

IN THE CANARIES  
WITH A CAMERA  
MARGARET D'ESTE



FETCHING WATER

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BY  
MARGARET D'ESTE

AUTHOR OF "THROUGH CORSICA WITH A CAMERA," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
Mrs R. M. KING

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36 ESSEX STREET W.C.  
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*First Published in 1909*

## TO THE READER

DO not, I pray you, take up this book in the erroneous belief that it is a guide to the Canaries. That is not its scope, and to those who may want a guide let me recommend Brown's *Guidebook*, wherein will be found the fullest details of every road, village, mountain, church, and volcano in the islands, with particulars as to population and currency, shipping lines and fares, manufactures and statistics—for the omission of all which in my own account therefore no apology is needed.

No, this chronicle only purports to be a guide to our own wayward steps and impressions, our observations and experiences, and makes no pretence of being anything but a personal record of six pleasant months spent in the delightful climate of the Canary Islands.

THE AUTHOR



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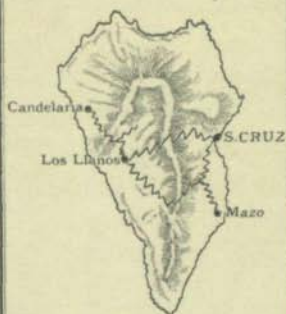


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Grand Canary.



La Palma.



Teneriffe.

IN THE  
CANARIES WITH A CAMERA  
TENERIFFE

CHAPTER I

15  
"YOU fortunate people to be wintering in the  
Fortunate Isles!"

So wrote a friend on hearing that we were going to spend six months in the Canaries; and the words recalled a somewhat similar remark I once made to a lady who had just returned from the Soudan. "How lucky you were," I said rather enviously, "to get as far as Khartoum on your first visit to Egypt!"

Whereupon she looked at me with some surprise and replied, "Lucky? Why, I just took a Cook's ticket."

Viewed in that light, there is no doubt that when once you have taken your passage to Teneriffe and have packed your trunk and got into the train for Southampton, you are in a very fair way to reach the Canary Islands without any special intervention of Fortune. But I think my friend meant that we were to be congratulated on being able to gratify the *Wanderlust* that comes over us from time to time, for it is a

general request the tea-table was ever after provided with a muslin cover.

It is the custom in the Canaries for afternoon tea to be included in a visitor's hotel *pension*, and it is served at a common table from which everyone supplies his own and his neighbours' wants, a custom I do not remember meeting with in any other country. It tends undoubtedly to sociability, and enables solitary guests to form acquaintances far more easily than is possible where the severe exclusiveness of separate tables prevails. Some of our fellow-guests we found to be old *habitués* returning to the island for their third or fourth winter; others were newcomers, and like ourselves were going on to Orotava in a few days. It was extraordinary how long the effects of our tossing were felt by some of us; we had grown so used to running up little hills and down again whenever we moved that for days afterwards we imagined we felt the floors of the rooms heave and the staircases sway as we went about the hotel.

In the case of one or two invalids on board the rough passage had been peculiarly unfortunate. It is wonderful to see the light-hearted way in which a doctor will order his patients a sea voyage, without so much as inquiring whether they are good or bad sailors, or will despatch them upon some immense railway journey, the fatigue and agitation of which on the return home will very probably undo all the good the invalid may have gained from a winter in the South.

"Indeed," wrote a friend after arriving, utterly exhausted by travel, at a southern health-resort—"indeed



one needs to be very strong to come abroad for one's health!"

In the evening we were promised a selection on the pianola, and the manager disappeared into the drawing-room to set the instrument going, while we and our fellow-guests sat in the hall expectantly awaiting the display of brilliant technique—faultily faultless, icily regular—of which a well-bred pianola is capable. Nothing happened however, and presently the electrician was sent for, after that the cashier, and finally the hall porter, and a confused and lively sound of discussion reached our waiting ears. Suddenly there came a noise like the violent breaking of many fans, followed by a rapping thudding, which evoked encouraging encores from the audience outside. Then someone was heard picking out a tune with one finger, but this brought on a second attack of loud rattling, interspersed with cries of "Turn it off!" and presently a very heated porter emerged from the room and informed the company that there would be no music that night, adding with a humility rare in one of his class, whose duties include omniscience in every department—"Of course there is something undone in the pedals that we can't understand."

Whereupon the humble services of a mere human pianist were offered and gratefully accepted. Is there not a Spanish proverb to the effect that a donkey that carries you is better than a horse that throws you off?

On Sunday we attended morning service at the English church at the foot of the hotel garden, a squat little building, called Gothic, that looks as if it were

covered in crocodile skin. The congregation was small and the singing more conspicuous for its heartiness than its excellence. To sing psalms very badly instead of reading them can hardly be held to be an act of greater piety, but I think there is a vague feeling that it is more likely to attract attention, much as the Buddhist worshipper feels when he rings a bell or sounds a gong at intervals while praying before a temple shrine.

As we put up our sunshades on coming out of church, the words of Isaiah came vividly to my mind—"The light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days." That is what it is here, the light and the pale sunshine of seven December days in England rolled into one.

We are already wearing our thinnest summer clothing, and Cammy, the twin-lens camera, is feeling so dazzled that he would like to use a smoked eyeglass. The difference of climate is graphically illustrated by the very opposite conceptions that exist in England and in Teneriffe as to the requirements of a greenhouse. At home, sunshine and heat are the conditions aimed at in rearing tender plants. Here, shade and coolness are what is needed. The greenhouse in the Quisisana gardens is a lofty shed built of split reeds, closed on three sides and open only to the north; air and a modified light are admitted by the reed screens, and here the gardener rears his choice plants and cuttings. Tacsonias and bignonias climb up the supporting columns, and getting their shoots through the roof screen ramble luxuriantly over the top.

Santa Cruz de Santiago, to give the town its full name, is the capital of the Canary Islands, which form



a province of Spain. People who have been in the West Indies say that they might imagine themselves landing in Cuba when they come here: swarthy, lean-flanked men in amazingly tight yellow or white calico trousers lounge about the quays, their coffee-coloured faces and heavy black eyelashes suggesting the mulatto rather than the true-bred islander. Santa Cruz is the chief military centre of the province and the residence of the Governor; it has a large Spanish society, an English club, a casino where dances are held, and the best shops in Teneriffe.

I am aware that the experienced traveller should be above succumbing to any novelty at first sight; but not in vain are the drawn-thread snares of Santa Cruz spread in the sight of the newcomer. The very moment I set foot in the town I bought a dress length of Teneriffe work for a guinea, nor did I ever regret my purchase.

All the shopkeepers speak English, some well, others not so successfully. One shopman told us that he knew English, but when we had explained to him with great clearness that what we wanted was a high tortoiseshell comb for the hair, he said "Who?" and produced a box of tooth-brushes, with garlands of flowers carved on their handles.

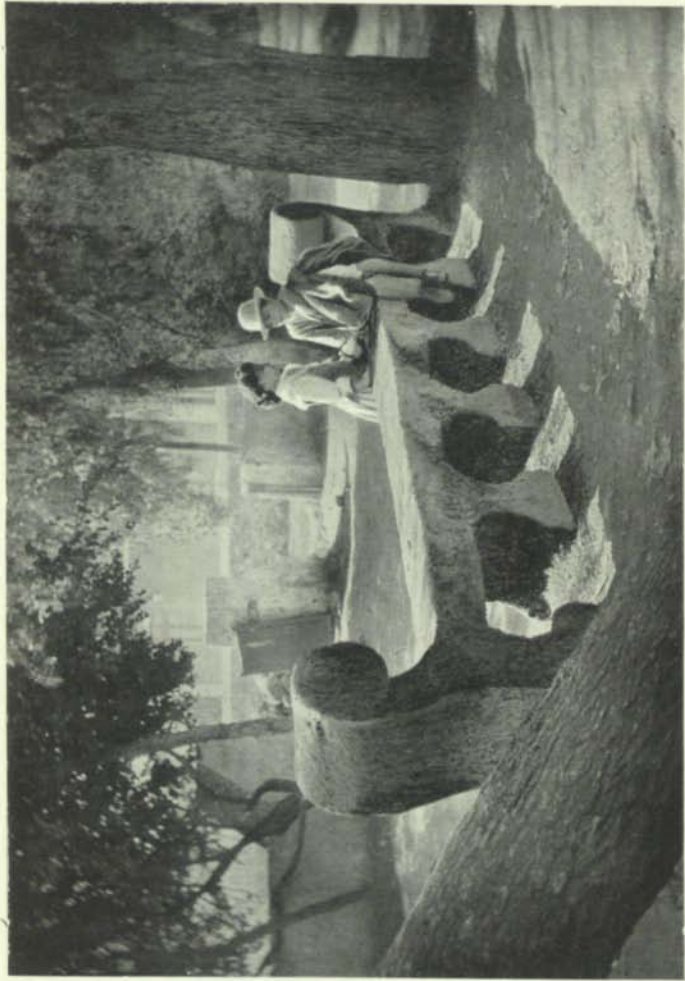
To English people one of the chief sights of interest at Santa Cruz will be Nelson's two flags, lost in his unsuccessful attempt to take the town in 1797. They are kept in the Church of the Concepcion, but it is misleading to say that they are to be *seen* there, for so dark is the church that they are barely visible, furled as they are in narrow glass cases, and hung high up on the walls

of a chapel. They are said to have been picked up on the beach after the defeat of the midnight landing party, when most of the boats were sunk by gunfire from the forts, or by the surf of the dangerous coast. As Nelson stepped upon the jetty his arm was shattered by a cannon-ball, and it is said that the first occasion on which he wrote with his left hand was in signing a letter of thanks to the Spanish commandant for the courtesy that had been shown to his beaten men.

Till within recent years the flags were openly displayed in the church, but since the day when an overzealous English midddy carried them off to his ship—only to be commanded sternly to return them immediately with profuse apologies—they have been hung up out of harm's way.

Some people spend the whole winter at Santa Cruz, and I have often wondered how they manage to amuse themselves there, but that is only because we did not happen to find the place attractive. You will find that Santa Cruz, in return, is equally unable to imagine how people employ their time at Orotava. It is not fair to judge of a place from a few days' stay, for we have always found that occupation develops by degrees as one settles down, but I think we got a little tired of daily walking down into the town and taking a carriage up again, and felt that we should be glad to get away into the country.

We took a few photographs in one of the pleasantest streets of the town, where pepper-trees hang over long stone seats that stand on arches like a bridge and have handsome scroll ends; and one day we tried the only coast drive Santa Cruz offers, a road that for a few miles







skirts the sea at the foot of the Anaga mountains. It was a very dusty road, and the impression left on us was that it was bordered on the one side by quarry pits and rubbish heaps, and on the other by a beach of coal-dust—this latter effect due to the black lava sand of the coast.

Beauty of scenery is not Teneriffe's strongest point, and the surroundings of Santa Cruz are to my mind too devoid of vegetation to be attractive, while lacking the savage grandeur of volcanic formation found in some other parts of the island. The view from the Quisisana Hotel could not fail indeed to prove bitterly disappointing to anyone who had formed a preconceived idea of the place from seeing one of the hotel *menus* which lies before me as I write. Crowning a hill and backed by a fiery sunset, the castellated building is depicted standing in bold relief against the snow-capped Peak of Teneriffe, while in the foreground—to include other salient features of the island—are seen a group of camels and a dragon tree.

I never happened to see a dragon tree or a camel at Santa Cruz, though I know of no reason why they should not flourish there if they chose; but with the Peak the Quisisana must, I fear, disclaim even the most distant acquaintance, much as the management would wish to secure its presence—for it is not visible from here at all!

The wild jumble of the Anaga mountains is perhaps the most conspicuous feature of our actual landscape; in front of us the town stretches down to the blue Atlantic, behind us spreads a yellow sun-baked hillside overrun with prickly pear and the grotesque candelabra

euphoria, and away to the south-west rise the indefinite slopes that culminate in the central backbone of the island, slopes upon which the clouds gather and descend at mid-day, and which we shall shortly cross on our way to Orotava and the Peak.



## CHAPTER II

I HAD known from schoolroom days that Teneriffe was either an island or a town in the Canaries, but so vague was my knowledge that I could not have said off-hand which of the two it was, and I was pleased to find other people who confessed to an equal state of uncertainty in the past, one lady having even arrived there with a vague idea that she would find herself in the West Indies.

Teneriffe, be it known then, is an island, the largest of the seven that make up the Canary group, and the main lines of its geography are so simply explained with the help of a shoulder of mutton that there is no excuse for the most ungeographical mind to remain in ignorance of the lie of the land.

Imagine a shoulder of mutton placed before you in the proper way for carving, and with the knuckle end to the right, and there you have a model of the island of Teneriffe. Santa Cruz is situated about four inches down the near side of the knuckle; Orotava occupies the precise spot on the flat northern coast where you will make the first cut with your carving-knife; Tacaronte and Laguna stand mid-way between these two points on the high ground of the ridge running the length of the bone; and the Peak stands in the very centre of the broadest part of the shoulder. If by mistake you have turned the shoulder the wrong way

round—as I was apt to do before going to Teneriffe—you will find yourself cutting on to the bone at a place called Guimar. And this I think is all the geographical knowledge with which the average visitor need burden his memory.

On December the 18th we left Santa Cruz, our luggage starting early in the morning on a two-wheeled cart drawn by mules, which slowly drag it across the island to Orotava, twenty-seven miles distant. If the carter is conscientious and does not loiter too much on the road he will get there about six o'clock in the evening, and you will say "Well done," and give him a couple of pesetas over and above the twenty-five which he charges for the job.

Meanwhile you breakfast comfortably at your hotel, and presently sally forth to catch the eleven o'clock tram, which takes you as far as Tacaronte and is the nearest thing to a train the island possesses. Starting from the quay down in the town it rushes, shrieking and clanking, to the top of the long hill up which the luggage mules have wearily toiled in the early hours of the morning, and in forty-five minutes lands you at Laguna, a small town on the central plateau of the island at a height of 1800 feet, where the air is very perceptibly cooler. Here we pass our luggage cart floundering along in deep mire—rain during the night having converted the roads around Laguna into veritable lagoons of mud—and changing to another tram we speed away again under a tall eucalyptus avenue with green fields on either hand and distant glimpses of wooded hills on the spreading upland around us.

At Tacaronte the tram line ends, and there is a



IN THE VILLAGE OF SANT' URSULA





twelve-mile drive to Orotava, on a fine day the pleasantest part of the whole trip.

We have ample time to look about us as we wobble slowly along in our landau, into holes and out again, behind three thin little horses said to be quite fresh, but which take nearly three hours over the journey, all down hill though it is. Stone houses are scattered about amongst clumps of palm trees and fields cultivated with vines, beans and potatoes. Oleander bushes and scarlet geraniums in full bloom grow beside the road, and a man in a blanket cloak riding ahead of us stops at a wine shop and ties his pony to the stem of a big poinsettia growing before the door. Before long we reach the edge of the plateau, and for the first time come in sight of the world-famed Valley of Orotava as seen from Humboldt's Corner—the spot on which Alexander von Humboldt is said to have thrown himself on the ground in a transport of admiration, declaring the view to be the finest in the world.

"Is this the Vista de Humboldt?" we asked our driver as we stopped the carriage and got out.

"No, señora," said the man, pointing out with his whip a sufficiently obvious town lying far below us, "this is the Vista de Orotava."

The word valley, in its commonly-accepted sense, is certainly not descriptive of the scene before us. We are standing at a height of 1000 feet on a long mountain slope called the Ladéra de Santa Ursula, and opposite us, at a distance of six miles, runs a similar and parallel ridge, sloping likewise to the sea—the dark Ladéra de Tigáiga. Between these two lies a wide depression, the so-called Valley of Orotava; from the mountain slopes

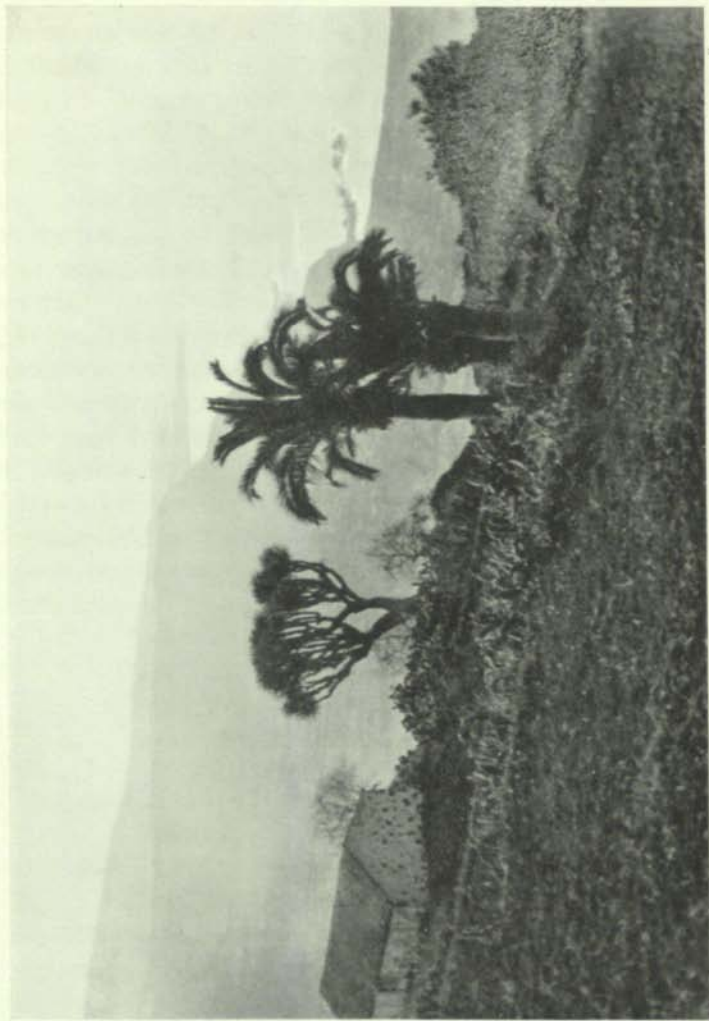
which shut in the back of the valley—rising gradually to a height of several thousand feet to join the two enclosing arms—the land inclines gently downwards to the coast, where the white houses of Port Orotava, whither we are bound, seem to be in danger of being tilted out into the sea; and beyond Tigáiga's dark wall rises, majestic and aloof, the presiding genius of the island, the broad white pyramid of the famous Peak.

It is a view well worth looking at, this wide expanse of land and sea, from the deep blue foam-fringed Atlantic on our right to the snow-crowned mountain that rises into a summer sky, and comparisons being odious we will not try to recall other views in Corsica or Sicily that might prove dangerous rivals for Humboldt's eulogy.

From this point the road descends rapidly into the valley, where the most conspicuous features appear to be three good-sized hillocks of black cinders and a winding river of eucalyptus trees marking the course of the main road. The rest of the country seems from this height to be closely carpeted with cabbage gardens and moss.

The moss changes to potato crops as we reach level ground, and the cabbage gardens resolve themselves into vast areas of banana groves that accompany us during the rest of the drive. Half-way across the valley we leave the white town of Orotava on our left and turn seawards, following the road descending to the port between an avenue of tall eucalyptus trees in which canaries are singing lustily. Another half-hour and we suddenly branch off into the private drive leading to the Humboldt Kurhaus, a huge building occupying a commanding position above the port and a landmark for miles around.







Being early in the season and the hotel comparatively empty we were able to take our choice of rooms, and decided on two facing west, with a glorious view of blue sea and rocky coast-line from our windows. Our first sight on waking of a morning was the long rampart of Tigáiga ribbed with cobalt shadows, and above it the snowy Peak, looking so infinitely remote that one can scarcely imagine a presumptuous human insect setting out to attain the summit of the dazzling Jungfrau of Teneriffe.

When it is borne in mind that the area of the island is almost exactly that of Derbyshire, the natives of the Peak district there will realise how dominating is the presence of a mountain of over 12,000 feet—six times the height of their Derbyshire peak—and how little room is left for any level ground in the island. Teneriffe is in fact nothing more than the upper half of a great volcanic mountain that rises from the bed of the Atlantic.

### CHAPTER III

IT will be remembered how Mr Wackford Squeers explained that when he spoke of religion he meant the Christian Religion, and when he said the Christian Religion he meant the Protestant Religion, and by the Protestant Religion he meant the religion as by law established in England.

In like manner when people speak of having wintered in Teneriffe they usually mean Orotava, and when they say Orotava they usually mean the Humboldt Hotel. It is by far the largest and finest hotel in the island, with room for over a hundred guests, and is splendidly situated on a headland nearly four hundred feet above the Port of Orotava. Other hotels there are down in the Puerto, as the port is called—the Martianez, Monopol, and one or two minor ones; but between them all they do not equal the Humboldt in the number of their guests.

A surprising statement, which caused much delight to its discoverers, appeared one day in a German journal of travel edited by Cook, to the effect that the principal hotels in Orotava owe their existence to Alexander von Humboldt, that enterprising young man having, it is to be presumed, founded them hastily during the four days he spent in the island in the year 1799. As a matter of fact, hardly any hotel dates back more than five-and-twenty years, Teneriffe not having been discovered by



the travelling public till about that time. The Humboldt was built as a speculation eighteen years ago by a Spanish hotel company, the site chosen being a rough and worthless lava stream which was projected from a small crater close by during one of Teneriffe's latest and mildest eruptions, and which may have been still hot and smoking at the time of Humboldt's visit.

A hundred and twenty thousand pounds are said to have been laid out on the place, and if you look at the raw material from which the present extensive hotel grounds were created, you no longer wonder that so large a sum was needed, but rather that any amount of money and human labour should have accomplished what has been done. No land fished out of the sea and reclaimed yard by yard by the Dutch farmer was ever more heroically acquired than the acres that form the garden of the Humboldt Hotel.

It is reckoned that two hundred years are needed before lava is sufficiently decomposed to be available for agricultural purposes, and if you wish to start a garden upon a comparatively recent outflow, there are two courses to be adopted: either you must bring earth from some other spot and lay it down in sufficient depth for planting, or else you must remove the lava by blasting and excavation till you come to the original soil below, and having dug this out, throw back the lava and spread your hard-won earth on top. Which is the cheaper plan depends mainly on the depth of the lava and the quality of the soil below.

One of the finest gardens at Orotava was made on the excavating principle, and the underlying soil proved to be so excellent that longing eyes of envy were cast

upon it by other residents, evoking a suggestion as to the expediency of adding a clause to the tenth commandment—"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's earth,"—for use at Orotava.

Once your garden is made, however, there is a certain compensation in the fact that, given a good water supply, you are able to grow practically anything you please. The climate and soil produce such rapid growth that though you must not expect to reap the reward of your labours quite as promptly as do the faithful in Mahomet's paradise—who behold what they have sown arise immediately in perfection—yet you may count on seeing your garden wear an old-established look in a far shorter time than would be possible in our northern latitudes.

Some of the varieties of eucalyptus grow twenty feet in a twelvemonth, and we saw a group of evergreen oaks in another part of the island whose age we took to be some forty years, judging from their height and girth, and our surprise was great on being told that it was only twelve years since they had been planted.

On the outskirts of the Humboldt gardens, you may still sample the original character of the lava stream, and it would be impossible to find anything more villainous and hopeless-looking than this *Malpais*, or unreclaimed land, a wild chaos of enormous lava chunks, with sharp, rasping edges, still entirely unsoftened by the hand of Time. Various euphorbias root themselves among the crevices, and the indigenous hare's-foot fern (*Davallia Canariensis*) grows profusely on the hummocks of grey lava. I once thought it would be easy to secure a complete root of the fern by removing the blocks amongst

which it grew, but I soon found that I had set myself a job very like that of digging a rabbit out of a stone heap. I had to dislodge more than a barrow-load of lava before I could unravel the yards of furry brown paws that crept deeper and deeper among the blocks. The roots are full of water and enable the fern to subsist without a drop of rain during the summer months.

Orotava's annual rainfall of fifteen inches is spread over so short a time that gardens have to depend on irrigation during a great part of the year, and every tree stands in a shallow basin that can be filled from the little aqueducts that traverse the grounds.

The palm avenues of the Humboldt are as yet young, but will be very handsome one of these days. The indigenous palm of Teneriffe, *Phoenix Canariensis*, does not bear eatable fruit, and even the true date palm, though it grows well, does not ripen good dates. Those we were given at Santa Cruz were woody and tasteless, as bad as the figs denounced by the prophet Jeremiah, for being "very naughty figs which could not be eaten, they were so evil."

The *Seaforthia elegans*, that most graceful of palms, grows well at Orotava, as does the fan-leaved *Washingtonia filifera*, only introduced into Europe thirty years ago and already such a noticeable feature on the Riviera. It must surely have been a palm of this kind that provided the mother of the Swiss Robinsons with the means of mending that resourceful family's clothes. I have myself, by way of experiment, used the white threads that dangle from its leaves for sewing on some unimportant buttons and found them a little brittle but otherwise satisfactory.



One of the commonest trees in the Humboldt gardens is the *Eucalyptus Lehmanii*, a variety we had never seen before. Its flowers are very curious; in the bud stage they resemble a large sea-anemone with curved tentacles two inches long, which are hollow and are gradually pushed off by the expanding of the stamens that are packed inside them; one sees them lying on the ground for all the world like a litter of bent and rusty wall nails. The perfect flower is a pale green ball of silken stamens, and its final stage is a seed vessel, resembling a handsome boss of carved wood, studded with sharp points like the morgenstern wherewith the knights of old used to crack one another's skulls.

People who visit a southern country for the winter months only are very apt, I think, to judge of its gardens by what they see of them between Christmas and Easter, forgetting that whatever the flowers may then be, the gardens can no more be compared with what they are in May and June than an English garden in October can be compared with the same in its midsummer beauty. It is no wonder that the Orotava gardens are never without flowers even in winter, when it is remembered that the thermometer never falls below 50° Fahr. at night, and that the mean temperature of the six winter months is 63°—nineteen degrees higher than that of Torquay and twelve degrees higher than that of Mentone.

Geraniums indeed, and heliotrope, grow in such masses that one heard people say they were sick of them. But there is no pleasing everybody.

Within a fortnight of our arrival we were already getting sunburnt. The latter half of December was





GATEWAY INTO A GARDEN



beautifully warm, and some quaint tussore garments broke out among the men, with canvas hats of curious shape; one of these, with its dangling white calico puggaree made a striking finish to the frock-coat worn by a church-goer on Christmas morning. The poinsettias were in their full beauty in Christmas week, masses of purest scarlet against the snow line of the hills. For waits we had the green frogs, who carolled joyfully from their hiding-places about the garden.

The atmosphere of peace and goodwill associated with Christmas Day is so bound up for us northerners with the frost and snow, holly and ivy of our childhood, that it is not easily called up on a midsummer day, amid unfamiliar surroundings. But to some extent it survives even under a southern sky, and when after morning service we sat down to luncheon in a dining-room decorated with huge palm branches, I think we must all have been feeling more cordially disposed towards one another than we had ever done before.

But alas that this kindly spirit of brotherhood should be so fleeting! By the very next day all the old antipathies of our hotel society had reasserted themselves with undiminished vigour, the same unconcealed ill-will was borne to certain foreigners by those individuals whose patriotism manifests itself chiefly in hatred of their country's enemies; while within a week we were on the verge of international complications with regard to the proposed site of some new pig-styes, which Germany—as represented by the head gardener—contemplated placing rather nearer to the hotel than Great Britain—in the person of the English guests—approved.

“These stuck-up English!” muttered a Teuton in his

mother tongue as he inspected the abandoned site of what he called the stable for the porks, after the management had gracefully conceded the point. "These stuck-up English! they can't even have a fowl yard anywhere near them"—with a snort of derision—"how could they have pigs!"

Occupation becomes of very minor importance in a fine climate, and nowhere, perhaps, can a winter be spent less strenuously than at Orotava, where you may pass for a busy person by merely carrying a Kodak about with you. Some of our fellow-guests seemed to imagine themselves still on board ship, and rarely quitted their deck-chairs save for a short quarter-deck walk up and down the terrace, and none of us, I think, suffered from that *busyness* deplored by Stevenson as denoting a lack of vitality, if I except the stout person in white duck, who used to dash about the hotel grounds, net in hand, pursuing butterflies.

Some of us of course there were who dabbled in botany, entomology and the like, with great pleasure to ourselves, although our contributions to science were probably much on a par with that of a certain Indian lighthouse-keeper who sent in his season's report to an English official engaged in collecting statistics concerning the migration of birds, the said report consisting solely of the conscientious note that on such and such a date the writer had observed "*one crow going north.*"

Still, there was always the possibility that one might stumble upon something hitherto undiscovered in this much-written-about valley, and if the pieces of information which we imparted to one another on returning



from our walks were not always in strict accordance with fact, they at anyrate showed a laudable interest in our surroundings.

"What do you think of *that*?" said a quiet-looking old clergyman one day, suddenly offering me his visiting-card with a large blood-stain upon it.

To tell the truth I thought it rather unpleasant. But it turned out that the gory splash before me was not blood at all, but merely the vital juice of a cochineal insect that had been squashed for experimental purposes. The cochineal is no longer cultivated commercially around Orotava, but may be found growing wild in considerable quantities among patches of prickly pear. Few people could dream that any connection existed between the beautiful crimson dye with which we colour our stewing pears at home and the little round grey creatures that adhere in colonies to the leaves of the cactus, looking exactly like clusters of Cockle's pills smothered in white powder, and to all appearances equally inanimate.

When we had nothing else to do we used to go and collect cochineal in match-boxes and dry it on our window-sill. A friend of ours was not very successful with this drying process, for though he kept his insects for days in the sun, they not only refused to shrivel but went so far as to increase and multiply; this was highly embarrassing, and being a humane man he was torn in two between the wish to see them dead and dried and the better feelings which prompted him to supply them with food and comforts even at the risk of having them settled on him as pets for life.

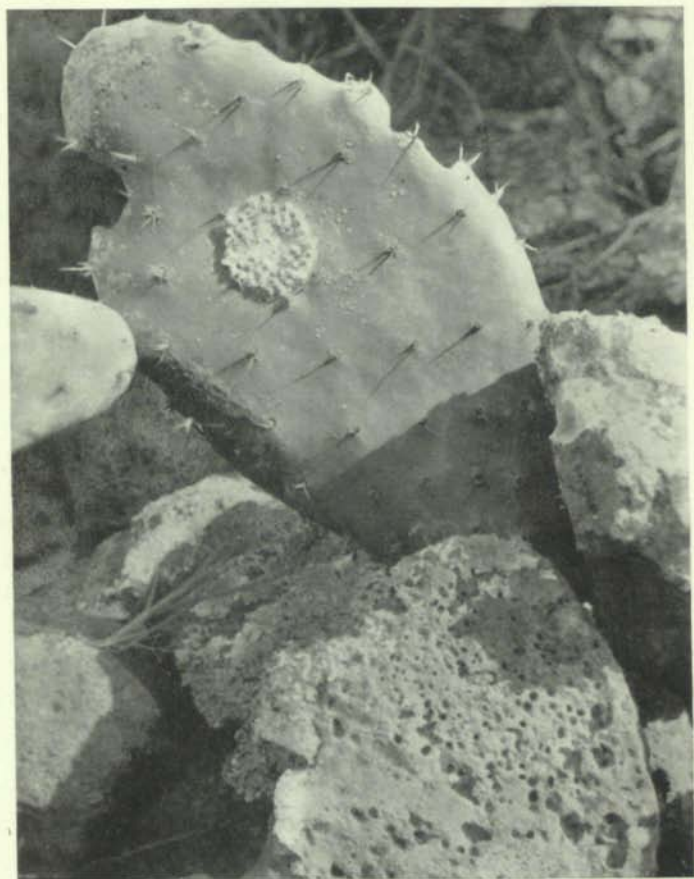
A lady who collected sea-shells had a rather similar

experience, for having been given a number of specimens, she wrapped them in paper and put them away on the top of her wardrobe, to think no more about them till in the dead of night she heard strange, small rustlings in her room, and found that the shells she had supposed to be tenantless were crawling out of their paper and walking off the edge of the wardrobe, to fall clattering into a bath that stood below.

For the scientific botanist the Canaries are a happy hunting-ground, as there are said to be no less than eight hundred varieties of plants to be found there, of which a large proportion are peculiar to the island. But in the winter there are very few wild flowers to be found, the only really common one about Orotava being the yellow oxalis, both single and double; and even in April we were disappointed to find a lack of variety and profusion. It was difficult to get any reliable information about the island plants, and only towards the end of our stay did we discover the names of some of the commonest shrubs and trees around us. The identity of the *Euphorbia Canariensis*, one of the most characteristic plants in the whole island, was the subject of conflicting opinions in the hotel almost to the end of the season, and no statement was too wild or improbable to be made and circulated concerning the names and habits of plants.

A fellow-guest was one day in a state of delighted excitement at having acquired a most interesting bit of knowledge respecting a noble member of the bee-beloved Borage family—

“It is a regular assassin, you know, and when bees alight on it, it catches them and holds them till they are dead, and the ants come and eat them !”



A COCHINEAL COLONY





I suppose that when one knows nothing at all about a subject, one is immune from the vice of unbelief with regard to any statement concerning it. I should certainly accept without doubt any marvel I was told about electricity—if I had reason to suppose that my informant understood the subject. But many people do not even trouble themselves as to that, and are content to let the blind lead the blind. This gives rise to delightful gems of information.

I remember once when in Majorca seeing a blossom of *Strelitzia* shown to an Englishwoman, who boasted of her botanical knowledge, and with a most judicial air she pronounced it to be *either a lily or a pineapple*—but that without her books she could not say which.

## CHAPTER IV

THERE came a time after the New Year had set in when the weather turned wet.

The change was heralded by the sudden and mysterious apparition toward sunset one day of a large and mountainous island to the west, where never an island had been seen before by us whose windows faced that way. So incredible did its reality seem, that those who saw it were unwilling to believe the evidence of their eyes, and wondered if it could be an illusion, or a mirage, or the phantom island of San Borondon.

But it was in sober truth an island—the island of Palma, distant sixty miles and only visible in certain rare atmospheric conditions; never again did we see it so large or so near.

The belief that its appearance portends bad weather was in this instance signally confirmed. The barometer dropped to  $29^{\circ}$  nor would the most diligent tapping persuade it to rise, and the thermometer in the hall fell to  $60^{\circ}$ . With one accord we put on greatcoats, and with the fell ingratitude of people who had been basking in the sun for weeks, began to grumble. Hotel managers have good reason to dread bad weather; a few hours' rain and up comes a crop of complaints like toadstools in a night: the coffee has taken to tasting like soap; the butter is uneatable; the bedrooms have no balconies. I do not mean to imply

that this last shortcoming has been sprung upon visitors since the rain set in, but it turns up periodically whenever discontent is rife.

Those who have no other cause for resentment allow their minds to dwell on things that have got lost in the wash, and the manager has been hurrying around with furrowed brow, notebook in hand, taking down a list of missing garments which he has pledged himself to trace. We find that a complaint made to the Scotch chambermaid and transmitted by means of a Spanish messenger to the German laundry women is very rarely crowned with good results.

Wet weather may be a trial even at home, if it outlasts one's capacity for indoor work; but in a southern health resort it becomes a trial that makes people as fractious as spoiled children. Nor is it by any means the invalids—on whom it falls heaviest—who grumble the loudest. To hear people talk, you would suppose that they had been defrauded by the management, and that their hotel *pension* was understood to include cloudless skies. It is well for these grumblers that they have not to be judged by the Chinese code of ethics, according to which grumbling at the weather is a sin, and is punished in the next world by the sinner being sawn in two.

It would be a good thing if we could all be as philosophic as an aged friend of mine in Somerset, bowed down by pain and infirmity, who said to me with a brave smile—"But there! it ain't no use to murmur, nor yet to fret!"

The month of January 1908 was abnormally cold all over Europe, and it was only by comparing our own



experience with that of friends at Biarritz and on the Riviera that we were able to congratulate ourselves on having come to Orotava, for in truth it was very cold and we were glad of the warmest clothes we had brought, while those unfortunates who had believed what they had been told—that nothing but cottons and muslins were wanted in Teneriffe—shivered miserably. The natives seemed to feel the cold quite as much as we did, and with chattering teeth would ejaculate, "*Mucho frio*," as they passed by, huddled up in shawls. One of the Spanish chambermaids got laid up, and the boots, who insisted on speaking English, explained that "She have fetched herself a cold in the back."

We have a fire in the reading-room of an evening, and Simona, the monkey, has obtained permission to sleep in the stables instead of in her draughty little house at the top of a pole, and is led off at sundown by one of the gardeners, with a chain round her waist like a suffragette. Simona is not a popular character, but she has certain favourites among the men, whom she permits to caress her. It is very comic to watch her examining the details of masculine attire, turning up coat sleeves, sliding shirt cuffs backwards and forwards, and making a minute inspection of her friends' socks—and then to see her with puckered brow stroke her own wrists and ankles, and ponder on how it comes that she, too, is not furnished with coverings of such fascinating interest.

One advantage of the wet weather is that since the rain we have not been troubled so much with ants in our bedrooms, which used to be invaded by swarms that came in through the window. I remember being



shown over Leicester's Hospital at Warwick by an old pensioner, who pointed out some beams of Spanish chestnut in the roof of the dining-hall, adducing as a virtue peculiar to that wood that "Insecks will not touch it, and spiders 'esitates to cross it." Ants do not appear to be so sensitive, for they do not 'esitate to cross the ramparts of Keatings' powder with which some of our fellow-guests attempt to defend their frontiers; I suppose they just hold their noses and wade through.

I think they come partly to look for sugar or anything eatable, and partly to get a drink in dry weather, for I have found colonies of them established in the cool, damp lodgings afforded by my sponge, and sometimes when I have thoughtlessly dropped it into my bath without warning the inhabitants, the water has looked very much as the brook Kishon must have done after the affair of the prophets of Baal.

The Peak is very beautiful in its robe of freshly-fallen snow, and not a vestige of its rocky ribs can now be seen, while for the first time this winter snow is lying on the *fortaleza*, the long black rampart at its foot.

As a rule, Orotava gets its rainfall during the night, and the soil being very porous there is often hardly a trace of it by the following morning; but at this time the clouds got into the habit of gathering at eleven o'clock every day and descending in showers just as we had started playing tennis. Sometimes we played in spite of the rain, but our shrimping parties, as these attempts came to be called, were conducted under difficulties, for the old man whose duty it was to sweep

the court generally began to do so when we were ready to play, plying his palm-leaf broom in a slow and mechanical way, quite regardless of the fact that a game was in progress. Gesticulations seemed lost on him, and as he was quite deaf it was no use attempting to argue the point. Sometimes we would take his broom from him and lead him off the court, but as soon as the broom was put down he merely took it up again and resumed his sweeping as before.

If the wet weather had lasted a little longer I think we should have got quite resigned to his presence, and looked upon him as a recognised handicap to the side on whose territory he happened to be.

Amongst the boys who attend to pick up our balls is a droll child named Pépé, more commonly known as The Grub. The Grub looks about six years old, but does not know his age, though he thinks his mother may. The chief features of his costume are a great deal of braces, a black felt basin of a hat, and a waistbelt with a purse on it to put his pennies in. In the summer he herds goats, but during the winter his mission is to bring a dinner-basket to one of the gardeners employed at the Humboldt, after which he hangs about on the chance of a job.

You may meet him scampering barefooted after a tourist on a donkey, and practising the deep and stentorian cries with which the smallest urchin can command the attention of a yoke of oxen or team of mules, or you may find him in charge of a horse in the hotel garden, holding the animal delicately by one rein while he removes a cigarette from his lips to book an order for "la pelota," intimating that he will follow you to the



PÉPÉ

*The original of this picture was No. 78 at the Exhibition of the Royal Photographic Society  
in 1908*





tennis court as soon as his job is up. When spoken to he becomes very self-conscious, shutting his eyes and turning in his little bare toes in bashful silence; but to the balls he is supposed to be retrieving he talks incessantly, besides whipping them severely with a small switch he carries before picking them up.

Unlike the old Guanche inhabitants of the island, the modern young Teneriffian seems to have no natural aptitude for catching or throwing, and is usually very clumsy at fielding a ball, and candidly afraid of being hit by one. But Pépé is already showing signs of improvement, and when we have succeeded in breaking him of the habit of cramming the balls into his mouth and of paddling in the pools on the court instead of attending to his business, he will become quite a valuable attendant.

He is already a Grub of considerable means, thanks to all the pennies that find their way into the purse on his belt, but what he spends them on I have never been able to find out. I fear they mostly go to buy the little thin cigarettes sold in packets of twenty for a penny.

Sweets are so dear in Teneriffe, with sugar at 7d. or 8d. a pound, as to be quite out of reach of the children of the peasant class. Sometimes a child on being given a penny will tell you that he means to spend it on bread; but this need not mean that he is in want of food. The staff of life in these islands consists almost exclusively of *gofio*—half-roasted corn ground to powder and eaten mixed with water—so that a loaf of baked and leavened bread is a sufficient rarity to be looked upon as a treat.

A few of the guests at the Humboldt took lessons in Spanish during the winter, and the mistress, who knew no word of English, would appear mysteriously in our midst when we were playing croquet and silently beckon away one or two of our number to their studies. We ourselves did not have lessons but rubbed up what Spanish we already knew with the help of a grammar and some exercise books, not only with a view to touring in the islands later on, but as a matter of everyday comfort. It is a miserable thing to be unable to speak to those about you, and when first we arrived if Catalina the Spanish chambermaid answered our bell instead of Maggie the Scotch one we felt bereft of all speech, so rusty was our Spanish tongue.

My friend was startled one morning at being awakened by a monotonous repetition, as she thought, of the words "*El muerto, el muerto* (the dead, the dead)," muttered at her bedhead. Hastily rising to learn the meaning of so strange a message, she perceived Catalina standing there, tray in hand, and understood that she had been announcing breakfast—*Almuerzo*.

Even the traveller who knows Spanish fairly well has to get used to the speech of the Canary islanders before he can understand them easily. They dispense almost entirely with the letter S, so that *Las Palmas* sounds like *La Palma*, and *moscas* (flies) like *moca*; added to which the final syllable of their words dies away to an inarticulate murmur.

Maggie had a very poor opinion of her fellow-servants' speech. "They do use such *curious* words for things; what do you think they call sweeping now?—*barriendo!* Not a bit *like* sweeping, to my mind."

Such progress as we made in talking with the natives was chiefly due to our almost daily expeditions with Tomás, one of the Orotava donkey boys, an intelligent young fellow of twenty, already a married man. Every fine morning he was waiting for us in the garden between eight and nine o'clock with his donkey, and as soon as we appeared the camera was slung on the saddle, the señora (as my friend was always called) mounted the sober grey donkey, Tomás shouldered the tripod, and off we set on a country ramble that often lasted until luncheon time. Tomás spoke more distinctly than most of the men and boys, and by degrees we grew to understand him very fairly, though I remember being much puzzled one day just before Christmas: he was taking his leave of us with some allusion to the coming *Fiesta*, and then with raised hat and a winning smile made a remark in which the word *propina* occurred. Not knowing this word, we tried vainly to find out his meaning, till suddenly his eloquent and sustained smile enlightened us, and the señora gave him the Christmas box for which he had been asking.

He was in nowise disconcerted at his request, intended as a light impromptu, having been made the subject of painstaking investigation on our part.

When I recall the difficulty we find in speaking with any freedom in a language not learnt in our teens, even though one has worked hard at the grammar and wrestled stoutly with the host of adverbs and conjunctions, it fills me with wonder and humiliation to read in other travellers' books of the amusing conversations held with the natives of every country by writers

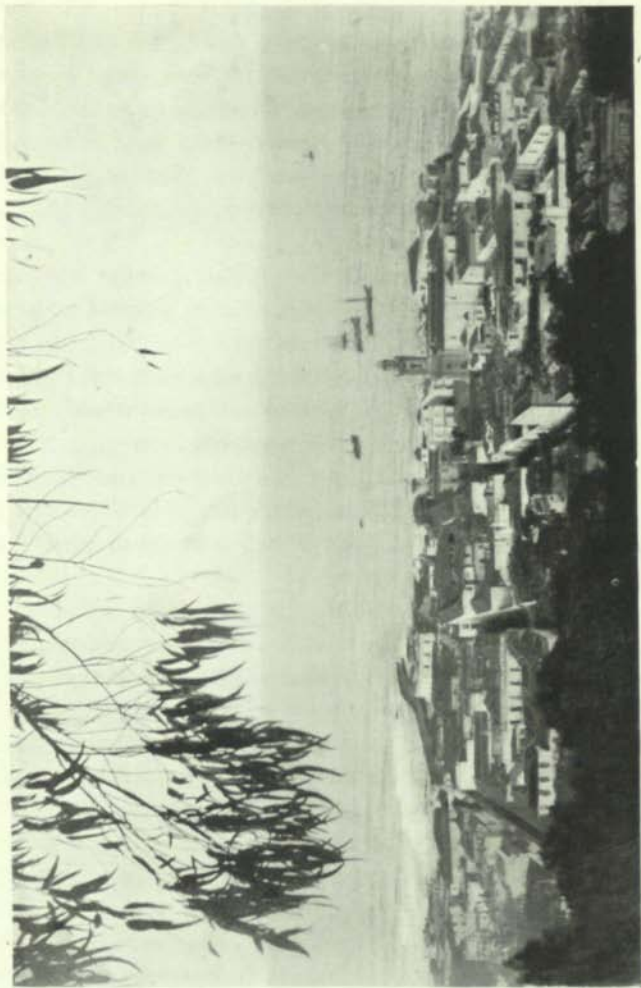


who only pick up the language as they go. Quite lately I was reading a book in which the author admitted knowing only some fifty words of the language of the country through which she was travelling—and a few pages farther she related a conversation, quite idiomatic and eloquent, with a dragoman who knew no English, upon abstract subjects that would have taxed even one's German or French. We find we cannot ourselves rise to this in Spanish, and are sorrowfully conscious how much we lose—still more how much our readers lose!

I sometimes wonder whether it is the good breeding of the Spaniards that induces them to refrain from all sign of amusement at the mistakes and misadventures of foreigners, or whether it is that their sense of humour is radically different from our own. Certainly Tomás betrayed no sign of being amused when the señora one morning, meaning to ask if the donkey was tired, inquired instead—through the slip of a single letter—if it was married. And I remember how I once, on leaving a shop in Palma de Mallorca, got my hat and veil entangled in a hanging lamp above the door, owing to my unusual height, and was rescued by the combined efforts of a casual passer-by and the very small shopman mounted on a chair, both of whom showed much concern at the occurrence but no more desire to laugh than if it had been an everyday matter with them to disengage tall foreigners from street lamps.

We soon found Tomás invaluable on our photographic expeditions; not only did his quick wits teach him to hand us slides or focussing cloth at the right moment, but he acted as interpreter in explaining to





FUERTO DE OROFAVA, SEEN FROM THE GARDEN OF THE HUMBOLDT HOTEL



our models what it was we wished them to do, and dispelled any hesitation on their part by producing—as a proof of our powers—his own portrait taken by the señora. The people were almost invariably willing to oblige when they understood what was wanted of them, and at a moment's notice would procure either a baby or a big red water-jar if the señora required it for a picture.

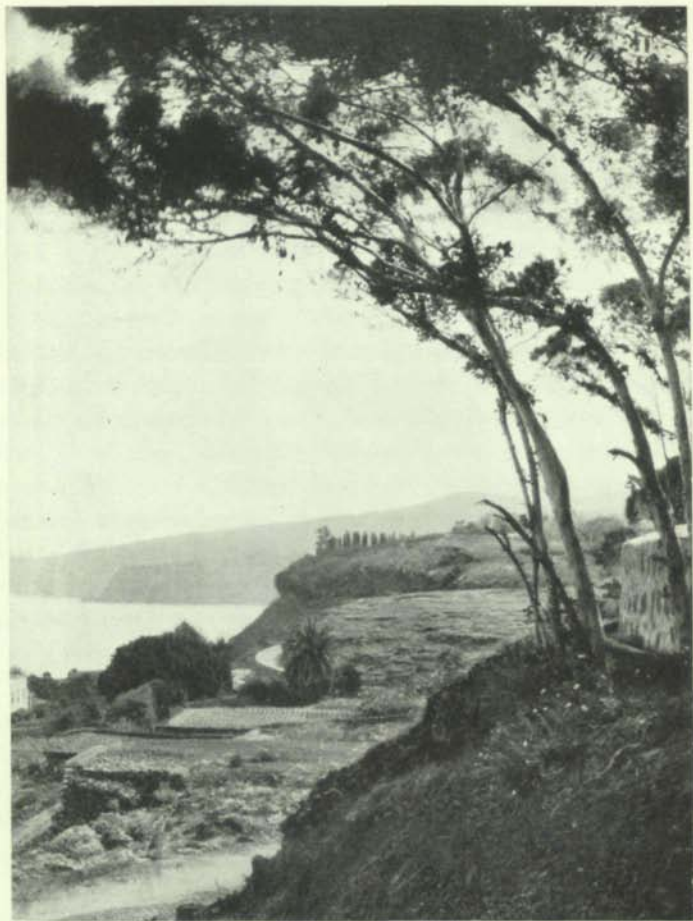
If one wished to catch a family at home in their everyday clothes it was, however, necessary to pay a surprise visit to the house, as if they knew one was coming, they were certain to array themselves in their Sunday best—pearl hair-combs, beads and frills. Even as it was, it was amazing to see the quickness with which—if one took one's eye off them for a single moment—the girls would tear the picturesque kerchiefs from their heads, or the father put on a brand-new hat.

To achieve success in figure subjects argues in the photographer a capacity not only for taking, but for giving, infinite trouble, and although time is measured out with a liberal hand in the Canary Islands, we should have hesitated to interrupt these good-humoured people in their various occupations if it had not been possible to recompense them for their civility. A small *propina*, however, or the promise of a copy of the picture in which they appeared, never failed to gratify them.

To people who have never been photographed in their lives, a portrait of themselves is a treasure we can hardly estimate, and the laughter and transports of delight with which some of the pictures were received

were very amusing ; the only regret of one family was that the *pajarillo* — the little bird — had not been hanging up in his cage over the door when the photograph was taken, so as to be included in the family group.





VIEW OF THE CLIFFS OF LA PAZ FROM THE HUMBOLDT GARDENS



## CHAPTER V

MOST of the visitors at the Humboldt find their way down to the Puerto at least once a day, ostensibly for the purpose of shopping. It is known as the Pew-er-to to some of our compatriots—unwilling, perhaps, to concede more to a foreign tongue than did Edmund Burke, who, though a good French scholar, never attempted to pronounce the words otherwise than as if they were English—and the steep descent to the Pewerto through the hotel grounds makes a pleasant walk on even the hottest day, for the unfailing breeze from the north-east meets you as you go, and under the eucalyptus trees that line the road are seats on which you can rest and enjoy the view of the sea and the cypress-crowned cliffs of La Paz.

Grass grows in the cobbled streets and squares of the quiet little town, and maybe the only occupants of the wide Plaza as you pass through will be a lady seated on a campstool under the tall trees and surrounded by a knot of boys watching her as she sketches some old balcony.

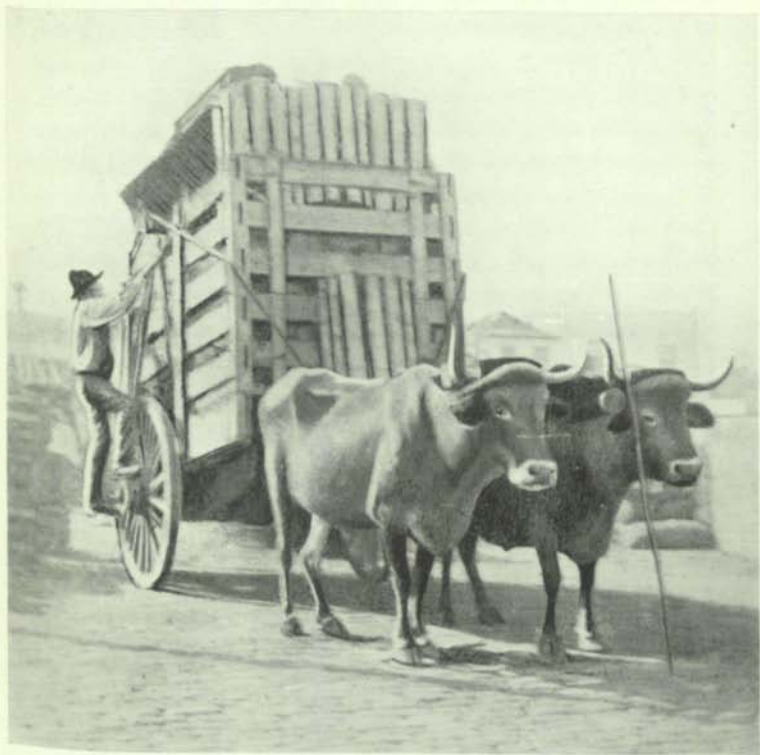
As you saunter along on the shady side of a shuttered and apparently deserted street, first one *postigo* and then another is quietly pushed outwards, and from each hinged panel some occupant of the house peers out, like an inquisitive trap-door spider, to see who goes by. At the shoemaker's shop door stands an idle apprentice

playing with a small woolly dog, covered with tight white curls, of the breed known as the Teneriffe terrier, that looks like the result of a cross between a toyshop dog and a toyshop lamb and tries to live up to both characters by barking sharply at itself and then running away. A small barefooted boy who has had his eye on you for some time now comes in front of you and walks backward along the pavement, reiterating incessantly—"Say! Donkey? *Quiere* donkey? Say!"—till his voice is drowned in the deafening rattle of a banana waggon coming down the narrow street on its way to the quay.

At the quay a certain amount of bustle prevails, for a fruit steamer has called and is rocking at anchor half a mile out from the little pier, and two-wheeled ox-carts and immense waggons with high sides of iron bars that look as if intended for the transport of lions and tigers are coming down to the quay piled high with banana crates, which are being unloaded and dropped one by one over the side of the pier, to be dexterously caught by the boatmen in their little rocking craft below. When a boat is sunk almost to the gunwale the men take up their oars and row her out to the steamer, dipping out of sight between the great rollers that come dashing through the narrow and dangerous entrance to the tiny harbour, and looking as though every moment they must be swamped. With a really rough sea on, loading becomes impossible, and at all times the coast is a dangerous one, fringed as it is with shelving reefs of lava half concealed by the curling breakers driven on shore by the prevailing north-east wind.

During the Spanish-American war an idea became





BANANA CART ON THE QUAY AT PORT OROTAVA



prevalent that the United States meditated an attack on the Canary Islands, and the troops up at *Villa Orotava* drilled all day long in the Plaza, and orders were issued that the *Villa* (town)—which is three miles inland—was to be lighted up at night, while in the Puerto not a light was to be shown, in order that the enemy might be beguiled into running on the rocks, while believing himself still at some distance from what it was hoped he would take to be the port.

The war-cloud passed, however, without Orotava's defences being put to the test, and happily the little town was not called on to make a desperate bid for the proud title of *Leal, Noble é Invicta*, earned by Santa Cruz for her successful repulse of Nelson.

Orotava dreams of a day when she shall have a fine harbour of her own, and be rendered independent of her rival by becoming a port of call for the liners which at present only touch at Santa Cruz—but many a mañana tree will spring up and die before these ambitions are realised, and for the present she devotes herself to the practical sources of prosperity afforded by her winter visitors, her bananas, and her drawn-thread industry. This latter, called in England Teneriffe work, goes by the name of *calado* in the island, and Orotava is one of the chief centres for its production.

The industry has been enormously developed in the last few years, and not only are hundreds of pounds' worth of work sold every winter to the foreigners who come to the island, but large export orders are placed amongst the workers by English and German firms.

Hundreds of women and girls support themselves by doing *calado*, and at almost every second house in

the port you will see them bending over the frames in which the work is stretched. The linens used are both white and coloured and are of a soft quality imported from Belgium, it having been found that the Irish linens were too hard for the purpose and hurt the fingers of the workers. The rate of pay is that which a woman may expect to receive all the island over, whether she is employed at tomato and banana packing or at the finest *calado* work—namely one peseta (9½d.) a day.

If you buy *calado* direct from the workers the price charged is strictly in accordance with the number of days a piece has taken to complete, whether it be a handkerchief or a bedspread; but most of the women are in the employment of agents in the Puerto, who display a large selection of the work in their showrooms and make their commission on the sales. Even so, the prices are astonishingly low, and the things are bought up with such a rush during the winter that even the largest establishments are practically sold out towards the end of the season. A showroom stocked with *calado*—cushion covers and tea-cloths, blouse lengths and dress lengths, cosies, bedspreads and handkerchiefs—is a sight calculated to remind either man or woman of every female relative they possess in the whole world, and I suppose few visitors leave Orotava without several pounds' worth of Teneriffe work in their trunks; it is so easy to pack and so sure to give pleasure to friends at home. Besides, there is nothing else that you can possibly spend your money on at Orotava; native jewellery there is none, for the people are too poor to wear either gold or silver ornaments, and even in the finest *calado* work ten pounds goes a long way. The most





“ . . . YOU WILL SEE THEM BENDING OVER THE FRAMES IN WHICH THE WORK IS STRETCHED ”



costly single article to be found in the whole town, and one speedily snapped up by some plutocrat was, I think, a lace collar priced at five guineas, made by lace workers at a small village called Vilaflor, on the south side of the Peak.

As for an American couple, who were reputed to have spent a hundred pounds on *calado* during their stay in the island, I can only suppose that if they were not mythical, they were buying wholesale with a view to setting up a shop.

The embroidered linen known as La Palma work, which one finds in the Orotava showrooms, comes from one of the western islands of the Canary group rarely visited by foreigners; it is extremely pretty and durable and consists of a slightly raised solid embroidery; when found in combination with drawn-thread patterns it means that the article—bedspread or blouse—had first been embroidered in La Palma and then sent to Teneriffe for completion.

With the middle of January the Orotava season may be said to begin, and on the 13th of that month each guest at the Humboldt was presented with a *Kurkarte*, admitting him amongst other things to all the in and outdoor entertainments of the hotel and to the use of the seats and tents on the sea beach—privileges which we had hitherto been exercising without question, but for which subsequent arrivals were to be charged at the rate of a few shillings a week—a levy to which some of the newcomers submitted with no very good grace.

The hotel gradually began to fill up, most of the earlier arrivals being English—the German season proper not

beginning till later—and at frequent intervals was heard the clanging of the bell over the main entrance which heralded an approaching carriage and brought the *faquins* hurrying down the long corridors as the word went round "*Es giebt arrivés!*" Every night the floor space in the big dining-room grew rather less and the number of the little tables grew rather more, and once a week dances were given in the splendid salon—to the infinite disgust of those older inhabitants who had established, as they hoped, the practice of using it as a card-room every evening. Bridge tournaments were organised and drawn-thread prizes awarded. The tennis court was in such request that applications for it had to be booked over night, and those who were not sharp in securing the croquet lawn found themselves relegated to playing with the second-best balls, which were showy to look at but dented badly when struck.

Another sign of the season was the opening of the reading-room connected with the Orotava circulating library, both of which are close to the hotel and contribute largely to the comfort of visitors, while within a stone's-throw of the garden gates lie the lawns of the Recreation Club, where bowls and croquet are played in the afternoon.

There is a small society of English residents outside the hotels, composed of families renting villas for the winter or who have settled permanently in the Orotava valley. Visitors who come out without introductions are apt to find the social atmosphere of the place a little lacking in the cordiality that characterises some winter resorts, and I am bound to confess that the majority of the residents seem to think that when a stranger has



paid his season's subscription and been admitted to their bowling club they have done all that is incumbent upon them towards making him feel at home there. There are, however, one or two houses whose hospitality is offered even to the unknown stranger, and in our own case we found that a very slight introduction sufficed to procure us a welcome so really friendly that we shall always look back on it with gratitude.

One of the greatest social functions of the season was a *corrida de sortija*, held in the grounds of the Humboldt, on January the 27th, to celebrate the German Emperor's birthday. The Governor of the islands had promised to come over from Santa Cruz for the occasion, and all the gentry of the neighbourhood—both Spanish and English—had been invited to attend in the capacity either of spectators or as competitors to tilt on horseback at the ring—*sortija*—from which the tournament takes its name.

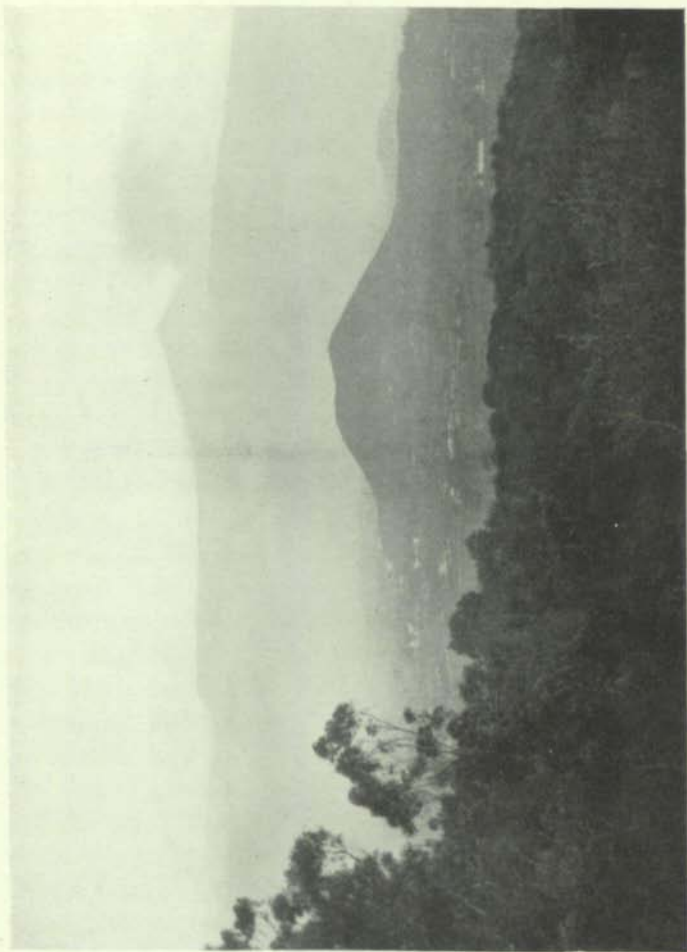
The morning dawned fair and cloudless, and we awoke to find an unusual stir and bustle pervading the hotel. Maggie remarked with some acerbity as she was making my bed that it was little pleasure *she* got out of the Governor's coming, and for all the servants it was indeed a day of stress and turmoil. As I went down to breakfast I stumbled over palm branches laid outside the rooms of guests at whose windows they were presently to be displayed, and I found the dining-room hung with the flags of various nations and presided over by a plaster cast of the Kaiser. On the croquet lawn stood a patient donkey laden with music-stands for the military band; waiters were setting out trestle-tables on the grass, a man on a ladder was coercing the electric-

lamp standard in the centre of the lawn, and to crown the excitement Simona the monkey had got loose and was capering lightly about the place, to the terror of the bandsmen, who with great alacrity entrenched themselves behind the tea-tables.

In the drawing-room an inspection was being held of the ribbons which were to be won and worn by the victors in the list—for each ring carries with it a ribbon, and the smaller the ring—and some were no bigger than a wedding-ring—the better worth winning was the prize attached. Some forty of them hung on a line, each three yards in length, exquisite ribbons or rather sashes—of which few can have cost less than a guinea a-piece and some considerably more. The plainest were simply lengths of wide silk ribbon—tartan, chiné or tricolor, with fringed ends—but the more costly ones were of satin, hand-painted or beautifully embroidered with flowers, and some of the most beautiful of all, presented by residents or visitors, were decorated with medallions, painted by a good artist and inscribed with the date on which the trophy was won.

At half-past two the fun began, and the spectators—to the number of a couple of hundred—adjourned to the garden and took their seats on either side of the sandy drive in which the tilting was to be held.

The day had turned to sultry heat, and haze rose from the valley like steam from a cauldron, obscuring the Peak and the mountain slopes. Festoons of flags hung between the palm trees lining the course, and spanning the track at some ten yards apart were two horizontal bars at a height of eight feet from the ground, each bar being furnished with half a dozen *sortija* ribbons care-



VIEW OF THE PEAK FROM THE HOTEL HUMBOLDT  
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fully wound on reels, so that only the ring at the extremity of the ribbon hung down in sight.

At these rings the riders—about a dozen in number, of whom three were ladies—tilted in succession with a short wooden lance as they galloped underneath the bar, returning to the starting-point after every round with each fresh trophy displayed sashwise across their chests, receiving the applause of their friends as they went by.

Occasionally two loud "rutsch-ch-ches" in succession announced that a competitor had carried off a ribbon from each bar as he passed, but this was rarely done. It is a pretty sight when a ring is taken at full gallop and the rider continues his course with the coloured streamer fluttering at his lance point, and as a spectacle the *sortija* depends, like tent-pegging, almost wholly upon the speed and dash which the riders display in their charge. There is nothing exhilarating in seeing a quiet poke delivered at a ring by a person lolloping along on a languid hireling, and though some of the competitors rode boldly and well, the spirit of the game was best exemplified by a young Spaniard mounted on a fiery black horse, who did not score many ribbons, it is true, but who amply supplied all the "go" that the sport demands.

In former years the Spanish officers quartered at the *Villa* used to enter the lists, and their absence nowadays is to be regretted, but I am told that since ladies have taken to riding in the *sortijas* it is considered *infra dig.* for the officers to compete.

The honours of the tournament fell, as befitted the day, to a German rider who won no less than seven

ribbons before the afternoon was over, and who presented a rainbow sight at the tea-party in the garden which concluded the performance.

It is surely well for us mortals that the leaves of the book of the Future are only unsealed to us one by one, that we may not read what lies written upon the pages that are yet to come. Not the faintest shadow of an impending tragedy marred the gaiety of the day or foretold that this same victor who was now receiving the congratulations of his friends, would within a few short weeks die by his own hand, far from family and fatherland, the foredoomed victim of an hereditary curse.

The festivities of the day by no means ended with the cakes and ices consumed on the lawn at tea-time—for at 7.30 began a great *Festessen*, which lasted a good two hours. At a long central table were seated the Governor and his suite, such Spanish civil and military officials as had been asked to meet him, and all the notabilities of every known kind; while obscure individuals who had not so much as an Order to wear were huddled away at small side-tables, which they were obliged to share for the occasion with other nonentities—numerous little impromptu dinner-parties being thus created under pressure from the head waiter. The confusion of tongues which filled the room, punctuated with the crashes of the military band outside, only ceased when the Governor rose to his feet and made an eloquent and impassioned speech in Spanish.

A storm of "Hochs!" shook the room when the health of the Kaiser was proposed, and so infectious is enthusiasm that for the moment it would have been quite pleasant to have been German.

The Governor was easily the tallest man present, and would have been a conspicuous figure in any surroundings—a black-bearded, well-built Spaniard, fully six feet three inches in height. He has twice been appointed Governor of the Canary Islands, but his second term of office has been somewhat unsettled owing to the persistent agitation of Grand Canary for a government of its own, and, should the province be divided, dignity would compel him to resign. He made himself very popular during the evening, talking in fluent French to the foreign visitors, and taking active part in the ball with which the day's festivities were brought to a close.

Fresh supper tables were being laid at midnight by exhausted waiters, and it was past three in the morning before the last dancers retired, worn out with a long day's pleasuring.



## CHAPTER VI

THE chronicle of a winter spent in the Canaries is of necessity a chronicle of small beer. The larger elements of brigands and adventures are all lacking. Not a beast is to be found in the island more dangerous than what in Spanish is called the ferocious coney. The volcano, it is true, cannot be classified under the heading of small beer, but it is a sleeping Titan, and while it slumbers it provides no material for the chronicler.

And viewed in its true light is not this a true presentment of life? In most lives small beer preponderates so immensely over anything more potent, that a diary kept by many of us would be little more eventful than that of Frank Buckland when a boy, which he tells us was mainly—

“Monday: Lost my hedgehog. Tuesday: Found hedgehog. Wednesday: Lost hedgehog,”

and so through the week.

Travelling in particular has become tame and uneventful within the last few generations, and a journey round the world in the present day will not provide half such thrilling moments as did the drive over Shooter's Hill to a ball at Woolwich a hundred years ago, when men kept their pistols ready and women were like to faint if the coachman checked his horses.



Small as the beer of life has always been, it has become far smaller of late, and should its quality deteriorate yet more, the chronicler of the future will have to resort to much magnification and embroidery for a livelihood.

Meanwhile I must go on with my humble chronicle, hoping that it may, at least, be found to merit the description given of an Indian magistrate who in the course of some trial had to inspect the private books of a Calcutta firm, in which were the names of their customers, accompanied by a brief descriptive comment. He had the curiosity to look up his own name, and found the remark appended—"Poor, but honest."

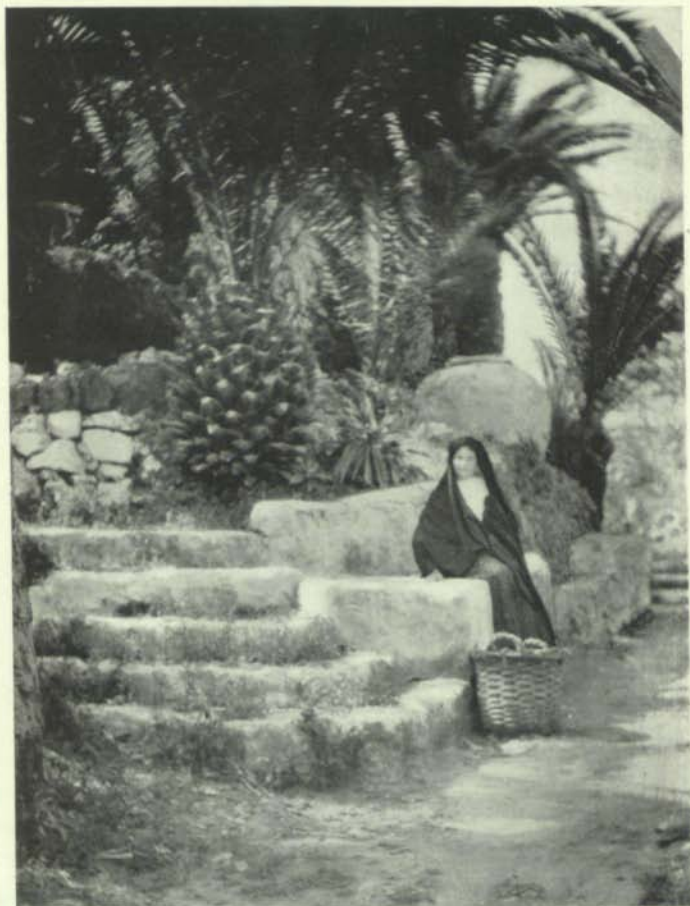
Within a few days of the *sortija*, I made my first expedition into the higher slopes above the *Villa*. Hitherto the weather had been too unsettled for any long excursions, but at last there came a time when the local weather prophets could with confidence predict a fine morrow, and orders were sent up to the *Villa* that five mules were to be in readiness at the Humboldt at seven o'clock the following morning to go to Agua Mansa.

I and my friends rose miserably at half-past five and dressed by candlelight, the noise made in brushing one's teeth sounding loud enough in the silence of a sleeping hotel to wake the whole corridor. An hour later the snow-fields of the Peak were blushing rose-pink in the first rays of the sun, while the under world was still in shadow, and the grey dawn began to creep in at the windows as we sat at breakfast over the coffee and eggs

provided by an unhappy waiter whom we had unearthed.

By seven o'clock it was broad daylight, but the mules, according to immemorial Spanish custom, were late, and even when they arrived there was considerable delay over the tightening of girths and the loading of the pack-mule. Weighing the lunch-basket in his hand, one of the muleteers went away and presently returned with a block of lava to use as a counterpoise on the pack-saddle, throwing a leather strap over the whole and tightening it with a wooden tourniquet till the unfortunate mule was squeezed nearly breathless.

At last we got under way, and waving good-bye to the friendly faces that were watching our start from upper windows, we struck into the road to the *Villa*, meeting workmen descending to their day's work, each with his dinner in a little reed basket, covered with a spotlessly clean, fringed napkin. Up we climb through the *Villa*, where a broken aqueduct is sending a torrent of water raging and sluicing down the steep, cobbled streets, and now we follow a rough, boulder-strewn path, leading into the zone of heath, cistus and arbutus, where charcoal-burners live in rude thatched huts among their goats, pigs and fowls. Higher and still higher we climb, and now the hillside is sparsely clothed with Spanish chestnut trees—representatives of the great forests that once covered the island before it was denuded by the reckless destruction of timber that took place during the centuries that succeeded the Spanish conquest. Since the introduction of the banana this destruction has been more widespread and com-



ON A TENERIFFE FARM





plete than ever before, as not a tree has been permitted to remain where the more profitable banana is able to flourish.

At the foot of a gigantic chestnut, said to date from before the Conquest, we dismounted, and leaving our mules set out for a scramble on foot. The herbage was dripping wet and the air felt chilly in the shadow of the mountain, for we were now at a height of some 4000 feet and so close under the eastern walls of the valley that it is nearly mid-day before the sun climbs the ridge.

The necessity for an early start is not owing to the distance to be covered—for Agua Mansa is only a two hours' ride from the hotel—but to the fact that clouds usually gather upon these heights by eleven o'clock and obliterate the view. At the present hour we had a splendid sight of the Peak, whose great, white, limpet-shaped cone we now saw for the first time standing clear behind the upper edge of the *fortaleza*.

We tracked the Agua Mansa to where it issues forth as a mountain stream from a cavern at the head of a wild ravine, and fancied ourselves in Switzerland as we climbed the steep hill spurs among the pine trees which strewed the ground with their fragrant but slippery needles. We had, perhaps, never consciously missed the presence of forest trees at Orotava, but it was a joy to find oneself among them once more, and we none of us were sorry to think that the ubiquitous and prosperous banana of the lower valley suffered from mountain sickness if it ascended higher than a thousand feet above sea-level.

The recognised place for luncheon at Agua Mansa

is in the first fork of the historic old chestnut tree, where it divides at about five feet from the ground, and there our party of four found sufficient—though I can hardly say commodious—seating room; it was rather like a nest full of young blackbirds, and we could see that to *quarrel* meant *to fall out*.

The descent to the Puerto takes if anything rather longer than the ride up, for the mules have to pick their way with circumspection down the rough paths, often barging heavily into one another as they drop from step to step, and cautiously zigzagging down the slippery cobbles of the *Villa*, so that you can say good-day alternately to the house-owners on either side, as your head appears suddenly at their first-floor windows.

This expedition is considered a good preliminary to longer tours in the island, as affording a sample of the mule-paths to be encountered, and many newcomers have probably—like myself—thought the riding unpleasantly bad in places. But all things are comparative, and after some experience of mule-riding in Grand Canary and La Palma one's ideas regarding the descent from Agua Mansa re-arrange themselves, and one can almost enter into the feelings of a person who having just ridden down the side of the Great Pyramid should be asked if he considered it advisable to dismount when riding down Hampstead Hill.

Brown's *Guidebook to the Canaries* says that people who come out to Orotava are wrong not to move about the island more than they do; and the local doctors

also lay great stress on the advantages of an occasional change of air—particularly in the case of those who have come abroad for their health.

But their preaching is mostly in vain, for like the white ants whose wings drop off after their first flight, the majority of winter guests—once arrived at Orotava—seemed deprived of the power of locomotion. Firmly established in some good hotel, they stay on month after month, grumbling at the monotony of their daily round of amusements, exasperated by any break in the fine weather which they consider their due, and—if the truth were told—heartily sick of the sight of most of their fellow-guests.

A change of scene would do them all the good in the world—both mentally and physically—but, on their own showing, the difficulties in the way are insurmountable. A few days in the hill air of the *Villa* might no doubt be beneficial, they will admit—but then there are no tennis courts at the hotel. They might, of course, stop a couple of nights at Icöd, further along the coast—but perish the thought! there are said to be fleas at the inn! To go up to Tacaronte would certainly be easy—but would one get a game of bridge there in the evenings?—and what about the food? Somebody who stopped there on the way from Santa Cruz said the luncheon was not very good.

We once met an apparently healthy English couple at an hotel in another part of the island, who were bored to extinction and really anxious to get away, but literally dared not leave, owing to the unfavourable reports that had been poured into their ears concerning the cuisine to be found elsewhere. There they stayed—



chained to one spot by their concern about their food—and for all I know they may be there to this day, unless a travelling kitchen has been sent out to escort them to the coast.

This was an extreme case, but there is no doubt that the importance which even strong, healthy people attach to food—and I am not speaking of invalids—deters the great majority from visiting any place the least out of the way; and this, coupled with the ordinary tourist's inability to speak any Spanish at all, sufficiently accounts for the fact that a winter in the Canaries means in most cases merely a prolonged stay at some cosmopolitan hotel in Teneriffe or Grand Canary, and a life differing hardly at all from what it would be at one of the smaller resorts on the Riviera.

To visitors of this class, it seems no doubt the act of a lunatic to wilfully forsake the flesh-pots of Orotava in order to travel about on muleback and put up with the discomforts of village *fondas* and the terrors of native cookery.

To those, on the other hand, who like their travels in different countries to possess distinctive features, it seems surprising that anyone should be found to come so far from home, to islands so full of character, and then be content to see nothing and do nothing beyond what may be possible between breakfast and dinner in a hotel carriage and in the company of a big luncheon-basket.

It is true that the colder climate of the higher villages makes it unwise to visit them much before April—for those at anyrate who are afraid of sudden changes—and in this matter we had a lesson ourselves,



for wearing of French *menus* and a babel of tongues, we took advantage of some extremely warm weather at the end of January to go up to Tacaronte for a few days. It stands 1700 feet above sea-level, and as we climbed out of the sultry valley the air blew fresh and chill and we began to envy the natives their blanket-cloaks in which they all were wrapped. Our thermometer dropped hurriedly to 55° — twenty degrees lower than it had been the previous day. There were no fires in the dining-room at Tacaronte, and dressing for dinner consisted chiefly in putting on fur coats.

The hotel is a thoroughly Anglicised one, and was comparatively empty, but I can hardly say it was quiet. A party of five Cuban Spaniards were staying there, and of all the noisy people it has been our lot to meet, they were the noisiest. Their ordinary conversation was carried on at the highest pitch of their strident voices, all speaking at once, with sudden squalls of laughter, and their entrance into a room was preceded by the most extraordinary sounds, loud cries, exclamations and crashes, as though they were falling over obstacles all down the passage.

An English traveller relates how once, when sitting out on a still evening on the shores of Lago Maggiore, he suddenly heard sounds from across the lake as of a distant multitude engaged in conflict, and asking the cause of the uproar was told that it was only the Germans coming out from *table d'hôte* at the hotel across the water.

But if there were a crowd composed half of Germans and half of Cubans, I believe you would not hear the

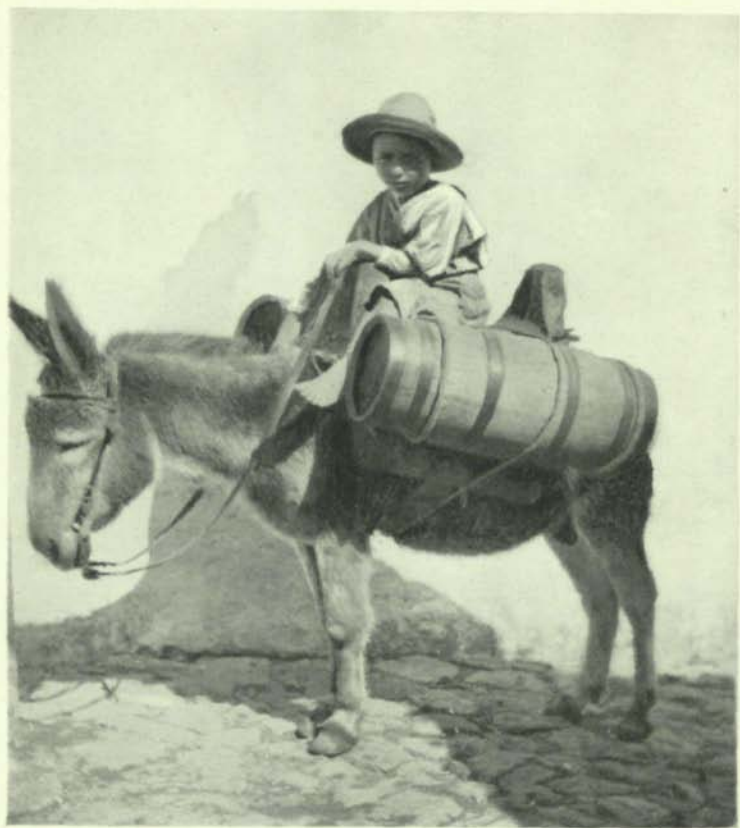
Germans at all, and would only know they were speaking by seeing their lips move, as you may sometimes see the string band of an hotel engaged in vigorous dumb show in one corner of a crowded dining-room without a single note of their music rising above the hubbub of tongues.

Our Scotch manageress had once hazarded a remonstrance with the Cuban party, but according to her own account they became so fierce that she decided to leave them alone in future.

Owing to its being the time of the potato harvest all the people and all the animals at Tacaronte were engaged in field work, and only with difficulty were we able to find a donkey for the señora to ride. It was on our rambles here that we first found the *Canarina campanulata*—known locally as *Bicacaro*—a climbing plant with a handsome dark red flower resembling the *Stunnia dinnerbellia* of Lear's "Nonsense Botany."

There are pretty walks in the woods above Tacaronte where the white heath becomes a tree fifty feet in height, and ferns and moss-grown boulders line the course of a streamlet that threads its way among the boles of chestnuts and evergreen oaks of hoary antiquity, and we had been looking forward to exploring the neighbourhood thoroughly. But the weather turned wet, and the clay paths of the steep wooded slopes became dangerously slippery for man or beast.

Confined perforce to the house, our outlook resolved itself into a vista of dripping cabbages growing among dripping wheat—a scene from which we sought dis-



CARRYING WATER





traction in studying the pictures on the walls. One that hung in the drawing-room and purported to show a local *barranco* (ravine) puzzled us for some time, till we made the discovery that it was hung on its side instead of the right way up—with an effect on the masses of foliage undreamt of by the artist. A couple of French prints bore titles in both French and English—the first, representing two damsels alarmed at night, being called *Les Peureuses* or *The Timorous*; the second, showing the same damsels in playful mood, entitled *Les Espiègles* or *The Waggishes*.

Of books there were few in the hotel, and I was soon forced to turn for occupation to my Spanish grammar, in which I lighted on an exercise written in a very bitter vein: "The unfortunate man (*el desdichado*)"—a word I used at first to translate as "the aforesaid"—"has no friends because he has no money:" "We should have (conditional clause) more friends if we had (principal clause) more money:" "If I had had money I should have had many friends."

These cynical sentiments were varied by an occasional haughty speech such as: "I had no mind to speak with the prince." But only once did I come across a phrase that introduced some human interest: "I did not sleep all night," says the inconsequent speaker, throwing aside his reserve for the moment, "because my uncle had an invitation to supper." This at once rouses curiosity, but the friend to whom the remark is addressed, has obviously reasons of his own for discouraging further confidences. "From the earliest

times," he observes sententiously, "knowledge was diffused in the countries of the East;" after which ferocious snub the first speaker never again lapses from the abstract into the personal, and the first glimmer of interest is also the last.

## CHAPTER VII

THE writer of a book of travel is, I know, always expected to give the history of any country he visits; and in order to do this he has to quarry facts suitable to his scope from the mines contained in the writings of historians—unless indeed his imagination is fertile, and he is unafraid of being found out by carping critics.

Even then, it is safer to rely on the imaginative efforts of bygone writers who are now indifferent to the finger of scorn, and many of whom have repeated what still further bygone ones have said, until they have at length created what is called history, on the principle of the famous dictum that "When I say a thing three times, it is true."

The books written about the history of the Canaries are out of all proportion to the size of the islands, and are to be found by the acre, clad in beauteous covers of parchment and vellum and of noble folio or quarto size in the libraries of Laguna and elsewhere. But being all written in Spanish—when not in Latin—they are only of use to a leisured and accomplished scholar, and all lesser lights have to draw their information from such second and third-hand versions as may be found in the few English books that treat of the subject; and among these lesser lights one of the least—a mere



rushlight—is the present writer. My historical information is shamelessly unoriginal.

Such history as the islands possess is mostly to be found wrapped in a legendary mist so obscure that writers even wrangle as to whether it refers to the Canaries or to some other islands. Picturesque names and facts emerge here and there like tall topmasts above a sea-fog, as when Homer speaks of an island beyond the Pillars of Hercules, to which the souls of departed heroes were translated; and Herodotus describes the spot where Atlas supports the sky on a mountain as conical as a cylinder.

Hesiod too, like Homer, states that Jupiter sent dead heroes to the end of the world—to the Fortunate Islands, which are in the middle of the ocean. King Juba of Mauretania also crosses the stage, as do the Phœnicians and the Carthaginians.

But even these combined facts and fictions hardly constitute what can be called history. And when we come to later times the confusion appears to be no less, and the fertility of imagination quite as great.

Perhaps one of the most curious instances is that of the enchanted island of S. Borondon—supposed to be the eighth island of the Canary group—a kind of lost Pleiad that eluded all search, though its mountains appear to have been seen by mariners at least as frequently as is the sea-serpent. Elusive as it was, the island was nevertheless registered as belonging to the Spanish Crown, and in a treaty between Spain and Portugal in 1519 was referred to as the undiscovered island (*Non Trubada*), and was further described as being eighty-seven leagues long and twenty-eight



broad, and as being forty leagues distant from Palma.

No less than four expeditions were fitted out to go in quest of it, carrying both priests and warriors on board to be prepared for foes spiritual and foes temporal. But search as they might, they never discovered the enchanted strand. Nothing dismayed, however, a priest of La Palma actually made a sketch of this island of San Borondon—and so late as 1755 a French geographer had the boldness to show it on his map.

All this shows that as yet there was no decay in the powers of credulity and imagination, and indeed for centuries no one seems to have doubted the existence of this undiscoverable island.

When the Canary Islands finally emerged from the fabulous mists that enshrouded them, it was well on in the Middle Ages, and they had—to their sorrow—been officially discovered by the Spaniards. From that day their history is one long succession of intrigues and treachery, and fighting—the foredoomed struggle of the weak with the strong—ending in the final conquest of the islands by Spain about the time of the discovery of America by Columbus.

The Spaniards had a powerful ally in the form of a mysterious sickness called the *Modorra*, that broke out among the Guanches—the aboriginal race in Teneriffe—and carried them off by thousands. Whole troupes of them were seized with profound melancholia, and wandered away into the loneliest recesses of the mountains to die.

No doubt the conquerors saw in this the finger of

God; and assuredly it turned the scales of victory in their favour. Such of the unhappy natives as survived were at once baptised, being too dull and languid probably to resist—and from that time forward the islands were part and parcel of the Spanish dominions.

The conquerors, as has so often been the case elsewhere, were at no pains to preserve any memories of the past history of the conquered race. Their only endeavour was to stamp the islands with their own signet, and so well did they succeed in doing so that very little appears to be known of the natives before the conquest. The fact that the Guanches had no written language, and that consequently no inscriptions have been found to throw light upon their past, has made subsequent research almost barren, the only link with the bygone centuries being tradition.

The Guanches are said to have been an honourable and warlike race, and famous for their feats of strength; marvellous stories have come down to us of their huge stature and of their amazing skill in athletic sports. Such importance indeed did they attach to athletics that if the date of their annual Olympic games happened to fall at a time when they were at war, they made a truce for the time.

They appear to have had prophets among them, but it must have been a thankless profession, to judge from a story told of one who predicted the coming fulfilment of an ancient prophecy, and the conquest of the islands by a strange people from beyond the sea. This was considered to be so unpatriotic that the king of the Guanches caused the prophet to be put to death "pour encourager les autres." It is probable that after

this event the prophets were more careful to keep a finger on the pulse of the people before venturing to prophesy — for it is not so much the truth or the falsehood of a prediction that is of importance as that it should be palatable. “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the people love to have it so.” Prophets of that type would never have been put to death.

The Canary tradition of the origin of man savoured strongly of feudalism; it stated that in the beginning God made a number of men from earth and water, and endowed them specially; but finding that there were not enough of them, the Almighty made another race, and these He condemned to perpetual servitude. To the first He gave all the flocks, to the second He gave nothing—dividing men from the first into Haves and Have-nots.

This tradition would seem from internal evidence to have emanated from a member of the race of Haves, and it effectually disposed of any unpleasant theories the Have-nots might propound as to equality.

Anthropologists hold that the Guanches were of the Iberian race, and closely allied to the Basques and Celts; but this theory is probably disputed, as are most others in connection with the early history of the islanders and islands. Were the Canaries identical with Plato's Atlantis? Are they the remains of a sunken continent, or are they comparatively modern upheavals? Were they at one time part of Africa, and was it only in the time of Noah that they became insulated? On all these points and on many others much has been said, both crim and con, as Mrs Malaprop observed, and we may feel ourselves at



liberty to lean to whichever theory has the greater attraction for us.

The history of the islands for the last four hundred years contains little of interest to Englishmen. It is true that from time to time we sent a fleet to attack them—first under Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins, then under Admiral Blake, and later under other leaders—but as none of these expeditions achieved any success they have been attended by no results.

Finally, in 1797, a fleet under Lord Nelson attacked Santa Cruz, and that proved to be a memorable incident—both by reason of its being the occasion of his only defeat and because it was there that he lost an arm. After the fight was over the combatants became most friendly—each admiring the bravery of the other—and after the interchange of the most exalted compliments between Nelson and the Spanish leader, they ratified their friendship, we are told, with presents of beer and cheese and wine, and so parted. Since when nothing very particular has happened in the islands, with the exception of one or two trifling volcanic eruptions.

Concerning these, Brown's guidebook considerably remarks that "those who are thinking of taking up their residence in the islands, and who are afraid of eruptions, may possibly like to know what chances they have of being buried alive."

It is unquestionably a matter in which we are interested, and no one can travel in Teneriffe without being reminded of the Japanese saying—"We are all living upon a frog's back, and some day the frog will jump."

It is now more than a hundred years since the last



eruption, a fact which will lead a pessimist to surmise that another may soon be looked for, and an optimist to feel that as the volcano has slumbered so long, the chances are that it will continue to slumber yet a little longer. But the Peak keeps its own counsel and maintains an attitude of Sphinx-like mystery.

## CHAPTER VIII

IN the middle of February we again left the Humboldt for a few days and drove over to Icod de los Viños—some twelve miles farther along the coast—one of the pleasantest excursions to be made by road from Orotava.

Skirting the foot of the *fortaleza* the road passes under high cliffs cleft here and there by a waterfall dashing down a ravine where the sides are draped with maidenhair or hung with sheets of creepers and long fern fronds. Wild bananas and the calladium-like *Colocasia antiquorum* occupy the stream beds below and mingle with patches of yam, planted in damp spots by the peasants for the sake of its root. Studding the rock walls are large fleshy-leaved stonecrops; the flat platter-like rosettes of the *Sempervivum tabulaeformis* and the cabbage-like growth of the *S. Canariensis* now throwing up their tall handsome flower spikes. Wild cinerarias in every shade of mauve cover the grassy banks, but the *Cineraria cruenta*—the parent of our greenhouse cinerarias, and known by the purple underside to its leaves—is not yet to be seen, as it only flowers in early summer.

Barefooted children waylay us on the road, and flinging handfuls of wild flowers into our laps, run beside us for a mile or more, shrieking "Péni, péni, péni!"



RAMBLA DE CASTRO





An English lady who on first coming to Orotava was accosted in the streets with this word, took it to be a form of benediction, and before she was disillusioned used to smile gratefully upon the children in a way that must have puzzled them considerably. Tourists, however, have only themselves to thank for the nuisance that they have created by their habit of scattering coppers broadcast among the children, which embitters life for all who follow in their wake.

"*Una perrita, señorita!*" goes on the piercing sing-song chorus—"Señorita, una perrita!"—till at length, *Dieu merci!* the last of our tormentors drops behind and is lost to view in the cloud of dust that follows the carriage.

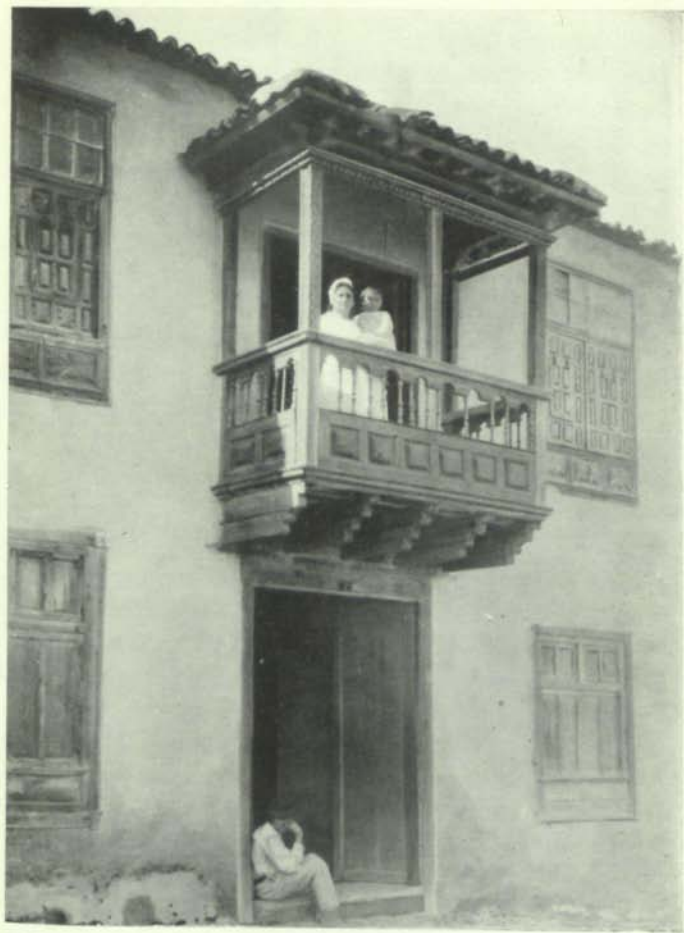
At the village of San Juan de la Rambla, two hours from the Puerto, we get down and visit the famous latticed balcony, mentioned in the guidebook as one of the best specimens of the kind and as being made of *téa*. A friend of ours who had driven over there one day told us he had had no idea that the tea plant ever grew to timber size. The mistake is amusing enough to those who know that *téa* is the name for the native pine (*Pinus Canariensis*), but is a very natural one to the newcomer; and even when we visited the pine forests later on and heard our muleteers alluding to some fine old tree as a *téa*—or *téasola*, as they sometimes call it—I never quite got over the idea that the latter name was the Spanish equivalent for the *thé simple* that one orders at a hotel.

Tay-ah, as it is pronounced, is a very hard and durable wood, and before it was supplanted by the succulent and pampered banana used to grow all round

this coast. On some of the farms are wine-presses with gigantic beams made of trees that formerly grew on the estate. But the presses have long been idle, for the vines on the lower slopes perished in the disease that ravaged the island fifty years ago.

San Juan can boast of *two* fine old wooden balconies both, curiously enough, at No. 2, though in different streets. In the second one the *Ama*, or mistress of the house, graciously consented to appear when she saw that we were taking a photograph—first retiring into the house to put on her best blue silk cap. Requiring someone to carry our camera, we looked around for a suitable boy, and immediately had the *bobo* or village idiot thrust upon us by the unanimous recommendation of the inhabitants present. Bobo was enchanted at being hired, and holding the camera in ungainly fashion at arm's-length he proudly led the way with such good will that whenever we wished to take a photograph we had to hire a second boy to overtake him and bring him back.

None but the stone deaf could ignore the arrival of a tourist carriage in Icod (pronounced by the way Ee-koh) and *postigos* flew up along our route as we bumped and crashed over the cobbled streets of the little town and drew up at the Hotel Internacional. The booking of our rooms had been entrusted to some English friends of ours who had driven over from the Humboldt a few days previously and had interviewed the *fondista* with the help of a dictionary, and we were not without misgivings as to the result. All was well, however, and we were ushered into a large double-bedded room prepared for our reception, everything in it being conscientiously



BALCONY AT SAN JUAN DE LA RAMBLA





duplicated, down to the two blue glass spittoons standing on either side of the window. The master and mistress of the house were absent, and the family was represented by their two daughters—Carmen and Lola—left in the charge of a capable servant, Esperanza.

Lola, a plump and cushiony maiden of sixteen, joined us in the sitting-room after supper, and after showing us her collection of picture post-cards—consisting chiefly of love scenes and portraits of actresses—she chattered away gaily, scrutinising us the while at close range with an unswerving glance from which no detail of our attire escaped, from hairpins to shoelaces.

Life at Icod, she said, was *muy triste*; there were no balls, no theatres; on Sunday, of course, there was Mass, but the shrug of her shoulders that accompanied the word showed me that it was certainly not to be reckoned as an entertainment. She had never left the island, but once she went as far as Santa Cruz, and that had given her a great desire to travel. She had a lover named Manuel, a young man of three-and-twenty, who was coming in July to see her father and ask her hand in marriage; he was engaged in the fruit trade, and at present lived in London—it was all one, London or England, was it not? Ah no—there must be other *Villas* in England, for Manuel wrote that he had another fruit shop, not in London . . . but she could not remember the name.

I suggested Bristol, Liverpool, Southampton.

No, it was none of those, it seemed to her that Higyack was the town he spoke of—yes, she was sure it was Higyack—perhaps I had been there?

Here she produced a whole packet of her lover's

letters and gave them me to read. If I had been a better Spanish scholar this would have been indiscreet, but I was only able to gather that Manuel wrote a very good hand and appeared to express himself well in writing to his Lolilla, "*niña muy simpática.*"

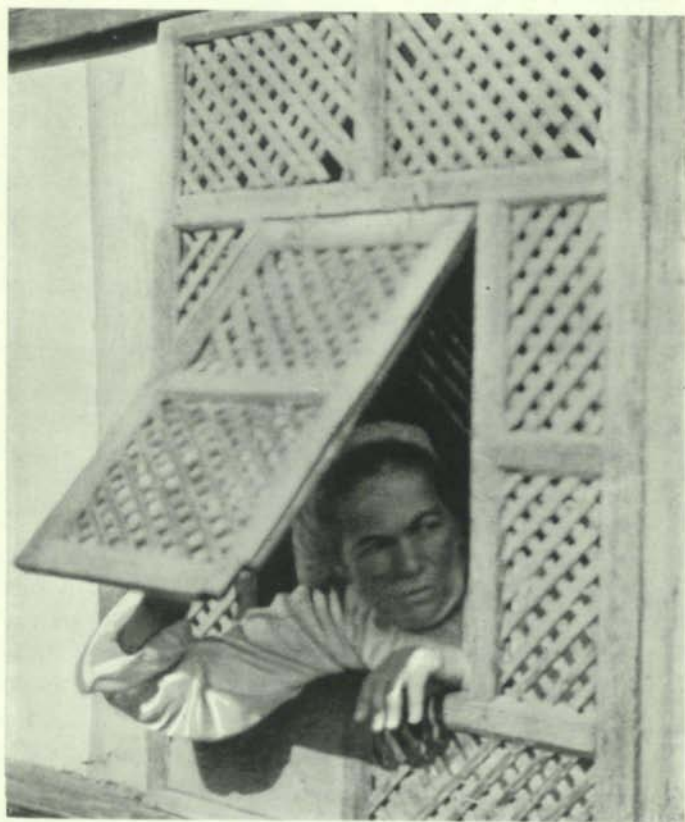
I asked her if she liked him well enough to marry him, and nearly laughed outright at the extraordinary grimace which she used to express her uncertainty. "*No sé!* (I do not know)," was her reply, with underlip thrust forward and shoulders shrugged to her very ears—"Manuel is kind, yes! and good, oh yes! But he is ugly—*Dio!* he is ugly! He has a pale yellow face—and brown hair—which is rare in these parts," she added with some pride.

I fancy she will end by marrying him, but she does not want to make up her mind just yet; there is plenty of time, she thinks; her sister is twenty and not yet married. And I?—she supposed I must be nineteen—I should soon be married.

I asked her how she spent her time—did she read at all? She pointed to some fashion papers lying on a table, together with a cheap novelette printed on atrocious paper, but said that she had no taste for reading—she preferred looking out at the *postigo*.

Years of looking out at the *postigos* had left on the insides of the green shutters circular patches as black as the heads that leant against them.

At intervals during our conversation Miss Lola slapped herself violently, and I soon began to do the same. My enemies had found me out. Some people are merely worried by fleas, and might say with the Irishman—"Tis not the bit of atin' I grudge the



A LATTICE POSTING





craters, 'tis the perpetual thramplin' that wears the life out av me"—but with others, like myself, flea bites produce acute irritation and mean a sleepless night of feverish misery. Forewarned, however, is forearmed, and when I went to bed that night I enshrouded myself for the first time in a garment I had specially designed for our winter in the Canaries. The idea had been given me by a fellow-sufferer in Corsica, who, when passing a night in the flea-ridden inns there, used to tie herself up in a large linen sack. But I flatter myself that my plan was an improvement on this, and I found it so entirely successful that I can recommend it to other travellers.

The basis of my costume was a *galabieh*, one of those long blue cotton nightshirts worn by the lower classes in Egypt, in which your donkey boy scampers across the desert after you, holding the hem of his fluttering skirts firmly between his teeth. The opening at the neck I filled in with mull muslin which drew up tightly round the throat like a bag, while in either bottom corner was sewn a sock, and at the end of each sleeve a loose cotton glove—every other seam and aperture being carefully stitched up. Once inside, you are in a perfectly flea-proof garment, though still able to walk about in comfort and even tie the strings at your neck—a vast improvement on being tied up hand and foot in a sack.

My fears that the fleas in their rage might bite holes through the cotton proved groundless, and I slept serenely all night, while my persecutors raced up and down trying in vain to find an entrance, till dawn forced them to raise the siege and retire in confusion,

No doubt they wondered how on earth I had got inside, as King George did about the apple in the dumpling.

The following day we went to see the famous dragon tree of Icod, the most distinguished member of its family in Teneriffe since the death—some forty years ago—of its venerable relative at Orotava, which, if tales be true, must have been a fine young sapling at the time of the Deluge.

During the Ice Age the dragons are said to have flourished in Africa—but, of course, no one can remember that time, and since the human race has appeared on the scene they seem only to have been found in the Canaries and in the high lands of Abyssinia and Somaliland. They have a primitive look about them, unlike any other tree, much as an ichthyosaurus would have if he waddled into the Zoo; there seems no doubt that both were among Nature's earlier efforts, and that she afterwards improved and elaborated her types.

In its simple outline a dragon tree resembles an umbrella that has been blown inside out. It increases in height in the same way that a palm does—by putting out new leaves in the heart of its tufted crown and dropping an equal number of the old ones; the crisscross scars left by the fallen leaves give a scaly look that may have been thought—by imaginative people—to resemble a dragon's skin.

But alas! for the passing of the age of romance and faith! what time men walked in a dim light, surrounded by such limitless wonders that a few more or less put



DRAGON TREE AT ICOD





no strain on their credulity ; when you might come to the country where the natives had but one foot, and that so large as to shield them from the sun as they lay down—or to another where they ate no food and lived on the smell of an apple ; when gorgons and giants and centaurs and all kinds of delightful monsters might be met with in strange lands ! How has the world shrunk since those days !

Remembering vividly the tales that had thrilled me as a child of the dragon tree that groaned and shed gouts of blood when wounded, I sallied forth one evening soon after reaching Orotava, feeling rather guilty, but full of grim resolve, taking with me a knife I had secreted at tea-time—and drove it into a young and inoffensive tree I had marked out for experiment—only to be stripped of one more illusion ! It neither bled nor groaned—no more than a potato.

The thrilling legend has, I regret to say, to take its place among other popular errors founded on a similarity of name, such as the common belief that bathbrick is, like a Bath bun, a product of the city of Bath. Here were undoubtedly dragon trees—and everyone knew there was something called dragon's blood. What more natural than to suppose that the one furnished the other ? And this being accepted, the more graphic details would quickly follow, till travellers came to persuade themselves that the tales they told were true.

It is not known how the Guanches obtained the so-called dragon's blood they employed in embalming their dead. A tradesman at Orotava was recently asked to supply two pounds of the substance for

chemical experiment on the Continent, but he told me he had been obliged to decline the order, as it would have been impossible to execute.

As a matter of fact, the resin known to commerce as dragon's blood is mainly the product of a wholly different tree, a species of rattan found in India and the East Indian Islands, called *Calamus Draco*. Had we known this earlier, we should not have stuck knives into the unresisting dragons of Teneriffe, but no one in the island was in a position to undeceive us.

*El drago*, as the islanders call it, is popularly supposed to flower once in fourteen years—though there are trees which have not done so for half a century—and after each flowering the stem forks, so that in process of time the head of the tree becomes a thick bristling mass of short branches divided and subdivided again, with each extremity bearing a yucca-like tuft of short, sharp, bayonet leaves. The trunk of the tree increases in girth by means of aerial roots that descend from the upper branches, and encircling the stem creep with incredible slowness to the ground. As layer after layer of these roots creeps downwards—each one adding a sort of cork jacket to the original trunk—decay sets in at the heart, so that when very ancient, the dragon tree is usually hollow.

The one at Icod was measured in 1881, and was then forty-seven feet in girth; and I was credibly informed that its present girth is actually slightly *less* than it was then. This—as an Irishman might say—will give some idea of the time the tree must have taken to reach its present size.

The old man to whom this giant dragon belongs

has had his ideas of chronology a trifle muddled by its presence among the fowls in his little garden. After telling us that the age of the tree was three thousand years—a fairly modest estimate—he went on to say (supposing we had believed him, as an old writer puts it) that when the village church was built *two thousand years ago*, the roots of the dragon were even then discovered among its foundations some hundred yards distant from the trunk.

When one of Purchas his Pilgrims in narrating his travels, told of his meeting an old man, who said he was two hundred years old, Purchas contented himself with appending the marginal note—“*An old man, or a loud lie.*” It would not be inappropriate to the age of this church.

The fact that the Christian faith had not been given to the world at that time troubled the old man not at all; waiving aside a remark so irrelevant, he merely repeated his statement, and set about finding us a seedling dragon as a souvenir of our visit. But the search was in vain; his hens had trodden the young dragons under foot, and we had to be content with a scrap of the red, spongy bark which the old man whittled off for us with his knife.

Having paid our respects to the prehistoric dragon, we next set out on mules for the pine forests above the town, in the hope of getting a nearer sight of the Peak than is possible from Orotava.

For two hours and more we followed a painfully steep track leading into the hills, where charcoal-burners and wood-cutters live in little cabins thatched



with white heath, and where the great *téasolas* are felled and then dragged down by oxen to the town, their trunks getting frayed and battered in the rough journey over the stony paths.

Miles of cloud lay upon the mountain flank, and we could not even tell in which direction the Peak lay. Presently we reached the cloud zone ourselves, and a dense Scotch mist drove through the pines as we halted for luncheon among the bushes of pink and white cistus on the hillside. We found that the good Esperanza had filled our basket with great store of food, and I shall always remember eating some quince marmalade spread on bread strongly flavoured with the aniseed beloved of Spaniards. The combination was extraordinary.

It seemed useless to ride any farther in such hopeless looking mist, so most reluctantly we set out on the return journey, and taking a path which the muleteers said was shorter than the one we had come by, we came down some amazingly steep rock stairs. We had ridden about an hour when suddenly we heard a shout from Isidor the muleteer—" *Señora! el Pico!* "

And turning round we saw the great pyramid towering into the sky in snowy beauty, rising sheer out of the dark pine belt, unspoilt by any intervening rampart. I jumped hastily from my saddle, set up the camera and secured a photograph of the Peak—not a moment too soon, for hardly had I finished when it was again invisible and we saw it no more that day.

The mules at Icod are very inferior for riding purposes to those at Orotava, being rarely used except for carrying packs, and the señora had considerable



difficulty each time she mounted, as they can hardly be induced to approach a rock or wall that will serve as a mounting-block. So common indeed is this difficulty that every hotel where mule-riding is in vogue should provide an easy means of mounting by having two short parallel walls three feet high and a yard apart; the mule would readily pass between them, and would find himself unable to swerve away while his rider mounted.

Carmen and Lola were at the *postigos* watching for us as we returned, and Esperanza was busy boiling a saucepan of water for our tea. People who are not tea drinkers themselves find it hard to remember the details of tea making, and it was only with great difficulty we could drum into their heads the necessity for some hot water over and above what was in the teapot, and our preference for milk that had not been boiled.

The Hotel Internacional grows its own coffee in a little neglected delightful garden at the back of the house, where the glossy-leaved coffee bushes are half smothered in a tangle of geraniums, fuchsias, arums and roses, while overhead the orange boughs laden with golden balls interlace with the crimson blossoms of a giant hibiscus and weave a decorative design against the turquoise sky such as a Japanese artist would love to paint. Miss Lola, who accompanied us, had no eyes for anything that was neither coffee, bananas, nor oranges. To her the maidenhair ferns that lined the little water-conduit beside the path were just *yerba* (grass), and her only object in going into the garden

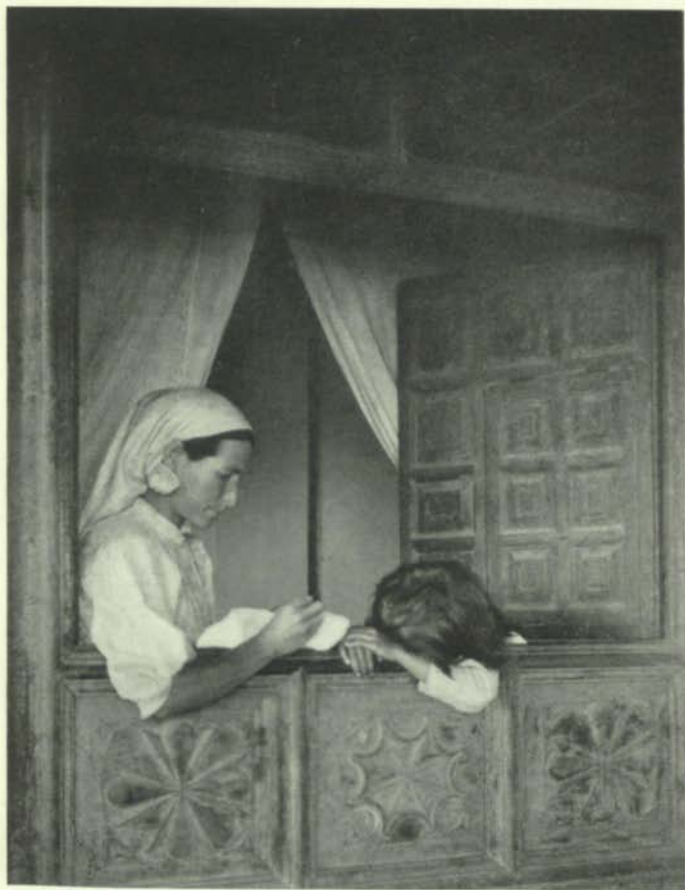
was to summon a small urchin to climb up into the trees and bring her down oranges—of which she said she often ate as many as thirty in a day; they were indeed so delicious that there seemed no reason for stopping at that number.

After tea I asked her to go with me to the post-office, a few doors down the street, to which the good-natured girl at once consented, and disappeared into her bedroom, which opened off the wooden balcony that ran round the *patio*. For ten minutes I waited patiently, and then asked Esperanza if the Señorita Lola was coming.

"*Se arreglando* (she is getting ready)," was the answer, repeated at intervals for the next half hour.

At length the señorita appears, in a costume befitting our expedition into the town; she wears a scarlet frock, a hat to match—with a tremendous ostrich feather in it, tight kid gloves are on her hands, and her face is powdered as white as if she had plunged it into a basin of flour. Off we go down the quiet little street, meeting no one more worthy of my companion's toilette than a party of barefooted boys leading mules to the fountain at a smart trot, while smaller brothers race breathlessly behind and encourage the animals with claps on the hind legs whenever they come up with them.

We found the post-office clerk gardening in his *patio* and when he had shaken hands with us and offered us rocking-chairs, he kindly composed for me the telegram I wished to send. I tried to get a plain postcard wherewith to announce our return to the Humboldt, but none were to be had at Icod; portraits of royalties



AT THE WINDOW





and actresses glittering with tinsel are well enough in their way, but seem a little out of place when writing to a hotel porter, and in the end I gladly accepted a rather grubby card that the clerk had had by him for years, with only a small view of Syracuse on it, which he insisted on my taking as a gift.

The evening was still young and I suggested walking a little instead of returning directly to the inn.

We turned up a steep paved path amongst the banana terraces, Lola, who hardly ever left the house except to go to church, ascending the slippery cobbles—in spite of high-heeled boots and tight clothes—as nimbly as a goat, and breasting the hill—to my great surprise—at a pace that soon left me panting in the rear. Generations of island ancestors had done more for wind and limb than had all my daily walking, and she turned round and laughed at me when I stopped to admire the view which, by a happy compensation of Nature's, is rarely lacking in an up-hill climb.

On the homeward way, however, she was no better off than myself, and we came down arm-in-arm, with wild giggles from Lola when either of us lost our footing for a moment and started slithering down the path at a pace that promised to land us on the roof of some house below.

Amongst the bananas were rows of the *batata* or sweet potato—a species of convolvulus with large tuberous roots, much eaten by the natives, though, to my mind, very inferior to the real potato. Here, too, I saw for the first time, the cochineal insect under

cultivation, the young broods being encouraged to attach themselves to the leaf of the *tunera* (cactus) on which they feed, by being bound to it with linen rags. The swathed look of a plant so treated suggests the *corpus vile* on which some ambulance class has been practising—though it is to be hoped that students are prohibited from fastening on their bandages with pins, as is done here, the wild cactus providing thorns, sharp and long, for the purpose.

Some thirty years ago, Icod was a flourishing centre of the cochineal trade. The vine growers of the district had been ruined by the disease that ravaged the vineyards in the middle of last century, but their losses were to be more than repaid by the culture of cochineal, which at first sold for 8s. a pound—so high a return that every yard of ground below a certain altitude was soon diverted from other crops and planted with the cochineal cactus. In 1869—though the price of cochineal had gone down to half a crown a pound—the export from the Canary Islands reached the value of over three-quarters of a million sterling, and everyone was on the high road to fortune.

“Here in Icod,” said Lola, with a comprehensive wave of the tight kid gloves—“all, all was *tunera*! Everybody was rich in those days!”

But, alas for the islanders! in the early eighties aniline dyes were put on the market—and the boom in cochineal passed with a suddenness that left some of the largest speculators face to face with bankruptcy.

A small amount of cochineal from the Canaries even now finds its way annually to the London markets, and I am told that the humble insect is still

accorded the posthumous honour of dyeing the scarlet coat of Tommy Atkins, as it presumably coloured the thin red line at Balaclava.

Nowadays, however, an imposing appearance on the field of battle is considered of such minor importance compared with the desirability of not being seen at all, that a decree from the War Office may any day sign the death-warrant of the scarlet uniform, even for home service, while who shall guarantee that Fashion may not suddenly constrain us to colour our stewing pears pea-green—under pain of proclaiming ourselves *démodés*? I confess that were I a cochineal grower, I should hardly consider the outlook a rosy one.

Vines have failed, cochineal has failed, but Hope springs eternal—and Teneriffe now looks to bananas and tomatoes for her prosperity.



## CHAPTER IX

THE tomatoes are grown by the acre, in rows trained over a light support of cane, and the first crop was being gathered at Santa Cruz when we landed there in December, for shipment to London where they can be landed—after reckoning all expenses of growing, packing and shipping—at a cost of about 2d. a pound.

I am told they do not equal the home-grown fruit in flavour—partly, no doubt, because they have to be picked before they are fully ripe, and partly, perhaps, because it is only possible to grow a variety that has a skin thick enough to stand the journey to England.

The tomato grower—like the cochineal and the vine grower—has his anxieties. The plants are subject to a disease that spreads rapidly and will sometimes leave a whole field of them black and shrivelled. Rightly or wrongly, this calamity is attributed to the irrigation of the large areas devoted to bananas, which is said to have made the climate perceptibly damper. And upon this point some of the English residents feel so strongly that it is hardly safe to mention the word banana in their hearing.

From their point of view the bananas are a curse and not a blessing, and they would joyfully see them smitten with some dire disease.



Since their introduction, we are told, not only has the climate become much more coat-and-skirty, as one lady put it, than it was even ten years ago, when cottons and muslins could be worn all the winter through—but the cost of living has gone up immensely. So little ground is now spared for growing corn or fodder that the keep of horses is almost prohibitive in cost, and even that of fowls is considerable. Potatoes cost double what they did a few years ago, and the following prices—given me by a lady who has lived for many years at the Puerto—will show that housekeeping in Teneriffe is anything but cheap.

Milk costs about 3d. a pint, when it can be had at all; a fowl, tough and skinny, 4s.; eggs, 2d. a-piece; cooking sugar, 7d. and loaf sugar 8d. a pound; flour, 7d. a pound; butter, 2s. 3d. a pound; tea, 4s. a pound, there being a heavy import duty on this and on rice, bacon and groceries while coal comes to nearly 80s. a ton.

Wages, on the other hand, are low, maidservants receiving about £12 per annum—nor do they cost much to keep, as they only expect meat twice a week, and live largely upon salt fish, a favourite delicacy of theirs, possessing a pungent unpleasant odour that fills the house.

Affectionate and zealous by nature, the servants are ready to do their own work or anyone else's as long as they are in a good humour; but they are extremely amateurish in their ways, and breakages are disastrously frequent.

A maid whose mistress once reproached her for expressing no regret for some fresh damage done,

replied—"Why should I say I am sorry? It will not put the spout on your teapot!"

Among their merits must be counted a natural gift for being picturesque. At a garden party in England it would create a sensation if a couple of maids, in immaculate white frocks and bright head kerchiefs, were to come to clear away, and placing the tea-trays crowded with china upon their heads walk off across the lawn without so much as raising a hand to steady their load. Here it is thought the most natural way in the world of removing the tea things.

Light-hearted as children while all goes well, they become like them quite unreasonable if anything occurs to cross them, and will leave the house in a huff at a moment's notice, regardless of any inconvenience they may cause their mistress. There is always tomato and banana packing to be done, at which they can combine independence with a wage of tenpence a day; and the life has many attractions, if one may judge from the cheerful parties of men and women one sees in the packing sheds, chatting and singing as they hammer the crates together and wrap up the great bunches of bananas that stand in serried ranks where they have been deposited by the carters.

A single bunch will sometimes carry nearly two hundred bananas, and form a heavy load for a man.

This being our first visit to a banana-growing country, we did not share the hatred felt towards them by the residents, but used to find considerable interest in wandering about the plantations. The stumps of the old plants that have been cut down stand like thick scrolls of tightly rolled papyrus among the dark



A BANANA TREE





avenues formed by the stems of their successors, and where the light strikes through the great broad, silky leaves, they assume the brilliant transparent green of a sunlit wave.

I wonder if a Hans Christian will ever arise in a southern land and teach children to love the fragrant eucalyptus trees and the frilled bananas as we loved the fir-trees and the storks that filled the fairy tales of our own childhood? To a young child a banana grove would be a vast forest, with its long, dim aisles overarched with broad smooth banners that rustle faintly as a breeze sweeps by, and its huge clusters of fruit hanging stiffly on their mighty stalks. Hop-o'-my-Thumb might meet with fine adventures in such a forest, and witches would be as much at home as in their northern lands. All that is wanting to people these southern scenes is the magician's wand.

The flower of the banana has a strikingly handsome bud, some two feet in length, cased in overlapping sheaths that shade from rich Pompeian red to purple, and from purple to green. Presently the sheaths begin to curl back, and under each roll of leathery crimson is seen a row of young bananas looking like miniature pea-pods carved in green ivory. At the tip of each one is the flower, like a small, white starfish, and this—instead of being allowed to run its natural course—is presently sliced off with a knife, no light labour when the immense numbers are considered. If this is not done the fruit is said to be liable to rot.

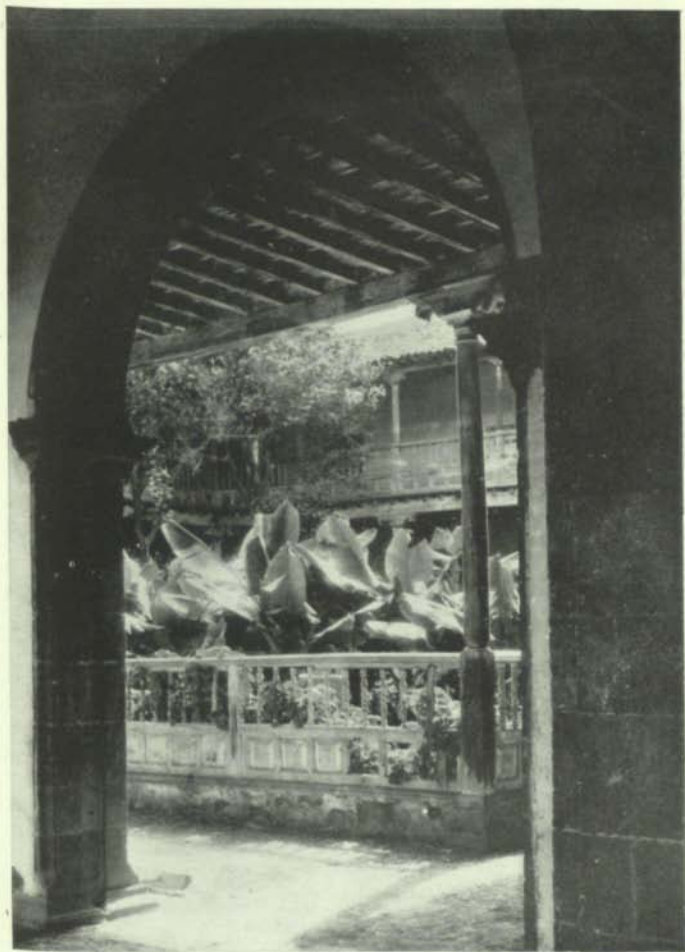
The bunch is then propped out from the parent stem by a short forked stick and needs no further

attention till ready for cutting, when it is carried off to the packing-shed, wrapped up carefully in soft oat-straw imported from France, nailed up in a crate made of deal from Norway, and finally put on board a West African steamer *en route* for Covent Garden.

The Canary banana is smaller but infinitely superior to its big and tasteless cousin of Jamaica; it could not indeed be surpassed for delicacy of flavour and delicious consistency, and newcomers, who have perhaps never eaten a banana in perfection, enjoy them greatly. But it is not given to everyone to eat them with impunity, and after the first week or two oranges take up the running and are never found to pall.

While at Icod we drove over to Garachico, four miles farther, where the carriage road ends. It was once a great shipping port for Canary wines, but was overwhelmed two hundred years ago by a violent eruption of lava that poured down from the Peak, filling up the harbour and destroying the greater part of the town. Its prosperity has never revived, though much of the ground has since then been cleared and built into terraces for bananas, the chief sign of the catastrophe being now a great black cinder-slide behind the town that serves as a *memento mori* to the inhabitants.

Garachico possesses an old Franciscan convent—an empty shell like the rest of its kind, now occupied by a hermit crab in the shape of a school; its spacious *patio*, surrounded by cloisters and broad wooden galleries, has that beauty of peace and sunshine and heavy shadows which the monks created around them wherever they



FRANCISCAN CONVENT AT GARACHICO





took up their abode, and which the most incongruous usurpers seem unable wholly to destroy.

Down by the sea is a small and ancient castle, decorated with armorial shields belonging no doubt to some of the Spanish knights who came over with the conqueror; but the knights are dust, and their swords are rust, and no memory of them lingers among the living.

We had driven to Garachico in the only carriage that Icod boasts, an antique landau drawn by three thin but keen little horses who whirled us along faster than we ever were driven before or since in the island. Whirling is indeed not the word for the usual Teneriffe pace, which is a slow shuffle of some four miles an hour, that makes the most moderate distance appear immense and gives one the uncomfortable feeling of weighing about a ton. Most of the horses are in very poor condition, added to which the Teneriffian is a shockingly bad driver and delights in keeping the brake on upon flat ground and in spoiling his horses' wind by galloping them up the steepest hills.

If an English horse were fed as these are—on straw, maize and banana leaves—he would not be more up to work than they are, if indeed he lived at all. Mules and donkeys stand the climate, the flies and the wretched fodder far better than horses do, and are consequently in better case; but of all the beasts of burden the best off are the big, sleek, fawn-coloured oxen, who never seem to be hurried, and pace reflectively and placidly after their master, drawing the huge wagons, high laden with banana crates, without apparent effort. It is to be wished that for this heavy work they

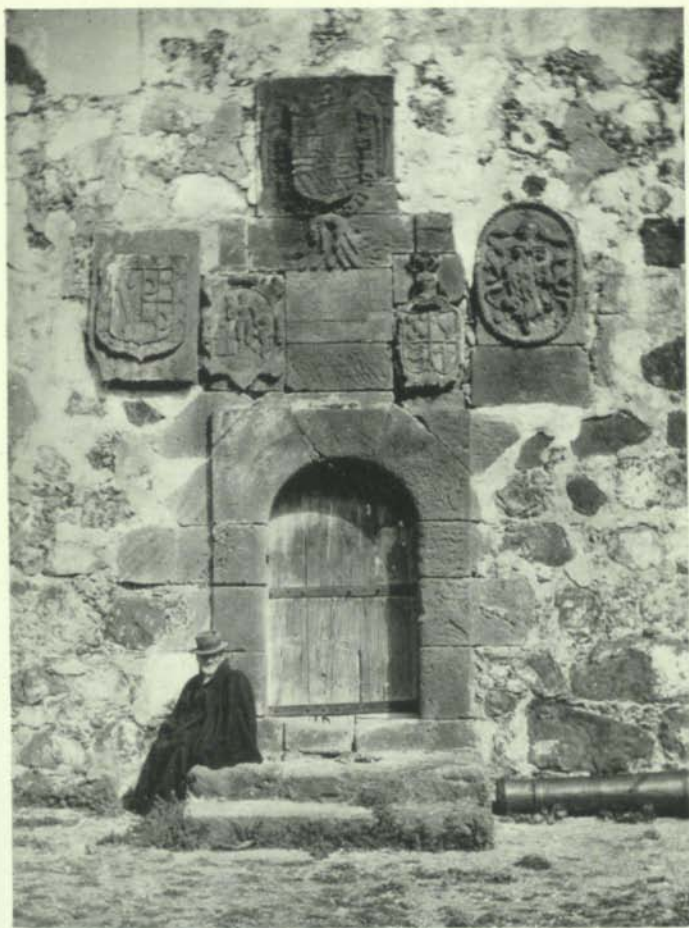
could entirely take the place of mules, whose gallant struggles up long heart-breaking hills are often pitiful to witness.

Cruelty to animals is happily far less common at Orotava than at either Santa Cruz or in Grand Canary, and the lack of sympathy with dumb beasts is chiefly shown in want of thought, such as leaving a donkey tightly girthed during the hours of a mid-day halt, or, when a carter will start his team without noticing that the leading mule has got the rope traces between his legs. It is wonderful that this go-as-you-please kind of driving should not lead to more accidents than it does, though broken walls and overthrown kerb stones sufficiently mark the course of the banana wagons.

Unlike the eastern islands of the Canary group, Teneriffe makes no great use of camels. But occasionally one meets a string of them striding silently through the streets of Port Orotava or sees them carrying loads of sand in great wooden panniers—the sight of them calling up memories of the East, that always seemed to me out of keeping with their surroundings.

Once, on a steep and rocky path, we met a camel staggering under a perfect pyramid of bricks, the poor brute pausing before each step as though uncertain if he would be able to raise himself and his swaying top-heavy load. His owner cheerfully informed us that the camel was carrying ten quintals (over eight hundred-weight), and would march all day.

I sometimes wonder if camels are aware of their extraordinary power of making people feel small. The studied insolence of monkeys is not flattering to one's self-esteem, and I can remember feeling curiously



ANCIENT CASTLE AT GARACHICO





mortified, when travelling on the newly-opened Port Soudan railway, at seeing numbers of birds perched on the telegraph wires—all with their backs to the train, as though it was beneath notice; but these are merely the impertinences of children compared with the lofty disdain of the camel, which is alone among animals in its unaffected contempt for humans.

The Arabs have a saying to account for it: the Moslem knows only ninety-nine attributes of Allah—but the camel knows the hundredth, *and he will not tell.*

## CHAPTER X

**I**N glorious summer weather we returned to Orotava towards the end of February. Rain was now a thing of the past and the high-roads were deep in dust—fine volcanic powder that permeates the clothing and leaves one's shoes after two steps looking as if one had walked through an ash-heap.

"This," said triumphantly the hotel managers—who, all the winter through, had stoutly ignored the necessity for door-scrapers, and had had to look up the word mud in a dictionary if mentioned in their presence—"this is typical Orotava weather!" The average humidity of its climate is indeed only two degrees higher than that of Luxor; but if it would gratify their guests, the hotels would willingly compound for a climate like that of Khartoum, to the dryness of which Gordon attributed the rapid evaporation of his standing orders.

I do not know what anyone wants with a better climate than Orotava's, the sun heat tempered all the year round by a sea breeze and with a variation in the temperature of day and night so slight that one may stay out without fear to see the moon rise like a huge arc-light behind the eucalyptus trees, or watch the western coast-line turn to transparent gold, as though the glow of the setting sun were shining through hills of glass.

Everybody rejoiced in the settled fine weather—by no means least Simona the monkey, who dropped the physical-culture exercises with which she had improved her circulation during the winter, and spent great part of her days in taking sun-baths—sitting on the ridge-pole of her house with crossed feet outstretched to their fullest extent, and as great a look of gratification upon her face as that rather forbidding little countenance would admit of. Butterflies frolicked among the trees and dragon flies skimmed the pond, where larvæ were every moment rising to the surface and sailing off in the glory of wings, while Atropos, in the guise of a garden warbler perched on a fig tree close by, burst into a song of praise between each snap that cut short a little life newborn into the sunlight.

The birds were beginning to nest, and a pair of hoopoes, dressed in chestnut-brown, with their black-and-white striped shawls neatly drawn round their shoulders, walked about the croquet-lawn with so much confidence that they were in danger of being struck by the balls.

The wild canary is still very plentiful in the island, in spite of the numbers caught and caged by the natives. In appearance it is very different from the fancy varieties that have been evolved from it, being not only smaller than its domesticated cousin, but of a greenish-yellow colour, mottled with dark brown. At first sight you might easily take it for a siskin or yellow-hammer, but its voice is unmistakably that of a canary, and it is difficult to free oneself from the impression that the shrill tweets and trills of song in the



tree-tops come from somebody's pets that have escaped from their aviary.

As with most fancy breeds, the reversion to the original type is very rapid in the canary, and the progeny of the most brilliant yellow birds—if removed from artificial restraint—will in a few generations become indistinguishable from their sober cousins of Teneriffe.

By the beginning of March, the bougainvilleas in the Puerto were a blaze of colour, and in a narrow street, much frequented by artists, a splendid specimen of the brick-red variety tumbles in luxuriant masses over a white garden wall. It is said to be difficult to propagate and is certainly much rarer than the magenta one, which I never see without being put in mind of a cataract of Condy's Fluid.

Camellias, for some reason, do not grow in the Puerto, though they make large bushes up at the *Villa*. The flowers bruise easily if tied in a bunch or put in a basket, and the natives have an ingenious way of carrying them with their stalks stuck into the juicy leaf of a cactus. There is a beautiful single white rose (*R. lævigata*)—called locally the Cherokee rose—that climbs over the English church at Orotava, and which I never met with in England; the plant is almost thornless and has dark green, glossy foliage, somewhat resembling the Macartney rose. At Guimar we saw a pink variety that was, if possible, even more exquisite than the white.

The *Wigandia macrophylla*—called by the natives *Tabachero*—a tree-like shrub with large, woolly leaves and handsome, purple flower spikes—was now in great



beauty. Its home is in South America, but it has almost naturalised itself in Teneriffe, and having escaped from the gardens is seen growing by the way-side or among the clinkers of the *malpais*—in company with such outcasts of society as the *Nicotiana glauca*, with its coarse, blue-green leaves and slender, yellow trumpet flower; the *Plocama pendula*—a fennel-like plant of evil odour, and the *Euphorbia Canariensis*—known to English visitors as the candelabra plant, with its tall, square, fluted columns, edged with small, black hooks. There is a patch of this grotesque euphorbia, fully twelve feet high, in the gardens of the Humboldt Hotel, which many people insisted was a cactus—and the discussion waxing hot, a deputation was despatched one evening to stab the plant with a knife by way of deciding the question—euphorbias having a milky juice and the cactus a watery one. The pro-euphorbia party returned triumphant, for no sooner was the knife plunged into one of the tall green columns than out gushed about a pint of liquid, resembling tennis whiting, and continued to flow till the column bled itself dry.

Fishermen are said to use the milk of this euphorbia to stupefy fish, but as there are no fresh-water fish to stupefy, the quantity of juice required to deal with those in the sea would be so great that one can hardly believe in the practicability of the plan. The statement seems to require a marginal note by Purchas.

Brown's guidebook to the islands recommends tourists who may be so unlucky as to get any of the milk of this plant into the eye, to relieve the pain by applying the juice of a species of house-leek—called

locally *gomereta*—which will usually be found growing in the same place.

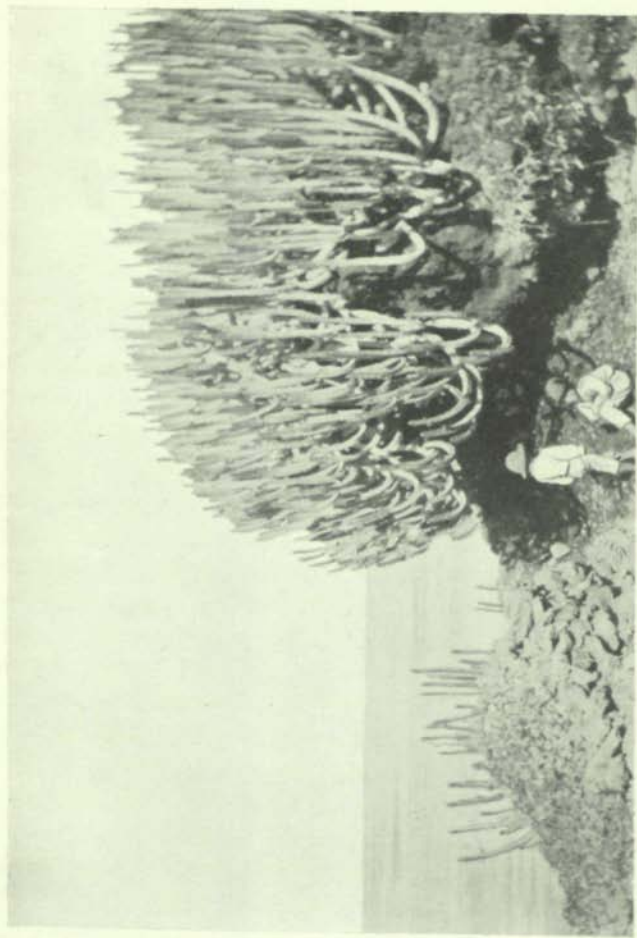
My best wishes go with the frenzied and half-blinded tourist in his search for this precious antidote, but I can only say that the señora and I utterly failed in all attempts to identify it. In vain did we search every patch of the euphorbia we came across; nothing that even resembled a house-leek ever intermingled with it, or was to be found near. Peasants and donkey boys, whom we examined on the subject, had never heard of a plant called *gomereta*, and knew of no antidote to the milk of the euphorbia.

“But if you were to get some of it in your eye,” we persisted, “what would you do?”

Their imagination failed them here so entirely that they could merely assert over and over again that the milk of the *cardon*—as they call the plant—was *muy malo* (very bad), and that they never, *never* let it get into their eyes. One of them, driven at last into a corner, admitted that in such an unheard-of case he would go to a doctor, and this was the utmost we could ever extract from them; nor could any of the residents, doctors or botanists, enlighten us further as to the existence of this mysterious antidote plant.

It seems to be a kind of herbaceous Mrs Harris, and we are disposed to echo Betsy Prig's declaration of disbelief in that lady's existence.

Early in March a quiet little carnival took place in the Puerto, during which it excited no remark if a tall figure draped in sheets and a bright pink shawl—who at any other time of the year would have been an obvious lunatic—strolled quietly along the roads, his



CLUMP OF EUPHORBIA CANARIENSIS





cheeks smeared with white paste, singing at the top of his voice to the accompaniment of a guitar. A most realistic dancing bear, with oakum coat and pasteboard head, made the round of the hotels and earned many a peseta by his clumsy antics and occasional attacks on his keeper; but the main point about the carnival was the general holiday it created for the people, who left off packing bananas, and rigorously closed their shops for the time.

Shopkeeping in the Puerto is at best a very amateur affair, and if the chemist's boards are being scrubbed at the time of your visit, you must just wait outside in the street till your wants are supplied to you through the bars of the first-floor balcony. A sudden large order—such as one for three whole sheets of blotting-paper—quite upsets the principal stationer, who is entertaining a burly priest across the counter and tells you he has only one sheet in stock. Shopkeepers in the Puerto would always rather you went to some other shop than trouble them to look for anything that is not on the counter—and the stationer promptly recommends you to a rival establishment across the way, till the priest insists on mounting a chair himself and rummaging among the upper shelves of the shop to see what he can produce.

Let no female tourist think lightly that she will be able to replenish her wardrobe from the drapers' shops at Orotava—unless she be content to go clad in *calado* work. The only gloves to be bought are of cotton, and the price of the local hat is 9d.; it is a large straw soup-plate, made by the peasants of Icod, and being light, shady, and far from unbecoming, it is worn

by young and old visitors alike, who display their ingenuity in trimming it with whatever they happen to have by them—from roses and old lace to a motor-veil that has seen better days. The native women wear it untrimmed, and tied under the chin with strings of black velvet; it was probably one of these hats that a lady travelling in Teneriffe five-and-twenty years ago saw steadied by the wearer in a high wind by the simple expedient of placing an immense stone upon the crown of it.

There is a great lack of pretty things to be bought at Orotava. The nearest approach to a souvenir of the place that I ever saw was a hideous photograph frame, made in the likeness of a raised map of the island—and consequently resembling a shoulder of mutton modelled in Britannia-metal—with a circular opening for a portrait in the place where the Peak should be.

I always prefer, when possible, to take home from foreign countries things in real use among the natives rather than the souvenirs specially manufactured for the tourist market, and I managed eventually—not without some trouble—to buy one of the collars worn by the Orotava goats. Every well-to-do goat in the place wears a broad and handsome collar of leather—covered sometimes with scarlet flannel and studded with brass-headed nails and old uniform buttons, as well as being furnished with a bell. I tried to buy a well-worn collar that took my fancy, from a goat in the street, but the owner of the animal refused to part with it, and I finally got a brand-new one that cost five pesetas from the only man in the Puerto who makes them. Goats have such long thin necks that their collars do not fit

a dog, but I am having one made narrower and larger for a retriever, and the man assures me it will be very smart indeed with buttons from an old artillery uniform.

It is strange that people so poor, who wear no kind of ornament themselves, should indulge in such decorative and expensive collars for their goats. The workmanship is rough, but the effect is very showy and attractive.

Tomás, our donkey boy, has been employed lately in carrying invalids about in hammocks, and has not been with us on our expeditions; it is astonishing to see this slender young fellow and another man march off with a weight upon their shoulders such as a strong Englishman finds unendurable even for a moment, and walking, moreover, at such a pace, that anyone accompanying them on foot has to break into a run now and then to keep up.

The hammocks—which are often very pretty with their frilled chintz awnings and gay cushions—are slung from a massive pole, and hang so near the ground that people who are new to them find the swaying motion rather unpleasant, and are in terror of being bumped upon the rough stones that strew the paths over which they are being borne.

In Tomás's absence he has entrusted us to the care of Antonio, a nut-brown urchin of about ten, with eyes like sloes and a hat like an old apple pudding. Antonio's donkey, Gioco, is a mite of a creature, with as little self-assertion about him as a bicycle; with eyes bent on the ground, Gioco trips away so nimbly and conscientiously that he never needs any attention from his master, who is accordingly free to amuse



himself by trundling a little iron hoop as he follows behind. I have often wondered in what *cache* Antonio keeps this hoop, for it never appears till we are outside the hotel grounds, and vanishes again as mysteriously before we re-enter them, so that only a demure little boy carrying a tripod passes the guardian of the gate.

Gioco is in such request for his good qualities that his name is occasionally transferred by small opportunists to their own animals, and I have seen Antonio hard at work on the beach beating every boy who ventured to introduce his donkey as Gioco to possible patrons.

Another well-known character is a fine dark-grey donkey called Sandy, whose name seemed so inappropriate that I remember explaining to the boy that Sandy meant "colour of sand"—forgetful of the fact that the volcanic sand of Teneriffe—the only sand the donkey boys have ever seen—is dark-grey or nearly black, which makes the name entirely applicable. Sandy is an animal of such exuberant spirits that he bursts into irrepressible fits of braying on meeting any other donkey on the road; his owner does his utmost to check him, beating him at the first symptom, to distract his thoughts, and trying to hurry him past the object of interest—but all in vain! Louder than ever does the trumpet blast break out after the momentary repression—often setting off the newcomer as well, so that you may sometimes see two riders who have drawn up for a chat waiting speechlessly while their respective donkeys indulge in a long-drawn deafening orgy of brays, grunts, and sobs.



"*Muy alegre* (Very cheerful)!" say the donkey boys when the paroxysm is over and peace is restored.

An English lady, less well versed in the ways of asses, furnished as an incontrovertible proof of their ill-treatment at the hands of their masters the fact that "the poor creatures were always braying!"

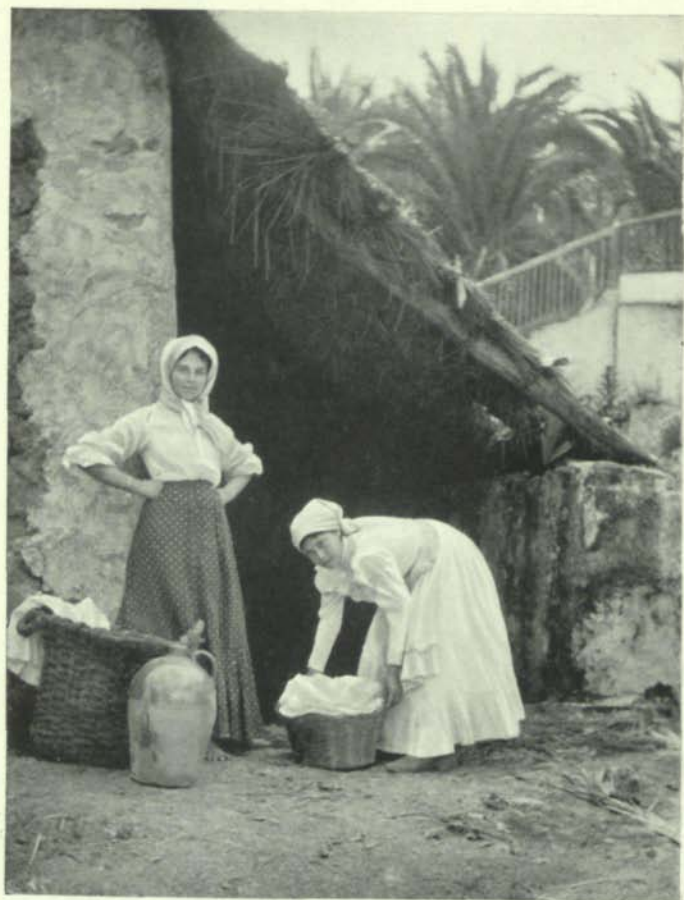
## CHAPTER XI

ON the 9th of March we left Orotava on a fortnight's absence, with the intention of first going to Guimar and then of making a little tour on muleback which we had planned quite by ourselves, not finding anyone who had ever made it.

Guimar is a quiet little town with a warm dry climate, on the southern side of the island, and invalids who go to spend the winter there, reach it by means of the carriage road from Santa Cruz which skirts the coast. But from Orotava the direct route lies across the central *cordillera* of the island, by way of the Pass of Pedro Gil, nearly 7000 feet high, and means a tiring journey of some eight hours on muleback. This was the route we proposed to take.

As the first step upon our way we spent a couple of nights at the *Villa*, putting up at the Hotel Victoria, a roomy old Spanish house fronting the central *plaza* of the little town. Several officers of the native infantry regiment which is quartered in the old Augustine Convent across the square, make this hotel their home and live here, year in year out, for the moderate sum of four pesetas (3s. 2d.) a day.

At the back of the house are the beautiful grounds laid out by their former owner—the late Marchesa de la Quinta, rising in terraced gardens up the hillside to where a mausoleum of white marble recalls the



BACK FROM THE MARKET





memory of her only son. The flower-beds are now crowded with orange and lemon trees in full bloom, as well as with camellias, stocks, roses, hyacinths, carnations and oleanders, while every terrace is hung and garlanded with the long trails and blood-red flowers of the *Pico de paloma* (*Lotus Bertholetii*) or a fiery tangle of *Bignonia venusta*—with the purple tassels of great wistarias, or with the long flower-wreathed shoots of banksia roses.

Here the officers, still in uniform, amuse themselves in the cool of the evening by watering the flowers, while their señoras—still in the loose dressing-gowns of red or blue flannel in which they appeared at breakfast—trail to and fro in shrieks of laughter, overcome with amusement perhaps at seeing Spaniards engaged upon a work of super-irrigation.

From our bedrooms on the first floor we walk out on a level to the garden, and find our breakfast-table set out under a big tree resembling a magnolia, whose dead flower spikes—as solid and heavy as fir cones—fall rattling through the branches from time to time, making one shrink together in anticipation of a sudden plop into one's coffee-cup. A friend of ours, who had ridden up from the Puerto, got hit on the head with one as he was sitting at tea with us, and I am not sure that he did not suspect me of a bad joke until we explained to him the nature of the accident.

Concha, the maid, had exerted herself to provide an extra good tea in honour of our visitor, but, as so often happens when one is anxious to show off, everything went wrong; not only was the tea itself worse than usual, but the milk was "singed," as a Scotch lady called

it, and the only cakes our good Shell had been able to procure were like thin dog biscuits, split, and spread with some nondescript jam.

The three principal meals of the day were, however, always good and substantial, and one does not expect to find the general style of the Humboldt—where one pays fifteen shillings a head a day—in a hotel which boards and lodges one very comfortably for slightly under five shillings.

Within a few minutes' walk of the hotel is the garden in which once grew the far-famed dragon tree of Orotava, in whose hollow trunk the Guanches used to worship, and in which Mass was celebrated by the Spanish conquerors of the fifteenth century. The old tree—supposed to be the most ancient living organism in the world—perished by fire in 1867, after having been previously wrecked by storms and twice blasted by lightning. A sturdy young dragon, planted ten years later, now occupies the site of the patriarch, and near it stands the extremely tall and slender palm that forms a landmark of the valley. Some six years ago the house in whose grounds these trees stand was burnt down, and the palm narrowly escaped the fate of its old comrade the dragon.

The house is now being rebuilt, but the garden over which the palm of Orotava waves is still a scene of wreckage and desolation.

On the morning of the 11th we rose betimes for the start to Guimar; by 6.30 our two *arrieros* and their three mules were before the door, and the lading of the pack had begun. The amount of luggage we were taking with us had been rigorously cut down as far as possible—but

even so it had rather scared us by its weight, and before leaving the Humboldt we had piled together the suit case, the rug bundle, and the heavy wooden box which seemed to be the minimum we could manage with for a fortnight, and had asked the hall porter to come and tell us if it was too much to ask a mule to carry.

"He will take the dobble of it," said that functionary shortly, turning on his heel.

But even with this comforting assurance we hardly dared to look the muleteers in the face when they came upstairs at the Victoria and lugged our things down into the street; when the turn of the wooden box came I expected a mutiny, and only breathed again when I saw it follow the other two with no comment made.

We need not have disquieted ourselves on the pack-mule's account if we had realised that a load of sixteen to twenty stone is not considered excessive, and that the total weight of our luggage did not equal that of an ordinary rider. The fact is that to a Canary *arriero* the actual weight of any trunk destined for the pack-saddle is quite immaterial; the only thing he is concerned about is that there shall be another equally heavy to balance it on the other side.

At 7.15 we were off; the younger of our guides, Pépé, marched in front to show the way, and the older man—whom we called Telephone, not being able to get any nearer to his name—brought up the rear with the pack-mule. The three mules were called respectively *Amarillo* (yellow), *Moreno* (brown) and *Pardo* (grey), and were all exactly the same colour. Not a cloud was in the sky; a fine white haze veiling the sun gave



promise of great heat, but the gardener at the Victoria assured us that we should find it *mas fresco* when we got out of the valley.

For the first hour and a half we followed the Agua Mansa track, but shortly before coming to the ancient chestnut tree the path bears off to the right and plunges into a tract of dense scrub, composed mainly of the *brezo* or white heath, now in full flower and forming a jungle twenty feet in height.

On emerging from the *Monte Verde*, as this zone is called, we find ourselves at the foot of the higher valley walls—steep and arid slopes of lava and volcanic sand—over which a narrow path zigzags upwards to the Pass of Pedro Gil (pronounced Paydro Heel). We were intensely curious to see what the ride from this stage upwards would be like, for though we had tried to glean some information as to its nature before leaving the Puerto the accounts given us by various residents of their own experiences were so conflicting that we were unable to form even the remotest idea of what we had to expect.

An old hand who knew the island from end to end told us that it would be madness to start for Guimar until a reliable guide had been sent over the track to report upon its state after the winter rains, and that not long ago a man who attempted the journey on foot fell over the edge of the path and lay for days in agony with a broken leg at the bottom of a lava slide; he need hardly add that the best of mules and guides were necessary for the trip.

As a set-off against this alarmist view, there was a lady who had been in the habit of casually riding over



to Guimar—generally at night—upon an old horse unaccustomed to mountain paths and not very sure upon its legs.

Another lady, however, who set out on muleback, told us that she found the ride so trying to her nerves that she walked nearly the whole distance on foot rather than stay in the saddle. But then again, there was the case of a hospital nurse who had never been in a saddle in her life—we were told—but who on being urgently sent for to Guimar, rode across from Orotava without once dismounting, and arrived at her journey's end without turning a hair.

What were we to believe?

My personal opinion is that the ingredients of the collective accounts well rolled together, with a strong dash of fatigue added in place of the spice of danger, would boil down into a very fair description of the ride, as it would impress the average tourist. I myself was thoroughly exhausted long before we got to the top of Pedro Gil, and even the señora—whose powers of endurance in the saddle are greater than most people's, and who never dismounts, come what may—was heard to remark now and then when her mule struggled up a higher boulder than usual—"That gave nurse a good shake, *I* know!"

The angle at which one had to cling to the saddle became back-breaking at last, and the steepness of the ascent—coupled with the heavy going in the loose cinders towards the summit—became so fatiguing to the mules that they had to stop and blow every few yards.

About half-an-hour before reaching the Pass I

dropped out of the saddle, ostensibly to relieve my mule, but really because I could not hold on any longer; and on foot I struggled feebly after the little cavalcade up an interminable ascent, deep in ashes, the gradient of which was—to judge by my own feelings—a rise of about four feet in two. The track was often imperceptible to the untrained eye—a wandering and inconsequent sheep walk, six inches wide, stamped in the loose *scoriæ* of the mountain-side; and when presently my apparently exhausted mule—whom I had left behind to resuscitate—came cavorting and snorting past me with a flourish of heels, there was nothing to be done but go over the steep side of the path and stay on all fours in the ashes—which began to slide rapidly valleywards—till he had gone by.

I would have held the ungrateful beast by the tail and made him tow me along, even at the risk of courting destruction, if I could have come up with him, but he walked faster than I did.

“Courage, señorita!” said the muleteers in their soft, sing-song tones—“it is only ten minutes more to the top!”

Presently I saw an empty sardine tin beside the path, and hope revived; a last despairing stumble through the cinders, with each breath coming harder at the unaccustomed height—for we have climbed nearly 6000 feet since breakfast—and we reach the Pass, a shadowless, lava-strewn saddle between the hills marked by a broken staff.

Clearing away the stones from a patch of ground, we threw ourselves flat on our backs and gasped; it



THE PEAK OF TENERIFFE SEEN FROM THE PASS OF PEDRO GIL.





was more than three hours since we left the *Villa* and the sun had been blazing without intermission the whole time. But the white sirocco haze in which we had started still veiled the landscape, and up at this height, with a reviving breeze blowing in our faces, the heat was no longer oppressive; below, the hot air quivered over the arid slopes of pumice and lava—indigo, ochre and coppery-red in colour—up which we had toiled for the last hour. The scene was one of immense desolation and ugliness, the silence broken only by the creaking voice of a crow passing overhead. Here and there the drifts of ashes and lava-sand were held back on the hillside by curious outcrops of basaltic pillars—regular as an artificial palisade built to check the descent of the volcanic débris into the valley—breaking the smooth surface like a row of Cyclopean teeth.

For a long time we looked in vain for the Peak, but at last, on gazing steadily into the haze, we made out a pale phantom—white against a white sky—looking like a vision that might fade into nothingness while we watched.

A clean-looking black-and-white vulture swooped around us when it saw that luncheon time had come, but to his disappointment our hard-boiled eggs had no bones; the black coffee provided by Concha acted as a magic pick-me-up, and the memory of the oranges from the Marchesa's garden—half-a-dozen of which we found in our basket—is with me still.

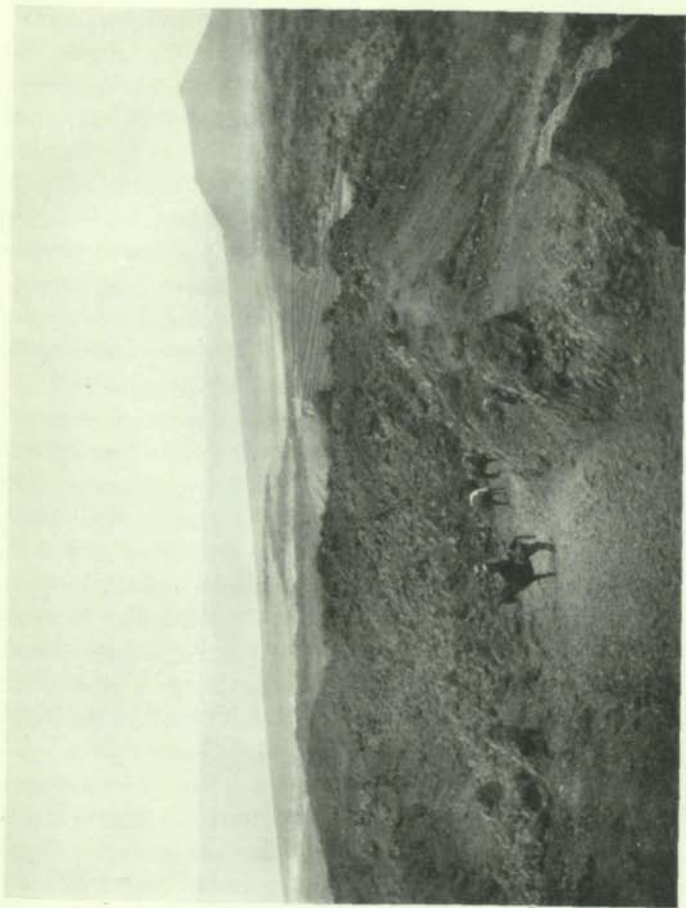
After an hour and a half's rest we remounted and continued our journey down the Vallé de Arafo—a vast valley descending towards the southern plain between

bare and jagged cliff walls. Far below us, at the mouth of the gorge, was a great black cinder heap, past which runs the path to Guimar; we could have got down to it in next to no time on a tea-tray, by utilising one of the fan-shaped sand-slides that had poured into the bottom of the valley from Pedro Gil—but this not being a recognised means of transit, we had to zigzag laboriously for an hour or so down a precipitous path consisting of a shallow depression in the bedrock in which all the loose stones of the neighbourhood had collected.

"*Muy malo camino!*" said our men, but the mules seem to find this kind of going less trying than the soft cinders, and as long as they keep their feet there is no danger; at the same time the perpetual downward drop becomes quite as fatiguing as a perpetual ascent—many riders think more so—and the rolling of the loose stones underfoot is not conducive to the happiness of a nervous person.

How such a path can be attempted by night I cannot think, for it is with the greatest caution that the mules proceed even by day, evidently gauging the depth of a drop before shifting their balance, and scanning the track before deciding which route to follow.

At last we get down to the bed of the valley and for half-an-hour ride across a tract of fine black ashes bestrewn with dollops of clinkered lava that fell red-hot in the last eruption. The whole place is burnt, dead, infernal—desolate with a desolation passing that of the desert—and the dust of it goes up like smoke under our mules' heels. Not a weed or blade of grass grows upon the coal-black cinder heap that we are skirting—a



"A STREAM OF LAVA THAT WINDS ITS WAY LIKE A BLACK SERPENT TOWARDS THE COAST"





circular mound of well-riddled volcanic ash some two hundred feet in height, created perhaps at the time of the stupendous eruption which geologists say blew out the whole valley of Arafo in bygone ages and left standing—in the shape of the present cliffs—part of the enclosing walls of what was once a gigantic crater.

The cinder heap—which is known as the Volcano of Arafo—became active at the time that Garachico was overwhelmed, and in 1705 poured through the throat of the gorge a stream of lava that one can see winding its way like a black serpent towards the coast to within a short distance of the sea.

Leaving the charred bed of the valley behind us, we come once more into the Monte Verde, or zone of green things, and riding through a wood with some glorious pine trees, drop down to Arafo—a village a few miles from Guimar, where we are not sorry to dismount and take our seats in a conveyance sent to meet us, which showed traces of having once upon a time been a victoria. A drive of less than an hour brought us to the hotel, where we found our men and mules already arrived by a short cut—and pleasant it was to feel that the Pass of Pedro Gil lay behind us.

Owing to our having made our start from the *Villa* and finished our ride at Arafo, we had only had six hours actually in the saddle; but when half that time is up, up, up, and the other half down, down, down, for six thousand feet, most people will feel they have had enough. I know we did.

El Buen Retiro—as the hotel at Guimar is called—

is a charming and homelike establishment, in which one feels more like a visitor in a country-house than a hotel guest.

Being frequented almost exclusively by the English, as well as being owned by an Englishman, it is run entirely on English lines, and we luxuriated in Irish stew and milk puddings with stewed fruit, such as we had not seen for months. The windows of our pretty chintz-hung bedrooms were wreathed in jessamine, and looked out upon masses of brilliant flowers bordering the drive. An atmosphere of peace and quiet pervaded the place; the guests were not sufficiently numerous to stand upon ceremony in making each other's acquaintance, and we had the good fortune to find ourselves welcomed by old friends—as hotel friendships are counted—who had preceded us from the Humboldt.

In the garden grew guava trees which provided the delicious home-made jelly we ate at breakfast, and oranges swung invitingly over the path leading to the croquet-lawn. Stolen waters may be sweet—but not so stolen oranges, if you chance, as I did, to select a marmalade tree for your crime.

Another trap for the greedy visitor consists of a small thatched erection standing in a secluded corner of the garden amid a tangle of stocks and nasturtiums, towards which newcomers drift almost unconsciously, in the belief that they will see bees at work, and resolving inwardly to ask for honey the following morning—only to find, when they get quite near, that the name of Negretti and Zambra is neatly painted on the little house, and that it is the home of nothing more engaging than the local thermometer.

The chief features of interest to visitors staying at Guimar are the *barrancos* (ravines) in the mountain-chain that forms the background to this eastern plain. Not only do these *barrancos* form a happy hunting-ground for the botanist, but they are for the most part extremely picturesque, with their towering cliff walls and wild scenery; it is wise, however, to reach them not later than nine o'clock in the morning, if you do not wish to risk finding them filled with cloud wreaths descending from the mountains above. In the Barranco de Añavingo we found a large-flowered wild laurustinus growing in the crevices of the rocks, with cinerarias and a showy yellow composite, and wherever the cliff was damp it was curtained with maidenhair and other ferns.

The origin of the *barrancos* of Teneriffe—like that of Jeames de la Pluche—is wrapped in mystery, and I have never heard any explanation given that seemed to me satisfactory.

Those that appear like chasms cleft in the solid rock, with perpendicular sides two or three hundred feet in height, may be attributed rightly to earthquake shocks; but there are others which have obviously, at some time or other, been the bed of a river little less swift and impetuous than the Aar at Meiringen.

Now rivers—at the present day—are as extinct in Teneriffe as are the old Guanche inhabitants. The deforestation of the island during the past few centuries has done so much towards diminishing the supply of surface water that even small streams are rare, and any mountain rill, capable of filling a three-inch aqueduct, is jealously diverted from its natural



channel and carried off to form the water supply of some neighbouring village. The annual rainfall and the melting of the snow-fields on the Peak do little towards filling the *barrancos*. During the wettest time of our winter at the Puerto, I walked up the one close to the Humboldt Hotel and found meandering feebly through the wide bed of the ravine a red streamlet no broader than I could step across, although the rains had been unusually heavy that year.

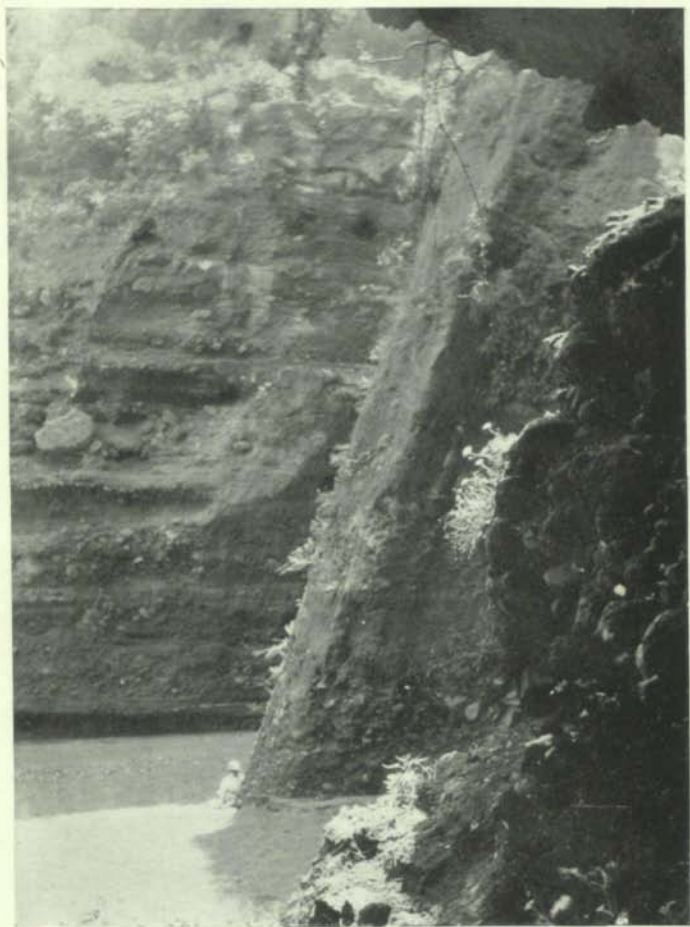
People who live at Guimar will tell you that for seven or eight years at a stretch no water flows down some of the largest *barrancos* in the neighbourhood.

Whence, then, came the rivers which in past ages scooped these deep grooves in the rock walls of many of the gorges and left their beds strewn with a chaos of great water-worn boulders, evidently brought down by a powerful current?

The most credible theory in my own opinion (though I do not know if it is held by geologists) is that at some remote period of its history the island—which has experienced so many ups and downs—was immensely more elevated than it is at present, and that the Peak, whose summit is now three hundred feet below the line of perpetual snow, may then have towered, let us say, ten thousand feet above it—its glaciers and everlasting snows feeding the rivers that tore their way down to the coast in every direction.

The *barrancos* on the eastern slopes may even have had their own source of supply in the volcano which once occupied the site of the present valley of Arafo, for looking up at the *Garganta de Guimar* from below, the broken cliff walls of the ancient crater are seen to





IN A BARRANCO



converge like the sides of a truncated cone, and if protracted would form the outline of a mountain which may easily have rivalled in height the Peak itself.

I think it is Stevenson who says that it is a more hopeful sign to hold wrong theories than none at all, and I merely offer this suggestion for what it is worth, in the absence of any more probable explanation of what is a most puzzling feature of the island.

On our ride back from the Añavingo gorge, our road crossed the black serpent that coils its way some five miles across country towards the coast—a corrugated chaos of lava heaped up fully a hundred feet as it cooled into the wildest of jags and pinnacles; a curious effect like that of moonlight falling upon black rocks is produced by a pale-coloured lichen that covers every northern facet of the lava. This stream was thrown out from the cinder heap in the Arafo Valley a couple of centuries ago, just as the lava flow on which the Humboldt Hotel is built was ejected at a rather later date by the little harmless-looking *Montañeta* close to the hotel grounds.

One wonders occasionally when the performance is likely to be repeated. The mountains of Teneriffe are assuredly not among those of which the Psalmist sang—which bring peace to the people.

## CHAPTER XII

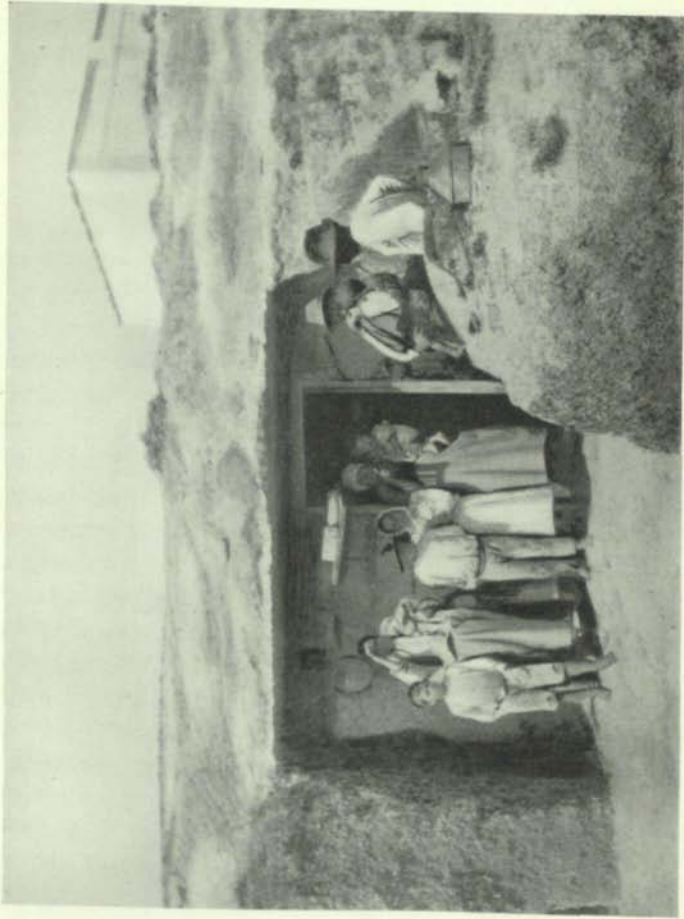
AFTER three restful days at Guimar, we set out on our journey of exploration along the coast, our intention being to ride to Vilaflor—a village within two days' march—and from there to cross the *cordillera* again at a fresh point on our way back to Orotava.

We had arranged to keep our men and mules for the whole trip, as they were better than any to be had at Guimar, and on March the 15th we sent them on to Escobonál, where we joined them by carriage, thus saving ourselves a dull and unnecessary ride of two hours along a road. An hour beyond Escobonál we reached the village of Fasnía, where the road comes abruptly to an end, and as we took our way over the rocky desert towards the coast, we felt that we had now parted company with civilisation and its roads and telegraphs and black-coated waiters, and our spirits rose at the thought of our independence and of the unknown that lay before us.

A large portion of the meagre population of this district is troglodytic in habit, living in cave-dwellings scooped out of the sandstone rock; and you may see a whole row of house doors underneath a wheat-field, with a stratum of rock, eighteen inches deep, dividing the lintel from the waving crop overhead.

We visited one of these underground dwellings and found it to consist of three good-sized, white-washed





A FAMILY OF TROGLODYTES



rooms cut in the clean yellow sandstone, with an oven beside the door—also cut in the rock—and subsidiary caves for the stalling of goats and donkeys. The family whose home it was looked respectable and prosperous and were engaged in cheese-making for the Fasnía market; they said their house was both warm in winter and cool in summer.

The hall-mark of gentility in troglodyte circles is the possession of a door; this shows that the family pays house-tax, which is not levied upon those who live the simpler life and are content with an old sack hanging across the open doorway.

From Fasnía to Arico, where we spent the night, our route may be tersely described in the words of the guidebook—"The country from here to Adeje is dreary and arid to a degree. . . . Botanists will find the vegetation of interest, but the travelling is hard and the scenery *nil*." The vast ugliness of the place recalled an out-spoken opinion of desert scenery that I once overheard in a railway carriage; a lady who was new to the yellow hills and interminable stony wastes through which she was being swiftly borne was so full of interest in it all, and described it as so wonderful—so impressive—that at last her *vis-à-vis*—a man who had spent more years in the Soudan than he cared to count—felt it incumbent upon him to look out of the window for a moment and offer some remark—"Sickenin', I call it!" he said.

For the most part we kept close along the coast, riding over plains of sandstone and tufa and in and out of dry, shallow *barrancos* debouching upon the sea. A furious wind was blowing, and drove showers of sand

into our faces. Extraordinary old spurses, in the last stages of decrepitude, sprawled over the ground, the massive trunk and branches of the *Euphorbia balsamifera*—called *Tabaiba dulce*, and said to attain a quite fabulous age—often resembling some stunted, distorted tree.

In company with these was another of Dame Nature's primitive patterns—a bush quite without leaves, and merely a tangle of wiry, thorny twigs (*Sonchus spinosa*): its flower seemed wholly incongruous, being a small yellow daisy, and the blossoms gave one the idea of having been stuck on to the thorns by some child.

Sometimes our way lay across stretches of what appeared to be the hardest, smoothest, white chalk, upon whose surface the mule traffic of centuries has not left the slightest vestige of a track, but in which appear the most curious clean-cut furrows—a foot deep and about a foot wide—often running in parallel lines for considerable distances, as though they were ruts worn by the chariot-wheels of the prehistoric race which is thought to have once inhabited the sunken continent of Atlantis.

The ride was monotonous, but not fatiguing, being for the most part over level ground, and four hours after mounting our mules at Escobonál we reached Arico, a village standing on high ground some three miles from the coast.

News of our coming had in some mysterious way preceded us, and as our mules clattered up the steep paved path bordered with prickly pear that led to the chief *plaza* of the village, we saw every wall above us



trimmed with a row of heads, much as the low parapets on the housetops were trimmed with gourds and ribbed pumpkins set out in line. A large crowd accompanied us as far as the door of the inn, but here their curiosity received a check, for the master of the house—scenting possible displeasure to valuable customers—suddenly rushed out in his shirt-sleeves and broke up the meeting as unceremoniously as if he were scaring a flock of poultry; after which, beckoning us to follow him into the shop, he squeezed quickly through a crack in the wall at the back of the counter and led us across a yard and up an outside flight of steps to a large double-bedded room over the stables. Our men and mules were also accommodated somewhere, in the elastic fashion peculiar to Spanish inns, although the premises seemed already full to overflowing.

I do not know how many members the household comprised in all, but when we asked for a jug of milk it was brought up to our room by seven women and girls, who all stood inside the door to watch us drink it; if we had suddenly unrolled trunks like elephants wherewith to sup it up, I don't think they would have been greatly surprised.

The room was clean and neat, the food well cooked, and after supper we were provided with a lamp—*quinque*—to read by; we had caused much amusement by using the dictionary word and asking for a *lampara*, which it was explained to us meant a large and grand affair hanging from the ceiling, such as one sees in churches.

Our bill the next morning was twelve pesetas (we had nothing to do with the board and lodging of men

and mules), and though this was a high charge as *fondas* go—in fact, just what we had been paying at the Hotel Victoria—there is no doubt that the less frequented by tourists a village inn is, the more trouble it gives when any turn up. All their ways are strange to the people; they ask for out-of-the-way things, like butter; they require milk with their coffee and milk with their tea, and the one time it must be hot and the other cold—all which is an effort of memory; and last, though far from least, is their extraordinary insistence on having hot water to wash with. This latter, indeed, is such a very real difficulty with the little cooking pots and charcoal fires used by the natives, that we never asked for it, accustoming ourselves to using cold water—and very unpleasant we found it in the chilly latitude of the higher villages.

On leaving Arico betimes the next morning we had a long day before us; by the map it was sixteen miles to Vilaflor, but the map takes no account of the ravines that recur every two or three miles, which have to be gone down into by frightful goat-paths and climbed out of again on the other side.

The village of Granadilla, which lies half way, was the most Will-o'-the-wisp object I ever saw; when first we came in sight of its white houses on the hill we thought we should reach it in an hour, but shortly afterwards we plunged into a cañon and lost sight of it altogether; then came cañon after cañon, and two hours later when we again caught sight of Granadilla it looked as far off as ever. Not till five o'clock did we reach Vilaflor, after being seven and a half hours in the saddle, going at a swinging walk the whole time.

The last two hours had been a steady pull uphill, and I think our whole party was relieved when at last we reached the pretty mountain village with its church and its three ancient cypresses, tall and black, embowered in the green and white shimmer of hundreds of blossoming pear-trees, while pine-woods straggled up the heights behind the village to the foot of the *Sombrerito*, the presiding genius of the scene—a red dome-shaped mountain nine thousand feet in height.

Vilaflores is the highest inhabited spot in the island, standing 4335 feet above sea-level, and if it were easier of access would form a delightful summer station, with its beautiful scenery and fresh mountain air. But so long as it can only be reached from Orotava by a fatiguing ride of ten hours over the *cumbres*, it will never attract many visitors, and the one *fonda* opposite the old church is amply sufficient for the accommodation of such enterprising tourists as at present find their way there.

In place of the temperature of 68° to which we had grown accustomed at Guimar, our travelling thermometer now stood at 52° in our bedrooms, and dressing for dinner meant putting on everything we possessed in the way of wraps before making our way round the wooden balcony of the upper floor to the dining-room. It was curious to find every dish upon the table concealed under a cover of wire gauze, when not a fly was to be seen in the place.

At dinner we were waited on by the attentive and friendly *amo* (master of the house), Don José Amador, who in the intervals of serving us with soup, boiled eggs, grilled chicken, honey and almond toffee,



discoursed upon what the Germans call the see-worthinesses of the place, and volunteered to accompany us to the top of the *Sombrerito* on the morrow.

Warned by experience—which Mr Dooley defines as “an imperfect recollection of a great many foolish actions”—we determined to make an early start for the mountains and rose heroically at five o'clock on a bitterly cold morning. The sun appeared above the horizon shortly after six, and as it did so we had the unusual experience of seeing our shadows cast brightly upon a wall by the setting full moon. In view of a stiff climb ahead of us we fortified ourselves before starting with a tumblerful of *gofio* in milk, which Eusebia—the factotum who ran the house—prepared for us, assuring us as she stirred four teaspoonfuls of the toasted flour into each glass that there was *mucho alimento* (much nourishment) in *gofio*, and that we should need no more food till mid-day.

But the good Eusebia quite underestimated the nourishing powers of the beverage, for not only did it last us till luncheon, but after that until tea and on again to dinner-time, so that we began to think we should never need food again.

Soon after six we were off, and were climbing the thinly wooded mountain slopes—our host leading the way, mounted on a clever but ugly mule. Some of the old pine trees near Vilaflor are the finest in the island, one splendid *téasola* numbering many centuries and having a girth of about thirty feet; we visited this *Pino gordo*, or fat pine, as it is called, and found its trunk built round with a low wall to protect it from further mutilation by the villagers, who have a barbaric habit





"A JAM OF LOOSE ROCKS HALF CONCEALED BY RETAMA BUSHES AND PATCHES OF SNOW"



of hacking away the base of a tree for firewood. The forests consist for the most part of younger trees which are tapped by the Government for turpentine. Their slippery needles strewed the path and made the mules slither awkwardly in places.

On and on we climbed, now glancing up at the *Sombrerito*, or little hat, above us, whose red brim was already draped with a gauzy wisp of cloud—and now looking down upon Vilaflor in its nest of pear blossom, and on the arid hills below it, sloping down to the coast gorgeously tinted in orange and indigo. A little aqueduct that we crossed was hung with icicles, and hoar frost lingered in the shade till the sun was high in the heavens.

A last effort, the mules scrambling and slipping over a jam of loose rocks half-concealed by retama bushes and patches of snow, and we arrive at the foot of the *Sombrerito*, where we dismount—feeling rather light-headed from the unaccustomed height—and are pulled up on foot by our muleteers to the crown of the Hat, a large plateau from whence a wide and magnificent view over the island is obtained, with a glimpse of Gomera and Hierro out at sea. We are none too early in arriving, for already the gauze veil we had noticed from below was solidifying round the perpendicular sides of the *Sombrerito*, and a cloud bed—like a solid snowfield piled with hummocks—was slowly gathering beneath us, and would shortly shut out all view of the world below us.

Close behind us was the Peak, and descending from our plateau we climbed to the top of a slope bestrewn with a hail of stones flung out from the volcano and

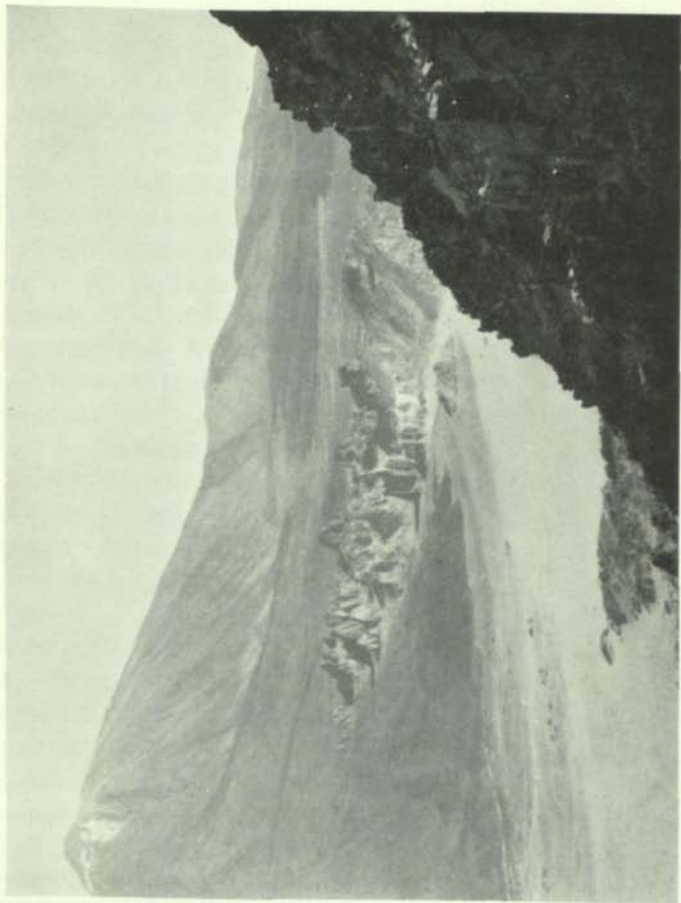
found ourselves looking down—for the first time—into the cañadas that surround the actual cone.

We had often heard the cañadas mentioned, and some of our friends had made an arduous expedition from Orotava to see them—involving twelve hours' riding there and back—but we had formed very little idea of what they really were, and it was quite a surprise to find ourselves standing on the edge of an enormous basin, and to see—hundreds of feet below us—a wide moat of what appeared to be smooth yellow sand, surrounding the Peak which stands in the centre of the basin.

The cañadas are in fact the floor of a primeval crater, whose walls form the enclosing *cumbres*, and how such a desolate plain of pumice and cinders—as we subsequently found it to be—ever came by its name, which properly means sheepwalk, one cannot imagine; for as the driver of the coach observed to the new laird who was trying to elicit a little information respecting his Scotch estate—"If ye was to see the deil tethered on't, ye'd just say, 'Puir brute'!"

And what of the Peak itself—the beautiful pyramid of rock and snow, towering 12,000 feet into the sky as seen from Orotava? We were so close to it now that it looked as though we might have walked to the top and back in a few hours—and alas! all enchantment lent by distance had fled. Seen from the rear (for it turns its best face to Orotava) it resolves itself into a mere ugly cinder heap—a cinder heap more than 4000 feet high, measured from the plain of the cañadas, it is true, but none the less ugly for that—with hardly a streak of snow left to veil its true character.





THE PEAK AND CAÑADAS SEEN FROM THE CUMBRES



The red dome of the Sombrerito looked infinitely more imposing from where we stood, and it was in the shadow of the rocks at its foot, amid snow and retama bushes, that we made our mid-day halt.

Retama is the native name of a white broom (*Cytisus fragrans*) that is peculiar to the neighbourhood of the cañadas and only found above an altitude of 6000 feet; its grey-green shoots are greedily eaten by mules, and mountain climbers warm themselves at fires made of its dead stem and branches. In May and June, when the retama is in full bloom, many of the villagers take up their bee-hives to its fragrant zone for a couple of months; in the vine-growing districts indeed I was told there was a fine inflicted on every hive left on the lower levels at that season, on account of the damage done to the ripening grapes by the bees.

I am sorry to say that we never saw the retama in flower, and the chief recollection I have connected with it is that by sitting down boldly on the top of a large bush one obtained a springy and delightful seat that after a hard morning's ride felt as luxurious as one of Waring's best armchairs.

We got down to Vilaflor—a descent of nearly five thousand feet—in about two hours; the señora was the only one of the party who rode the whole way, Amarillo tripping from rock to rock in a nonchalant and jaunty manner, or putting his feet together and sliding gracefully down the hillside when the pine needles gave way under his weight. I followed—slithering less gracefully—on foot, my shoes full to the brim (or so they felt) of sharp lava fragments, and by the time we got back I had such large holes in my soles that for once I was

glad that it is not customary at *fondas* to put one's shoes outside at night to be cleaned.

The following morning Don José took us to see some lace makers at work. The Vilaflor lace is the only kind made in the islands, and is needle-point—*punto de aguja* as it is called; it is by no means a wide-spread industry like that of the drawn-thread work, for it is only made at Vilaflor, and even there by only half a dozen girls.

These few workers are kept busy most of the year in executing orders for one of the big shops in the Puerto, but although they have a monopoly of the lace-making, their prices are exactly the same as those of the *calado* workers—that is, a peseta a day. "*Muy malo para los ojos* (very bad for the eyes)," said one of the girls, whom we found bending over a wide *berthe*, commissioned by a visitor at the Hotel Humboldt.

The lace is made entirely of thread, and starts as a narrow needle-made braid, sewn upon a paper pattern and filled in with needle-point in various stitches, butterflies and flowers being introduced into the pattern; it is very strong and handsome, and the price asked for it seems extraordinarily low; for instance—the *berthe* which we saw in progress had already occupied two girls for a month, and would take another fortnight, they said, to finish—and they asked a hundred pesetas for it, as the time spent on it would represent a hundred days' work by one girl. I happened to know that the lady who had ordered it through the agent was giving a hundred and fifty pesetas for it and considered it remarkably cheap at the price.

We did not, however, tell the girls that 50 per



cent. more than the price they put upon their work is readily paid for it by the foreigner at Orotava—thankful to find something on which money can be spent—remembering the saying—“He is well paid who is well satisfied.”

And yet it seems a pity that these hard-working people should have no share in the profits so easily reaped by the middleman.

The church at Vilaflor is of considerable interest; it is not only one of the oldest in the island, but is of unusual size, although the population of the village numbers little over three hundred. In old days it had a reputation for special sanctity, and bodies were brought from a great distance to be buried here; the whole of the nave is marked out by sunken beams into divisions six feet by two, each division being a grave. Some fine carving on the beams of the organ-loft and decorating a reredos in a side chapel is the work of a local craftsman in the long-ago, and is on téa wood grown close by.

There are some curious old statues in the church, one very unconventional one representing the Man of Sorrows sitting upon a low seat and resting His head upon His hand, as He may often have done in sad and weary moments; the realism which impels the Spanish sculptor to portray our Saviour with broken, bleeding knees after His fall on the road to Calvary, is in this instance touching—and not, as in our eyes it so often is, repulsive.

We were shown a small figure of Christ preaching at Jerusalem, wearing the papal triple crown and stiff ecclesiastical vestments, but the pride of the church is a marble statue in a niche above the high altar of S.

Peter reading from a scroll, the work of an unknown sculptor. Judging by the ivory tint of the white marble it must be of great age, and the lifelike pose and powerful face of the saint, stamp it as the work of an artist of no ordinary merit.

The aged sacristan who showed us round told us that he was over eighty years of age, and that winter and summer he rose to toll the bell at six o'clock; he was huddled up in a tattered *manta*, and his toes, which protruded through his broken boots, were blue with cold. The almost incredulous delight which irradiated his kind old face when the señora put a two-peseta piece into his hand on leaving, made one feel the pathos of an old age into which such joy could be brought by so humble a gift.

At supper that evening we discussed with our host a plan the señora had formed of going to see the *Barranco del Infierno* before returning to Orotava.

This *barranco*, which is considered the most remarkable in the island, can be reached in two ways from Vilaflor—either by riding down to Adeje, a village at the foot of the gorge, and there sleeping the night, or by keeping to the high level and riding to the head of the gorge by a frightful mountain path, involving eight hours in the saddle. Our host favoured this latter route, and by way of demonstrating how far more stupendous was the effect produced by seeing the *barranco* from above, he went through so dramatic a pantomime of precipitating himself headlong into an abyss that we really feared he would dash out his brains on the floor.

Impressive as this was, we nevertheless decided on the less arduous, if less sensational march to Adeje, and packing up such indispensable belongings as would be wanted for one night, we set out on the morrow for the Infernal Barranco.



## CHAPTER XIII

HAVING an easy day ahead of us, we left Vilaflor at the comfortable hour of ten. A joyful clanging of church bells announced a *dia de fiesta*, and we found that it was the feast of San José and therefore that also of our host, the saint's namesake.

Eusebia was busy all the morning baking little cakes called *roquetas* and drawing them out hot from the oven on a spaddle, and we profited by the *amo's* birthday not only by eating *roquetas* as fast as they were baked, but in having a large piece of the real birthday cake sent with us—a wringing wet compound flavoured with aniseed and covered with a brittle white icing that fell off if you so much as looked at it.

Don José came to help us mount and wished us *Buen viaje*, Eusebia waved a friendly spaddle in the background, and we were off. A long and steep descent of slippery cobbles lay before us—trying both to mules and riders—varied with stretches resembling the ruins of an extensive stone wall. Walking on such a track meant giving one's entire attention to the business of keeping one's feet, to the exclusion of everything around, so that—as I have sometimes noticed in Switzerland—the most beautiful scenery may pass unheeded while one's eyes are in self-preservation glued to the ground. It was only





CAKES AND WINE



when riding that my mind was sufficiently "at leisure from itself" to notice our surroundings.

Near the bottom of the mountain-side we came to the white village of Arona, hedged with tangles of cactus and scarlet geranium, the leaves of the prickly pear smothered with clusters of fruit like big red gooseberries.

The plain below us was studded with small volcanoes, mostly of the cinder-heap pattern—*fumaroles*, as the islanders call them; others, more weathered, and with an irregular depression on the summit, resembled great slugs lying asleep with their head curled round to their side. A long desert stretch, producing nothing but stones, weeds, and a few goats, occupied the next two hours, and at four o'clock we arrived at Adéje and made our way to the inn, nothing doubting that—although our coming was unannounced—we should find rooms for the night.

Who could have foreseen that three Cuban señors would have taken it into their heads to spend the whole winter at Adéje and to take up their quarters in the little village *fonda!* We asked—rather sharply I fear—what they did there, and were told, with a shrug of the shoulders, that they spent their time in reading and walking. For the reading I cannot vouch, but the walking was mainly done after everyone else was in bed, to judge from the ceaseless tramping of boots that went on overhead all night.

Things might have been worse however, for there was still one small room to be had, and into this the whole household—or as many members as could be detached from gazing at us—were presently

turned, to prepare it as quickly as possible for the señoras.

Our chief object was to steer clear of the Cuban trio, and to this end we ordered supper to be early and at 6.30 groped our way across a dimly-lighted backyard crowded with fowls, dogs, and goats to the dining-room, where we took our seats on chairs so low that in the intervals of eating we could comfortably rest our chins on the table. The kitchen on the opposite side of the yard appeared to be in pitch darkness, and full of people, but there proceeded from it in due course various dishes, carefully carried across the cobbles by Corinna our handmaid.

Supper began with a very palatable soup; then came a dish of meat—*carne de vaca con patatas*, as the girl explained; after that came a dish so similar in appearance to the one we had just eaten that we again asked what it was. *Carne de vaca con patatas*—again replied the imperturbable Corinna.

We sent it away, wondering if we were to have yet another replica, but there now appeared an omelette, a dish of honey, and a cake; the omelette was of so ethereal a nature that a French *chef* need not have been ashamed to lay claim to it. We asked ourselves what kind of cookery would have been our lot had we arrived thus unexpectedly at some remote English village—or what kind of prices would have been charged at an inn that could boast as good a cuisine.

At Adéje we paid 3s. 2d. a head for board and lodging; I have known an infinitely bad English inn charge an unhappy victim 12s. 6d. for a night's accommodation with supper and breakfast.



An English inn, to be sure, would be more consistent in its style—that is to say there would be nothing to choose in point of badness between its cookery and its sleeping arrangements — whereas at Adéje the two were on a very different plane. Not only were the beds very hard—like those in the lodging-house of which a famous humorist pathetically remarked that he really hardly knew which was bed and which was board—not only were there a fair number of fleas and two distinct smells in the room, but the noise which went on above, below, and around us, made sleep impossible during the greater part of the night. Long before it was light, and almost before the screaming downstairs and the tramping overhead had ceased, the whole household was up and about again; fowls clucked and cocks crowed under our windows, and half-a-dozen children of tender ages toddled about the yard from four o'clock to six, dashing kerosene tins and kettles down upon the stones with loud cries, to which were added piercing howls when they landed a kettle upon one of the dogs.

Fortunately we had intended in any case to rise early, so giving up our night's rest as a bad job we lighted our solitary candle and dressed, got some coffee and bread, and sending word for our mules to come, started soon after daybreak for the *Barranco del Infierno*.

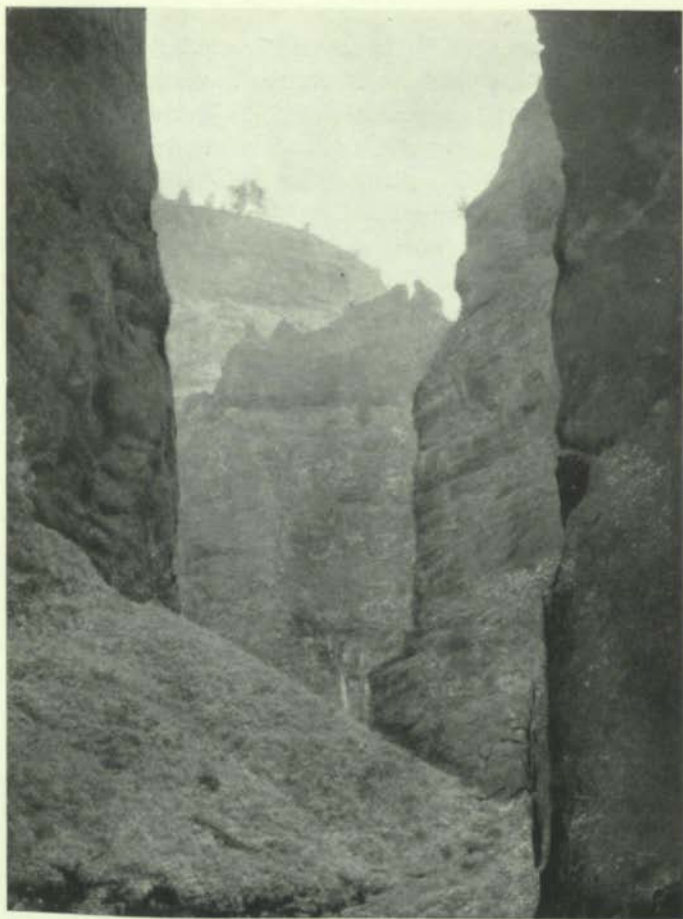
For half-an-hour we climbed a bridle-path leading to the mouth of the gorge—stopping to water our mules at the village horse-trough, well stocked with gold-fish—but when the path dwindled to a mere shelf clinging to the side of the ravine we dismounted and proceeded on foot, taking Telephone with us to

carry the camera; we here found two plants that were new to us, the *Aloe vulgaris*, a kind of yellow red-hot poker, and a showy pink bush mallow, *Malva acerifolia*. Presently the señora declared she had had enough of balancing herself on a tight rope, as she called the narrow little aqueduct on which we were walking, and, sitting down, left Telephone, Cammy and me to go on and report what there was to be seen.

We soon had to take to the bed of the *barranco* and scramble along as best we could, jumping from boulder to boulder and forcing our way through waist-high thickets of bramble and bracken. Wilder and wilder grew the chasm as we advanced, till the perpendicular grey walls seemed to meet overhead, shutting out all but a narrow ribbon of sky. Wild dragon trees had found a foothold here and there high up in the crevices of the cliffs, and flights of rock-doves who had made the place their home circled above us in agitation at our intrusion.

To take a photograph of the scene appeared almost hopeless, but as I felt sure that Cammy would never again find himself in the *Barranco del Infierno* I determined to attempt some sort of a picture, and tilting him recklessly I made an exposure, trusting to a small stop for preserving the perspective to some extent. The result was better than I could have hoped, and if it is remembered that what appears to be a carpet of moss or grass is in reality a vast thicket of fern and bramble, some idea will be obtained of the tremendous height of the rock walls.

The señora said that the only gorge she had ever seen that resembled this clean-cut chasm was one at



THE BARRANCO DEL INFIERNO





Montserrat, of which legend relates that it was formed when the rocks were rent at the time of the Crucifixion.

We got back to our inn at ten o'clock, and at once started on the return ride to Vilaflor; on the way we halted for luncheon in a *barranco*, the only place as a rule where any shade is to be had. Our muleteers were always warning us of the danger we ran from falling stones dislodged up above by goats, but we had never heeded them much—till crash! came a small rock close to where we sat to-day. Our men gave a shout and presently a goatherd looked over the edge of the cliff and drove his goats away from the spot; but after this we were more careful as to where we halted.

While unpacking our lunch-basket we became aware of an odious smell, which I recognised at once as the worst of those that had disturbed our peace the previous night, and which we now traced to a small branch of the fennel-like bush *Plocama pendula* which we had picked on our ride the day before and had had in the room with us all night—the abominable plant smelling worse and worse as it dried. In mere fairness therefore to the Adéje *fonda* I must append as a note to my description of our sleeping quarters "Delete—one smell."

We reached Vilaflor without misadventure, and the following morning set out for Orotava; we had decided to divide the journey into two stages and to pass the first night in a cave on the cañadas—a good dry cave, *bien entendu*, the recognised sleeping-place for benighted travellers.

Don José knew exactly what would be needed for

a night in the cave, and he bound upon the pack-mule two pillows, four blankets—drawing his shoulders up to his ears to express the Arctic degree of cold we should suffer from—and a large saucepan in which to heat the bottled soup and coffee that he stuffed into the pack. Eusebia was rather uneasy about giving us her best saucepan; she did not care what happened to the pillows and blankets, but enjoined us straitly to return the saucepan by the very first person coming that way—and promising faithfully to do so, were it the Governor himself to whom we had to commit it—we rode away, waving *addios* to our friendly hosts as long as they were in sight.

Long before we reached the top of the *cumbres* we were swallowed up in the clouds, and then came a frightful descent into the bed of the cañadas by a long steep glaçis of loose stones, down which the mules scrambled almost on their heads. Patches of frozen snow made the path still more dangerous in places, and if much snow were on the ground I cannot think it would be possible to reach Vilaflor by this track unless one were prepared to trust to one's own feet the greater part of the way.

Once at the bottom of the basin it was plain sailing. We found ourselves in a lifeless, soundless world, burnt out, dead, the very abomination of desolation, where once raged a fiery inferno over a lake of boiling lava. A thin piercing wind was blowing, and we plodded along in silence, shrammed with the cold.

For an hour and a half we marched round the pumice-strewn moat, in some places fully two miles wide between the foot of the Peak and the enclosing

ring of cliffs, in others narrowing to a bare half mile where the Peak, feeling unwell on some occasion, has—like Budge and Toddy in similar case—"threw up a whole floorful of things" and encroached upon the cañadas with glaciers and buttresses of lava that have streamed down the sides of the cone.

It was a surprise, in the midst of such desolation, to come upon a drinking-trough, where we stopped to water the mules, and shortly afterwards our *arrieros*—pointing to some large boulders ahead of us—said "*Cueva de Mistatolair!*" We had arrived.

At first we could see no sign of any cave, but as we drew nearer we made out a door at the base of a yellow rock, and three vultures sitting outside it, from which we concluded that the cave was unoccupied. Signs of recent visitors however were not wanting; oily sardine tins and spent Kodak-spools strewed the ground, and quite a large cairn of empty beer bottles had been erected close to the cave; but how fortunate we had been in not having fixed our return to Orotava a day earlier, we did not know till we got back to the Humboldt and learnt that a large party of Germans, with twenty-five mules, had spent the previous night on the cañadas, only clearing out the very morning of our arrival.

A miss in this case was luckily as good as a mile, and thanking our stars that we had the place to ourselves we set about making our arrangements for the night. The cave, which is named after Mr Graham-Toler who furnished it with a door, was about the size of a big loose-box, and had a knobby rock roof high enough near the entrance to admit of one's standing up,



but so low at the back of the cave that if you sat up suddenly in the night you hit your head a sounding crack.

A blow on the head cannot be called pleasant at any time, and lava rock we found to be of quite peculiar hardness,—but then the romance of it! how different from knocking your head against a garret roof! Here we were, like Robinson Crusoe, in a real cave upon a mountain, just what we dreamt of when children as an unattainable joy.

The floor was littered with branches of retama, and on this we spread our blankets, planting our wooden box on the ground between us as a supper-table, our light being a candle stuck in the mouth of the coffee-bottle. We had to bear three things in mind while at supper—Firstly not to get up suddenly, whatever happened; secondly, on no account to set fire to our carpet of dry retama by upsetting the bottle—or, if we did, to leave the cave hastily and not trust to the coffee acting as an automatic extinguisher; and lastly, to avoid dropping anything for which we had any further use. Our only spoon, conscious that this was the chance of a lifetime, made such determined efforts to dive into the retama that for the sake of peace we tethered it to the table with a bit of string.

I cannot say that we slept much better than we did at Adéje; the cave is more than 7000 feet above sea-level, and the air was bitterly cold, freezing outside, and 43° inside the cave; the men lay outside, wrapped in scarlet blankets, beside a roaring fire of retama that filled our nostrils with a scent as of burning incense, and sent showers of wind-driven sparks across the doorway.



The night seemed interminable; now and then we groped our way to the entrance and looked out; the stars were shining with extraordinary splendour, and Venus blazed like a beacon-fire on the very tip of the Peak. Later on the moon rose, and flooded Peak and desert with silver light. It was very beautiful, but I detest a wakeful night, and but for the cold I would have slept in spite of the crackling of the fire, the restless stamping of the mules, and the voices of the men quieting them.

Chilly, unrested, and extremely stiff from the hardness of the ground, we rose at daybreak, drank some iced coffee—which on a frosty morning is not an ideal breakfast beverage—and made ready to start. All that was left of our provisions we made over to the men, who returned the compliment with true Spanish politeness by offering us from their own stores some lukewarm *pápas* (sweet potatoes)—odious vegetables, to my mind, with their slightly fishy sweet flavour.

As soon as the mules were saddled we set out, still following the stony bed of the moat in which we had now ridden almost half-way round the Peak. The encircling walls were still so regular and so high that one felt that if the volcano begun erupting again it would find itself in the comparatively harmless position of a spirit lamp boiling over in the middle of a wash-hand basin; and so it would be were it not for flaws in the basin. But on the western side great sections of the outer wall have been carried away by lava streams, and—most ominous of all—immediately above Port Orotava is an immense breach called the *Portillo* (gateway), ready, like the lip of a saucepan, to

conduct a torrent of boiling lava into the Orotava Valley.

It is now more than a century since the Peak was last in eruption. Heaven send that it is not preparing for the islanders a fresh reminder of the fact that they are living on the sides of a volcano.

Emerging through the *portillo* we soon descended to the level of the Monte Verde again, and our footsore mules, who for twelve days past had been travelling over rough and rocky tracks were glad to feel the short soft turf again beneath their feet. Amarillo always led the way, very jealous of the position, and frustrating any attempt of the other mules to pass him; but his pace had grown so much slower the past two days that the señora had given up the reins to Pépé, who dragged him onwards while Telephone in the rear kept up a running encouragement—"Arré, Amaril'! Amaril' Assá!" the latter being an expression of unspeakable amazement at the mule's conduct. Making snatches at every bush along the way, Amarillo let himself be dragged rather than led down the mountain-side, only shaking off his apathy when we neared the end of the journey.

From time to time we got into a belt of cloud, and hurriedly putting on our warm coats marched for a while through a cold drizzling fog, till we came again into brilliant sunshine below it, and as quickly shed our wraps—dropping them beside the path for Telephone to pick up and place on the pack-mule.

At last we reached *Villa* Orotava, whose white houses had been beckoning to us for the past three hours. Our men, who lived at the *Villa*, had numerous

messages and bits of news to receive from their families, who ran out to meet them in the street as we rode by; and then, getting clear of the town we continued our way down to the Puerto, much to the chagrin of the mules, who thought their journey was ended.

Then came the paying of the men, who each received a great *rouleau* of big silver *douros*, or five-peseta pieces. The charge for mule hire is the same all over the island—ten pesetas a day—so that for our three mules we were paying about a guinea a day; there are no extras, as the *arrieros* provide the saddlery, and board and lodge themselves and their beasts at their own cost; and the tips expected are very moderate. To each of our men—who had been unfailingly civil and obliging—the señora gave a *propina* of ten pesetas, with which they were entirely satisfied.

At parting we observed that they and their mules must be tired with the long tramp, and would enjoy a day or two's rest at home. "O señorita," said Pépé, "we are not tired! To-morrow we are going up the Peak with some English señors!"

I have heard Alpine climbers say that the Teneriffe *arrieros* have amazing powers of endurance, and that whereas a Swiss guide considers 5000 feet a good day's climb and grumbles if you expect him to do more, the Teneriffe guides are quite prepared to take you straight up the Peak in one day if you wish it, and in all cases reach the hut at *Alta Vista*—10,700 feet—before night-fall, in eight or nine hours' walking from the Puerto.



## CHAPTER XIV

WE returned to find the Humboldt Kurhaus even fuller than we had left it; the dining-room was a babel; the lounge of an evening seethed like a nest of angry hornets. Centuries of civilisation have not done much to improve the human voice, and when heard *en masse* it is little better than the speech of frogs or turkeys.

A native of India, selling beautiful embroideries, has established himself in the hotel since we left, and aided by a winning smile and a total disregard for truth, does a roaring trade. "You very clever lady!" he cries, with renewed and admiring astonishment to each customer who beats down his prices—although I suppose that since the day he was born he has never known anyone pay him what he asked for a thing.

A few of the old friends with whom we have borne the burden and heat of the winter still survive, but the greater part of the crowd are spring tourists—here to-day and gone to-morrow—and it is too late in the season to feel much interest in strange faces.

By the beginning of April people are on the move, and an unsettled feeling pervades the hotel. Departures take place daily, and the manager is kept busy on the front steps, bowing and handing bouquets to his homeward-bound guests. Berths and boats are the topic of the hour, and everyone has some story to tell



of the desperate struggles people have had to get away. It certainly is not always easy to leave Teneriffe when you wish; a strange irregularity prevails with regard to the calling of some of the liners, and some friends of ours who have been waiting nearly two months at Las Palmas for a boat to take them to Marseilles, are beginning to think that the Canaries are the bourne from which no traveller returns.

The English liners too at this time of the year are so crowded with home-coming passengers from New Zealand and the Cape that it is quite a chance whether one will get a berth on any given date.

An eager crowd collects round the printed notices of steamships due that are posted up from time to time in the hall-porter's bureau; here is one, setting forth that the s.s. *Paphlagonia*, 8000 tons, bound for Southampton, will call at Santa Cruz on April the 12th; the manifold advantages of booking by this line having been pointed out—

“The agents request that all intending passengers will hand in their names as early as possible; special answers will be sent by wire.”

At the bottom of the notice runs a quite inconspicuous line of print—

“This boat has room for *no* first-class and *no* second-class passengers.”

Our own day of departure has not yet come, so we can afford to smile at these solemn official jokes. Indeed we are glad to think that we need not hurry away from the Fortunate Isles at the beginning of

April; long days of glorious summer weather have set in; lizards rustle and slide around one as one walks, and the sun-warmed air is perfumed by hedges of scented geranium. We have been spending a whole morning at the Botanical Gardens in smelling roses and in trying to keep our hands from picking and stealing. Bathing is in full swing on the Martianez beach, and from the shade of the salt-laden tamarisks we watch our adventurous friends wading out, rope in hand, into the surf, until a big wave knocks them down and scuffling them swiftly over the shingle casts them up, battered and breathless, upon the shore. The undertow upon this coast is extremely dangerous, and the strongest swimmer—once among the breakers—would have a hard fight to regain the beach.

The palms that crown the cliffs of La Paz are bending to the breeze with the abandoned frenzy peculiar to those trees, and far below, the plunging green rollers—their white manes flying wildly behind them—dash themselves to pieces on the rocks, the foam leaping up almost to where the bleached bones of some old Guanches appear at the mouth of their burial cave overhanging the sea.

The ocean-bed around these islands descends abruptly to immense depths, and it is said that if it were drained dry we should see them to be poised on giddy pinnacles—the mere peaks of submerged mountains.

A party of thirty-five Swiss scientists has lately descended upon the hotel, and moving in light marching order has already ransacked the neighbourhood with the thoroughness of a troop of driver ants. All



THE PRIDE OF TENERIFFE





is fish that comes to their net, and Catalina vows she is afraid to enter their rooms since she saw a crab scuttle out from under a bed. The professors of botany display their daily "bag" upon a large table on the terrace—the *débris* of roots and greens left when the lecture is over suggesting the remains of a vegetarian banquet.

One of their earliest trophies was a four-foot flower spike of the Pride of Teneriffe (*Echium simplex*), a giant white biennial of the borage family, which created quite a sensation when first brought into the hotel. Desperate-looking members of the band are told off to track the *Erica scoparia* and *Plantago arborea* to their lair, and pursue the quest with the relentless determination of a big-game hunter on the trail of a rhinoceros.

Before they had been at Orotava a week the whole party went up the Peak, the accession of whiteness visible upon the summit the following day being attributed by irreverent jokers to all the sandwich-paper left behind by the professors. We had never climbed the Peak ourselves, and did not propose to do so, but it was interesting to hear other people's experience; a young German officer whom we knew had gone up lately, and had arranged to signal to us when dark, by means of a bonfire on the top of the Peak; it is doubtful if it could have been seen in any case, but at the preconcerted hour the Peak was so swathed in cloud that nothing less than an eruption would have been visible from the Puerto.

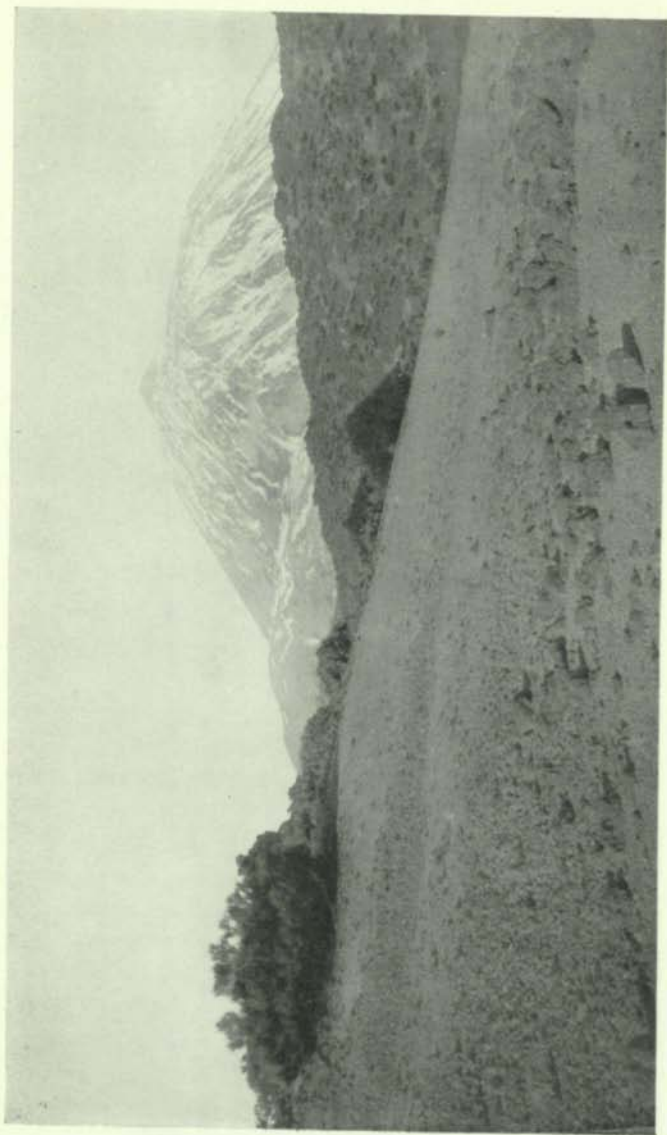
The usual plan in making the ascent is to start from the Puerto in the forenoon, and before darkness sets in reach the hut at *Alta Vista*, where the night is spent,

climbing the last fifteen hundred feet on foot before dawn, so as to see the sunrise from the summit. Everyone agrees as to the cold and misery of the latter part of the journey; most people are violently sick all night in the hut—not so much from its actual height, but that they have gone up without any preparation into that altitude from sea-level.

To watch the sun rising like a ball of fire from out of the sea, and to see his rays strike the Peak thirteen minutes before they reach the coast below, while the shadow of the great mountain on which one stands is flung far out as a monstrous triangle over the Atlantic, must be a wonderful sight, repaying—so they say—all the hardships and miseries of the ascent.

The geologists among the Swiss party said they could have spent days on the way in investigation, but they suffered from being unequally yoked with botanists, as wherever they found most to interest them the botanists found least, and the party had to keep more or less together; it seems there are three craters, one within another—the first one the plain of the cañadas which we had traversed, enclosed by the *cumbres*; the second one, much smaller, surrounding the actual foot of the cone; and the third, and most recent, on its summit,—a basin about eighty feet deep lying behind the apex of the snowy pyramid that one admires from Orotava. The flat top of the Peak is too warm for snow to lie, the temperature of sundry cracks from whence issued sulphurous vapours being found to be 176° Fahr.

How far the Swiss scientists may have been correct in some of their theories I cannot say—but they entirely



THE PEAK, SEEN FROM THE CAÑADAS





waived aside the old idea that the Canary Islands are a continuation of the Atlas Mountains; they said they were purely volcanic in origin, bore no geological resemblance to—and had never formed part of—the African Continent.

Being quite unprejudiced in the matter ourselves we were ready to agree unhesitatingly; but when they began to speak slightingly of the dragon trees, and to cut down their age from the traditional thousands of years to mere hundreds, we would listen no longer; we have sent home dragon seeds to be sown, and I shall be deeply disappointed if the gardener has to move them out of their thumb-pots under a century.

## CHAPTER XV

APRIL 13. At last we have left Orotava. I say *at last*, because our departure — having been postponed daily during the past week—had come to be looked upon in the light of a joke, although the cause of the delay had been anything but a laughing matter. The very day before we were to have started for Laguna the señora was laid low with a severe attack of influenza—"smitten in the place of dragons" as she said, quoting from the Psalms of the previous Sunday—and until she was better it was out of the question to leave Orotava.

At length it seemed possible to undertake the drive, and bidding good-bye one morning to the friends who—undeterred by repeated leave-takings and farewell calls—had assembled to see us off, we got into our carriage and for the last time drove away down the eucalyptus avenue and out at the familiar gate of the Humboldt Kurhaus.

Toddle toddle, jingle jingle, go the little horses along the dusty road; "With patience and perseverance one may drive snails to Jerusalem"—and we shall reach Laguna before night. Here is the house where the woman ran after us with a bunch of roses as we rode by,—there the spot where a merry group of girls, sitting before their door, begged us to photograph them, and



HOUSE BUILT OF LAVA





catching up the household baby and cat posed themselves, with screams of laughter, by the wayside.

Masses of sulphur-yellow oxalis fringe the road, and the grassy banks are starred with cinerarias; before us stretches a long perspective of eucalyptus trees, their bark hanging in tatters as though ripped by lions' claws, the dusty grey-blue sickles of their leaves, whose aromatic scent we have delighted in all the winter, acting as a foil to the fresh emerald-green in which their neighbours the planes are decking themselves. Roses tumble over the garden walls, and a woman passes by with a load of new palm-leaf fans on her head, flies buzzing round her as she walks. The temperature is hardly warmer than it was the day in December when we arrived, but there is a different feeling in the air, a greater sense of security in the weather—for lo! the winter is past.

On reaching Tacaronte we dismiss our carriage and go on by the electric tram to Laguna; there is a mystery about this tram that I never was able to fathom. It consists of two closed compartments, supposed to be first and second class, and though I had on various occasions made a point of travelling first in one and then in the other, I was always given a second-class ticket; whether the first-class passengers were *always* in the carriage I did not get into I cannot tell, for I had not the strength of mind to change my seat after paying my fare, which would have been the only way to solve the mystery. The conductor cannot read, and I am told that so long as you hand him a blue ticket he is satisfied, although it may be one for the reverse direction to that in which you are travelling.

The Hotel Agüere at which we stayed in Laguna is a large rambling Spanish house with old-fashioned galleries and floors of *téa* wood, black with age, and polished to a pitch of dangerous slipperiness. From the glassed-in corridor running round the first storey one looks down into the central *patio* of the house, where an ancient wistaria—trained as an awning over the whole courtyard—drops its mauve blossoms into the gold-fishes' basin below.

Donna Anastasia, our buxom landlady, did not profess to speak any language but her own, and the interpreter of the establishment was a Spanish head waiter—known as William, on the strength I suppose of his very rudimentary acquaintance with the English tongue.

Now it is a well-known fact that with some foreigners a slight knowledge of English mounts to the head, rendering them incapable of speaking anything else; and though we should have got on infinitely better with William in Spanish, no persuasion or command could induce him to lapse—even for a single moment—into his mother tongue. His effusive welcome on our arrival took us in at the time, for though some of the phrases he used seemed a little lacking in meaning, the words in which they were couched were undoubtedly English. The señora's handbag was missing when we alighted from the tram, and had probably been left behind at Tacaronte—could we make inquiries there? and have it sent on by the next tram?

William, always anxious to please, and full of sympathy as we believed over the loss of the bag, flew to the telephone, and on getting into communication

with the Tacaronte Hotel booked two rooms there on the ground floor for the following night, before he could be stopped.

The next morning I had occasion—before going out for a walk—to order a beaten-up egg to be sent to the señora's room, and taking William aside expounded to him, in as few words as possible, and with explanatory gestures, what it was I required, catechising him as I proceeded as to my meaning; "One raw egg, William."—"Yes," said William eagerly, "yes, eggy." "But *raw* egg, William; what is raw?" William made a wild shot and performed a pantomime of beating up something in a tumbler—and I departed, hoping for the best.

What eventually reached the señora was a glass of plain boiled milk, and we realised the truth of a remark made by a fellow-traveller who had likewise suffered tribulation from linguistic waiters; "If I speak English," he said, "I get the wrong thing; but if I were allowed to speak Spanish I should either get the right thing or nothing at all."

Life at the Hotel Aguére flows on very peacefully; posts disturb us only at rare intervals, and if we take up one of the illustrated papers lying about we feel that the shadow on the dial has been set back, as we find ourselves looking at war-correspondents' sketches from South Africa or the plans of the Japanese trenches before Port Arthur. Laguna itself is set in so quiet a backwater that we might have fancied ourselves in a city of the dead had it not been for the daily processions through the streets during Holy Week. The very name of Laguna brings back the smell of the rosemary



and lavender sprigs that strewed the churches on Palm Sunday, and the pungent odour of incense that pervaded the town.

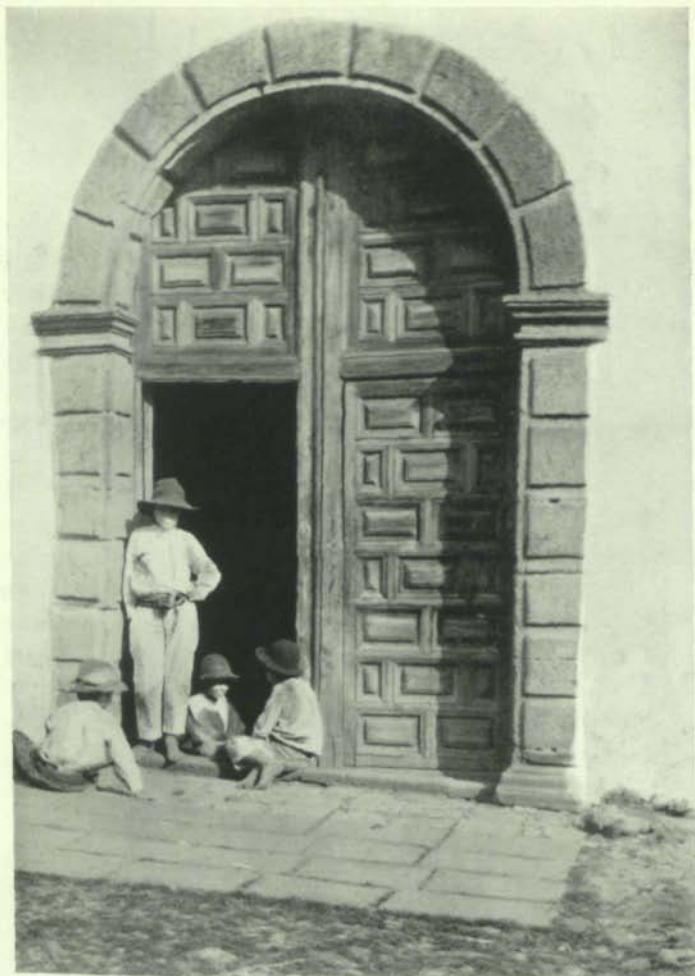
A sound of dirge-like music is in the air, and the passing bell tolls mournfully, unceasingly, hour after hour.

Great platforms bearing groups of life-sized figures are carried from church to church on men's shoulders; here is our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane; a cherub, poised beside Him on clouds of blue-and-white muslin offers Him a cup, and in the background are stretched three sleeping figures of the disciples—the whole enclosed by a hedge of glaring artificial flowers.

Another day the Mater Dolorosa is borne along, her brown hair streaming behind her, and a sword buried in her heart; and on Good Friday, passing slowly, slowly, along the street, comes a ghastly wooden corpse lying beneath a canopy and guarded on either side by a file of soldiers with drawn swords. Bare-headed policemen clear the way, and behind the bier walk the Alcalde and the principal gentlemen of the town, hat in hand. The rest of the street—far as the eye can reach—is a dense black river of people, the silent mourners bringing up the rear of the solemn *cortège*. The women, instead of wearing their tiny velvet-bound straw hats on the top of their headkerchief, as is the custom in these parts, have removed them, as they do in church.

Arrived in front of the bishop's palace, the procession halts, and the bishop—clad in episcopal purple, and with a violet biretta surmounted by an emerald button on his head, appears at an upper balcony, and raising a





CHURCH DOOR AT REALEJO ALTO



violet glove in benediction addresses a few words to the multitude below.

The bier again moves on, preceded by choir boys jerking silver censers, and the slow crowd moves after it. A cutting wind meets us, and an old peasant walking beside us gathers his ragged *manta* closer round him. The muffled tramp of feet seems to beat time to the wail of Chopin's Funeral March that the band is playing, and slowly the procession passes out of sight, on its way to the Church of the Concepcion, where the bier will remain in front of the High Altar until Easter morning.

When first we came to Laguna we felt it bitterly cold after Orotava; the thermometer only admitted a difference of ten degrees, but a strong wind was blowing, and I can remember wishing—as we drove along the roads—that they had been lined with hot-water pipes instead of the ubiquitous gum trees.

Our driver urged us so incessantly to look at the Peak whenever a bend of the road afforded a possibility of a glimpse, that at last we told him sternly that for five months we had been living in sight of the Peak and should certainly not turn round to look at it again—adding rather viciously “The next thing will be that we shall find it in our soup.”

The change of being on a comparatively level plateau at Laguna is so extraordinary that it is difficult to believe oneself still in the same island. No toiling up from the Puerto on returning from a walk—no stony mountain tracks to be climbed on muleback, but pleasant footpaths meandering through the fields, rich

crops of wheat and lupins on either hand, little streams fringed with reeds and poplars, and cloud shadows chasing across the rolling green and blue hills that form our horizon. The country is so flat that donkeys suffice for the longest rides, the worst perils to be encountered being from the extreme slipperiness—after rain—of some of the clay paths in the forests.

In the woods grow tall yellow globe-flowers with thickets of pink cranesbill, and the damper spots—where tiny cascades dash down the rocks—are the home of luxuriant ferns and mosses. In England one would not perhaps travel many miles for such a sight, but out here in arid Teneriffe we think it a scene of surpassing beauty.

Of a quite different character is the expedition to the *Cruz de Taganana*, where one rides along the crest of the mountain ridge that penetrates into the knuckle end of the island; the señora did not yet feel equal to such a long excursion, and I was accompanied by a friend who had joined us from the Puerto. With eight hours' riding before us we had to start in good time, and to my great relief I found on coming down that even William had understood the necessity of an early breakfast and had laid a table in readiness for me.

"Good-morning," said William, attentive as ever—"do you like honey?"

I said I liked it very much, and promptly had a dish of thick black treacle placed before me.

"Spanish honey," said William, watching me keenly as I tasted it—"English honey much better!"

"Have you got English honey?"



"Oh yes!" said William, hurrying off and presently returning with a tin of golden syrup.

"That is very nice, William," I said—"but it is not honey."

"Yes—very nice English honey!" returned William, beaming with pleasure.

The size of the luncheon basket which he had provided really staggered me; it could hardly have been larger had he been preparing for a party of six instead of for my lone self—for my friend was staying at another hotel close by. I felt sorry for the men who were to carry it so many hours, but they merely slung both baskets on a stout staff as though they had been the grapes of Eshcol and bore them away on their shoulders without a murmur, having no doubt learnt by experience that the heavier the load the more there is left for the *arrieros* when the picnic is over.

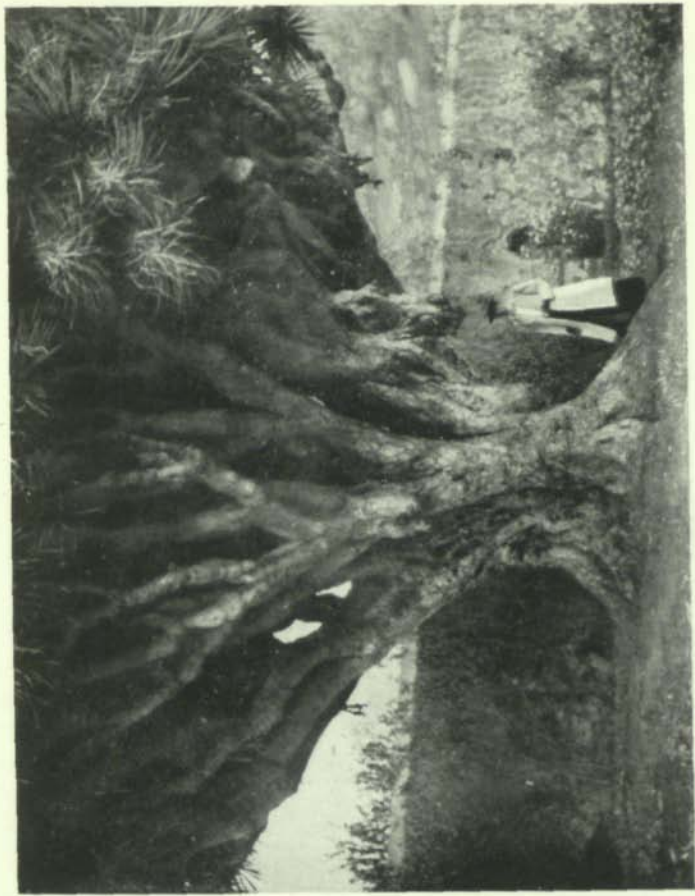
Away we ride through the town and out into the open country, where villas are scattered about, half-hidden amid gardens and clumps of palm trees. Moreno and Blanco, stimulated by short sarcastic laughs and cries of "*Arré—boo!*" trip nimbly along the road with a rapid click of hoofs, almost breaking into a run; donkey boys in Teneriffe never carry a stick, and only rarely a vine twig or switch of heather. Neither donkeys nor saddles are as good as those at Orotava, and I was riding—much against my will—upon the off-side, on a regal-looking saddle covered in purple velvet embroidered with gold, which its proud owner assured me had come from Havana and was such as were used by the señoras in those parts. At anyrate it was sound, which many of the broken-down old-fashioned English saddles were

not, and though the unaccustomed position was tiring to me I was able to rest myself by walking long stretches of the way.

Passing some rude cave-dwellings in the side of a cutting we noticed a woman seated on the ground, her back against the pig-stye, wholly absorbed in a book she was reading,—a sight so unique that I fear we stared at her harder than good manners would warrant. Around her strutted fowls, the cock—according to a common practice—restrained from roaming too far afield by having an old boot tied to his leg with a long string—a decoration which doubtless he had taught his wives to look upon with envy as a signal mark of distinction.

Emerging from the Mercedes forest, where the donkeys slipped and staggered so badly in the miry clay that we had to dismount and walk, we might have fancied ourselves on some green alp in Switzerland. Great white cumulus clouds were stacked upon the hill-tops around us, and the pastures were sheeted with the blue flower of a small borage that lent an atmospheric hue to the landscape.

Wilder and wilder grew the scene as we pushed on towards the northern end of the Anaga promontory at times we were riding along the very backbone of the mountain chain, a knife-like ridge some 3000 feet above sea-level, from which precipitous spurs intersected with deep *barrancos* descended on either hand to the coast. Far, far below us on the right lay surf-encircled Santa Cruz, with midget steamers at anchor in the bay, and here and there a tiny village clung like a patch of lichen to a ledge far down some wild hill-



DRAGON TREE AT LAGUNA





side. Vultures and crows circled overhead, and as we entered a tract of dense scrub that clothed the mountain slopes with a close rich pile I heard blackbirds fluting merrily, and a thrush calling "Pick it up! pick it up! pick it up! Leave it! leave it! leave it!" as distinctly as if he had been born and bred in England.

The *tagasaste*, a white broom (*Cytisus proliferus varietas*) which I had only seen hitherto as a small bush, grew here as large as a laburnum. Giant ferns with fronds seven feet long met above our heads as we clambered down on foot towards the village of Taganana; huge grey lichens like the shovel horns of an elk draped the tree trunks, and hare's-foot ferns climbed into the topmost branches, while every bole and bank was cushioned with emerald-green moss.

We would gladly have gone on—but time was passing, and we had to return, with our hands full of forest treasures, reaching Laguna at sunset, just eleven hours since our start in the morning.

This ride is probably the finest and the most varied of any that can be taken in Teneriffe, but it should only be attempted in clear weather, as otherwise one may find oneself immersed in miles of billowing clouds gathered upon the mountain flanks and obliterating all things above and below.

We had now been a week at Laguna and the señora had not picked up strength as we had hoped; the air was good, the cookery was good, the milk and butter were the best we ever tasted in the Canaries, but for some reason or other the señora did not gain ground. Whether the germs of the *modorra*—the fatal melancholia that decimated the Guanche host, and

which may have been an ancient and virulent form of influenza—still lingered in the place, I do not know, but a complete change of scene appeared advisable and we decided to visit the island of La Palma.

We had only met one traveller who had ever been there, and according to his account we should find all comforts lacking there; but possibly the very novelty of the experience would provide the stimulus of interest that seemed to be required. The first thing to ascertain was what chance there was of our getting back again, for we had heard of a man who left Teneriffe to spend a week in Madeira, and there found that he could only return *via* Liverpool. La Palma however presented no such difficulty; a service of small steamers ran between Teneriffe and the western islands once a week, and we should have our choice of either spending ten days at La Palma or of returning by the next boat, forty-eight hours after landing.

On the 21st of April therefore we left Laguna, driving down to Santa Cruz, and at eight o'clock that same evening went on board the *Leon y Castillo* lying beside the mole; the last of our Orotava friends came to see us off, the last cheery "*Auf Wiedersehen!*" reached our ears across the widening stretch of water, and we vanished into the night to seek the island whose blue mountains had from time to time mysteriously appeared to us at sunset as we gazed seawards from the Orotava Valley.

We found—rather to our surprise—a fellow-tourist on board, an elderly Englishman, who without speaking any language but his own, had travelled over a great part of the world by means of signs and wonders, and

was now going to La Palma for curiosity's sake like ourselves.

To him I handed on the advice bestowed upon us by the cabin steward—that we ought on no account to miss getting up at sunrise to look at the Peak, and I felt quite guilty afterwards when I learnt that the poor man had spent nearly an hour on deck in the chilly dawn, and that not only had he caught a bad cold in consequence, but had never so much as seen a glimpse of the Peak.







VIEW OF S. CRUZ DE LA PALMA TAKEN FROM THE HILL ABOVE THE TOWN



## LA PALMA

### CHAPTER XVI

AT 7.30 in the morning we cast anchor in the harbour of Santa Cruz de la Palma, and on being landed in a boat were met by a daft-looking creature in a striped jersey who nodded to us effusively and shouldering our luggage marched away without a word up the main street of the little town, leaving us to follow.

"*Hablan Español* (Do they speak Spanish)?" asked inquisitive shopkeepers of our guide as we passed.

Raphael, son of the morning, vouchsafed no reply, but hurrying on presently brought us to the door of the Hotel Español—formerly known, under different and better management, as the Hotel Aridane.

At mid-day we were summoned to the *comedor*, where in company with the other occupants of the house we took our seats at a long table covered with an extremely dirty cloth. Gracing the centre of the board was a large glass vase containing decayed flowers in a scum of foul green water, and this was flanked on either side by a dish filled with sections of aged radishes of cellular formation. At the head of the table, busily picking his teeth, sat a blue-eyed priest, his artificial tonsure merged in the natural and spreading one conferred upon him by the hand of

Time. On his right was a heavy greasy-faced man, wearing a tie of vivid red tartan, with collar and shirt-cuffs of pale pink celluloid, and on his left sat an officer in uniform, displaying splendid rings upon elaborately manicured hands, a sufficiently imposing figure until he rose from table—or strictly speaking, got down from his chair—when he was seen to be so short that we were reminded of Sidney Smith's dictum concerning the correct length for a man's legs—"That though it was difficult to lay down an exact rule, they should in any case be long enough to reach to the ground."

Opposite us sat our host and his wife, the latter a lady of such ample proportions that everything about her which in the ordinary stout person becomes doubled, was in her case trebled or even quadrupled.

She was clad in a close-fitting nightgown of extreme severity of cut, her only adornment a string of vast pearls encircling her neck, and her broad cheeks glowed a subdued mauve through the layers of powder with which she had dimmed their natural hue.

Madame had been a beauty in her day—she was probably still on the sunny side of forty—and she had not forgotten how to use her magnificent eyes, which she could dilate and contract at will with a startling effect not unlike that of a sudden flash from the revolving lamp of a lighthouse. The habitual expression of her face however was one of bovine repletion and stupidity. Slowly, and with a look of unspeakable repulsion, she would bend her gaze upon each dish as it was offered her by Raphael, and slowly — unwillingly, as it seemed — convey a large



portion of it to her plate, and there dispose of it to the uttermost morsel ; a plateful of soup, two eggs, two rissoles, three slabs of meat, some cheese, bananas, and olives, disappeared in this way—and still Madame ate steadily on, with intense disgust stamped on every feature.

She had employed her morning in flicking lightly at the furniture in the salon with a duster, and with that her household duties appeared to be ended for the day. Dead flowers lay scattered about on tables and chairs, grimy tear-marks bespattered the unwashed milk-jug and coffee-pot, and the raised china flowers upon the teacups carried ledges of dust that had not been disturbed for weeks. And throughout the house the same slovenliness prevailed.

What Madame did with her time I cannot guess, for she rarely set foot outside the door, and assuredly had no intellectual occupation. She was quite helpless if asked for any information about the town ; “My husband,” she would say, shrugging her fat shoulders—“my husband, that is different ; he is a man, and he goes out,—but *I!!!*”

Chartering a small boy as guide, we went down the principal street, the name of which—O'Daly—recalls the Irish settlers of former times. Here and there we met a peasant wearing the *mantera*—a picturesque head-dress peculiar to the island, resembling a sou-wester of dark brown wool lined with red flannel. Far less becoming, alas ! was the headgear of the women, who on the top of their kerchief mounted a broad-brimmed straw hat trimmed 'Arriet-fashion with shabby black tulle and frowsy ostrich tips. For the

first time we saw sledges in use, roughly formed of pine baulks that slipped easily along over the cobbles behind a yoke of oxen. Brown and white tussore silks of local manufacture were exhibited in the drapers' windows, and at a small grocery store we found the pretty brass-mounted pipes with hinged lids to their bowls such as are smoked by the islanders.

Here also I bought, for thirteen pesetas, a handsome keen-edged sheath knife with a wooden handle skilfully inlaid with brass and bone, of the kind that every countryman carries in his girdle for such pacific uses as the chopping of sugar-cane, the slicing of cactus leaves for his beasts, or the preparation of his own food.

Every second shop was a tobacconist's, stocked with the dark brown tobacco grown in the island from Havana seed; our English fellow-tourist praised so highly the quality of the cigars and cigarettes—which as usual were priced absurdly low—that I was tempted to bring some home. Whether they suffered from the sea voyage I do not know, but they met with such very qualified success among our friends that I shortly made over the bulk to the gardener, with permission to either smoke them himself or devote them to the destruction of green-fly in the conservatory. To the credit of the Palma tobacco I may add that no unusual mortality was subsequently observed among those insect pests.

Opposite the *Ayuntamiento* (town-hall) with its arched entrance *loggia*, stands the church of San Salvador, the interior of which appears at first sight richer than it really is, owing to its pillars of painted

plaster and screens of sham ironwork. It has however a good ceiling of pierced wood and a fine old marble font—said to have come from London three hundred years ago—sculptured with scenes from the life of San Juan Bautista, as the sacristan informed us,—a name under which we failed for the moment to recognise St John the Baptist.

We visited the small museum in the town and were much interested in seeing the relics that have been discovered of the *Haouarythes*, or aboriginal inhabitants of La Palma.

The human remains, like those in the other islands, were mummified to a certain extent, and wrapped in tanned hides; and two of the bodies—those of chiefs, it is supposed—were found to be wearing close-fitting head coverings beautifully made of straw bound with leathern thongs. A box formed of the hollow branch of a dragon tree—mill-stones for grinding *gofio*—necklaces of tubular pottery beads—hempen ropes, and some splendid bowls of black earthenware decorated with tooled lines, form the greater portion of this collection, and the Director of the museum was kind enough to present us with a piece of a *ganigo* or earthen vessel as a souvenir of our visit.

When he heard that we proposed riding across the island to see the *Gran Caldera*—the great crater of La Palma—he congratulated us heartily upon our enterprise; “The Peak—” he said, waving his hand patronisingly in the direction of Teneriffe—“the Peak is fine, but you will find plenty of peaks higher; the *Caldera* is the deepest and largest in the whole world.”

The following morning we went to see the nearer



*barrancos* above the town, and ordered a donkey for the señora; I say advisedly *ordered*, our landlady having told us that donkeys were to be had, but she seemed no whit surprised when a sixteen-hand mule was brought to the door instead.

"For me," observed Madame stolidly, standing by with folded arms, "—for me, donkeys or mules, they are all one family, you understand."

There is only one side-saddle in La Palma, and that has both its pummels smashed, owing to the habit of the mules of rolling on the ground the instant their rider dismounts. Balanced upon this "siege perilous"—our own saddle not having yet been unpacked—the señora rode through the town, on the outskirts of which, at the mouth of a dry river-bed, we came to a strange ship or barge built of stone. This is the ship of our Lady of the Snows, as an ancient image of the Virgin is called which is lodged in a church higher up the hill. Once in five years she is brought down in solemn state to the town, and on these occasions the stone ship is full rigged and a great *fiesta* takes place, attended by Spaniards from all parts of the world. The next celebration will be held in April 1910, and if I were staying in Teneriffe at the time I should certainly go over to La Palma to witness such a curious ceremony.

The surroundings of Santa Cruz—*La Ciudad* as it is called by the islanders—are infinitely more picturesque than those of any other town in the Canaries. Rising abruptly from the coast, the hills open out behind the town into a pretty valley, disclosing a vista of *gofio* mills occupying a rocky spur, and backed by a chain of





THE STONE SHIP OF OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS



irregular indigo-blue peaks, the pine-clad heights of the *cordillera*.

There is only one *carretera* (carriage-road) in La Palma, and this runs along the eastern side of the island and partly round the western coast. This road we followed by carriage as far as Mazo, a village some twelve miles from the capital, our driver lashing his two shabby but willing little mules up the long steep zigzags by which one climbs the hill behind the town until we insisted on their being allowed to walk. The views from various turns of the road are charming, the tall palm trees—standing singly or in groups among the houses—supplying the foreground which is usually so lacking in the scenery of the Canaries.

Choughs wheeled in flocks about the fields, uttering their shrill cry, their long bills and legs of sealing-wax red distinguishing them from rooks, for which at first sight we mistook them.

The chestnut groves were still leafless, but the whole countryside was breaking out into fruit blossom from the orchards of peach, plum, pear, and cherry through which we drove. The white Florentine iris grew in quantities in the fields and by the wayside, in company with bushes of double geranium and masses of a graceful old-fashioned-looking wild cineraria with dark purple centre and petals of pale mauve, quite one of the most beautiful wild flowers we ever saw.

The natives hold wild flowers in very low esteem, and if you ask them the name of one they will in most cases merely reply that it is *yerba*, (grass) and that donkeys will—or will not—eat it as it may happen.

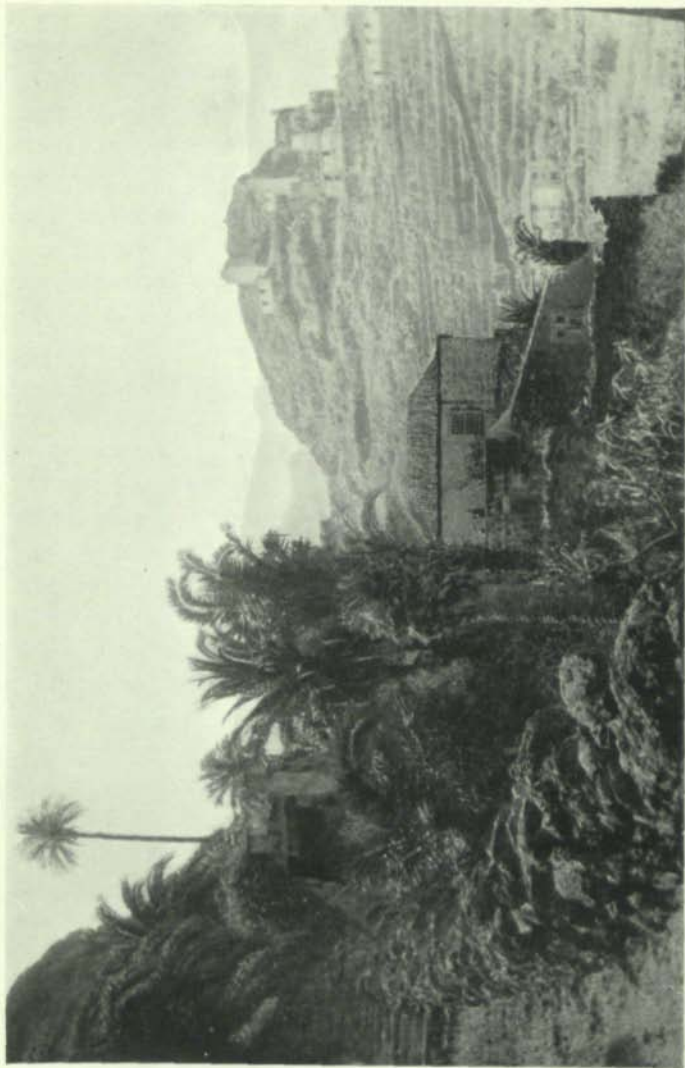
They have an extraordinary love of cultivated

flowers however, very unusual in southern peasants, and the humblest cottager will bloom the most beautiful carnations, fuchsias, freesias, and geraniums in old kerosene tins, kettles, and broken saucepans grouped around his house door. We noticed the same passion for flowers among the people of Grand Canary, where I remember once seeing a flourishing colony of pansies growing in some battered sardine tins.

We halted for luncheon by the roadside, ensconcing ourselves among cistus, bracken, and tall St John's worts; our driver procured us a bottle of water from the nearest house, but it was so brimming with live things that we forbore to drink it, and fell back on the oranges we had brought with us. Glancing casually seawards, we suddenly espied the Peak; not a sign of Teneriffe was visible, but the *Pico de Téide*—the Peak of Hell, as the people of Palma always call it—was seated upon the bank of clouds on the horizon like a grey limpet-shell streaked with snow, and appeared incredibly high. This was memorable as being the last occasion on which we saw the Peak; whether we had slighted it unparardonably at Laguna I cannot say, but eagerly as we looked for it on a subsequent occasion when in Grand Canary, it never again vouchsafed to show itself to our eyes.

On our way back we stopped in the village of Breña Baja, and—with the boldness that sometimes seizes one in a perfectly strange locality—expressed a wish to photograph the ancient Canary costume which the guidebook says “Is still worn by the people of this district.” We had ourselves seen no one wearing anything approaching a costume, but a number of villagers





"THE HILLS BEHIND S. CRUZ OPEN OUT INTO A PRETTY VALLEY, DISCLOSING A VISTA OF GOFIO MILLS OCCUPYING A ROCKY SPUR."



crowded round us when we stopped the carriage, and to these we explained in our best Spanish what it was we were looking for.

At first they could only gaze at us in silence, but presently an intelligent-looking man assumed the rôle of spokesman and turning to the others asked them if they had ever heard of a *traje de pais* or *traje de fiesta* such as the señoras were inquiring about.

One and all shook their heads, passing the phrases we had used from mouth to mouth with a solemnity worthy of the chorus of a comic opera.

The oldest inhabitant, who had tottered up on crutches, was now appealed to, and pointing with a quavering hand to the English guidebook I was holding, intimated that he would first like to see what was written there on the subject; poring over the page—which was less than Greek to him, since he assuredly had never learned to read—he returned us the volume, and nodding to the spokesman of the party assured him that what the señoras said about an old costume was quite true, for it was set forth in print.

Spurred to fresh efforts our friend despatched a girl to a neighbouring house whence she presently issued, wearing a bright pink silk blouse, a blue skirt, a necklace of glass beads, and a fly-away hat decked out with ostrich feathers. "Señora!" said the man triumphantly—leading the girl, whose cheeks were white with pearl-powder, in front of the camera—"behold the fête-day costume, *traje de fiesta!*"

We were reluctant to dash his pleasure, but we were forced to tell him that that was not what we wanted.

The case seemed hopeless, and we were preparing to

abandon our quest when suddenly a woman who had joined the crowd, announced that at home she had a hat of immense antiquity. We implored her to let us see it, and when she returned—bringing with her what looked like a doll's sailor hat made of palm fibre—we saw that we were on the right track at last.

At sight of the hat the bewilderment and inaction of our would-be helpers disappeared like magic; a long-drawn "Ah-h!" of comprehension went up from the crowd, and in a moment half-a-dozen children were sent running in different directions, while messages were being bawled by stentorian voices to outlying houses about the village. The whole collection of antiquated garments that could be raised in the place amounted to little more than an outfit for one girl, and we had some difficulty in persuading any of the little maidens present to don the crimson-laced bodice, the short full skirt, and the absurd little hat that must be worn cocked over one eye. Some of the girls were too shy to masquerade in public, others refused to be photographed barefooted and wanted to go home and put on their Sunday boots, while others again were so convulsed with amusement at the thought of the figure they would cut in so obsolete a dress that they broke down in fits of laughter.

At last we found a child sufficiently devoid of self-consciousness to act as a model; a small boy wearing a *mantera* was easily caught and placed beside her, and we secured a picture that is likely to be the last ever taken of the ancient peasant dress of La Palma. The woman to whom the hat belonged said that the costume of which it formed part had been extinct in Breña Baja for the past twenty years or more.



Our return to Santa Cruz was really exciting, for it is a matter of etiquette with the local Jehus to drive furiously—with loud whip crackings—down the steep zigzags above the town, quite regardless of the risk of overturning the carriage; making all our belongings fast with straps and strings, we anchored ourselves in our seats as firmly as possible, and did what we could to right the victoria at the turns of the road by leaning inwards as though we were bob-sleighting. Once inside the town our speed was even accelerated, and we bounded over the cobbles at full gallop, our driver glancing over his shoulder from time to time to see if we still were in the carriage.

It needed no Cassandra to foresee an accident, and very soon, when trying to turn a street corner, we crashed straight into a house, the end of the pole alone saving the near mule from being brained against the wall. Slightly subdued, our driver picked himself up, backed off the pavement, and eventually set us down, shaken but uninjured, at our hotel door.

Whether it was owing to this kind of excitement, or to the detestable cookery at the Hotel Español I cannot say, but the señora picked up strength so surprisingly that three days after we landed she felt able to start on muleback for a few days' expedition.

Our idea was first to cross the *cordillera* to Los Llaños, a village on the other side of the island, with a good *fonda*, and from there to visit the *Gran Caldera* (great cauldron) at our leisure; we were able to hire two good riding mules, and having our own saddle made the march in tolerable comfort, taking with us the owner of the mules—José Maria—and a lazy young

fellow of the type described by a Sussex gardener as "an arternoon sort o' chap" to look after the pack animal. Winding our way up the mountain-side through woods of laurel and heath—our valises getting many a sad scrape from the boulders on either side of the track—we arrived in three hours at the pass of *Cumbre Nueva*, 4750 feet above sea-level.

Here we lunched in a tiny *venta* tucked away among the rocks, and while the old man in charge lighted a fire of chips to boil the kettle and scraped and wiped a bench for us to sit on, we rummaged in a cupboard and collected a mixed assortment of eatables—a tin of sardines, some guava cheese, a solitary egg, half a dozen biscuits and some bananas; a couple of plates and knives were discovered on the floor, and a small bare-footed boy huddled in a blanket was set to kick away the cocks and hens assembled under the table. As fast as he drove them out by one door they ran round under the counter of the adjoining room and re-entered—like a stage army—from the rear, so that we seemed to be sitting within an unbroken circle of scurrying poultry.

There was neither bread nor coffee to be had, we were told, until Pépé returned from market; if he was bringing bread there would be bread—and if coffee, there would be coffee. But Pépé was late, and no amount of shouting down the mountain-side brought any answering call. The old man assured us however, as we rode away, that all should be in readiness for us on our return to Santa Cruz, and that not only should there be coffee for us but even milk to go with it.

For the next three hours we descended the hill, riding through glades of splendid pine trees before



IN THE PINE WOODS OF LA PALMA





reaching the village of El Paso, where the air was heavy with the scent of orange-blossom. Still down, down, down, always down, now following a steep paved lane between high walls, till at four o'clock we enter Los Llaños—a clean, prosperous-looking place of six thousand inhabitants, with a good *fonda* kept by the former proprietor of the hotel at which we have been staying in Santa Cruz.

A greater contrast than that afforded by the two houses could hardly be imagined; the rooms at Los Llaños were beautifully clean, the cooking excellent, and our host the soul of courtesy and liberality.

During the first twenty-four hours of our stay our feelings were harrowed by intermittent outbursts of piercing lament below stairs, proceeding as we supposed from José's little mongrel *Gentil*—shut up and separated from his master; at last we could bear it no longer, and went to beg that the faithful little dog might be let out. Our host seemed puzzled, and said that as far as he knew the dog was not in the house at all—but possibly what the señoras had taken for its howls was the sound made in opening and shutting the street door, which certainly did squeak a little. Antonia the maid was sent downstairs with a bottle of oil and a feather—and *Gentil's* distressing shrieks ceased from that moment.

## CHAPTER XVII

THE following morning we rose early, with a view to visiting the *Gran Caldera*; by the local time it was five o'clock, and on going to our windows what was our disappointment to see the sky heavily overcast and the crests of the mountains already enveloped in clouds. Tourists however cannot choose their weather, and we set out, consoling ourselves with the reflection that there was at least as good a chance of the day improving as of its growing worse.

The next three hours' riding was the roughest we had as yet encountered—which is saying a good deal. On topping the brow of the nearest hill one finds oneself looking down into the *Barranco de las Angustias*—a ravine so gigantic that it might almost be termed a valley, were it not for the precipitous nature of its sides. Opposite us, on the far side of the gulf, rises a sheer wall of black lava seventeen hundred feet in height—the barrier of the Timé (pronounced Tee-may), and far below, flowing down the bed of the *barranco* and dwarfed by distance to a mere thread, is the stream that issues from the great basin of the *Caldera*—the only stream of even respectable size that we ever saw in the Canaries.

Down to this stream level we have to go, and for the next hour we pick our way down a sort of rough staircase that skirts the abyss, our *arrieros* steadying the

mules at the deeper drops by hanging on to their tails and acting as drags.

The wooden crosses erected here and there beside the path do not—as we at first supposed—mark the spots where travellers perished on their way to the *Caldera*, but are merely the ordinary wayside crosses in rather unusual number; we asked José Maria why some of them were swathed in linen. "*Costumbre de pais!*" (local custom), he replied—adding naïvely—"Have you then no crosses in your own country?"

At last we are at the bottom, and crunching across the wide shingly bed of the ravine and fording the little river knee-deep, our mules gain the other side and begin the long—apparently interminable—climb which shall bring us to a point from whence we shall be able to look down into the *Caldera*. Each time we round a buttress of the hills we think it must be the last, and each time we see a fresh spur ahead of us; here and there a lonely hut or a terraced patch of stunted sun-bleached barley betokens the presence of human life among these solitudes—but neither man nor beast do we see upon our ride.

Meeting a train of pack-mules on these narrow paths is not unattended with danger, and on one occasion—fortunately in not a really dangerous spot—I had my beast dragged backwards, plunging and kicking, for some distance before his crupper could be released from the load of a passing mule in which it had become entangled. And a friend of ours met with a nasty accident in much the same way—his bridle-rein getting hitched upon the curved stick fastening the girth of a pack-mule, causing both beasts to get frightened and after a scrim-



mage to fall, the rider escaping with a cut face and badly sprained wrist.

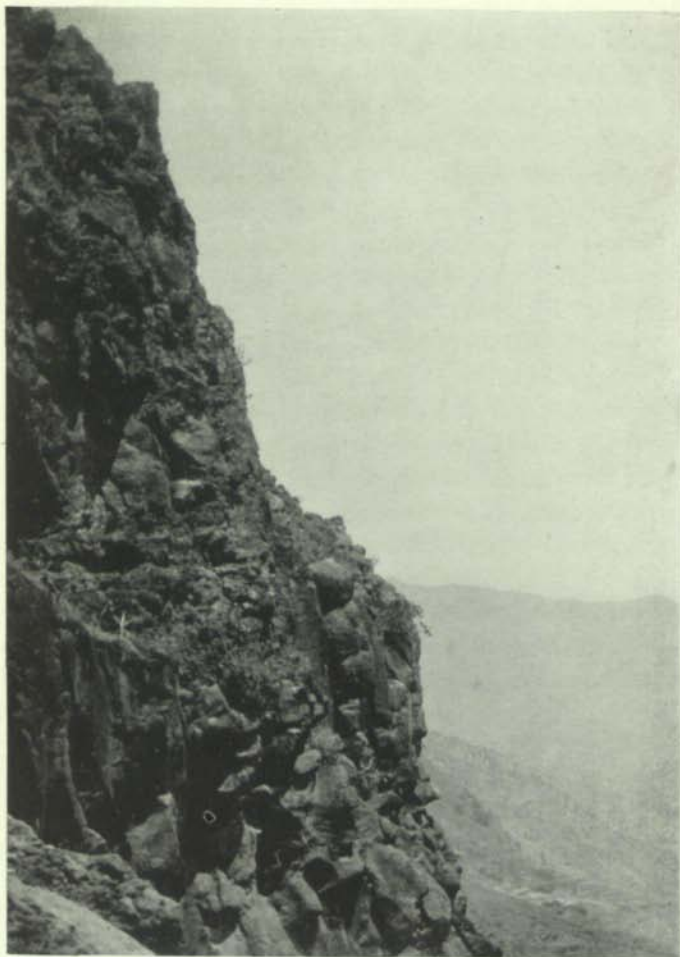
We had now been riding more than three hours, and the heat of the sun was rapidly dispersing the clouds, so that by the time we reached our outlook point the great *Caldera* lay unobscured before us beneath a sky of radiant blue.

Had we not known that we were going to see a crater I do not think we should have recognised as one this immense hollow among the hills—measuring over four miles across and ringed round with bare grey crags six or seven thousand feet in height. The aborigines of Palma used to assert that the Peak of Teneriffe had been blown out of this *Caldera* and flung across the water into its present position—and undoubtedly a large portion of the Peak might well be dropped point downwards into the *Caldera* without filling the enormous cavity. The bottom of the basin and the lower slopes of the mountain spurs that rib its sides are clothed with pine forests, and their slippery needles—together with the excessive steepness of the ground—made moving about so difficult that we stayed where we were and took a long rest on the warm hillside, a chiffchaff singing to us of spring in a pine tree overhead.

José Maria said that with tents it was possible to camp very comfortably in the bottom of the crater, and that he once spent a fortnight there with a German señor who passed his time in picking up stones; he had also heard of an English señora who lived for a week alone in a cave close to where we now were, in order that she might draw pictures of the trees.

The passion for being uncomfortable at any price





PRECIPICE OF EL TIMÉ, SHOWING A PORTION OF THE PAVED ZIGZAG PATH



which he observed in well-to-do foreigners was evidently an unexplained mystery to simple José, whose aims had always lain in the direction of acquiring such humble luxuries as were within his reach. We ourselves were perhaps not as eccentric in his eyes as some other travellers—but why we should wish to climb to the tops of mountains when compelled by no necessity, and why we should come to a *fonda* in La Palma when we could obviously afford to stay at an expensive hotel in Tenerife—these were problems which José accepted, but could not hope to find an answer to.

On the return ride to Los Llaños I walked a great part of the way, and only realised what the steepness was of some portions of the path we had ridden down in the morning when in trying to climb it I fell on all fours in the vain effort to make good my footing on the slippery stones. How it is possible for shod mules to stick their toes into these frightful inclines sufficiently to struggle up with a rider on their back I cannot think; as a matter of fact nearly everyone dismounts and walks both up and down all the worst parts of the track, as being both safer and pleasanter.

The following day—April the 27th—we left Los Llaños on our way to Candelaria, a village to the north of the Timé precipice, where we hoped to get beds for the night.

Again crossing the *Barranco de las Angustias*—but this time nearer the sea—we find ourselves at the foot of the towering cliff of the Timé; it is astonishing that it should ever have entered the mind of man to make a path across this rampart reared by Nature, which says as plainly as tongue could speak—Thus far, and no

farther. There is something awful in looking up and seeing the zigzag path that has been blasted in the rock winding like a tiny track worn by ants over the face of the precipice; the whole of the path is paved with slabs of rock, and the turns of the zigzags are so abrupt that the leading mule is often standing on a ledge perpendicularly above his companion pressing close upon his heels.

When halfway up we overtook a countryman leading a cow; all the islanders are extremely scrupulous about saluting one with "*buenos dias*" or "*buenas tardes*" according to the time of day, but this man went farther and pressed us to have some wine from the diminutive barrel slung from his shoulder; his surprise and disappointment were great when we regretted that we did not drink wine. "Is it possible!" he exclaimed.

But he would not be balked in his hospitable intentions, and diving into the depths of his *alforjas* (saddlebags) he produced a packet of most excellent dried figs, which he insisted on sharing with us. To anyone hailing from one of the villages to the north of the Timé, as did this peasant, it must indeed have seemed incomprehensible that we should not drink wine—for water drinkers would be in sore straits there; springs are very scarce in that part of the island, and the population relies almost wholly for its water supply upon the rainfall, which is carefully collected in covered tanks and is full of animalculæ and impurities.

We saw an old woman dredging up the last bucketful of yellow fluid from the bottom of a large reservoir, for washing purposes, and she told us that on the morrow she and her neighbours would have to



send for water to a *barranco* distant an hour's march for mules.

At the top of the Timé precipice we made a long mid-day halt in the shadow of a great rock.

Lizards crept out of the crevices and watched us with glassy unwinking eyes as we sat at lunch; we threw them a chicken bone, and in a flash half-a-dozen of the creatures had seized it, scuffling, worrying, and tearing off shreds of flesh and skin as though they were a pack of famishing crocodiles. At last a large black lizard—which had adopted the protective colouring of the lava with such success that it was more like a charred cinder than a living animal—dragged the bone of contention into a hole, leaving the others outside licking their lips with greedy red tongues.

Next came a great glossy raven, who eyed us from a neighbouring rock and then suddenly flung himself into the abyss as though bent on committing suicide—falling like a stone for fully a thousand feet before he righted himself and sailed away. After him there appeared two young goatherds, carrying *lansas* (jumping poles) in their hands, and wearing the *mantera*—a headdress which, seen from in front, has so much resemblance to the wigs worn by the ancient Egyptians that it seemed to lend to the boys an Egyptian cast of countenance.

Wonderful tales are told of the leaps made by these *pastors* of the *Caldera*, who skip from rock to rock as nimbly as the goats they herd, and think nothing of alighting upon a boulder fifteen feet below them, breaking the shock by striking the ground with the point of their iron-shod pole at the moment of

alighting. It is even said that a man offered, for a wager, to jump from the roof of a church at Santa Cruz—but whether the wager was taken, or what was the result, history recordeth not.

The two boys gave us a slight display of their powers, though admitting that they were not skilled performers; what chiefly struck me was the ease and rapidity with which they swung themselves, spider-like, from rock to rock with the help of their poles, or bounded in a twinkling to the top of a six-foot stone wall. They said that accidents very rarely happened, for that the *pastors* began as quite small boys to learn the use of the *lanza* and so grew expert before they ventured into really dangerous places.

Occasionally however one of them gets killed, just as even a goat from time to time pays the penalty of its recklessness and is dashed to pieces at the foot of some precipice where no one ever finds it but the ravens.

Long before we got to Candelaria we could see its large *parroquia* (parish church) upon the hillside, but as usual, unsuspected *barrancos* intervened in weary succession between us and our destination, and it was not till late in the afternoon that we entered the scattered village of four thousand inhabitants. Though so large a place, the only *fonda* is primitive in the extreme, and neither fish, flesh, nor fowl was to be had for supper.

Having noticed a large placard hung in the shop through which we had entered, bearing in English the legend—"Pat-a-cake biscuits. We have them," we said we would have some biscuits anyway; but our host



GOATHERDS OF LA PALMA





only shook his head gloomily and appeared never to have heard of such things. At that moment the sound as of hungry people supping soup fell upon our ears, and we told him to let us have whatever was being eaten in the kitchen; whether they really were supping on potted salmon, soup, goat's-milk cheese, and prickly pears I do not know, but that was the *menu* presently set before us, shortly after discussing which we were lighted down a ladder and across the backyard to bed.

The flies here were worse than we had seen them since landing at Santa Cruz in December; they clung in dense black patches to the ceilings, walls, towels, and bedclothes and woke us at sunrise by their lively buzzing.

While breakfast was being got ready we crossed the street and entered the church, which has a fine sixteenth-century reredos of carved wood; the roof and floor are of *téa*—the hard durable timber in which the ancient Guanches confined their dead. Before the west door is a wide stone seat of singular appearance, inset—both seat and back—with porcelain tiles bearing bold numerals—those that were left over after numbering the houses in the village; it is not a restful seat, as it is difficult to resist mentally totting up an imaginary Bridge score.

The old sacristan came to the inn door to see us off, and with blessings and handshakings bade us good-bye, while the priest wished us *felis viaje* and as a parting gift presented us with a framed picture of the *Virgen de la Candelaria*—a wooden image of great antiquity and power.

Our second *arriero* was in a fit of sulks, owing to my having forbidden him to place a bundle of green stuff under my canvas suit-case when loading the pack-mule; stains upon the valise did not matter to him, and he vowed that the load could not be made secure if the fodder were removed—proving his point by halting to readjust the pack every half-hour during the march. The descent of the Timé was worse, if anything, than the ride up had been, and was undoubtedly more trying to the mules, who now and then slipped on to their hocks in picking their way down the appallingly steep rock paving; at one point the señora's mule got one of his hind feet hung up in a crevice between two stones, and a nervous or inexperienced beast might have come to frightful grief; but after a few ineffectual pulls the mule freed his hoof and cautiously continued on his way.

"*Pobre bestia! sufre mucho!* (he suffers much)," said José, alluding to the anxious face of the mule, who seemed to realise what the consequence of a false step might be.

No one, added José, had ever ridden down the Timé before, and I—who was on foot—sincerely agreed with him that anyone able to walk would certainly not choose to remain in the saddle.

Our men had breakfasted at a *venta* that we passed, and having each bought a roll had torn out the crumb and poured in a glass of red wine, munching the wine-soaked crust as they went along, and they now burst into song, improvising a kind of antiphonal anthem as they descended the Timé, taking up the chant in turns and bellowing till the rocks re-echoed again. When

at last we reached the bottom we passed a field of sugar-cane that was being cut, and following the laden mules that were carrying bundles of it up the opposite side we visited the sugar factory before returning to Los Llaños.

Entering an immense quadrangle strewn deep with trash that emitted a strong sickly smell, we inspected the great tanks of boiling syrup and the whirling vats where by centrifugal force the sugar is dried and crystallised. Everyone and everything about the whole factory was sticky with sugar, but strangely enough not a fly was to be seen.

Although grown and manufactured on the spot, the price of sugar in the island — thanks to protective duties on the Cuban imports—is maintained at sixpence a pound. I remarked to José—who while waiting for us was feeding his mules with the fat pink and yellow butt ends that had been thrown away—that at home we could buy the best sugar for twopence halfpenny.

“*Caramba!*” he exclaimed, “but the cane must grow well in England!”

On April the 29th we returned to Santa Cruz, quite sorry to leave the little *fonda* at Los Llaños, which for cleanliness, cheapness and liberality will compare favourably with any in the Canaries.

We did not take the route over the *Cumbre Nueva* by which we had come, but striking off to the south crossed the backbone of the island by the *Cumbre Vieja* —a much easier, though longer, ride. Passing the lava stream behind Los Llaños—which like an overturned inkpot has spent itself in pools upon the plain—we first followed a charming path through the pine woods,



and then ascended by cindery wastes and ash-heaps to the Pass, a narrow saddle between sandhills. From this point begins an interminable descent to the coast; down, down we ride through the clouds, our path twisting and turning among the woods that clothe the mountain-side, till we reach the *carretera* and are once more on the high road for Santa Cruz.

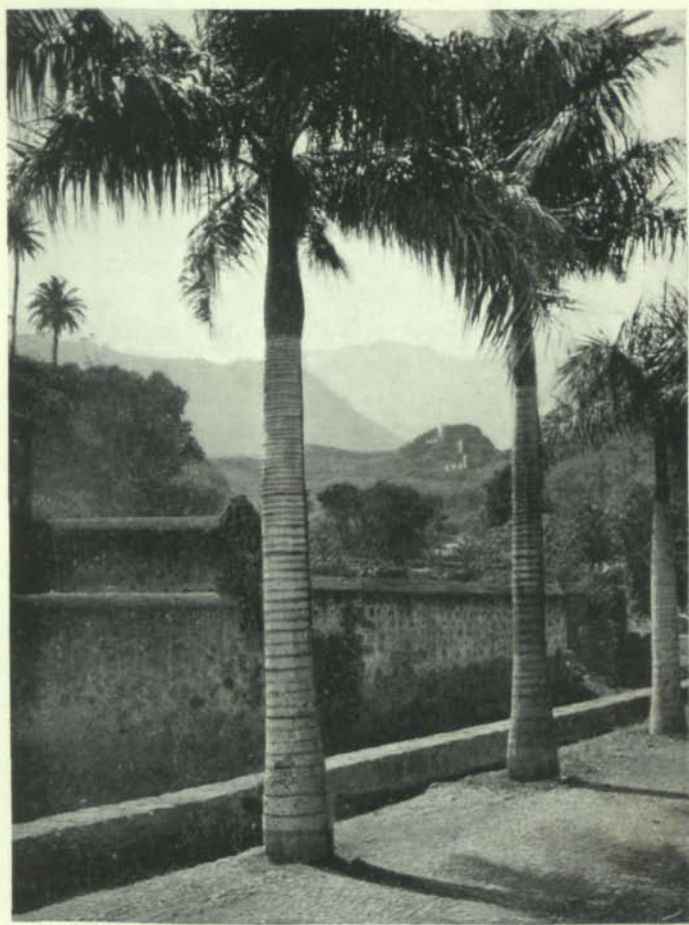
The whole country was a-foam with fruit blossom, and later in the year the island must be such another paradise for the fruit lover as Tasmania, for we rode for miles past flourishing orchards of pears, peaches, cherries, plums, almonds, loquats, oranges, mulberries, figs and chestnuts.

Our ride ended with a long and tiring descent into the town by the old mule path; seeing the steepness of the paved track I dismounted and decided to walk, but found it no easy matter to keep my feet, the stones having been polished by centuries of traffic to a glass-like slipperiness. Even the *arrieros*—accustomed as they are from childhood to these paths—sat down heavily and unintentionally now and then, with sudden exclamations as their feet shot from under them; and I was not therefore greatly surprised when after the first few steps I found myself flat on my back and descending in that position at dangerous speed towards Santa Cruz.

Our spirits sank, I confess, when we regained the Hotel Español; even the mournful tootle of the knife-grinder's flute in the street outside seemed associated with the grease-spotted table linen of the *comedor* and the half-witted unshaven Raphael in his dirty jersey.

Our bedrooms had undergone a partial cleaning





VIEW TAKEN IN THE TOWN OF SANTA CRUZ



during our absence, but the towels—which had evidently remained undisturbed in the process—were connected with the wall by stout spiders' webs. Madame was in no very gracious mood, and when at the close of dinner we asked for milk to add to the coffee, Raphael—with a preliminary glance at her face—informed us in a loud aside that there would be no milk that night, as one of the señors—indicating one of the men at table—had *mal de estomago* and would require a glassful before going to bed.

A new visitor had arrived since we left, in the shape of a little German woman engaged in writing a series of articles on the Canaries for the *Kölnische Zeitung*; she only had three days to spend in the island, but in that time she managed to see not only the environs of Santa Cruz but with immense energy paid a visit to the *Caldera*, riding for ten hours a day on a chair strapped sideways—like a pillion—upon a man's saddle, the swaying motion of which made her violently sick. In spite of all fatigue and discomfort however, she, like ourselves, was charmed with the island, which—with the exception perhaps of Gomera, a yet more unknown land—is undoubtedly the most beautiful of the Canary group, and with a good inn at Santa Cruz might easily become an attractive resort for some of Teneriffe's winter guests.

One of the chief features of the Palma climate we found to be the absence of wind, which we had hitherto accepted as an inseparable condition of life in the Canaries.

Bad food and long days of arduous riding might not seem the ideal treatment for anyone recovering

from a severe attack of influenza, but from whatever cause it may have been, our stay in La Palma had wrought wonders for the señora, and it was with lighter hearts that on the night of May the first we re-embarked in the *Leon y Castillo* on our way to Grand Canary, where the last remaining weeks of our sojourn in the islands were to be spent.



# GRAND CANARY

## CHAPTER XVIII

IF first impressions be the true ones, then Las Palmas—the capital of Grand Canary—may safely lay claim to beauty.

I can still remember—with astonishment—how attractive the place looked as we quietly glided into the harbour on our arrival; the almost incredible blue of the water, flecked with patches of translucent green and purple—the long line of orange sand-dunes stretching between the port and the town—the delicate violet of the low hills behind them—the palm trees upon the sea front, and the town itself, its cathedral towers half veiled in mist, clustering on the shore three miles away.

Neither was the illusion destroyed when we presently got into a *tartana* and in the freshness of early morning drove along an almost deserted road in the direction of the town until we turned off into the grounds of the hotel Santa Catalina.

It is not for a day or two that the true ugliness of one's surroundings is borne in upon one—an ugliness which led one traveller to write of Las Palmas as a place of barbed wire and cinders, but which to me will ever be associated with dust, with heat, with the hideous steam-tram that clanks up and down the sea front,

ejecting showers of blacks from its funnel,—and with the daily, endless suffering of the heavily-laden mule-teams that pass along the same road on their way to the docks.

I have met people who have spent weeks in the Santa Catalina hotel without once leaving its grounds—not even for an afternoon's perfunctory sight-seeing in the town, for—as they truly remarked—what was the pleasure of going outside? Nobody even pretends that there are any walks at Las Palmas, while bumping along in a carriage through hideous scenery, enveloped in dense clouds of dust, has charms for few.

In the hotel you could at anyrate be comfortable and enjoy the fine weather—and what else, might they ask, did you come to Grand Canary for?

The hotel is indeed an oasis in a weary land—a place of arcaded verandahs, cool polished floors, wide balconies, and luxurious basket-chairs. The tropical creepers outside, the bleached grass, the dusty spaces of earth round the palm trees, and the hoopoes calling about the grounds, recalled an Egyptian garden. Among the trees were tennis courts, and away at the back—on the top of a yellow hill so devoid of vegetation that it seemed to have been skinned—were golf links, but they were for the most part deserted now, and the stillness that falls upon a southern pleasure resort with the approach of the hot weather was already making itself felt, in spite of the dozen or two of visitors who still lingered in the place.

For a while it was pleasant enough to idle away the days, and we should perhaps have stayed longer at the Catalina if we had felt the heat less; but during the

first week of May the thermometer stood at 75° in the shade, and our thoughts turned to the cooler climate of the Monte—Grand Canary's hill station—six miles inland.

Also be it said that our liking for Las Palmas by no means increased upon a nearer acquaintance with the place.

\* The favourite spot in the neighbourhood for picnics—Confital Bay—can only be reached by driving through some of the most squalid slums of the port and then picking one's way across a piece of waste ground strewn with old tins and heaps of refuse; and the seashore between the town and the port is utterly ruined for purposes of pleasure or beauty by being built over with low-class houses and used as a dumping ground for every kind of rubbish.

Las Palmas must thank its climate, and not its natural attractions, for the fact that it is the oldest and best-known winter resort in the Canaries. The main road along the sea front, cut up by the ceaseless traffic to the docks, is a deep bed of loose white dust in dry weather, and in wet a quagmire; in vain has the money for its repair been voted over and over again by the municipality, it always evaporates unaccountably without the public being a penny the better.

From morning to night the potato and banana waggons from Telde and Teror rumble by on their way to the port.

The mules belonging to the English packing companies—one of which owns as many as two hundred and fifty—are big, strong, well-fed beasts quite up to their work, and I am told that the indirect influence of the



English colony at La Palmas has done a good deal within the last twenty years towards diminishing the cruelty to animals that used to go on unchecked.

At the same time the pitiful wrecks of horses in the shafts of the *tartanas* waiting for hire at the harbour, the worn-out mules limping day after day with stone and sand carts along the road—half-starved, and with horrible red galls behind the collar—are sights so common that they effectually destroy any pleasure one might otherwise find in going outside the hotel gates.

A society for the protection of animals was started some years ago, but after the first native witness in a prosecution for cruelty had been knifed it was found impossible to get anyone to come forward with evidence.

Spanish opinion is hard to rouse on the animals' behalf. Pricking a saddle-donkey's withers with a cactus thorn to make him trot, jabbing mules with the whip stock behind the collar—where the raws are worst, or sticking a knife into them if they jib, are everyday practices with the natives, and if remonstrated with by an Englishman they reply that at any rate there has been found no need for a society to protect *children* in the island, such as we have at home.

It will be a bad day for the world when the occupation of a glass house shall be held to disqualify a nation from throwing stones.

By all means let us remember that when a Bill for securing protection to animals was introduced into the House of Commons—less than a hundred years ago—



it was received with ridicule and derisive hoots, and that it was jeeringly said that English legislators would next be called upon to defend the rights of cabbages; by all means let us remember that there are still to be found English men and women in the west country who enjoy hunting hinds to death at a time of the year when by every dictate of humanity they should be protected; but let us also remember that there are higher virtues than consistency, and if there is no other way of mitigating "the burden of the beasts of the South" but by persistently throwing stones at a neighbour's glass house, let us go out boldly and do so, without expecting to escape the crash of broken panes at home.

Some of our pleasantest hours at Las Palmas were spent in the museum in the town. The sight of the devil-fish—a fearsome monster with big black wings and a mouth like a portmanteau, who embraces his victims and carries them away under water—would effectually deter most people from bathing off the coast of Grand Canary.

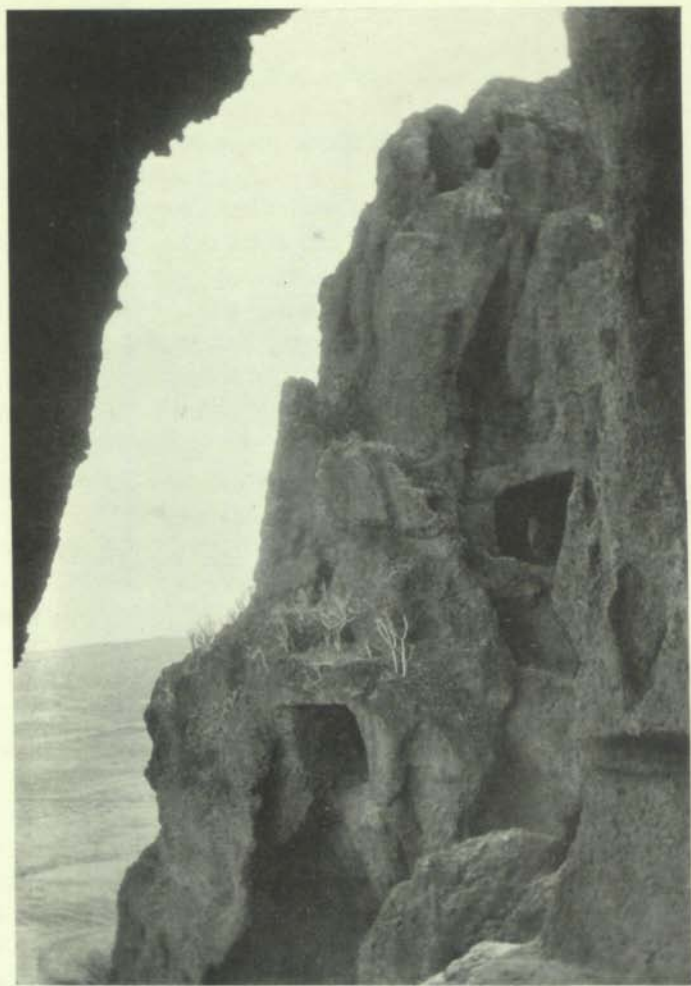
The collection of relics of the aborigines of the various islands is the most complete that exists; we found ourselves looking at the rows of mummies in glass cases, at vessels of red and black pottery, and at axe and spearheads of polished diorite and obsidian, with the feeling that they belonged to some prehistoric people of the Stone age, or of the time of the ancient Egyptians—instead of to races that had hardly ceased to exist as distinct tribes in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and of which the survivors—merging their nationality in that of their conquerors—became the ancestors of the present islanders.

Reverence for human remains is of so evanescent a nature that we can display in museums the bones of those who died a few centuries ago with as little compunction or sentiment as if we were dealing with so many fir cones. There is something grotesque in the reflection that a modern Canario might quite conceivably be looking upon the mortal remains of a lineal ancestor when inspecting one of the skeletons—"far too naked to be shamed"—that dangle by wire hooks round the walls of the anthropological section of the Las Palmas collection.

And probably he would have been an ancestor such as his descendant might be proud of, for it is remarkable to find what a high moral development existed—notably among the Guanches, truthful, courteous, haters of treachery—side by side with the lack of any written language and the absence of all scientific attainments or knowledge of metals.

Navigation being unknown, no communication existed between the islands, and some Canarios who were landed by the Spaniards on the neighbouring island of Lanzarote were never able to get back again, while their speech was a foreign tongue to the natives.

The conquerors made use of this lack of cohesion and employed one race in the subjugation of another; but even with the help of these auxiliaries, and aided by cavalry—which produced as paralysing an effect on the islanders as it did upon the Aztecs—the Spaniards had many a desperate battle, and so fiercely did the aborigines fight, with their clubs, slings, and stone axes, that in Grand Canary they are said to have been



CANARIO CAVES IN THE MOUNTAIN OF THE FOUR DOORS, GRAND CANARY





reduced to six hundred men before they were finally defeated.

A large number of the most valuable finds come from the sacred hill of Telde, or the Mountain of the Four Doors as it is called, which we had already visited, shortly after our arrival.

This was one of the holiest spots in the island in the times of the old Canarios, but a considerable effort of the imagination is now needed to conjure up the dwellings of the priests, the vestal virgins, and the embalmers of the dead, among the caves—difficult of access, vastly uncomfortable, and pervaded by a stifling goaty smell—that honeycomb the precipitous face of the mountain.

The different types among the skulls ranged upon the shelves of the museum must strike even the most ignorant observer.

Those from the eastern islands of the Canary group—Lauzarote and Fuerteventura—have more of the negro in them; those from the western—with high, well-shaped craniums—are said to resemble the type of the Celts and Basques, and perhaps like the latter race they may have claimed to have brought their language uncontaminated straight from the Tower of Babel.

In comparing the massiveness of chin and breadth of jawbone of some of the specimens with others of the same race in which both qualities are conspicuously lacking, one cannot but think that the resoluteness and strength of character which an individual will possess are as surely predestined for him as the colour of his eyes and the length of his nose.

“There is no manufacturing a strong will,” says Emerson; “it takes a pound to raise a pound.”

A Spanish youth who had been closely shadowing us for half an hour past, now addressed us with "Please I want to speak—" and in an almost incomprehensible medley of Spanish and English he explained that he was a guide, and that he particularly wished to show us the garotte at the law-courts before we left the town.

I had never seen a garotte before, and our guide showed us the working of the instrument by seating himself against its upright shaft upon a sort of straight-backed spinning-stool and allowing his neck to be enclosed within a heavy steel collar. With a single turn of the wrist a confederate standing behind the chair sent a well-oiled thumb-screw spinning up the steel shank of the garotte,—as one might tighten a screw hammer—and as he stopped it he said with a smile that another inch would have compressed the victim's neck so tightly against the shaft that he would have died instantly.

Although he had doubtless often done it before, I thought there was distinctly a look of relief on the face of the lad playing the part of the pinioned criminal when he was set free.

We wished to ask if the man who showed such familiarity with the instrument was the professional executioner, and the señora—who even in her moments of direst speechlessness had never been able to forget the Spanish word for hangman, presumably because there was no reasonable likelihood of its ever being wanted—now inquired with an *aplomb* quite foreign to her on everyday occasions, if he was the *verdugo* of Las Palmas.

The poor man was horrified at the suggestion and

hastened to explain that in the whole kingdom of Spain there was but one executioner and that he resided in the Peninsula, but had come over to Las Palmas two months ago to carry out a sentence of capital punishment. Both of the men assured us that death by the garotte was so instantaneous as to be practically painless; this may be so, but there is something so cold-blooded, quiet, and easy about the operation that for my own part I think I would sooner be hanged.

In front of the museum is a large Plaza, at the further end of which, opposite the cathedral, are some fine bronze figures of hounds; one naturally associates them with the great dogs said by Pliny to have been found in Canaria—which are I believe borne in the arms of Las Palmas—but we could learn nothing about them except that they had come from Paris and had only been set up some ten years ago.

I cannot remember noticing any special breed of dogs in the island, except a kind of large yellow greyhound that used to roam about the vineyards.

On the Teneriffe farms one sees large mastiffs which are turned loose at night to guard the property, but I do not think they were of a type in any way peculiar to the Canaries.

On May the 8th we shook the dust of Las Palmas from off our feet, and as far as possible from off our clothes, and drove up to the Monte—the only other spot in the whole island ever visited by the average tourist.

Grand Canary is in shape like a limpet-shell, with an apex some 5000 feet in height and a diameter of some



thirty miles, and our road strikes straight for the centre of the island, rising steadily the whole way. An hour's drive brings us to the village of Tafira, a thousand feet above sea-level, and a mile or so farther we come to the Hotel Victoria, recently adapted from a Spanish villa and not yet closed for the season as is its grander neighbour the Hotel Santa Brigida.

The Monte—or Monte de Lentiscal as this part used to be called a hundred years ago when it was covered with wild scrub—is now the great vine-growing district of the island, and the Victoria stands like a lodge in a garden, not of cucumbers, but of grape vines. We are surrounded by countless acres of vineyards, the brilliant green of their young foliage relieving the monotony of the fine black cinders that cover valley and knoll. There are charming walks all around; narrow footpaths bordered with Madonna lilies and bushes of fiery geranium lead through the vineyards, and scrunching cinder lanes—hedged with ancient aloes and tall Spanish broom—branch off in various directions about the country.

Within half an hour's walk of the hotel stands a conspicuous hill, the Pico de Bandama, shaped like the top of an egg from which the first spoonful has been scooped out—and just behind it lies the *Gran Caldera*, one of the most perfect specimens of a crater to be found in the world.

So unsuspected is the presence of this crater that it is quite a surprise on rounding the shoulder of the Pico to find oneself looking down into a great circular symmetrical bowl more than a mile across and about a thousand feet deep. At the very bottom there is a





THE GREAT CRATER IN GRAND CANARY



farm, and moving across the tiny patchwork of fields around the building we could see a plough at work. The inhabitants of the crater are so fortunate as to have their own water supply in a spring that issues from the rock in a small but perennial flow. We were assured that the heat in the *Caldera* was not nearly as stifling in summer as one would imagine, but that on the contrary there was usually a cool air stirring at the bottom.

We have all heard of a storm in a teacup, but I must confess that I should never have expected to meet with a refreshing breeze in a cauldron.

For the past week men and women in big straw hats have been shaking sulphur over the vines out of large pepper-casters—and just as we had been told that no more rain would be seen at the Monte this side of October down came a heavy storm and washed all the sulphur off again—the labour of days being undone in twenty minutes. Water drains away so instantaneously on these cinder beds that one may walk out immediately after a shower—tread on its tail, so to speak—and hardly be aware that rain has fallen.

Within a stone's-throw of the hotel is a group of picturesque old winepresses, with heavy beams and tiled roofs whereon fat house-leeks flourish. It is to be hoped that the big stone bins in which the grapes are trodden out are cleaned before the vintage; but perhaps for the fullest enjoyment of wine it is not wise to enquire too closely into the processes of its manufacture; the human foot, I am told, has not yet been satisfactorily superseded by machinery either in the pressing out of the juice of the grape—which it does without crushing

the stones—or in the smooth kneading out of lumps in some of the finer sorts of porcelain clay.

At the present day Grand Canary does not supply even its own wants, and has to import wine from Spain. The heights of carousal which I have always associated with the quaffing of cups of Canary sack have lost much of their glamour since I have heard that sack resembles nothing so much as diluted port, and that it owes its name (a corruption of the French *sec*) to its extreme lack of sugar—to my mind an unpardonable defect in any wine. Perhaps the unfortunate Duke of Clarence was of the same opinion, since he chose to be drowned in a butt of malmsey—a sweet white wine made from grape bunches left twisted on the stalk till half dry, and largely grown at one time in the neighbourhood of Orotava.

It is well known what a love vines have for volcanic soil, but it was a surprise to see roses growing side by side with them in the loose cinders and blooming so profusely that you could hardly see the bush for the roses, as one would not have expected their roots to go deep enough—like the vines'—to reach the loam and clay below the ashes.

But the soil seems able to grow anything with the help of plenty of water, and the flower-beds in the garden of the Victoria Hotel stood perfectly stiff with flowers — longifolium lilies, hollyhocks, salpiglossis, gazanias, cinerarias, carnations—each plant ready to elbow its neighbour out of the bed from sheer exuberance and excess of vitality. I do not know whether the hot blood of the South can be said to flow in the veins of flowers, but an expression of really passionate



hatred was visible upon the faces of a row of pansies that stood in danger of being suffocated by a mass of pompous and overbearing snapdragons.

In the gardens of the Santa Brigida Hotel are many rare and curious plants, and among others we saw a rose-bush bearing perfectly *green* roses—not things of beauty, but as curiosities quite genuine and innocent of arsenical aid.

Riding-donkeys are scarce at Monte, and it was only after some difficulty that we managed to hire one for the señora to get about on. Though well stricken in years, and extremely shaky in the forelegs, the little beast was possessed of indomitable spirit and would not only challenge every donkey it met on the road to a fight but would scream defiance at a venture if it found itself passing within a hundred yards of the dwelling of any rival.

The perpetual braying became so wearisome that one day before starting we improvised a muzzle with a strap, Manuel—the little boy who accompanied us on our rambles—looking on with an apprehensive eye, evidently expecting a catastrophe, such as the bursting of the donkey, when the uncontrollable spasm that shook its soul should find its natural outlet stopped. At first the device seemed to promise success, and Moreno—still rather preoccupied about his nose—was hustled past one, and even two strange donkeys without giving vent to more than a brief and inarticulate remark; but at the third encounter his pent-up feelings overpowered him, and heedless alike of the muzzle and of the enraged Manuel's smacks behind he broke out into such a hideous, well-sustained, and semi-suffocated solo

that when at last he sobbed himself out and paused for breath half a mile farther on, the señora said that on the whole she preferred the sharper but shorter bursts of unsuppressed emotion—and so the muzzling-strap was removed.

Hundreds of tons of early potatoes for the London market are grown at the Monte; the busiest time is from the middle of March to the end of May, and we used to watch whole family parties of peasants at work in the fields, ploughing up the crop with a curved wooden ploughshare shaped like an elephant's tusk, and sorting and packing the potatoes into deal boxes containing sixty or seventy pounds apiece, with a layer of palm-fibre from Mogador on top to keep them fresh while travelling.

Possibly it is only those potatoes accounted unfit for foreign service—the stunted, the immature, and the elderly—which are reserved for home consumption, but I do not think that in the course of the whole spring we ate anything even dimly resembling a new potato such as we get in England.

The peas, French beans, and even the ducks—all raised on the spot—seemed to us to suffer from the same lack of flavour, though in outward appearance they were of the finest quality. The oranges on the contrary were delicious, even more so I think than those of Teneriffe.

I cannot say that I was able to cultivate any liking for the more outlandish fruits that some people profess to think so excellent, such as the alligator pear, edible passion-flower, custard apple, or the melon pear, which latter—though cool and juicy, is to my mind but an

indifferent melon with an unpleasant *arrière-pensée*. The attraction lies oftener in the name than in the reality I think, and even the fascinating bread-fruit that figures so largely in books of tropical adventure is found upon closer acquaintance—according to a dispassionate traveller—to be nothing but an edible substance of a consistency between wool, cotton, and a cornstarch biscuit.

May is the great month for running to and fro on the face of the earth, and when a tourist steamer put in at Las Palmas for the day we would be suddenly overwhelmed by twenty or thirty carriage-loads of trippers, who having spent the morning in doing the sights of the town would drive up to the Monte for luncheon and for a hasty glimpse of the neighbouring village of Atalaya, where the whole population exists by making coarse pottery and lives in cave dwellings scooped out of a sandstone hill.

The trippers had previously spent twenty-four hours in Madeira and a day and a half in Teneriffe, which permitted of a dash up to Tacaronte, while the hardiest even pushed on as far as Orotava and there slept the night, returning to Santa Cruz in the morning.

That this snapshot style of travel is popular is evident by the crowded state of the boats that cater for this class of tourists; but on less versatile minds these hurried programmes produce a kind of mental giddiness such as is felt on looking through a magazine in which photographs from all parts of the world are collected and where one sees in rapid succession a Parthian stele lately discovered in Assyria and representing a man wearing trousers,—a Sicilian donkey-cart—



a Norwegian wedding party—and the centenarian post-mistress of some Cornish village—with three lines of concentrated letterpress to each picture. Macedoines of this sort are apt to be a severe trial to one's mental digestion.

The inhabitants of Atalaya—an old Canario stronghold—are as much demoralised as is invariably the case along the great tourist tracks, and old and young alike are not above begging for pennies; but we found them civil intelligent people, as ready to show off their houses and to fashion clay pots by hand (the usual trick expected of them) as if they had received a season's training at Earl's Court. We were told afterwards that the model interiors with the clean rush matting and starched muslin curtains we had so admired were those specially reserved for exhibition—the unconscious tourist being gently lured in the desired direction by the wily villagers, just as a card-sharper imperceptibly influences his victim in the choice of a card.

However this may have been with regard to the homes of the Atalayans, we met with nothing but neatness and cleanliness in such peasant dwellings as we casually entered in our rambles about the Monte, and though the islanders do not shine as domestic servants I cannot think that people so industrious in the fields and with such a passion for washing their clothes—if not their persons—can often be slatternly in their home life.

It was while here that we first saw women wearing the white mantillas that are the only remaining vestige of local costume, and are peculiar to Grand Canary;





PEASANT FAMILY NEAR MONTE



they are of thin white cashmere shaped something like a large cape, and seem only to be worn on gala occasions or for going to Mass. It is sad to think how surely they are being superseded by the commonplace hat.

The postal service at the Monte was the most primitive that, so far, we had met with. At Orotava it had been sufficiently irregular, and visitors—buoyed up by the hall-porter's solemn assurance that a post was expected in that evening—would stay up late night after night in the vain hope that the looked-for mail-bag might really arrive. But at the Monte any communication with Las Palmas—six miles away—seems to depend entirely on chance. Even in Las Palmas itself, a town of nearly fifty thousand inhabitants, letters are only delivered once a week, and one of the great English shipping firms pays a fee of forty shillings per annum for the privilege of fetching its own letters daily from the post-office.

No townsman wishing to write to a friend living in one of the villages or hotels on the Monte would dream of dropping his letter into a pillar-box where it might lie *perdu* for weeks; he hands it personally to the driver of one of the coaches plying in that direction, gives the man a penny, and begs him to leave it at such and such a shop on the road. If he is particular as to the letter reaching his friend within a day or two he advises him by telegram where to go and fetch it.

The letter is meanwhile thrown with others into the bottom of the coach under the feet of the passengers, and if it is unregistered and therefore not obviously

worth stealing, and if it does not fall out when the door is opened or get jolted through the slit in the floor for the brake, the chances are it will arrive.

Not only were stamps very difficult to procure at the Monte, but the sight of one affixed to an envelope really distressed the natives, who looked upon it apparently as a direct tempting of Providence which the letter could hardly hope to survive. In the island of Gomera, we were told, stamps are such rarities that one pays twenty centimes for a fifteen-centime stamp.



## CHAPTER XIX

ON May the 17th we left the Victoria Hotel for a week's expedition into the interior of the island—the last excursion on muleback which we made in the Canaries.

“What makes the weather?” I asked of Antonia when she called me in the morning.

Antonia, who had sauntered into the room with a slow heavy tread that shook the house—and had then, with that air of having casually “come in to oblige” inseparable from the native servant, set down the water-can with a loud sigh and fallen to watching me in silence—moved to the window, and after a prolonged observation remarked that it made much wind. This was no novelty at the Monte, where for the last week we had been living in a circle of the winds, with our Venetian shutters clapping and squeaking all night; but the sun's heat was now so great that when we started that afternoon we were thankful in spite of the wind, for the shade of the eucalyptus avenue overhead.

The first stage of our journey—the drive to San Matteo, where the carriage road ends and where we were to stay the night—was made in a *tartana*, a two-wheeled covered cart, driven by a young fellow who knew a few words of English and who drove like a lunatic, galloping his willing little horse up the hill in

spite of the heat and the eight miles of collar-work that lay before it.

"*Despacio, despacio!* (gently)," we said from time to time—"there is no hurry."

"Sit buck!" was the only reply over a half-turned shoulder—"more buck!" although the *tartana* was already so tipped backwards that we were clinging desperately to our seats.

At last we imperatively insisted upon his coming to a standstill; the little horse was almost exhausted, and the sweat poured from it like rain, forming pools upon the ground where it stood. We pointed out its distress, and the cheerful idiot who had reduced it to that condition cut the ground from under our feet by heartily agreeing that it was very wrong to drive a horse so fast uphill; he brought it some grass, fanned it with a bunch of ferns and offered it other little attentions, and when we came to the next *venta* he went inside and bringing out a glass of red wine poured it over the horse's back by way of refreshment, the mingled smell of sour wine and smoking horse rising to our nostrils as a peculiarly nauseous combination.

It was Sunday afternoon; here and there a solitary figure was seen at work in the fields directing a flow of water among the crop of maize or beans, but for the most part the people were making holiday.

Little parties of girls with bare heads, but dressed in their gayest clothes and with a cluster of roses or geranium tucked coquettishly into their raven hair strolled along the road. Groups of men chatting, smoking, or strumming a guitar, sat in front of the village wineshops. Riders cantered by, and for the



COMING FROM MARKET





first time we saw a girl on horseback ; she was wearing a white bodice, a bright blue corselet skirt reaching nearly to her armpits, and a big befeathered hat, and was escorted by two cavaliers. Some children were playing at a funeral in one of the villages we passed, four of the party bearing between them a small coffin covered with white roses, while their companions processed solemnly in front, carrying a toy pix, censer, and banner.

The cocks in this part of the world have a habit of perching on the ridge of the house roofs and standing there motionless ; more than once we were in doubt as to whether they were cocks or weathercocks, but, on the only occasion on which we felt certain it was a weathercock we were looking at, the bird settled the question by suddenly breaking out into a shrill cock-a-doodle-doo.

A couple of hours' drive brought us to the village of San Matteo, lying close under the furrowed yellow hills that we had seen, far inland, from the Monte. The *fonda* was a very fair one, but the bedrooms were built upon a plan we found unpleasantly common in Grand Canary—that is to say they were on the ground floor, were wholly without windows, and had doors opening directly upon the paved courtyard of the inn, a thoroughfare where men and mules were constantly passing ; this necessitated our going to bed and getting up by candlelight in a dark and airless room, whatever the hour, as it was impossible to admit light by means of an open door in such a public place. How the natives adapt themselves to these ill-contrived sleeping quarters I do not know, but I fancy that the men at

anyrate leave their doors open when convenient, and if the details of their toilet are somewhat visible from outside—why, so much the worse for the passer-by.

At eight o'clock the following morning we set forth on the expedition we had planned with a view to seeing the finest scenery the island affords, and which is found chiefly on its western coast.

Both the men and mules were inferior to those either of Teneriffe or La Palma, the men stupid and lazy, the mules slow and not well accustomed to mountain paths. The señora's mount was like a great cart-horse in build, but if clumsy he had at anyrate the merit of being imperturbably placid and good-tempered; if he slipped down he got up again, unruffled; if he had to step across the tethering rope of a frightened cow, who drew it tight round his legs at the critical moment, he calmly disengaged himself; the sudden crashing collapse of the stool by which the señora was mounting left him unmoved; in fact you might as well have hoped to startle a spinning-mule.

For the first two hours we climbed steadily uphill, till on reaching the pass we came in sight of the great valley of Tejada, one of the grandest panoramas of wild tumbled hills, precipitous ravines, and bold rock needles jutting up from the mountain ridges that could be seen; the great bare obelisk of *Roque Nublo* is more than six thousand feet above sea-level, and can be seen from Teneriffe pointing its finger to the heavens. Had the day been clear we should have had a fine view of the Peak of Teneriffe towering out at sea as we rode down to the little village lying amid the folds of the mountains below us, but unluckily it was sirocco

weather and the whole island was wrapped in a haze of white heat which did not lift either that day or the next.

Our arrival at the little *fonda*—where, to use the old-fashioned phrase, we lay that night—caused a wonderful commotion, such as could hardly have been exceeded if it had been a question of quartering a regiment of dragoons. Whole family processions passed in and out of the best bedroom for the next hour, carrying heavy pillows, blankets and bed-linen, chairs, candles, and glasses, and tumbling over one another in their passage across the tiny *patio* already overcrowded by the presence of three dogs, some fowls, rabbits and guinea-pigs that had to be stepped over, as well as by numerous pots and boxes containing fuchsias, arums, and other plants.

When at last all was ready our hostess took us into the room, which was divided from the shop by a curtain, and showed us how, by one person falling heavily against the door and another simultaneously turning the key, we could barricade the entrance giving upon the *patio*. Every piece of furniture in the room except the beds and chairs was crowded with ornaments and empty flower-vases—rows of which stood also round the floor along the wainscot—but of washing apparatus there was no trace.

No, said Madame, when she understood what we missed—it was true this room was not adapted for washing, but we could use the little windowless room opposite, across the *patio*, for that purpose, and should find it very convenient.

This was indeed luxury, to have a dressing-room, even if somewhat detached; but we could not make out



why, during the rest of the evening, the good woman was so concerned as to when we proposed to use it. Had we washed? she inquired as she served our supper. Then what time did we intend to wash? and had we not better do it at once instead of waiting till we went to bed?

At last the reason for this insistence came out. The room was not a spare one as we naturally had supposed, but was the bedroom of some man who might be coming in any moment, so that we must fit in our ablutions at his washstand to correspond with his absences.

On these terms we were forced to decline the arrangement, and poor Madame, with a shrug of her shoulders at the inscrutable whims of foreigners, again summoned her patient household and set them to carry basins and towels, decanters and water-cans across the court into our room, where we concocted a washstand out of two chairs.

We went to bed early, in view of an early start the next morning; the grass pillows were so hard that we should certainly wake with red ears and aching heads, but we were tired and should no doubt sleep well. Alas for our hopes! No sooner was the light put out than battalions of bugs appeared upon the scene. A few might have been excused in a hot climate, but numbers such as these pointed to dirt, and when we pulled off the mattresses and discovered layers of grimy old sheepskins below we were no longer surprised at the condition of the beds. Sleep was out of the question, for even my flea-proof garment was no protection against bugs, which merely concentrated their attack upon my face and neck the instant I lay down. Lemon juice did



not daunt them, nor did layers of carbolic soap spread over every inch of exposed skin diminish their appetite.

A disturbed night does not sound much to read of, but when we rose at dawn we felt that bugless beds were the best boon the gods could bestow. Our hostess was sympathetic but in no way surprised at the inflamed sight we presented in the morning; perhaps it was in her mind that people who object to bugs need not come to Tejeda, and that anyway we were more trouble than we were worth.

It was horrible to think that if either of us had met with an accident on the road resulting in broken bones, an enforced detention of weeks among the bugs might have been our fate—a prospect almost more appalling for the uninjured one than for the sufferer. The more we dwelt on the awful possibility of being laid up in the fastnesses of the hills at Tejeda, the more nervously anxious did we feel to get away, and as soon as the muleteers had loaded up the pack—which they did with an amazing lack of intelligence for people who have been accustomed from their youth up to transport all their household goods, from a wardrobe to a bird-cage, upon a pack-saddle—we set out for Agâete, a march of seven or eight hours in the saddle.

That the march would be a bad one we felt no doubt, for the *arrieros*, who as a rule call any path good where a mule can keep his feet, expressed some nervousness as to the ride before us, giving us to understand—for the first time in our experience—that the path down to Agâete was worse than we should wish to see, and was indeed dangerous. We felt some curiosity to know in what way it *could* be worse than what we

had already met with, but before the day was over we readily admitted that it surpassed in badness any mule-track we had yet seen. We were told afterwards by residents at Las Palmas that much as they had wished for years to take this ride they had always been told it was impracticable.

For the first few hours we rode through a wild lonely country at a high altitude, with a magnificent jumble of mountain and ravine below us, stretching to the sea. The heat was sweltering, and the sun smote pitilessly upon the rocky track, forcing us on pain of sunstroke to hold up our lined umbrellas from morning to night.

By eleven o'clock we were even as melting wax, and on coming to the rare and welcome shadow of a great cliff we dismounted for a long halt. It was not exactly a restful siesta, for even when we had cleared the chunks of rock from a patch of ground sufficiently to lie down we found Mother Earth's lap desperately hard and unaccommodating. The mules were all rolling upon their backs, their heels kicking convulsively in the air, and the men were fast asleep in the shade with their mouths open. The air quivered with heat. Innumerable grasshoppers shrilled in the dusty grass, and now and again a piercing whistle rang across the valley from some invisible goatherd among the cliffs who was communicating with his family at home or passing the time of day to a distant comrade.

When a recumbent posture became too painful we sat up and turned our thoughts to luncheon; on a long march we always made ourselves some soup, however hot the weather, finding it both more reviving and

pleasanter than the very indifferent meat to be got at the village *fondas*. It is difficult to see the flame of a spirit-lamp in broad daylight, and after we had burned our fingers in ascertaining that the wick was really alight it stealthily went out and left us waiting vainly for the kettle to boil.

A raw egg stirred into the saucepan greatly improved the soup, but what was our horror to find that on this occasion our hostess of Tejada had not only provided us with the egg for which we had asked, but had crammed four others—raw and without any protection—into the luncheon-basket that had been swinging about on the mule's back all the morning. The horrible sticky mess had permeated everything around it and had even found its way into one of the valises; no water was to be spared to wash the things, so we scraped everything clean as far as we could and re-packed the basket for the march.

Before us lay the valley of Agáete, on the further side of which rose a towering black cliff that reminded us of the Timé precipice; far down the valley, near the coast, we could make out microscopic white houses half-concealed among what looked like housemaid's feather brushes, and which we knew must be palm trees—but between us and them lay many hours of fatigue and difficulty.

When we neared the edge of the rock plateau on which we had made our halt and the *arrieros* drove the pack-mule over the edge down a hideous goat-track it seemed impossible that we should be expected to follow—but this was in truth the beginning of the descent. Slithering and skating, with the muleteers hanging on



to their tails, the mules scrambled and dropped down the narrow twisting path, too much absorbed by the difficulties of the descent even to protest against the attacks of the swarms of flies that buzzed about their heads.

A peasant astride a pack-saddle was riding ahead of us and acted as a kind of road-meter, getting down when coming to an abnormally bad bit of path and remounting when the going was better; I must say he was much more down than up. At first he earnestly advised the señora to dismount when he did, but on learning that her walking powers were so limited as to make this impossible, he merely watched her perilous progress with an eye of commiserating wonder.

Twice one of our mules fell, but struggled to its feet again unhurt, and once the señora's stirrup-leather broke, no light misfortune when riding down miles of rock stairs; our men were as broken reeds to lean upon—they could suggest nothing, and had not so much as a bit of string in their pockets. Luckily we remembered that in the camera-case was a roll of tape we had bought when in La Palma—a broad and splendid tape of a rich ecclesiastical purple which went by the name of the Papal lampwick and had already been useful on many occasions; and with the aid of this and a penknife we repaired the strap so effectually that it lasted for the remainder of our tour.

When halfway down the valley we passed a woman washing clothes in a little streamlet, who offered us some goat's milk, which she brought fresh and foaming—and never did tired and sun-baked mortals find a drink more welcome.





PLAITING STRAW



The ride down the hot and shadowless mountain-side seemed never ending, but gradually the path grew less and less steep till at last we reached the broad and fertile valley that hours ago we had seen below us, with its plantations of bananas and rich green maize, its palms, and patches of waving feathery reeds through which splashed and sparkled little streams of running water. Some women who were sitting beside their cottage door under a clump of palm trees, with children playing and pigeons strutting around them, looked at us with curiosity as we rode by; few strangers come to Agáete at all, fewer still, or none, from the direction by which we were approaching it.

That we were sorely fatigued there was no denying; but in spite of weariness and heat our hearts were glad within us, for we had successfully carried out the plan we had devised and had come through the splendid scenery of the last two days without mishap, and now the toilsome march lay behind us; nor was it a light weight off our minds to be again in touch with civilisation in the shape of the *carretera* that connects Agáete with Las Palmas, as the thought of being laid up with broken bones several hours by mule from anywhere had become rather a nightmare to us while it seemed so far from improbable.

In mountain expeditions of this kind there is undoubtedly always an element of danger, though not quite of the kind conjured up by an old woman in a Somersetshire village to whom I had once—when on the White Nile—sent a coloured postcard depicting a group of wild giraffes, little thinking of the anxiety she would suffer in picturing me surrounded by these fearsome beasts.

“Lor miss—” she said, clasping her hands earnestly, when I went to see her on my return—“I did *pray* they mightn’t vall upon ee! But there, I baint ’sprised, for I allus knew if I was to go into vurrin parts I should run away!”

My chief recollection of the inn at Agáete is that we spent a blessedly undisturbed night and that we were so impressed by the general style of the place as to put our shoes outside our door at night in the hope that they might get a much-needed cleaning. We found them however quite untouched in the morning, and I have no doubt that our host—had this been pointed out to him—would have proudly assured us, like the Irish landlord, that ‘if we had left out a *gould watch and chain* sure an’ it wouldn’t have been touched neither!”

By half-past six we were again in the saddle, bound for Guia. Nothing could have been a greater contrast than our march to-day and that of yesterday; the road was flat and tame, and instead of the heat and haze of the sirocco there was a tearing wind that buffeted us handsomely till we got into the shelter of the *Montaña de Galdar*, a red hill like a pyramid that rises from the level coast in abrupt isolation.

Here for the first time we saw corn being threshed out on one of the circular paved threshing-floors we had often remarked in the fields. Two horses, a mule, and a donkey, fastened abreast, were being galloped round and round, knee-deep in straw, their manes and tails flying wildly, by a man standing in the middle of the circle with an end of rope in his hand, while half-a-dozen men seated on a pile of sheaves looked on.



Every few minutes a halt was called and the animals fell to eating greedily while the litter under their feet was hastily raked together and redistributed with wooden pitchforks, the merry wind catching up wisps of the short pale straw and whirling it away across country.

Three or four men with flails would probably have accomplished more than the whole circus, but if the manner of threshing was primitive, its *mise-en-scène* was infinitely picturesque, and the sight of a harvest scene in the month of May reminded us that we were in a land where winter is little more than a name and without any of the associations it has for us northerners.

The *Fonda de Francisco Artiles* at Guia is of a very superior kind, and we spent two most interesting days there; the Artiles family represents I should suppose one of the best types of the prosperous middle-class of the island. All the sons have received a good education, had secured exemption from military service by the payment of £60 a-piece, and were doing well in their different lines; the one who lived at home with his parents helped them to run the inn and was the local agent for the English banana export business. He had travelled in many parts of the world and spoke three languages fluently besides his own, and was moreover a keen and excellent photographer.

As he waited at table he told us that his mother was a notable jam maker and he brought us some of her peach and quince jams which were delicious. In the garden below the gallery where we breakfasted was a great tangle of the morning glory with its brilliant blue trumpets, and fig trees laden with ripe black figs,

the first we had tasted in the islands. Those who— with Charmian—like long life better than figs, are warned by a Spanish saying never to drink water when eating this fruit, but often as we have neglected this rule I cannot remember ever having suffered in consequence.

The following day Señor Antonio took us over the little family property, two *fanegadas*—nearly three acres—in extent, and devoted not to the proverbial cow but to the banana. Each bunch of bananas brings in on an average the sum of five pesetas, against which has to be set the cost of the artificial manures used in banana culture and that of water; very few growers have a private water supply. At Guia for instance all the aqueducts belong to the municipality and are in charge of a public official, the *Acequero*, who repairs, cleans, and watches the *acéquias* and dispenses water to the various properties as required. The aqueducts are made in three sizes, and for an hour's flow from the largest gauge the charge is five pesetas; Señor Antonio told us that his own little plantation required five hours' water once a fortnight.

Stealing water is a rare crime, and so grave a one that it is punished by imprisonment.

During the last two months Señor Antonio had collected over nine thousand bunches of bananas in the Guia district alone for despatch to London, receiving a commission of twopence upon each. The summer he said was the slack time for business, for though the banana plants fruit equally all the year round, the demand for them in the English markets falls off as soon as cherries and strawberries come in.

A few years ago sugar-cane was largely grown around Guia, but now the mills stand idle. Cochineal still fetches one and tenpence a pound, and a few acres of land are devoted to it; but the banana has practically ousted all rivals in the district, and the whole population seems to be employed in attending upon it.

We looked into a shed from whence there came a sound of lusty hammering, and saw hundreds of banana bunches being packed for export. A woman was standing on either side of a stock of newspapers spread open upon the floor, and as each bunch was laid down it was enfolded—before being put into its crate—first in a wrapping of cotton wool and then in a new and uncut sheet of the *Lancashire Daily Post*, hundreds of copies of which seemed to have found no better use than to come out to Guia as wrapping material. Even now when in the streets of London I notice a van piled high with crates and see the straw or the tattered brown banana leaves sticking out through the slats it brings back the memory of that packing party in the shed, and of the mule-teams—hot, thirsty, strenuous—shuffling along in clouds of white dust on their six hours' journey to Las Palmas.

While we were at Guia we visited an old Canario cave at Galdar, a couple of miles away; turning aside out of one of the streets of the little town, a short but odoriferous walk through some onion fields brought us to the cave, which is below the level of the ground and was discovered quite accidentally some twenty-five years ago. Its chief interest lies in a rude decorative design painted in red, black, and white on the rock walls; but since the air and damp have been admitted



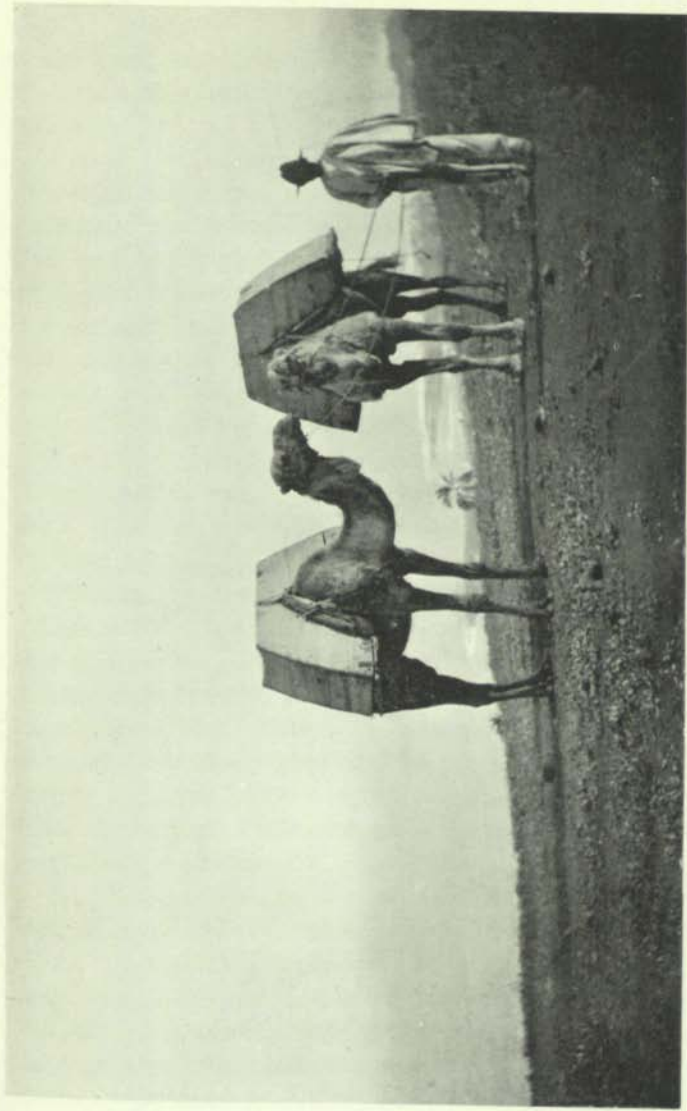
the colours are fading fast, and it is already difficult to make out the sun, moon, and stars which are said to be painted on the ceiling. Silver coins roughly stamped with the same devices were also found here, we were told, along with mummies that were removed to the museum at Las Palmas.

As far as I know this is the only cave in the Canaries in which traces of aboriginal decorative art have been discovered; we heard that King Alfonso had come here when he visited the islands two years ago.

Before leaving Galdar we looked into the church; during the whole of May—the month specially consecrated to the Virgin Mary—her chapels are adorned with flowers, and we found the altar and steps before the blue and white shrine of Our Lady decked with masses of longifolium and Madonna lilies, their shining white blossoms gleaming in the dim religious light of a Spanish church. It is a pretty custom.

In the *patio* of the Casino at Guia is a dragon tree, by no means so common an object in this island as in Tenerife; it is not as large as the old tree at Laguna, but has a straighter and taller stem which gives it less the appearance of a one-legged hedgehog. For the first time we saw the tree in fruit and carrying clusters of what looked like small orange-coloured cherries threaded upon a tassel of red fibres, much in the same way that dates are strung upon their bunch; the clusters springing from the tufts of fixed bayonets were quite out of reach, but hundreds of little cherries lay on the ground, and I asked Señor Antonio if they were ever eaten. He said he had never heard of anyone





CAMELS CARRYING SAND AT OROTAVA



eating them, and a small boy standing near looked on in wide-eyed astonishment when I made the experiment.

I must own to having felt rather as Eve must have done when she tasted the forbidden fruit—by no means certain she would not drop dead on the spot. To my surprise the dragon cherry was quite pleasant in flavour, much like a soft sweet date with a dried pea in the middle, and upon this discovery both Señor Antonio and I ate several and were none the worse; the little boy was still gathering them up greedily and storing them in his pockets when we left.

Looking through an album at the inn that evening I came across some photographs taken in the bone-yard that adjoins the Spanish cemetery at Las Palmas.

As was the case with the ancient Egyptians, and is to this day in Italy, it is only the rich who can hope to secure for their mortal remains an abiding resting-place; a lump sum down will ensure undisturbed repose in the cemetery to those buried in a family vault, but the tenants of the cheaper catacombs are evicted the very instant the annual rent due to the cathedral authorities falls into arrear, while the poor are only allowed to rest a single year in hallowed soil.

It is not every one who is as devoid of sentiment with regard to the disposition of his mortal husk after death as was Diogenes—who desired that his body might be hung up to scare crows—and it would be difficult to imagine anything more repugnant to the feelings than the place into which the freshly evicted corpses—stripped of all but their boots—are flung, in

company with broken coffins the features of whose occupants are said to be often quite recognisable in spite of the ravages of the quicklime in which the bodies are buried. The action of sun, air, and of the sea waves that break over the wall of the enclosure gradually disintegrates the clothing and the framework of the dead, and the residue is periodically burnt as the stock becomes too large.

The Towers of Silence of the Parsee are decent and solemn by comparison; yet so great is the power of the Church that knowing the fate in store for the bodies of their loved ones, mourners still commit their dead to a brief resting-place within the cemetery, fearing lest all should not be well with those who slumbered in unconsecrated ground.

On the 21st of May we went on to Firgas, a village lying up in the hills—our last stage on the way back to the Monte. Two comparatively quiet days at Guia had refreshed us, and the mere fact of having been able to talk to our host in English, instead of cutting our conversation to fit our Spanish, had been more restful than perhaps we were aware at the time. A very limited Spanish vocabulary is sufficient to support life upon, even in quite out-of-the-way villages; but that delightful fluency of expression of which I used to feel capable in moments when I was not called upon to speak, would unaccountably vanish as soon as I really had to do so.

In the course of the morning's march one or two of the deep and inevitable *barrancos* had to be crossed—in one of which the señora's mule cast a shoe—but for



the most part our way lay across pleasant uplands, by red lanes hedged with the Mexican agave, and through copses of chestnut and pine. It was so long since we had seen a tree that when we halted at mid-day in a beautiful wood through which bubbled a clear impetuous stream we could scarcely believe it was in the same island through whose arid and rocky fastnesses we had been riding two days ago.

Our men, who had never before been to *Los Tilos* as these woods are called, were enchanted with the place and exclaimed delightedly "*Mucha agua! mucha agua!*" as they gathered watercress in the stream.

*Los Tilos* properly speaking means The Limes, but we did not see any lime tree, and the wood seemed to consist chiefly of an evergreen tree of the laurel family (*Ocotea foetens*); both this and the *Ficus nitida*—commonly alluded to in the guidebook as the laurel or the Indian laurel, and something resembling an ilex in appearance—grow to the size of noble forest trees in these islands. The ivy-leaf fern (*Asplenium Hemionitis*) climbed profusely over the moss-grown boulders beside the stream, and later in the day we got into a region where a handsome pinkish-red salvia growing wild in tall clumps upon the banks and terrace walls formed quite a feature of the landscape.

A party of children by the wayside were playing with some unhappy bumble-bees tied at the end of a long thread; they must be a stingless variety, unfortunately for themselves, as I saw absolute infants stalking the hapless creatures and capturing them with the bare hand.

Before reaching Fargas our path dipped down by

an awful corkscrew zigzag into a veritable abyss, at the bottom of which are the warm springs and bathing establishment which attract summer visitors to the spot from Las Palmas, who are able to reach it by a carriage road from the south that comes up the bed of the cañon to this point. Firgas itself lies high and is reached by a long steep mule path up the side of the *barranco*; from the village one gets a wide bird's-eye view over the northern coast of the island and can see the white houses of Las Palmas clustered along the shore, and the *Isleta*—the rocky island that shelters the harbour—lying out at sea like a semi-detached limpet beyond its narrow isthmus of yellow sand.

The inn at Firgas is a very good and well-appointed one, but at the time of our visit was experiencing the rigours of a spring cleaning in preparation for the coming season, and all its galleries and balconies were encumbered with bedroom furniture and pails of white-wash.

That we had returned to civilisation was sharply borne in upon us as we rode up the street and were accosted by a small boy with the familiar "Péni! Péni!" instead of the grave "*Adios!*" with which we had lately been saluted in the villages.

"*Bôn dia, señora—bôn dia, mi niña!*" an old country woman would sometimes cry as we passed her on the road; but oftener the second salutation would die upon her lips, so absorbed was she in gazing at the señora who rode first; whether it was the señora's pince-nez that aroused such intense interest we never knew, but I—who when abroad have often owing to my height

known what it is to feel like a freak—could not help being amused as I walked behind to find that I often passed not only unnoticed but apparently unseen, owing to the concentrated attention focussed upon the señora.

The following morning we had the usual difficulty in getting breakfast early. Patience is too daily and hourly a necessity when dealing with Spaniards to have any claim left to being a virtue, but I do not know if, with any amount of practice, we should ever get reconciled to absolute unpunctuality; it seems to upset one's calculations so, much as it would a pilot's if a rock marked on his chart were sometimes fifty yards from the shore and sometimes five hundred.

By repeated shouts from the balcony and personal visits to the kitchen we at last got some coffee, honey, and very rocky bread, and when we had finished a little girl came up to the head of the stairs and in a barely audible voice remarked that the bill would be eleven pesetas. The muleteers were still struggling with the ill-balanced pack when we rode away, though they had done nothing but rearrange it since we had sat down to breakfast, and the items were invariably the same. The camera usually travelled slung upon the señora's saddle, though not without protest from the *arrieros* whether in Teneriffe, La Palma, or here, the reason of which we never fathomed; it could not have been on account of the extra weight for the mule, for if either of ourselves had been a stone or two heavier than we were it would not have troubled the men at all. Yet rather than see the camera slung upon a saddle they would willingly go through the lengthy business of un-



girthing the whole pack and readjusting it every time we wished to take a photograph; I have even known them insist on carrying it themselves by preference.

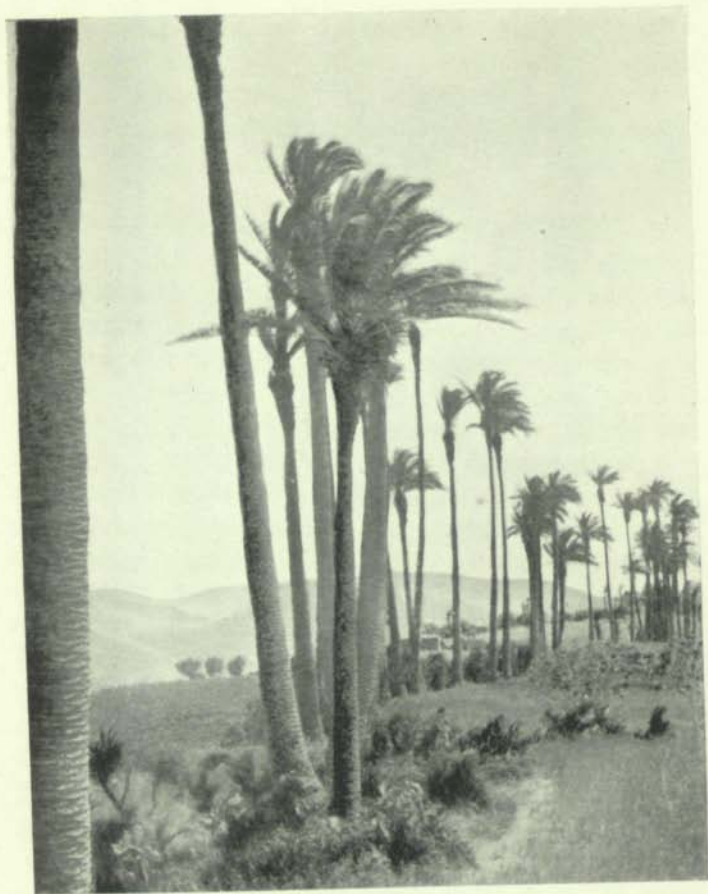
The pack-mule, though the smallest of the trio, got harder work than either of the others, for besides carrying the luggage it was frequently burdened with one or other of the lazy *arrieros* on top as well. On this occasion they must either have sat upon the luncheon-basket or have packed it upside down—a feat of which they were quite capable; for when we made our mid-day halt we found the marmalade everywhere but in its tin, and by the time we had re-captured the greater part of it there was so much marmalade spread upon the surrounding rocks that we had to move on to a fresh place before venturing to sit down.

The mules had enjoyed their morning's march, for much of it lay through fields of young clover and barley drenched with the clouds that hung upon the hills, and as they walked they snatched mouthfuls from the crops on either side, regardless of their masters' expostulations—" *Ave Maria!* to eat so much!"—and the accompanying smacks from behind.

Long stretches of the path were of a pattern we had not hitherto met with, the ground having been worn into such an abrupt succession of humps and holes by the feet of pack animals that it was like riding across a row of some hundreds of deep pig-troughs set closely side by side; the going was decidedly awkward, and the mules had to lift their feet so high and so straight out of the trenches that it looked as if the whole cavalcade was suffering from an acute attack of stringhalt.

When at length the track struck into the carriage





PALM TREES NEAR MONTE



road near the village of Santa Brigida it was emphatically "ease after toyle, port after stormie seas" and was in its way pleasant, though we were conscious of a certain sense of regret that our free outdoor life of wandering—rough though it had been—was over, perhaps for ever.

We were not sorry to have a few days in comfortable quarters before sailing for England, for the state of shabbiness in which one returns from these mule expeditions is unbelievable; it is better to start with old saddlery, old luggage, and old clothes from the very beginning, for a tour of even a few days goes far towards disintegrating the stoutest materials. Our saddle was in such a pitiable condition that we debated whether it was worth bringing away, and only the knowledge that we should get no offer for it in Grand Canary induced us to take it home, where the groom nearly shed tears at the sight of it, declaring that the stirrup would never be the same again even if he left it for a fortnight in the pig's bucket.

The 26th of May was our last day at the Monte, and I remember that we ate ripe blackberries from the hedges that day and saw asters and dahlias in bloom in the garden, which gave us quite an autumnal feeling, not being accustomed like Londoners to the anticipation by two or three months of each successive flower's natural time of blooming, which leads them to want roses in January and lilac in February.

Most of the guests at the Hotel Victoria had already departed, and lest we should feel dull in the evening the manager enlivened us with a gramophone which reproduced with great fidelity the sound of a fine voice of

indistinct utterance struggling heroically to rise above an accompaniment of whirring grindstones. A field cricket who was hidden somewhere in the room chimed in so lustily that he attracted another to come and sit on the skylight overhead and answer him, both chirping *à qui mieux mieux*, until a raid by the page-boy put an end to the impromptu cricket match.

A drive back to Las Palmas, hot and dusty, down a road winding between hills of white mud, our luggage and ourselves occupying two *tartanas*—and our stay in the Canaries is numbered with the things that have been.

Our boat is rocking at anchor in the bay and we go on board at once; the night was oppressively warm and when I fell asleep methought I was deep down at the bottom of a ship's hold full of crates, with the air getting hotter and more stifling every moment; then I heard a voice say—"It will be bad for the bananas," and a big electric fan was turned on; and I woke to find we were under way and that a cool breeze was blowing in at the porthole as the ship headed for old England.

As these sheets are passing through the Press there comes the news of a great convulsion in one of the Aleutian Islands—a numerous group in the Behring Sea, of volcanic origin like the Canaries:—

"NEW YORK, 5th July 1909.

"News has been received here of a remarkable natural convulsion in the Aleutian Islands, Mount Borgasler,



according to the reports of fur traders, having entirely disappeared. The mountain in question, which was one of the many volcanic peaks with which the Aleutian group is dotted, would seem to have been swallowed up bodily in an enormous chasm, its place having been taken by a boiling lake, from which dense clouds of steam are rising. The temperature of the waters of the lake is given as 240 degrees Fahr."—*Central News*.

The frog has truly jumped with a vengeance, and we must hope that no one was on his back at the time. Had I been one of the fur traders I should have suppressed my curiosity as to the temperature of the boiling lake; but of course it is well to be exact.



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