutaneas, sifilíticas y reumáticas. Recibió grande alivio con estas aguas D. Gumer —sindo Lacerna comerciante de Santa Cruz de Tenerife, y otros muchos enfermos de reuma. El pozo es inagotable.'

This means that the water is good for people to drink who are afflicted either with rheumatic complaints or diseases of the epidermis, and that there is plenty of it.

The *cura* kindly allowed the author to photograph the interior of his church after High Mass on Easter Sunday. Many good Christians of the congregation flocked back so as to appear in the picture, but as the darkness necessitated long exposure, and as the people moved, the result was a failure. Before High Mass excellent opportunity was afforded to take photographs of a procession, consisting of the *cura* in brilliant attire, beneath a canopy, supported by venerable laymen clad in long scarlet robes. Outside were attendant acolytes, clothed in white. Banners streamed in the air, and curious emblems surmounted by large crosses were held high aloft. It was a very solemn and stately affair, and the variety of colours against the dull-red cinder hill, in the brightness of a perfect day, added materially to its beauty. It proceeded around the red cinder hill which towers at the back of the church. At intervals a halt was made, when instantly the congregation knelt, and remained in that attitude until the emblems began to move on again. Women, dressed in spot-

less white garments, their expressive faces upturned in adoration, added impressiveness and life to the effect.

On the top of the cinder hill alluded to is the church belfry, a strong stone building—in fact, a campanile. It forms a very curious and appropriate addition to the church; the cinder hill, topped by the tower belfry, acting as a sort of round, and yet square, steeple. From its commanding position, the bells inside it are heard to a great distance. Their music reaches high up the mountain-side; in the forest, when alone, amidst silence only broken by the voices of Nature, it is refreshing and pleasing to listen to their homely village sound,

> We have with holy bell been knoll'd to church;

and away over the valley, until overcome by the roar of the Atlantic, neighbours hearken for its tinkling to don their best apparel and hie to Mass beneath the cinder hill.

The estimable *cura*, a man of about fifty years of age, is one after the heart of all who can appreciate genuine wit, combined with good humour and thorough hospitality. It is true that his means are as limited as those of the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' but outsiders do not know that—he deserves to be made a bishop. The writer saw him every day during his stay at Golfo, and regretted not being able to talk fluently to him; but they managed to hold slight converse. Producing an illustrated volume of the 'Popes and Saints,' when they arrived at the portrait of Saint Augustine, the introduction of Christianity into Britain became an appropriate subject to talk about. Then the *cura* brought forth a splendid copy of 'Don Quixote,' filled with pictures—silent but yet speaking interpreters—and the writer felt more at home over that book; for who can fail to love all about Don Quixote de la Mancha, Sancho Panza, and the illustrious and the adorably comical Lady Dulcinea del Toboso? It was delightful to listen to

the *cura* rolling out in grandiloquent language passages from his beloved 'Spanish Shakespeare.'

The inhabitants of Hierro are more observant of the rites of religion than those of the other islands. Their priests are their personal and intimate friends, as well as their spiritual advisers. That is the secret. Of course, it is the same throughout the archipelago, but here it is more strikingly noticeable. They are far away from the vanity-inclined portion of the world, and therefore the church is their beloved place of assembly as well as of worship. They are almost, but not quite, as devout as their co-religionists in Ireland, where one witnesses the overplus congregation kneeling in the highways and the fields outside the sacred building; here they do the very same. During Easter week there are daily and nightly services; and both inside and outside are processions, with banners and crosses held aloft.

Every evening, in front of the church, the villagers assemble to play guitars, and dance and sing, or to sit and talk until long after darkness sets in. They are keenly sensitive, as all mountain-born people are, of the beauty of their home. They love their wild island with the passion of an Irishman for the Mourne mountains of the north, or the grand hills and lakes of the south of Ireland; of a countryman of Wallace mounting his native highlands, or of any other nation rejoicing in lands towering aloft into the clouds.

The steep cumbraes are close above them. At sunset, with clouds dividing, or rather splitting themselves on the sharp tree-clad ridges, and rushing into the great gulches between the precipices, the effect is marvellously beautiful. With dark-grey backgrounds the forests stand out in various shades of green. As rain falls in one part, a rainbow enlivens the whole scenery, and the glorious tints on the clouds, and their mirrored reflection on the sea, create perfect

rapture. No wonder, therefore, that the peasant of this gem of the Atlantic Isles is loth to emigrate :

> Dear is that hut, to which his soul conforms,
> And dear that hill which lifts him to the storms.
> And as a child, when scaring sounds molest,
> Clings close and closer to the mother's breast,
> So the loud torrent and the whirlwind's roar
> But bind him to his native mountains more.

A very pleasing custom prevails in tobacco-growing places on these islands. Upon entering any ordinary dwelling, after welcome being accorded, and the wine brought forth, the host seizes a few tobacco leaves—there are always some lying about loose ; he then takes a sharp knife like a cobbler's, and on a small board, in less than one minute, he has made and presented to the visitor a cigar of perfect shape ready to light and smoke.

Attached to several of the better class of houses are sheds open at the sides, where the green tobacco leaves are slung across long sticks to dry. This operation is also carried on indoors, but no wood fire is used beneath, as is common in the tobacco-growing States of America, the climate of this island not being sufficiently damp to require it. On account of the chemical properties of the cindery soil on this slope of Golfo, and of the gentle moisture dropped by the clouds, as before remarked, splitting themselves open upon the very near mountain tops, it grows cigar tobacco of a very superior kind, and the cultivation of it is increasing year by year.

One of the most remarkable productions of Hierro is the fig-tree. It flourishes best in hollow, secluded places, such as at the bottom of old craters, or in small valleys sheltered from ocean gales. One tree will spread, low down, over ground fifty yards in diameter. They present a remarkably attractive appearance of rich foliage, and afford grateful shade during noontide heat, as well as welcome

shelter when it rains. Branches radiate from the trunk downwards, then they run along the ground and rise up again. Push aside the leaves and enter the green drawing-room. The branches afford comfortable seats, and the leaves are so beautiful that enchantment and peace must enter the mind of the most miserable sinner seeking solace in their seclusion. Fierce sunlight is toned down by the eye-pleasing verdure. Weary with walking, rest there is truly welcome, and should the fruit be ripe there is a banquet overhead and on every side fit for the gods. Green or purple, fresh or dried, that fruit is as fine as any on this earth.

There are very few orange trees or bananas, and fewer palms, but European fruits are abundant, and the vine yields excellent wine.

One day Don José and the author mounted mules to ride to what is called the port of Golfo, situated six miles north-west of the village. Setting out shortly after six o'clock in the morning, when passing the nearest neighbour's house, he called out from his bed, 'Where are you going to?' 'To the port,' was the reply. 'Oh, wait a minute, and I'll go with you.' That minute meant a quarter of an hour. At other houses the same conversation in shouts took place. At length, at nine o'clock, the cavalcade numbered fifteen men on horses, donkeys, and mules. They rode in single file, passing many fields where men and women labourers (chiefly the latter) were trimming and tending tender young tobacco plants. Of one such group a photograph was taken, with the Golfo mountains for background. After a ride of four or five miles a gloomy region appears, consisting of broken-up beds of hard black lava, of the thickness of from fifty to sixty feet. This belt almost entirely surrounds Hierro. It is in truth a stern and rock-bound coast. At one spot, close to the sea, is a natural cavern extending far below the surface. Rain-water falling upon the surrounding lava is led by open wooden channel troughs into it, thus

forming an excellent reservoir. It arouses wonder to stretch at full length and look deep down into the sky-reflecting mirror. In so doing the surface of the fresh water is estimated at about forty feet from the eyes—that is, ten feet above what ought to be the level of the furious sea, breaking a few yards outside. The entrance is partly covered by strong pieces of timber, and the perfect calm away beneath in the cathedral-like crypt forms a remarkable contrast to the roaring waves outside.

It makes one shudder even to glance into the dismal recesses of this cave. Its sides are of a dull black colour, and, like colossal kidneys, bulby and smooth as glass. Once down there, one would require to be endowed with the agility of a water lizard to crawl up again. No human being could do it. A moment's dreamy thought peoples that awful mystery with incandescent sea-nymphs reclining upon clouds of darkness, mermaids combing their hair in quiet after their ocean wanderings, for it is but one step outside to their unknown world, where long green seaweed trees form submarine forests, where those who have gone down deeper into ocean than they intended are lured to eternal rest:

> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange.

From a point of the island which bounds the vision on the north two rocks extend into the sea. Smaller rocks between them, seen and unseen, present to view a line of breakers. The inner projection is partly connected with the island in a similar manner. The whole forms a kind of shelter from the Atlantic for the only available landing-place on this side of the island, and it is situated about three miles to the south-west. That spot is what they call the Port of Golfo. It is merely an eccentric piece of lava jutting into the sea in the form of a rude pier, with two or three barn

warehouses perched on it. It is thirty feet above the level, if the sea be ever level there. Call it out of courtesy a pier, but anybody attempting to land there must be dragged—like rough merchandise—up its uneven sides by means of ropes, and that only on rare occasions when old ocean permits it. It is possible to make a tolerably good landing near to this spot, but the inhabitants do not understand improvements. The island is poor. The houses are mean. The natives are not endowed with energy. Their women perform the heaviest work. It is pitiful to witness them toiling with loads more suitable for mules to carry. They climb even to the most inaccessible-looking places to collect ferns and twigs for firewood.

Sorry to part with the *cura*, his nephew, and all the truly hospitable friends and good neighbours of Golfo, and promising to visit them again some day, the writer returned to Valverde by a path round the mountain at the northern extremity of the island. That eminence is bare of trees, but its beaten track is not quite so dangerous as the more southern ones. The same erratic and difficult description of going up was experienced, but this time it was much pleasanter and easier, for that good guide Vicente Hernandez had managed to borrow a saddle and stirrups, and they yielded comfort which the pack-saddle used when crossing to Golfo did not.

At the summit is a hermit's cave ; it is a solitary dwelling, literally a hole excavated in the face of the mountain-top, whence, missing foothold, a body would bound downwards, like a ball, over two thousand feet into the sea. Upon this occasion, the wind blew from the sea so violently, and beat upon the narrow ledge and against the door of the cave so fiercely, that had it been blowing the other way —towards the sea—crossing the summit would have been rendered impossible.

On the eastern side of the island uninteresting, rugged

scenery and wretched villages take the place of the beauties of Golfo. The path breaks into narrow lanes wretchedly paved; there are many houses and hamlets scattered far apart, all perched and concealed as much as possible in highland valley nooks, sheltered from the violence of the sea-breezes. A group coming out of the Church of San Pedro was recorded in the camera, but a mob of the good-natured peasantry wanted to look at the picture at once, there and then. Vicente cavorted the mule around to keep hands and legs away from the tripod, but this artful conduct proved of no avail. Fortunately, just at that moment, two men came up and shook hands with the author, who hardly knew them in their Easter Monday suits, because his acquaintance with them had been limited to glimpses of stockinged legs, and black, scrubby, unshaven beards peeping for fresh air from beneath blanket cloaks. They were fellow-travellers during the four days' voyage from Tenerife, and, although prostrated on board ship, and therefore generally silent, here they appeared as gay, festive, and active mountaineers upon their native heath, and perfectly able to declaim, 'My name is Norval.' The writer had rendered some little service at sea in bringing to their parched lips water to drink, or something of that sort, which evidently they remembered. They, like good fellows, took in the situation at a glance, and kindly kept the mob at a respectful distance. These good people of Hierro are so unaccustomed to the presence of strangers that their curiosity is pardonable, especially as they mean no harm. But a mob is a mob all the world over, and nobody knows what mischief it can do, however innocently inclined it may be at first.

Valverde is one of the least alluring towns that the most dismal man could desire to dwell in. The author would not recommend his direst foe to take up his abode there. The inhabitants have so little to interest them that the arrival of a stranger is an event. The author was always followed by

numerous stragglers, chiefly boys; but made good use of them—as practised in the other islands—by selecting one boy to carry the tripod, another the camera, a third an overcoat, and a fourth to superintend, giving them each a halfpenny, and instructing them to drive the other boys away, which they did. But the other boys did not go far; they remained at a respectful distance looking on. At the end of perhaps two hours' ramble, another coin of the same value, with advice added not to rush into reckless expenditure, made those mountain children feel like millionaires, and they waited outside the house for further employment. For similar service in the United States or Canada no youngster would say 'Thank you' under one dollar. But then one pair of hands would suffice. Several times, upon entering small shops, no sooner did the universal little bell tinkling announce the half-door opening, than the neighbours within its sound, rushing out of their houses, made for that shop and filled it, but their eagerness was not in the way of trade. The harbour-master is the only man licensed to sell postage stamps; none are to be had at any post-office. The author paid him several visits, first having been introduced by the patron of the four-day boat. His audience-room—a stuffy apartment, by night a bedroom—was always empty on entering it, but in two minutes it became crowded with men and women, all apparently wanting to purchase stamps.

The houses of this miserable metropolis straggle over a couple of hills—evidently so built for the convenience of water cisterns. These tanks are generally of a circular form, built of lava stones, beneath the surface, well cemented, and arched over in true masonic manner, somewhat like the strong stone roofs of the houses in Judea, leaving one or more holes at the top. Each of these holes is walled round to prevent the drawer of the water from falling into the well. Some wells are forty feet deep and twenty-five feet in diameter; others are smaller, or larger, according to the re-

quirements of the household. Chasms in the rocks are sometimes utilised as cisterns, by building a floor, sides, and top, and then cementing all securely.

The author being loth to put up at the wretched grocery store where breakfast was obtained on the morning of landing, the man and woman who kept that establishment produced the key of a dilapidated building opposite to their shop—'You can knock at the window if you want anything, and one of us will come.' There were six large and lofty rooms on the upper floor; rain came abundantly through several of their ceilings, and they were all unfurnished, excepting by cobwebs; but the outlook was magnificent. The church was immediately beneath in front, then followed two thousand feet of steep valley incline, and there was the sea, and in the distance the faint outline of the islands of Palma, Gomera, and Tenerife, the Peak bearing due east. It was simply exquisite, and at night the author could lock the front door and be alone—away from many kind-hearted people, but too fond of talking and very curiously inclined. Five minutes sufficed to plant a trestle-bed, chair, and table, and a second chair to act as a washstand, and so, with ulster and rug, that was all that was wanted. No doubt that house will now be furnished and used as a *fonda*. The writer had to wait five days for the mail schooner. There is another lodging-house at Valverde, but as it had got no banisters to its staircase the empty house was preferred.

At present there is not even one *fonda* at Golfo, but the people all over the island are so kindly disposed, that rooms to sleep in are easily obtained anywhere; but remember that it is absolutely requisite to carry food and wraps wherever one wanders. The utter change from home or hotel life has charms which more than counterbalance inconveniences—but only for those who are fond of change and can stand roughing it.

The cemetery of Valverde, surrounded by high stone

walls and protected by strong iron gates, locking well, as is customary in these islands, is perched near to a hill-top overlooking the two elevations, and the valley between, where that straggling place lies. From this point one has an excellent idea of the numerous gulches and precipices adorning the town. One day the funeral of an old lady took place. She had attained the remarkable age of 97, and she looked it. The procession of mourners, priest, and acolytes stayed until the opened casket was filled with quicklime, closed, and the half lids tied by black tape, and then deposited along with about a dozen other coffins in various stages of dilapidation in the family vault. The vault was sealed by a marble slab. There are many strongly built vaults in the same vicinity, but their openings having been covered with wood, although strong as one of a ship's hatches, they are decayed. Time has destroyed the timber, and the contents—they should be out of sight—are going the same way. On another day it was the burial of a poor man, over ninety years of age. Evidently death had taken place that morning ; the body was simply lifted out of the customary box common to the very poor, in what had been his everyday costume, and lowered by two men, one at each end, into a grave about two feet deep.

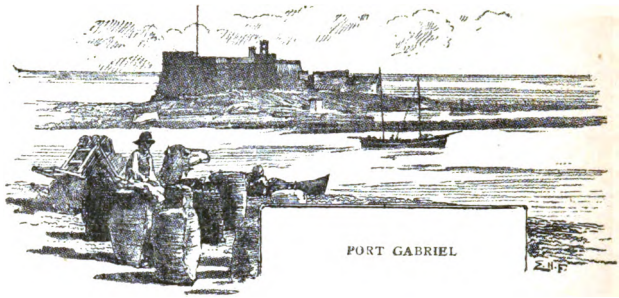
On each of these mornings the passing bell tolled. From the windows there was an excellent view of a boy coming like a jack-in-the-box through the church roof, and gaily skipping, as if for a wedding, up the steps of the belfry to operate upon the clapper. Then the *cura* came forth from the church in his robe of office, accompanied by his white-clad attendants, one of them ringing a hand-bell, conveying the elements for the last sacrament. Neighbours came to the front of their houses, and some of them knelt as the hurried procession proceeded. It was very solemn. On both these days knots of people gathered together at corners, recounting the lives of the deceased. Apparently death is a

stranger, and not a welcome one, although it must have been so to those two old bodies. It was stated that neither had ever been out of the island. They had led long, quiet lives, probably happier than the average.

The author wanted to hire a boat for the purpose of sailing round the island, but not one was to be had at Golfo ; and as the mail-schooner was due, he did not care to try the eastern side. There are only a few fishing-boats belonging to Valverde ; indeed, the Canary islanders—leaving out fisher-folk and professional mariners—are not at all in love with boating or with yachting. They are quite content with close proximity to the huge Atlantic waves, and their mighty roar against their iron-bound coasts, heard afar off like the perpetual noise of a multitude. They prefer rough mountain riding to skimming 'o'er the glad waters of the dark, blue sea'—and nobody can blame them, for tastes differ everywhere.

There is not a single good house on this island. Nobody ever seems to have waxed wealthy, yet abundance is apparent. The peasants dress well, in fancy cloth as well as in homespun tweeds, for hand-looms are not uncommon in the hamlets. The young folks dance, sing, play guitars, and generally enjoy themselves as people do elsewhere. Probably, because they take things easily, they live longer and are happier in their simple way than the children of hard-working lands. But all existence is a conundrum. Truthful is Gay's epitaph in Westminster Abbey—

> Life is a jest, and all things show it.
> I thought so once, but now I know it.



PORT GABRIEL

CHAPTER VI

LANZAROTE

Where the slumbering earthquake
Lies pillowed on fire.

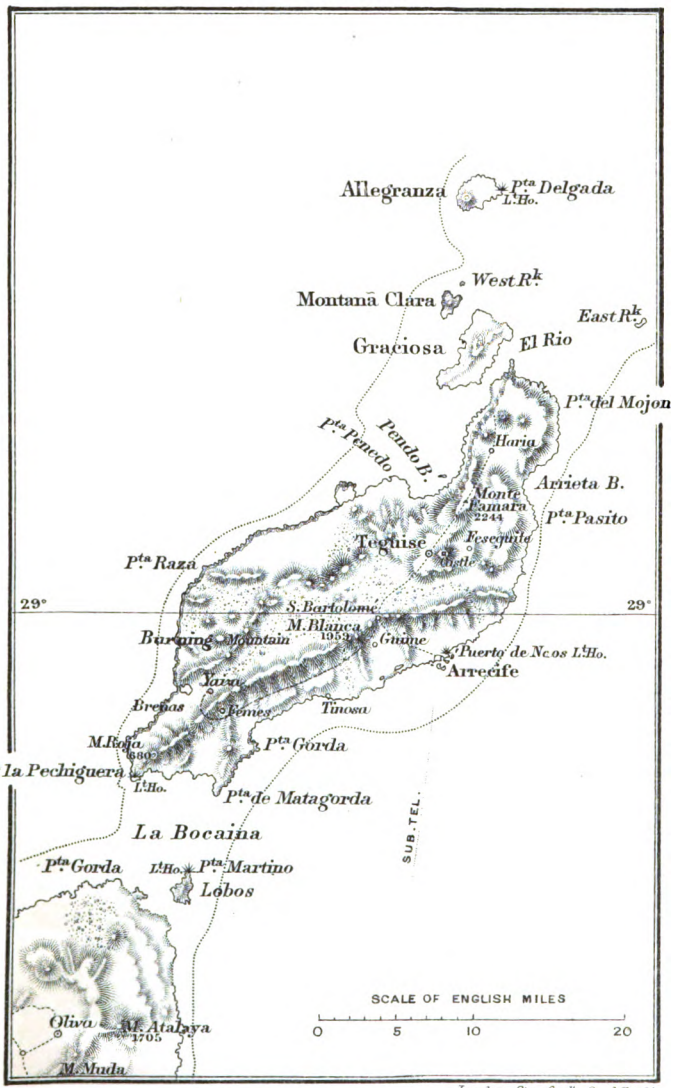
TURN we now eastward, to the Oriental group, consisting of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura.

Lanzarote is the most northerly as well as the most easterly island of the archipelago. It is only separated from Fuerteventura by ten miles of sea, and both islands trend one after the other in a roughly drawn but continuous line from north-east to south-west, almost parallel to the western, or, to be more exact, the north-western coast of Africa, from which they are distant from fifty-five to sixty-five miles.

Lanzarote—with its length of twenty-one miles, average width of twelve, and population of 25,000—is about the size and shape of the Mull of Cantire ; but in addition, straggling about its northern end, there are six small islets.

The only good harbour possessed by Lanzarote exists in front—hence the site—of its principal town, Arrecife, and that haven, for a natural one, is the best ; it is, in fact, the only port deserving the title among the islands. On ap-

LANZAROTE



London. Stanford's Geog.l Estabt

proaching it, its resemblance to Suakim, on the Red Sea, is remarkably striking, not only in the Oriental look of the town, which, as already mentioned, is almost universally the case in the Canaries, so different from Europe or America, but in the extensive reefs, above and below water, apparently forming a line of docks hemming it in. At Suakim the reefs are of coral ; here they are of lava. Lava, when in a fluid state, plays many eccentric pranks. In this case it has chosen to run itself into the sea in the shape of ridges and islands. Thus nature has constructed a most excellent refuge for vessels, only requiring artificial appliances to better it. To a certain extent those improvements have been made by the Spanish Government, in so far that small vessels can lie alongside the town wharves so quietly that delivering or receiving cargo and passengers is simplicity itself. It would not cost much money to deepen the main entrance so as to enable large ships to ride at anchor or moor in perfect shelter. Mr. Topham, the British Vice-Consul at Lanzarote, states that the principal difficulty consists in the removal of two very large boulders, now under water, from the best of the three channel entrances.

It is possible that Arrecife may one day rank as an important coaling dépôt similar to the Port de la Luz at Grand Canary. Meantime ocean steamers come to anchor well outside the reefs, and communicate with the wharves by boats and steam launches. Travellers are thus landed or embarked in comfort ; and this, for invalids, is an especial advantage. Fort Gabriel, the most prominent feature about Arrecife, is built upon a wide rock fronting the town. This rock is an island joined to the mainland by an embankment road crossing a drawbridge. The bridge spans a channel of communication for small vessels between the southern and the northern parts of the harbour. North of Fort Gabriel is another island ; thus there are three approaches from the sea to Arrecife.

Lanzarote, on account of the extreme dryness of its deliciously warm climate, is better adapted for those who suffer from rheumatic complaints than any of the other islands, excepting Fuerteventura. But taking into consideration that Arrecife has the advantage, not only of good houses, but of easier landing-places, when compared with those of Fuerteventura, it is entitled to the preference so far as both of those blessings are concerned, and in all probability will so continue, at any rate, for many years to come.

There is no island of the Canaries where the change from Europe is so great—not entirely a delectable one though, because of the absence of trees, yet interesting on account of its novelty—as Lanzarote. The first objects that meet the eye on landing are camels resting and travelling, and baby camels drinking the maternal milk. The Arabian Nights' Entertainments are vividly brought to mind. By reason of its primitive condition in the manner of travel, there are no professional porters, but a veritable Sinbad the Sailor carries any stray passengers' baggage to the *fonda*, and a tolerably comfortable inn it is. One is strangely tempted to ask Sinbad to sit down and tell a story, and it would be certain to be a good one, provided that the listener could make out what it was all about. Everything is so bright and joyous, the air breathed is so pure, so dry, and exhilarating, that if invalids or healthy tourists have not been happy, either in mind, body, or estate, for a very long time—the worry of too many good men and true women—they feel sure that they soon will be, and that the prayers of the congregation for that happy consummation are about to be realised.

It was in the merry month of May, the period of full harvest, when the writer landed there, passing through the strait of Bocany, which separates Lanzarote from Fuerteventura. On approaching Arrecife, great tracts of country appeared yellow with ripe wheat. It looked as if the island grew immense

quantities, but upon examining the mountain-sides and valleys it became apparent that rich golden colour had blinded the eyes as to the poverty of the land, and that misshapen stones were more numerous than wheat stems. It was a delusion. There were men, women, and children engaged in the tedious operation of rooting up each individual stalk of life-giving grain, one by one, and piling them tenderly in tiny heaps as carefully as a miser his coin. A sickle under ordinary circumstances cannot be used, there not being sufficient bulk for it to catch. Where the stones have been removed the precious grain sprouts up luxuriantly and fit for the sickle, but those spots are few. All the little hills, for they do not deserve the name of mountains, and the valleys between them are barren, inhospitable, and wicked-looking. No smiling landscape meets the eye, nor babbling brook delights the ear. It is like being suddenly set down in the adjacent Desert of Sahara. But, on the other hand, the adorable climate fully compensates for drawbacks, and there are to be met with bright little valley glens—oases in the desert—where water is, where villages cluster, where vineyards and bananas flourish and small fig-trees thrive, and where the inhabitants enjoy life in a very primitive and happy manner. Such desirable places can be utilised by those who seek residence in Lanzarote for health, but the immediate vicinity of Arrecife is strongly urged for that purpose, until comfortable convalescent homes are erected where deemed the most suitable.

Arrecife is a tolerably good town. Many of the houses are excellent, with large and lofty rooms, and the customary enclosed courtyard gardens. There is a capital club-house fronting Fort Gabriel, from the windows of which is an interesting view of the quay, the harbour, the fortress, and the sea beyond. Ascending to the flat roof promenade of this club—a morning or evening retreat common to good houses—there is from thence an extensive view of the island,

from its centre half round to the sea, in which the tall campanile of the church close at hand forms a conspicuous object. This club rejoices in cool, comfortable, large, and high-ceilinged apartments, and plenty of them; but the whole caravansera bears an air of run-to-seed mouldiness about it, giving one the impression that departed wealth—cochineal and wine depression, those plagues of the islands—has rendered it almost desolate. The influx of visitors, however, will soon brighten it up again, for, as at that good but smaller old English club at Madeira, they will be privileged not only to enjoy the use thereof, but to subscribe towards a new coat of paint for it.

The usual trades peculiar to small Spanish towns are to be found here, from butchers to barbers, shoemakers to ropemakers; and there are stores also where ordinary requirements can be obtained at fairly moderate prices.

The fishing community, always sturdy, healthy, and hard-worked, is considerable; they reside in a quarter by themselves, as is their custom, and the place selected is invariably as close to their boats and to their natural element as the character of the shore will permit. Here they have picked out a very appropriate inner beach bay, a perfect tidal basin well inside the harbour line.

Fort Gabriel, the most conspicuous cluster of stonework in every view of Arrecife, overlooks the town, and also the southern part of the harbour. A similar fortress northward stands as a relic of old times, and is supposed to protect that end of the harbour.

There are many old forts in the Canaries which are now useless for war purposes. They were erected in the sea, or on its margin, or commanding it, for the convenience of blazing seawards at obnoxious men-of-war, privateers, and pirates; and, landwards, to repel attacks from that direction, to terrify the—now obliterated—Guanches into submission, and to keep their successors in awe. As a matter of course

these castles stand in isolated and prominent positions, excepting the Fort de la Luz at Grand Canary, which, as said before, is flanked by coal wharves, and will shortly be incorporated into, and swallowed up by, the adjacent village. As has been previously suggested, by obtaining permission from Madrid some of these cumbersome old constructions could easily be reclaimed from desolation and converted to usefulness.

Forts and fortified cities range in size and age from the walls enclosing Chester, Rome, or Jerusalem, to the round martello towers on our south coast; and, although they may be obsolete and useless for defence, yet the foundations are there, and so are the remarkably strong walls—the ancient of slighter construction, and the modern of more substantial work—consisting of additions peculiar to different ages, ranging from defence against battering-rams and catapults—'lo, the stone cometh'—to what was considered until recently the perfection of protection against cannon-balls and shells. But now who or what can meet on equal terms hundred-ton guns, in ten-thousand-ton armour-clads, driven by ten-thousand-horse-power? Yet the foundations are there, above and combined with which it is comparatively easy work to erect superstructures, modestly, only one happy floor in elevation; or towering aloft into the sky six or a dozen stories high, fitted with proper elevators. The numerous remains of this kind in the Canary Islands offer eligible sites for mansions, palaces, boarding-houses, or hotels. Especially are these sites eligible on account of the convenient deep sea for perfect drainage, for elevated salt-water tanks, giving the luxury of sea bathing without the bother of a van, and, so to speak, for washing decks and flooding refuse out of sight into the ocean.

There are not many soldiers either in Lanzarote or Fuerteventura — only enough to fill up the conscription. Each young man between the ages of sixteen and twenty is

obliged to serve in the army. To do so he must leave his home for three or four months in each year, and hie either to the drilling barracks at Santa Cruz, Tenerife, or to those at Las Palmas, Grand Canary, where he is taught (as Robert Burns calls it) 'the fighting trade'—to walk erect, don uniform, rattle his weapons, and swagger, 'full of strange oaths,' to the intense delight of many small boys, and of all big girls. If the conscript has a mother dependent upon him for support, he is not called upon to serve; otherwise, for a substitute two hundred dollars are required. No man is permitted to emigrate until he has been a soldier, but many eligible young men who object to the goose-step evade the law and flee to America. Here it may be appropriate to remark that the police in the Canaries somewhat resemble in dress and equipment the constabulary of Ireland; they are paid by the State, and are very obliging, and generally good-looking. They are very fond of smoking cigarettes when on duty, but that habit is universal in all trades and professions. In the towns there are night watchmen, who call out the hours as our old Charlies—'Watchman, what of the night?'—used to do in the days before the force was thought of.

Arrecife has already been compared to Suakim; it is also strikingly similar to the French town of Goree, situated on the opposite coast of Africa, but further south, between the Senegal and the Gambia, where the pursers of the African mail-boats facetiously announce: 'Goree junction, change here for Senegal and Timbuctoo, keep your seats for the Gambia and Sierra Leone.' Goree is just round the corner of Cape de Verde. A copy of Fort Gabriel overlooks that town and harbour. The only apparent difference is that in Goree, domesticated ostriches promenade the streets, and act as scavengers by gobbling up offal and refuse of too large dimensions to be eaten by ducks or flown away with by turkey buzzards. There are no ostriches either in Lanzarote

or Fuerteventura, but both islands are very suitable for the purpose of breeding them.

Handing an introduction to Señor Pedro Medina Rosales at his counting-house, a pleasant talk ensued, in which information was kindly imparted as to the best places to visit. A camel-driver was sent for, and he had such a good-humoured face, and such a winning way with him, that it was a delight to agree to his terms. Camel and driver were to take the writer to the Burning Mountain and back, on the next day, for one dollar and a half, and subsequently the charge was to be reduced to one dollar daily for shorter distances. The driver asked bashfully would he get anything to eat on the journey, and upon promising him that he should be at liberty to devour the half of whatever victuals there might be, he was more than satisfied.

The hotel people supplied a large basket containing a cold fowl, a lump of cold beef, hard-boiled eggs and salt, abundance of bread—bread is exceedingly good everywhere in the Canaries—a tin of Danish butter, it being vastly superior to the native article, also plenty of oranges and bananas, and two quart bottles of water. Nobody should travel in Lanzarote or Fuerteventura without a good supply of water, for there are no grateful springs by the wayside as in the other more fortunate islands.

There being no house near to the Burning Mountain, the necessity was strongly urged of starting on the camel at two o'clock in the morning so as to get back to Arrecife the same night. That advice was taken, but however well meant, it was not judicious counsel, for the intense interest enjoyed during the day was marred by the fatigue of the evening travel, which necessitated a rest at sea before again mounting a camel. Of course, to strong young people the trip would be no more tiresome than a long summer day's sight-seeing—simply a matter of indifference. Tourists who are not averse to roughing it, and who, at the same

time, desire to see all that they can in a proper and leisurely manner, should spend three or four days or a week in the centre of Lanzarote.

At two o'clock in the morning the camel, equipped for its wearisome journey to the Burning Mountain, appeared by the light of a lantern quietly reclining, with its long legs bent beneath its ungainly body, in the street, in front of the *fonda* at Arrecife. Its great eyes of wonder seemed to say, 'Good master, let me rest where I am,' and, in truth, the writer felt very much inclined to do so. A rough, but strong armchair, on each side of the animal's hump, was firmly fixed to the lower part of the cross-tree pack-saddle, which was braced tightly by girths. Between the cross-trees, at the top of the pack-saddle, were two stone bottles containing water, besides provisions for the voyage, made fast by cords. The weight of the riders had to be taken into consideration, so as to form a true balance. The driver attended to that needful operation somewhat after the manner of John Gilpin—

> Each bottle had a curling ear,
> Through which the belt he drew,
> And hung a bottle on each side
> To make his balance true.

One chair accommodated the driver and the other the victim. To each chair was attached a swinging board for the feet to rest upon, which acted like double stirrups, so that only by a violent jerk forward which it did not happen to think of could the camel throw off its load of humanity. Beneath each chair seat was a deep drawer. An iron cage, subsequently removed, was fastened over the animal's mouth, for the purpose of preventing the beast biting at the legs of its masters. Many camels amuse themselves in that objectionable manner before they get fairly under way. The sleepy landlord yawned, rubbed his eyes, drowsily said *Adios*, and then disappeared inside the *fonda*, taking with him the cheerful society of his lantern.

The early portion of the journey, on account of pitchy darkness, very much resembled that performed by Don Quixote de la Mancha, when mounted on the celebrated wooden horse careering, high up in the air, through the night-sky. There was nothing to see but stars—very bright stars—and their brilliancy favoured the thought that we were thousands, perhaps millions, of miles nearer to them than in England. All else but stars was intense blackness, for there was nothing to reflect the starlight. It was like swimming in air, or treading upon black clouds, so gentle was the almost silent footfall of the camel. Only the tiny bell tied to its neck tinkled a reminder of the earth. Thoughts of the days of childhood and of special events through life more than at any other time impress the mind during solitude, stillness, and night. Old-world events, especially those relating to camel-riding, which under ordinary circumstances are indistinct as forgetfulness renders them, come back with the speed of lightning, fresh to the mind, and the effect is wonderfully charming. The camel sails on amidst the stars, and the air is full of delicious mystery, which is inhaled with joy, because there is silence supreme.

At the break of dawn, birds commenced to sing—from the ground—and it had a most surprising effect. There were neither bushes, trees, nor fences for the songsters to perch upon. Presently night commenced to grow lighter and to vanish as dawn appeared, and slowly the earth announced itself as solid. Shortly before five o'clock the sun arose over Africa—which is only sixty or seventy miles distant, but is not visible on the horizon. One can tell, as our source of light and life ascends, whether he means to make it hot for those exposed to his rays. Here he shows like a great circle of fire, and, until setting, he sailed his course in cloudless glory. Sunlight speedily exposed the nakedness of the miserable, stony land we were passing through. At a distance, as said before, the

fields of ripe wheat furnished the landscape with sufficient bright yellow to make the brown and red mountains, and the hideous belts of black lava, look interesting, and even picturesque ; but it was only on the camel wading between the stalks—or rather, sailing over the crops—that their extreme poverty was made manifest.

Broad day loosened the camel-driver's tongue. The restraint of darkness had disappeared, and we conversed as freely as the writer's small knowledge of Spanish permitted. Limited as it was, it increased in a very pleasing manner, for his companion was genial and witty. When he perceived, in conversation, that he had gone beyond understanding and ability to interpret—and that, even with the assistance afforded by a pocket dictionary, to talk fluently was a puzzling problem—he sang songs to cover discomfiture, and he laughed in a good-humoured and encouraging manner. To every individual we met he accorded a cheerful greeting, which the writer echoed with emphasis, imitating the pronunciation as closely as possible ; and thus, what would otherwise have been a tedious march, proved a valuable lesson in language, as well as an interesting journey. No matter how devoid of beautiful scenery travel may be, if favoured with the company of a cheerful person to talk to, even lava beds and arid wastes are enlivened ; for out of every little incident by the way amusement and interest can be, and is, derived. Prettily speckled hoopoes started up from the ground, almost as suddenly as snipe rise from home hedges and marshes, and they afforded much delight, especially as other birds were scarce. At the first village through which we passed nobody cared to make coffee for money, but at the second collection of dwellings a kind-hearted old woman cheerfully did so. Upon the driver calling out 'Peche, peche,' the camel obediently knelt, and so walking on the level from our chairs, we entered the shop belonging to the coffee-maker. It was one of the ordinary

wine-drinking stores common in all villages in all these islands; where, in addition to casks of wine on tap, as beer is at home, there were boxes of kerosene, each containing two tins with 'New York' marked outside; American tobacco in the leaf—Canary-grown tobacco is too mild for the peasantry, exactly in the same manner and by the same class of people in Ireland is strong black twist preferred to the finer kinds; and, also, in Central Africa the native-grown tobacco is so mild and tasteless that it is invariably rejected whenever the American leaf appears. There were also London biscuits and Bologna sausages in tins, English candles, inferior Spanish and better Swedish matches, needles, thread, and everything that the country people wished to buy for daily use. The coffee was good, and the shelter from the sun refreshing.

Resuming our seats, and requesting the camel to rise and march, it did so with its usual complaining—grunting, grumbling, and yelling as if its heart were breaking under the operation—which is a way they have. Strings of camels passed journeying towards Arrecife; some were laden with onions, others with rye, piled up in great heaps over the humps, giving the animals the appearance of walking stacks of produce. We rode through another village—name forgotten—without stopping, leaving the small town of San Bartolomé on the right. Both are wretched-looking and uninviting hamlets, almost devoid of trees. Indeed, along this route there are very few palm or fig trees, and they are only to be found growing in sheltered valleys where rain had been collected in reservoirs. At one place a great belt of lava extends from between two mountains down to the sea. It is crossed by a new road which has been riven through it. That lava had overflowed from the central table-land filled with and formed of it, and was once a boiling lake in front of the Burning Mountain whither we are going.

An exceedingly good road is that now travelled, but

there is not the trace of a wheel upon it. Rumour states that there is only one carriage on the island, and that it is never used. By-and-by there will be vehicles for hire. Meantime, camels plodding steadily and comfortably at the rate of two miles an hour, or active donkeys for short distances, are the only express trains available. This road is one of the new ones already described. It is marked from one to twenty-two kilometres by twenty-two white-painted posts, and then it terminates at a very hard and fast stream of lava once flowing into the sea (and looking as if it still did so) on the western side of the island, at the straggling little town of Yaiza, where a few better-class houses, surrounded by very luxuriant gardens, somewhat enliven the scenery.

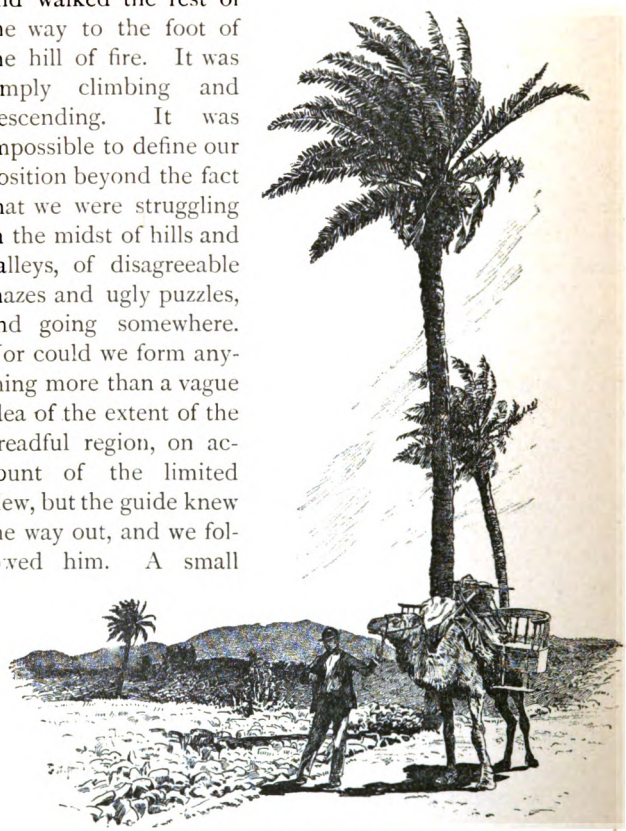
Near to the twentieth kilometre mark, by the wayside, are several widely spread villages, or rather clusters of dwellings and solitary homes dotted along a valley and up the sides of two hills. A small mountain separates Yaiza from these scattered buildings, and beyond, on both sides of that hill, as far as the eye can reach, bordered where the distance can be discerned by purple-red mountains, is a very dense-looking black forest. As soon as the sight of that dark foliage gladdened the eyes, the desire became intense to revel in its shade—to rest there out of the fierce glare of the sun, perhaps by the margin of a babbling brook of fresh spring water. Oh, what joy the anticipation of arriving in such a luxurious retreat aroused! The bare idea of remaining there all day and all night, and awaking in the morning, still by the banks of the beautiful stream, was sweet even to anticipate, so what must reality be! The march of the camel was hurried towards this vision of delight. But, upon arrival at that forest, the trees vanished as if by magic, and black lava appeared—lava left as if it had suddenly ceased boiling and bubbling; and, so transfixed, had been broken into a thousand fantastic forms

which might be mistaken for cathedrals, obelisks, temples, theatres, trees, caves, grottoes, or anything but what the collection really was—a vast city, as far as the vision extended, of solid demoniacal buildings, all mixed into desolation, here and there frescoed with lichen moss, giving the appearance of antiquity. The disenchantment was complete. Between the rich golden appearance of the island as viewed from the sea, and its stern sterile reality; the bright starry firmament, a heavenly amazement; followed by Stygian blackness, fertile earth destruction, and its umbrageous forests changed into petrifaction—that Lanzarote was a land of enchantment, controlled alternately by celestials and demons, became a fixed impression.

All anticipations of sylvan bliss—like those of the hart panting for cooling streams—were rudely dispelled by very stern reality. At any rate, there were no demons visible; and there we were, in the lava—so turning out the contents of our provision basket, we enjoyed a good breakfast at ten o'clock, after eight hours' camel ride, and only getting over twenty-two kilometres of level road. The camel, after resting for a while and gazing at its driver and the author enjoying themselves, and probably thinking that it might be as well to do the same, got up and took its breakfast from the ugly cactus growing on the lava borders, biting in bites, each about the size of a saucer, and devouring the oval-shaped slabs of thick green stuff with infinite relish, regardless of the spiny prickles peculiar to that plant.

The next thing was to proceed to the village of Yaiza to get the water-bottles replenished, and also to engage the services of a guide to the Burning Mountain. The camel-driver, although a native of the island, had never been there before. A guide was soon found, who led the camel, loaded as before, over a very rough path across the lava. As for the path, the lighter description of cinders was simply broken in pieces, and an attempt at levelling them had been

made, that was all; it was cruel on the camel. After two miles had been, somehow or other, clambered over, we left the now very unwieldy animal tied up to a spiked pinnacle, and walked the rest of the way to the foot of the hill of fire. It was simply climbing and descending. It was impossible to define our position beyond the fact that we were struggling in the midst of hills and valleys, of disagreeable mazes and ugly puzzles, and going somewhere. Nor could we form anything more than a vague idea of the extent of the dreadful region, on account of the limited view, but the guide knew the way out, and we followed him. A small



THE BURNING MOUNTAIN (FROM YAIZA)

but very beautiful fig tree actually growing at the bottom of a lava valley—or rather in a cavity—looked strangely out of

place, but its bright new emerald leaves were extremely refreshing to the eye in the midst of such utter hideousness.

With the exception of a few crags on the summit of this mountain of fire, and also on the tops, and here and there on the sides of the smaller hills composing the mountain, and extending for many miles, the whole surface is marked in wavy form, like the sand upon the seashore. Indeed, the cinders of which the region is composed are nearly as fine as sand, worn to that state by continual attrition. It is, in truth, a dreadful pile of desolate mounds. The terror of it is the more striking by comparison with the vast extent of lava spread out beneath it. There is not a blade of grass, nor a single trace of vegetation. The colours are brown and red, and in many parts of very bright scarlet. Ascending about 500 feet we came to tracts where sulphur ore lies upon the surface formed by fumes bursting upwards through fissures in the cinders. The higher one goes up, the more numerous are these beds of sulphur, and the hot air issuing from them is very oppressive. The writer ardently desired to get to the top of that mountain, 2,000 feet high, and the loftiest in the island, and he walked upwards until, finding that he must suffer suffocation if he attempted to proceed further, he stopped. The day was hot to begin with. The air was still. The sun shone straight overhead. Every man stood upon his own shadow. It was high noon. The guide and the camel-driver looked as if they were frizzling on account of the fervid heat simmering, agitating, and distorting the fiery atmosphere around. We were encircled by hills, and fairly undergoing a baking process. Thoughts of the gallant men who rush through flames to save life, and marvelling how they could possibly get breath, passed through the writer's mind; also those even of Hades, and wondering if this place were anything like it. Then came intense longing for a drink of cold water, but our supply was endeavouring to boil in the

bottles on the back of the camel tied to the lava below. Two photographic views, developed in England a few weeks later, bear the appearance of being burnt; so do all the other photographic plates that were in the slides on the mountain that day. The sulphur doubtless affected them. The taste was similar to that experienced in going over chemical works, but intensified so as scarcely to be endured.

Now that district of sulphur, repulsive as it is, is eminently suitable for rheumatic patients—but there is no dwelling near it. It has already been stated that one of the best and smoothest carriage-roads in the archipelago is made from Arrecife to Yaiza, twenty-two kilometres in length. Bear in mind that from that point it is only three miles, across lava, to the base of the Burning Mountain. This good road should be continued across the lava, and a comfortable hotel, containing every modern convenience, especially for invalids, ought to be built at the base of the hill. Carriages must be introduced into the island, as well as hammock-bearers and hammocks—that is a simple matter; then patients can either walk or be carried up from their hotel to where the potent exhalations are, once or twice daily. The writer is confident that a couple of weeks would cure any case that was not already hopeless. The flavour to the taste—and that is a reliable test—on the mountain is exactly the same as that caused by undergoing bodily contact with the natural hot sulphurous vapour, boxed up into small rooms, issuing direct from rock fissures at the Geysers, near to Cloverdale, Clear County, California, one of the most efficient resorts for rheumatic patients in the United States of America.

Mr. Topham, the British Vice-Consul at Arrecife, who has resided there since the month of October 1828—sixty-one long years—informed the writer that he had been twice to the top of the Burning Mountain, and that he poked a stick into a cleft of the rock, and drew it out with its end burnt.

When rain falls the simmering heat changes to smoke, enveloping the scenery in thick fog.

At every small collection of houses, near to the road along which the camel slowly marched on its homeward journey, were groups of peasantry enjoying the cool of the afternoon and evening. Outdoor amusements and gatherings are universal in all lands of the sunny South. Here the old folks creep out of their houses, and seated in their verandahs, well adorned with flowering plants, they look on, with smiling faces, at their grandchildren playing. Some of the middle-aged men were engaged in athletic sports, others played cards and smoked cigarettes. Youths and maidens, assembled in separate groups, amused themselves in various ways ; but they kept within hail, and occasionally mingled, met, and danced to the music of a guitar ; and no doubt they made love, as they do elsewhere. They all looked happy.

When asking for a drink of water, it was supplied and gracefully handed in the best cup or glass that they possessed —water fresh from their dripstone filter, very good, cool, and acceptable. The poorest peasant has no idea of asking or taking money for any slight service afforded ; it is purely a matter of kindness rendered with goodwill, and a naturally amiable trait in their character. When darkness once more covered up the earth, when the villagers had retired inside their dwellings, and there was nothing but the stars to look at, the movement of the camel was so gentle that the writer fell asleep in comfort, and only awoke, in the middle of the night, as it stopped at the hotel in Arrecife. Being very tired by the long travel to and from the high-land of hot sulphur in one day, the author was compelled to postpone a visit to Teguiza, the ancient capital of Lanzarote, situated in the middle of the island, once a flourishing town, but now a deserted village.

On account of the absence of trees, clouds pass over this

island, and rarely does rain fall. The year of the author's visit was an exception, and the blessed rain from heaven descended freely, and an abundant harvest was the result. Cisterns are built beneath each house in the same manner as at Hierro; some of them contain rain-water sufficient to last for three years. The overflow, when heavy rains do favour the island, runs to waste into the sea.

Some years ago artesian-well borers from America tried to drill what are called Abyssinian wells to enable the water to rush to the surface, but whether the rocks proved too hard, or the funds for continuing the experiments ran too low, or because there was no fluid to rush, the attempt was abandoned. It appears a much more easy matter to collect rain by damming up valleys and converting them into lakes, but that is not done.

It is not at all unlikely for various reasons—one being that kerosene is found in Africa by the Red Sea on one side and bitumen in the West Indies on the other—that bitumen and underground reservoirs of petroleum exist in the Canary Islands. If so, some day they will be brought into daylight and commerce.

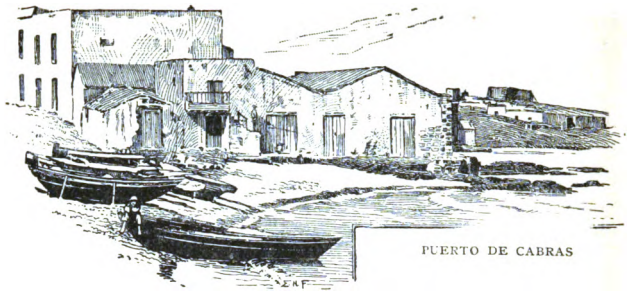
In the winter of 1874 the clouds in their wild career for Africa refused to break over Lanzarote. No rain fell, consequently there was famine on the island. Many thousands of the inhabitants were compelled to leave their homes so as to obtain water, food, and employment in Grand Canary and Tenerife, and those who could scrape money enough to do so migrated to America. Drinking-water, in barrels, had to be imported from the other islands to keep life in the people.

The last eruption in the Canaries occurred in this island in 1824. It took place in the lesser hills situated north of the hill of fire.

In 1736 a terrific eruption burst forth at the Burning Mountain, and for seven years lava ran into the sea on both

sides of the island, overflowing and obliterating fourteen villages. In the central part—it may be called the table-land, or the plateau top of the island—the lava, before brimming over seawards, filled all the valleys between the surrounding hills, and has left behind a veritable turbulent black sea, the waves of which are fixed—as is said of the genuine sea—mountains high; and also that irregularity, as the writer has faintly endeavoured to describe, caused by subsequent splitting. This is the delusive black forest. It is a fitting place for supernatural and awe-inspiring ideas and mysterious terrors. You think you hear the witches in 'Macbeth' chanting in smothered anger—

> Double, double, toil and trouble,
> Fire burn and cauldron bubble.



PUERTO DE CABRAS

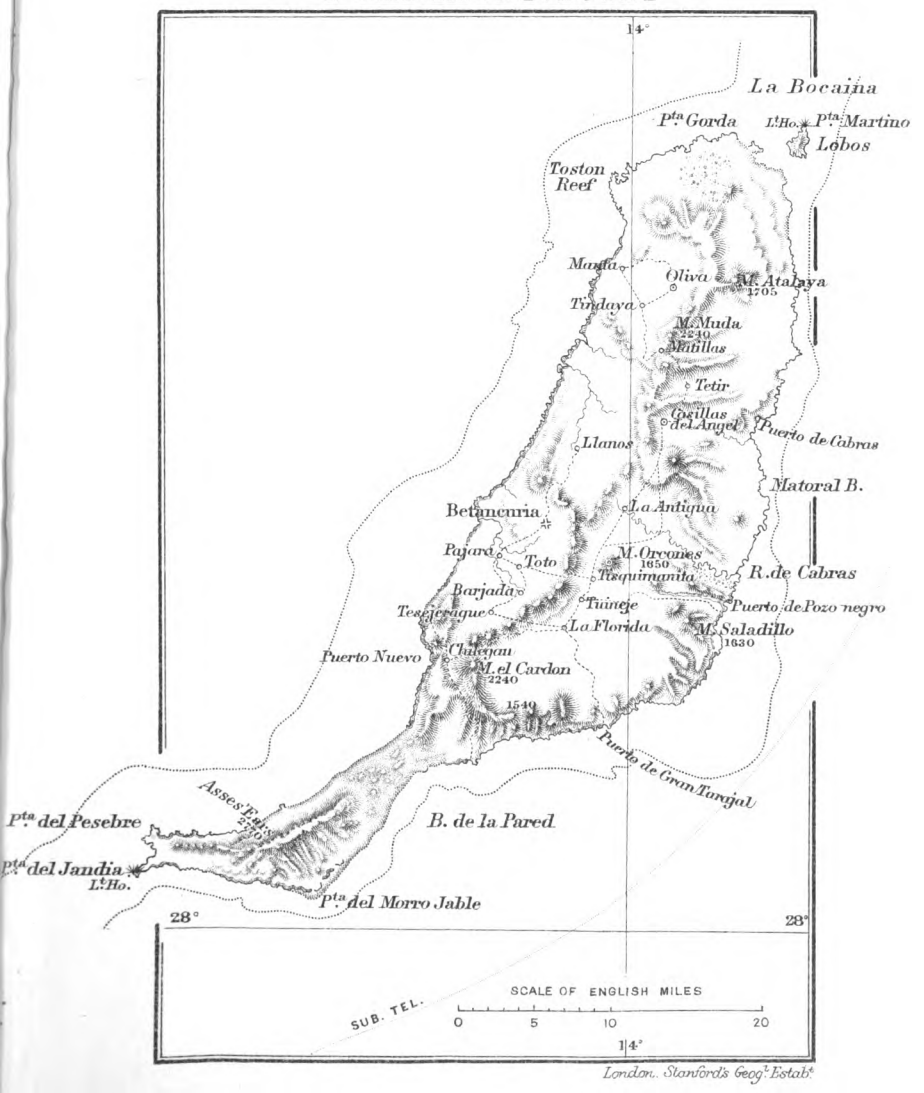
CHAPTER VII

FUERTEVENTURA

A weary waste expanding to the skies.

THIS long and narrow island, so far as size is concerned, ranks the next after Tenerife. To fix its position in the mind it is well to remember that it is situated south of Lanzarote, and is only separated by sixty miles of sea from the Desert of Sahara. In truth, the whole island is exactly like a slender slice of that enormous land-waste cast adrift. Its population amounts to 25,000. When inland, in one of its extensive valleys, encircled by undulating land rising into small hills, shutting out the view of the sea, the resemblance to Sahara is complete. There is nothing inviting about Fuerteventura. The absence of fresh water in any country makes it sad; add to this the terribly stony surface, the lime formations cropping up everywhere, its scanty crops of wheat, limited vineyards, and onion-fields, the cruel-looking clumps of the poisonous plant or bush *euphorbia*, as in Lanzarote—more prominent here on account of the scarcity and absence of other vegetation, but quite as

FUERTEVENTURA



London. Stanford's Geog.l Estab.t

abundant in the other islands—and acres of the hideous cactus shrub wandering high and low in thick roots, and oval slabs bristling with wicked prickles surrounding poverty-stricken habitations and villages—a feeling of solitariness and desolation is created in the mind of the wanderer difficult to describe. To realise that feeling is good, as affording a contrast to the thorough enjoyment experienced during fine weather in that garden of the world called England. With a camel beneath one, and a basket of provisions and a bottle of water handy to reach, one can sail over the irregularities of the roadless surface, and all the time, after a fashion, revel in the comforts of life in the midst of a wilderness where no water is. Vivid tales of Sahara—hot winds and clouds of sand raised by dry tornados—clouds that travel like genii issuing from bottles into vastness come to the mind ; and, not at all unlikely, they may whirl across the path.

The writer observed several of these eccentricities of rude Boreas in Fuerteventura, but they were at a distance ; his experience of such sand-storms in the Soudan was sufficient for one lifetime, and no longing for repetition was indulged in. This is the nature of those celestial inflictions. The day is fine and cloudless, the sun has it all its own way, and the air is so still that little insect life is a noise. Suddenly a small white cloud rises up from the sage bush ; it grows, like 'Alice in Wonderland,' but taller than any monument raised by man ; it widens its circle, and then it moves, slowly at first, but gathering speed. It is the whirlwind, flitting with the rapidity of shadows of storm clouds, sweeping over mountains and valleys, until it loses its way and speed, and disappears. The sand has fallen on the desert, all nature is again serene, and man and insects collect their scattered senses. Meantime, woe be to the thirsty traveller over whom it roams. He must fall upon his face and breathe as little as he can until the hurricane is over. It may last only one little minute, but that is almost enough to choke—five minutes of it

would suffice to destroy an army. The fine sand fills the nostrils, ears, neck, eyes, hair, hands, wrists, feet, and legs, and powders the body with gritty excruciations which can only be removed by a bath. But where is the water? As a Chinese philosopher sagely remarks, 'If no have, how can do?' Sand-storms have confounded all designs to invade Upper Egypt, or Ethiopia, or the Soudan, from the time of the ancient Persians down to the attempt of the British army to travel from Suakim to the Nile. They are invincible.

A camel and driver will carry and pilot the most timid person anywhere over the island, so that, with organised supplies of provisions and water, including coverings for the night, those who are really fond of rude travel, or who delight in a couple of weeks' thorough change of scene from the dull routine of ordinary life at home, can be accommodated in Fuerteventura to their hearts' content. It is better to purchase provisions at Las Palmas, Grand Canary, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, or at Arrecife, Lanzarote, before starting for the Island of Fuerteventura. Of course, there are shops in every collection of houses one passes through, but a moment's inspection of their interiors is enough to demonstrate that beyond petroleum and tobacco, wine, beans, peas, and maize, few other commodities are to be had. The inhabitants are wretchedly poor, hence the marts of commerce only contain the actual requisites for their daily life. In every shop, Toledo blades, clasp-knives, the very things for picnics, are sold, to meet the scarcity of money, for sevenpence each; those with fancy handles cost more money. The steel of which they are made is excellent; the glint of it is white-blue, exactly similar to superior Sheffield cutlery, delightful to the eye of boyhood for whittling.

Supposing that with only a compass for guide one gets on a wrong path, there is something supremely delightful about losing one's way—not, perhaps, in a city, but certainly away in far-off lands, especially among mysterious mountains.

It is one of the charms of life to roam over roadless regions, if only to find that good exists in human nature under the most adverse circumstances. The writer in early manhood wandered amongst Indian tribes in Oregon and California, alone, and he was well treated. He made rough water-colour sketches of squaws and papooses, which caused the braves to smile, and grotesque likenesses of the latter, which furnished amusement all round; so that he thoroughly enjoyed the run of their curious wigwam life. On one occasion, in Central Africa, when out elephant-hunting, he was left accidentally by his party and lost his way. Exhausted by the heat, and fatigued by walking, he lay down to die beneath the shade of a palm-tree, where a negress found him and brought him water to drink, and she and her neighbours tended him for a couple of days until he recovered. Be assured, for there is no doubt about it, that hearty welcome, shelter, and joy are to be found by man from man in the lonely places of the earth wherever man exists.

There are no hotels upon this island, with the exception of a small and, for its size, tolerably comfortable *fonda* at Puerto de Cabras. The landlord of this inn, Señor Don José Galan Sanchez, is an active, intelligent, middle-aged man, who will, as far as he can, utilise his various houses, and provide rough, but clean, accommodation for all who visit Fuerteventura. He keeps a general store opposite to his dwelling, a bridged barranco only separating the two establishments, so that by elevating his voice at the dinner table he can be heard in his shop without the aid of a telephone. The charge for board and lodging—universal in all the islands—is one dollar per day, and this includes provisions supplied for excursions. This *fonda* must needs suffice for the present, and until such time as the increase of visitors justifies the building of a proper hotel—at a very dim period in the future. Invalids must not think of going

to Fuerteventura for a very long time yet—the period depending upon how soon comfortable places to exist in are provided for them—then, those who find that the enjoyable hot and dry climate of Lanzarote suits them, may like to shift the scene of their improvement to Fuerteventura.

Puerto de Cabras, the chief town, fronts to the east, in what is called a wide bay, but which is only an open roadstead facing Africa. Facing Africa means smooth water. The landing is effected by boats backed on to a shingly beach, which extends for about a dozen yards between clusters of rocks, some of which are covered at high tide. On the northern side a reef projects into deeper water. On that natural advantage a concrete pier can easily be constructed and curved round so as to afford sheltered steps. Meantime those who desire to go ashore at Puerto de Cabras must either take a small jump from the boat on to the shingle, or else fly into the embrace of a stalwart sailor for half a minute or so, who will gently receive and carefully deposit his burden dryshod on dry land.

There are some pretty little court gardens enclosed by the better class of houses, where flowers and curious plants delight the eye, but they are few in number. Puerto de Cabras, scarce of two-storied houses, is as mean and miserable a collection of one-storied dwellings as the most evil-disposed misanthrope could select for his abode, and its surrounding scenery is in perfect accordance therewith—treeless, unfruitful-looking, uninteresting, and tame. The highest hill rises only 2,770 feet above the sea. Each house has its cistern well, into which rain-water is trained to run, as in Lanzarote and Hierro. Some of those cellars are spacious enough to store sufficient supply for one or two years' consumption. The entrances to these receptacles are generally from the courtyard, but in some cases there are also openings from the street, similar to coal-grids in Northern countries, but they are covered with wooden trap-doors instead

of iron. These traps are very dangerous, especially for blind people and children, but accidents are few.

Statistics give the population of Puerto de Cabras variously at 1,000 and 500, but five minutes' inspection of the town enables one to judge the round numbers as one hundred families; one hundred each of pigs, dogs, cats, donkeys, and camels; five hundred goats, two mules, and one pony. With the exception of the principal street, called 'Principal,' and which leads uphill, a couple of hundred yards from the landing-place, to a small church, and only so far paved, but in a villanous manner, and a few short by-streets equally bad to walk upon, there is not a road on the island. Paths lead in all directions, picked out centuries ago, as the imagination of camels and donkeys suggested and approved. Fortunately, however, as there are very few hills to travel over in comparison with the extent of the valleys, and as the gradients are slight, these paths, chosen by instinct almost amounting to reason, are easy for camels, donkeys, or pedestrians.

It was agreed with the owner of a camel to pay one dollar a day for hire of the animal, including his services as driver. We started one morning at dawn, carrying provisions for two days. There was only a hard and bare wooden pack-saddle frame to mount, not one fashioned with comfortable armchairs and convenient swinging feet-catches—the latter acting as double-stirrups—as at Lanzarote, so it was decidedly uncomfortable; but the kind-hearted landlady of the inn supplied a large pillow, which made riding easier.

The path from Puerto de Cabras leads uphill. Five minutes sufficed to get away from the not very much madding crowd, clear of the town. In half an hour a barranco was crossed, by the side of which an attempt has been made to plant the Eucalyptus—an utter failure; then across another small hill to another barranco, in which water

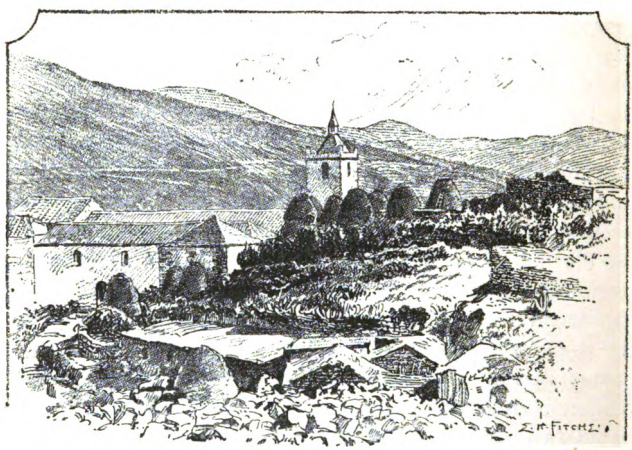
was still running, and also remaining, here and there, in pools. Just then a flock of goats appeared and made a rush for the water—it was a refreshing sight to look at their enjoyment. On crossing the second hill the general view was pleasing. Wheat and rye appeared to grow everywhere, but a glance at the earth and stones immediately around the feet of the camel at once dispelled the idea. The general view was deceptive, and the impression it gave was false; the camel walks through the midst of grain crops, but the stalks are so far apart that its feet scarcely injure one of them. It is only at this time of the year (May), and only when following a season of abundant rain, that such a view can be obtained. In all directions peasants are gathering in the harvest. As in Lanzarote, stalk by stalk is handled, pulled up by the roots and placed lengthways on the ground in piles—not in sheaves. After a little while it is taken to be trodden out by oxen going round in a circle, sometimes a camel is in the centre of the circle, then an ox, and then a donkey outside. All animals so employed look happy, and almost smiling, because they are busily engaged in eating as well as working, for, in accordance with Scripture, they are not muzzled. The valuable grain is then gathered and garnered—built up in the centre of what looks very like a conical haystack, covered over at the top with mud. Thus it is preserved for many years. Unthreshed wheat is also stacked. All over the villages, and in every farmyard of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, are these stacks in numbers sufficient to denote that they are granaries for use in years of famine, when but little or no rain falls. The natives of many parts of Central Africa practise the same manner of housing grain, so do the North-American Indians store acorns to make bread—bread so bitter that, in truth, it must be an acquired taste to enjoy it. This particular valley is about eight miles long, and four miles broad. There are hamlets and villages studded over it, showing out as pretty green

spots from the yellow grain, from the rocky barrancos, and from the desolate brown mountains. They are truly nooks of home comforts—very limited dells and dingles, where rain is collected and stored, not only for domestic use, but for the irrigation of fig trees, bananas, grape vines, orange trees, and the various limited garden crops in their immediate vicinity.

We arrive at the ancient village of Antigua, where there is a large church—much too large for the number of houses. The population has evidently diminished. The same desertedness is apparent in every inland village of Fuerteventura and Lanzarote. Their sturdy young men, fit for battling life anywhere, have gone to the New World, and the gentle, dark-eyed beautiful maidens have followed them. The day is very hot, and we gladly avail ourselves of the grateful shade afforded by the interior of a wine-shop and general store, to partake of the breakfast which the camel has carried, consisting of cold fowl, tinned Bologna sausage, bread, and figs. There was a lump of the usual country cheese in the basket, made from goat's milk, which did not look very inviting, but the camel-driver thoroughly appreciated it. Our water-bottles—one for each man—were refilled from one of the exceedingly good stone filters to be found in every house of any pretension to comfort in the islands. These filters—Anglo-African residents, who thoroughly appreciate their luxury, call them 'drip-stones'—are made either from lava, or porous stone, each one being thickly overgrown with exquisitely delicate ferns. So dense is the drooping foliage, that it is necessary to push the dipper through the pliable green curtains to get at the water jar beneath the filter, where the sparkling, clear, diamond-like water rests in dustless seclusion. This precious drink is invariably cool and refreshing; Canarians well know how to preserve it from impurities and heat, and how also as gracefully to present it to all who ask for it.

The church, although very large for the size of the town, or rather village, is not beautiful, either inside or outside.

Indeed, there is nothing of interest about Antigua; it is just a deserted village, and it is very difficult to imagine any native who had once escaped from it ever wanting to go back again. At noon the camel—unwillingly as usual—was called upon to continue the journey, and after crossing a hill, which was just as much as the poor brute could do—



BETANCURIA

for camels neither appreciate mountain scenery, nor do they love climbing—in two hours Betancuria, the ancient capital of Fuerteventura, appeared in sight.

It is difficult to say anything in favour of this island, this most forlorn cluster of hard stones. Its climate certainly is beyond all praise, but everything else is repugnant and depressing. Fuerteventura supplies the other islands with limestone in any quantity. Wine in casks, collected by vessels from vineyards where valleys abut upon the

sea, is taken to the island of Madeira. Onions strung on ropes are also exported. There is very little else at present. The same remarks as to products apply to Lanzarote.

Betancuria is a sleepy old town shrunk into the dimensions of a hamlet, but rejoicing in a large church and a still larger monastery. There are some very good houses with gardens, as well as fields of ripe grain and a little pasture-land surrounding them. There are also a few very old, dilapidated houses, ornamented with huge but tottering balconies projecting over the roadway, and some dwellings in ruins—that is all; but the curious old place is most delightfully nestled along the bottom of a serpentine-shaped valley, well sheltered by hills, and ornamented by clusters of tall palm-trees. The whole forms a welcome retreat in the desert.

The camel appeared to know where to stop, for it selected a resting-place at the very door of the house the writer wanted to find; where, presenting a letter of introduction from the landlord of the *fonda* at Puerto de Cabras to Señor Don Rafael Perez Mota, that worthy caballero at once accorded me a hearty and hospitable welcome. Now, the writer had never seen the landlord of the *fonda* at Puerto de Cabras before landing in Fuerteventura, and his giving him this introduction was so puzzling as to cause hesitation in making use of it. On reflection it appeared to be a distinguished mark of confidence—and so it was—an instance of that delicate feeling of Spanish kindness akin to chivalry. Mine host had spent many years of his life in Cuba, and had only recently returned to inherit his paternal property. The *cura* of the metropolis came in to dinner, and afterwards he kindly took the writer over his church and allowed him to photograph the interior. The sacristy is surrounded by oil paintings of subjects connected with the New Testament, in which a total disregard of perspective makes them very strange to the eye, but still very interesting to read as one may a book.

One of a boat, on the Sea of Galilee, is exceedingly quaint. They are very old—this church is said to be the oldest in the archipelago. One of the pictures, situated immediately over the inside of the outer door, is becoming ragged, owing to the frequent slamming of the door and sudden admission of gusts of fresh air. A wandering artist is wanted to suggest to the *cura* how to preserve it or, better still, by touching it up himself he would earn the gratitude of the clergy and the approbation of everybody.

The monastery is at the head of the valley. A very high and strong wall encloses a large tract of land, through the centre of which runs a barranco. On either side of the barranco is a large building, surrounded by gardens sloping down to where the stream is—when it runs. These buildings are uninhabited, and in one hundred years more will be in ruins; meantime, it is very probable that possession could be obtained by any one wishing to purchase or to rent them. They would make an excellent but exceedingly quiet and lonely sanatorium, deep down in a valley locked in by hills.

The Inquisition was abolished in 1820. The closing of convents and monasteries and the sale of Church property followed. Those events paved the way for primary education. There are in all the towns, and in every village in every island, national schools for boys and girls. Private schools are abundant, and at Laguna and Las Palmas there are colleges. Thus the present generation of Canarians is well informed, and each future generation will be an improvement on the past. The clergy now receive pay from the Government. They have lost that hold over the minds of their flocks which in past days they possessed and held with firm grasp until their domineering demands for lucre and luxuries caused the peasantry to throw off their religious yoke. The educated classes, although deferential in ecclesiastical matters, are less superstitious. Many good men

and true are waxing fonder of masonic lodges than cathedrals. Excommunication has lost its terrors for them. Threats of excommunication only increase the number of lodges. Still, from the peasantry the priests obtain due respect. Indeed, in villages and islands where public entertainments are unknown, church is the only place of resort for a little variety, and when diversion can be combined with devotion, peace of mind results; so the priests are regarded, and deservedly so, as the true friends of the people.

On the following morning, at dawn, the camel, with its driver perched on one side of the pack-saddle frame, and the writer on the other, started uphill from Betancuria and across the mountain to the westward. By doing so we entered upon another valley similar to that already described, but not so extensive. The camel sailed through similar miserable villages, and over similar scanty cornfields, and at ten o'clock we pulled up and rested for breakfast, from our basket, in the shade of a general-store shop at the small town of Cassilio del Angel, in the middle of the valley, where a couple of views were obtained, but the church was so devoid of interest that its interior was only glanced at.

The valleys of Fuerteventura—and there are many of them, for the hills are small, and the island sixty miles long, and in some parts eighteen miles across—when rain descends between October and May, are exceedingly productive. When rain does not fall, then it is bad for the inhabitants. It seems—nay, it is—a marvel that, with abundance of limestone everywhere on the surface, and plenty of other good stone for building purposes, the two are not combined into the formation of dams, so that all the surplus water should not be allowed to rush down the barrancos and into the sea, but that the lower portions of valleys should be converted into lakes to act as reservoirs. If in the land of Egypt the Nile were allowed to stream bodily into the

Mediterranean, without at high Nile being turned into artificial lakes, the world would say that Egypt had gone mad. Instead of a fruitful valley, Egypt would be a howling wilderness on each side of the Nile. Here we have it in a nutshell. Clouds full of rain pass over Fuerteventura and Lanzarote from October until May without breaking, as they break over the five more western islands of the archipelago. These clouds are the sky Nile of those two islands, and they ought to be coaxed down. By making artificial lakes this can be done ; clouds will be attracted, and, within a limited surface, trees can be planted, which, as they grow, will bring down more rain, and ensure a regular supply, and thereby increase the area of cultivation.

This is worthy of attention. As the world grows older, every available country will be utilised by improved means of agriculture ; but especially is Fuerteventura worthy of the experiment, on account of the superiority of its climate and its nearness to Europe. It would grow anything semi-tropical, but it lacks water. It would be a great health resort, but it wants better scenery.

Herein is an excellent opportunity for the employment of capital, if—and there always is an 'if'—honestly managed. Let a company purchase the island, and make lakes and plant trees, year by year, constructing fresh lakes on higher ground, so that all but the mountain tops should be brought under farming operations. Thus, in ten years, Fuerteventura now in most parts a wretched, useless, burnt-up, ugly desert would be transformed into a veritable Garden of Eden.

Individual improvements of plots of land, even extending to whole valleys in Fuerteventura, would be trifling with the subject. It requires the ingenuity and the combination of men with money to expend to utilise passing clouds driven over barren hills and useless desert. There is plenty of willing labour to be had cheap. Since the wine trade has diminished and the cochineal insect fallen in estimation,

new industries are demanded. The cultivation of sugar and tobacco has been increased with the view of taking the place of wine and cochineal; but other countries produce sugar and tobacco in such vast quantities that the Canaries cannot compete. However, they can, to an unlimited extent, increase their crops of onions, potatoes, and fruit, and find a ready and quick market for all that they can grow.

Moreover, Providence has kindly populated the sea surrounding the Canaries with abundance of good fish. In every island, at every headland or rock overhanging the sea, boys, girls, and women use long fishing-rods and lines, and supply their families with nutritious and delicious food. From every available shelter small boats issue forth, and ply their lines and nets; at night-time they burn torchlights to attract the fish. But the most productive and extensive fishing-grounds are between Lanzarote and Fuerteventura on one side, and the coast of Africa on the other, and extending beyond the limits of the islands from 30 degrees to 20 degrees north latitude—from above Cape Nun to below Cape Blanco. There are about four hundred small vessels—40- to 70-ton schooners—employed in this deep-sea fishery, and they are principally owned in Grand Canary. Capital can be profitably employed in the extension of this branch of commerce, not only in better craft, but by establishing salting and drying dépôts on the rocks of Fuerteventura and Lanzarote, as practised in the Orkneys, the Shetlands, Norway, and Newfoundland.

There is only one British-born subject resident in Fuerteventura—William Sinclair Hogg, from the north of Dunbar. He first came to the island in the year 1834, and he is always glad to welcome a countryman. All spare time during a week's stay on the island was pleasantly passed in his society. He said that when he arrived camels and asses existed in a wild state in Jandia, the southern part of the island, which is connected with the northern

part, called Grand Tierra, by an isthmus, and that the most popular sport in those days was to organise camping-out parties to hunt those animals; also that wild goats were numerous, and that their skins formed a large item of commerce to France for making gloves—hence the name 'Puerto de Cabras' (Harbour of Goats). Mr. Hogg owns the only house in the town suitable for an hotel—it overlooks the sea—but he is too far advanced in life to trouble himself about providing loaves and fishes and camels for tourists. Like a wise man, he spends the evening of his days in quiet, but he often gazes sadly over the sea towards the land of his birth, which he will never more look upon. His income is derived from the rental of farms situated in the pretty valley of Oliva, nine miles in a north-westerly direction from Puerto de Cabras. The rents of these farms are gathered in a primitive manner—viz., one half of the produce is sent to him. Thus this worthy old Scotchman of Fuerteventura unwittingly suggests his simple arrangement to the lawgivers of the United Kingdom as a basis for rental adjustment of agricultural land, so that landlords and tenants may live and let live.

Geography holds high rank in the march of improvement in this wonderful age. Look upon a map of Africa dated during the first quarter of this century, and compare it with one of the present year. The term 'unknown regions' has disappeared. The sources of the Nile have been ascertained. Livingstone died under the belief that the waters of Lake Tanganyika pertained to the Nile; Stanley proved that they belong to the Congo. Modern travellers have withdrawn the veil from the Dark Continent, and now it only remains for commerce to civilise the negro and abolish slavery. It stands to reason that when African chiefs find that white men prefer *produce* to the mere bodies of black men and women, boys and girls—they have yet to learn this simple fact—they will employ them in working on

the land instead of deporting them, and thus slavery will die a natural death. Thanks be to King Steam for the early promise of that great boon to Africa !

The Canary Islands pertain to Africa. Slaves were taken thence to the Mediterranean countries before a larger supply was found on the west coast of Africa. It was only last year that King Steam opened up local traffic amongst these Fortunate isles. Now they will emerge from obscurity, and not only enjoy the benefits conferred by reciprocal trade, but their delicious climate will tend to prolong the lives of the children of the chilly North who resort thereto.

Fair clime, where every season smiles
Benignant o'er those blessed isles.

Population 1890

	Towns	Islands
Island of Tenerife	—	112,000
Santa Cruz, Tenerife . .	24,000	
Laguna ,, . .	8,000	
Villa de Orotava ,, . .	4,000	
Puerto de Orotava ,, . .	4,000	
Icod ,, . .	4,500	
Guimar ,, . .	4,500	
Garachico ,, . .	4,500	
Island of Grand Canary . . .	—	90,000
Las Palmas, Grand Canary . .	28,000	
Island of La Palma	—	30,000
Santa Cruz, island of La Palma .	8,000	
Island of Lanzarote	—	25,000
Arrecife, island of Lanzarote .	5,000	
Island of Fuerteventura . . .	—	25,000
Island of Gomera	—	15,000
Island of Hierro	—	5,000
Total	. . .	302,000

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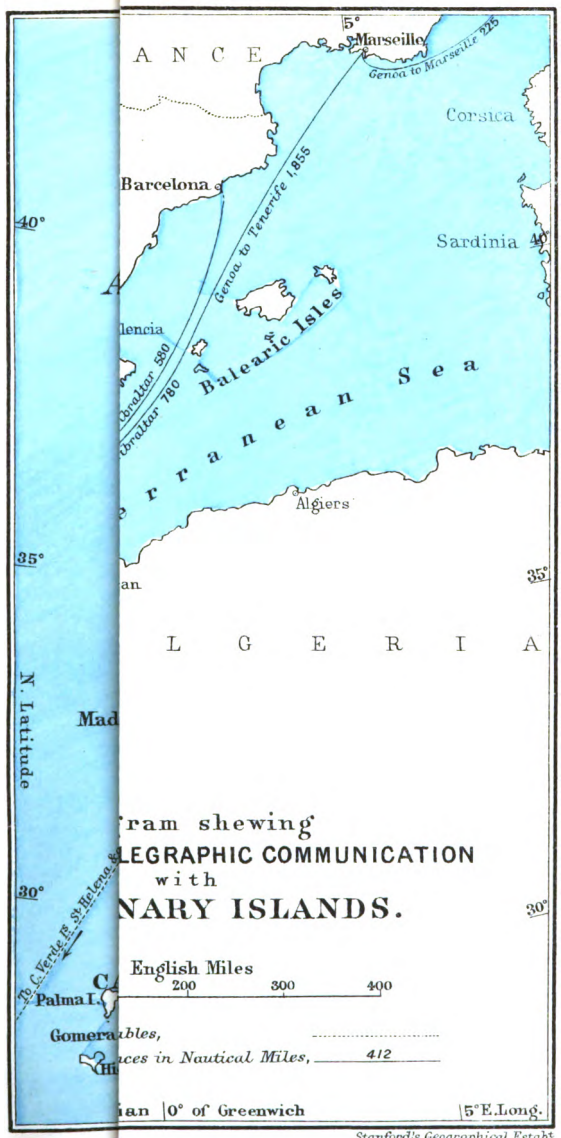

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