

SOME BIRDS
OF THE
CANARY ISLANDS
AND
SOUTH AFRICA.



Ploughing with Camel in Fuerte Ventura

Various papers on Birds of Canary Islands, ^{San} Canaria
(Cape Verde Islands)

ESSAYS AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

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SOME BIRDS

OF THE

Canary Islands and South Africa.

BY

HENRY E. HARRIS.

[also papers by Meade Waldo - Godwin
Tristram - Salvadori - Boyd Alexander]
from "His" 92 ILLUSTRATIONS



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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE photographs which are reproduced in the pages of this book were collected during some portions of a stay of six months in the Canary Islands, and during periods of a visit of about the same length of time in South Africa, and although while I was engaged in taking them I had no intention of bringing these photographs out in book form, so many people have asked me what I am going to do with them that I have decided to place them in some way before the public. Had I anticipated bringing out a book, I should have obtained many additional items of interest, and should have verified others, which have been left out because of insufficient identification. As an example of this, I may mention the botany of the various districts to which these pages relate, this branch of natural history being often so closely associated with the nesting habits of birds.

With regard to the illustrations themselves, it has been my aim to present the birds apart from their nests, this plan seeming to show their various attitudes more clearly, and I may here state that in the case of every reproduction, the object has been portrayed in a perfectly wild state, and among its natural surroundings.

Perhaps the ideal way of showing a bird, would be that in which its natural surroundings are included in

the same picture, but however successful this method may be in a drawing, it is practically impossible in a photograph, with certain rare exceptions. As some set-off against this disadvantage, it may be remarked that in photography the momentary positions assumed by a bird can be caught, as it were, and perpetuated on glass, whereas these positions would tax the powers of the best draughtsman to reproduce accurately with the pencil; in this way bird-photography may be said to be a most valuable ally to the correct setting-up of specimens for museums and other collections.

One of the chief difficulties to be contended with in this kind of photography is undoubtedly *background*, and a picture that often looks most enchanting as seen on the focussing-screen of the camera, comes out but a sorry affair in the finished print when bereft of the depth and colour which make every item stand out so clearly on the screen.

But little can be done with the birds except during the nesting season, some people preferring to stalk them, others to conceal the camera at a likely spot, having everything in readiness for the release of the shutter at the critical moment; in the former plan the operator may secure more photographs, but is entirely at the mercy of his background, while in the latter, he has the advantage of being able to arrange the picture beforehand, all that is needed being the presence of the bird itself. The dark backgrounds shown in nearly all the illustrations in this book are due to the presence of out-of-focus distance behind the birds themselves, this method seeming to bring into relief the various markings and details of feathering to better advantage

than if the birds were taken against the sky. To illustrate this in a word, the varying shades in the foliage of a tree are seen much more effectively when backed by a distant hill, than when the tree is outlined against the light. Stalking may generally be successfully employed in photographing sea-birds at their breeding stations, at which time they are more or less tame, although the wear and tear of the knees on the sharp rocks, no less than that of the temper, are things to be remembered.

I have not considered it necessary to enter into full details concerning all the birds which are shown in the illustrations, as this plan would entail much sameness of description; besides which, this book does not claim to be of a scientific nature, save to the extent that the information contained therein is authentic. To avoid confusion of identity, I have thought it better to put the Latin names below the English ones in describing the illustrations of the birds; these names have been taken, in the case of the birds of the Canary Islands, from Mr. Meade-Waldo's list which appeared in the *Ibis* for April, 1893, and in the case of the South African birds, from Mr. W. L. Sclater's list. The figures which follow the Latin names refer, approximately, to the lengths of the individual birds, in inches.

I may confess, at once, that I am no Spanish scholar, but the isolated words and few short sentences which appear in that language in the first part of my book, have become so associated in my mind with the matter to which they relate, that they would seem to me out of place if written in English.

For any shortcomings in the book, I must claim the

reader's forbearance ; I have found it no easy task, while having, as it were, to stop so frequently and refer to any particular illustration, to preserve, at the same time, the continuity of the writing. This I have endeavoured to make interesting in a general way, and not solely from a natural history standpoint.

My thanks are due to many who have kindly helped me, to my subscribers, and especially to Mr. Howard Saunders, who has been good enough to overlook my manuscript. I am also indebted to Messrs. Bale, Sons and Danielsson, for the great care which they have taken in reproducing the illustrations.

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ERRATA.

p. 29, *for* "except those which are not able" *read* "except those which are able."

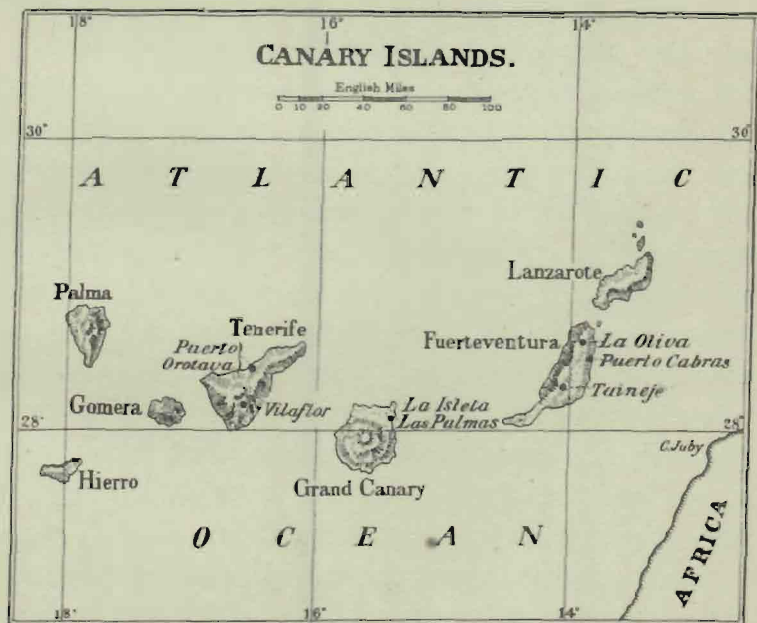
p. 57, *for* "little-wine shop" *read* "little wine-shop."

PART I.

Some Birds of the Canary Islands

CHAPTER I.

Fuerteventura.



A GLANCE at the small map which is set forth above will perhaps place before the mind more clearly than any attempted explanation, the relative positions of those islands, seven in number, which con-

stitute the group known as the Canary Islands. Five of these, Grand Canary, Tenerife, Palma, Gomera and Hierro, to name them in the order of their respective sizes, form what is usually called the western group, the eastern group being represented by Fuerteventura and Lanzarote. All these islands are of volcanic origin, those of the western group being for the most part fertile and cultivated, in strong contrast to Fuerteventura and Lanzarote, which are barren in the extreme.

My journeyings took me to three of these islands, Grand Canary, Tenerife, and Fuerteventura, and of those three I propose to deal in these pages with the two latter only. In treating of Fuerteventura first, it must not be imagined for a moment that that desert-like island can claim precedence in any way over Tenerife, indeed the contrary is the case, for the inhabitants of Tenerife regard the individual who would choose of his own free will to leave their beautiful and justly celebrated island for the barren shores of Fuerteventura, as one who must be, to put it as gently as possible, a little "touched." So far from showing this however, they evince a well-bred interest in his plans, relegating the surprise which they must feel at his actions into the dim recesses of themselves, where it keeps company with a supreme pity.

Years ago Fuerteventura was owned almost entirely by the members of one family, and a deputy Governor was chosen out of this family, whose title was *Coronel*, or Colonel, of Fuerteventura; that title has, however, long since been done away with, and the island is now governed, under the Crown of Spain, as any other of the Canary group.

One of two steamboats, working in connection with one another, visits each of the Canary Islands once a week, calling at its chief port, which in the case of Tenerife is Santa Cruz. From Orotava, on the north side of Tenerife, where I was staying, a long drive is necessary to reach Santa Cruz, whence the boat is taken by way of Las Palmas in Grand Canary, and so to Puerto Cabras, which lies on the eastern shore of Fuerteventura.

The journey now is very different to what it was some ten years ago, when the enthusiastic naturalist—for no one not interested in natural history would go to Fuerteventura—must take his chance in the rough seas which are often to be encountered between these islands, trusting himself and his belongings to some antiquated schooner which might very well take a week over the voyage.

The companion who I had hoped would have been able to accompany me was unfortunately prevented from doing so, I therefore engaged a guide from Orotava, by name Lorenzo Garcia, to act as servant.

As Lorenzo's name will be constantly appearing in these pages it is perhaps as well that I should devote a few lines to him, in order that the reader may be familiar to a certain extent with his personality before we start on our travels. He was about fifty years of age, and had been one of the chief guides for the Peak of Tenerife for a good many years. Lorenzo could speak no English, and I, unfortunately, could speak but little Spanish, so we were dependent to a great extent upon signs as a medium of communication. At this language he was an adept, and would illustrate in a

pantomimic way almost any word, converting himself for the time being into a sort of child's alphabet imbued with life; when engaged in these little performances he never liked being interrupted, and if I understood him before he had finished acting them, as was generally the case, he would still go through with them. One instance perhaps I may mention as an illustration. Before I engaged him to accompany me on the expedition in which we are at present interested, I went with a friend for a two days' excursion across the mountains in Tenerife to a little town of the name of Guimar. On our way up the mountains my friend told Lorenzo that he had been informed one of the guides had covered the distance between Orotava and Guimar in such and such a time; this Lorenzo doubted, and endeavoured to make us understand, by marking off each word on his finger in his impressive way, that the man would have had to run the whole distance if he had done the journey in the time stated. I could see he was still doubtful as to whether we understood him clearly, so, stopping us in the path and bidding us to remain where we were, he began to prepare for one of his little pantomimic shows, at the same time brushing aside, as it were, all his previous explanations. He then started off at full speed, running up the steep side of the hill as hard as he could. We saw, of course, what he meant almost before he had started, and called him back; but no, he had his dignity to preserve, and never liked to be interrupted in these little exhibitions, so he continued to run up the hill for perhaps a hundred yards, when he turned and came down at the same pace, standing before us panting, and saluting us by raising his hat ever so

little from his head. This slight raising of the hat, accompanied as it was by an almost imperceptible bow of his head as he stepped aside, was quite a feature in connection with Lorenzo's conversation, and seemed to act as a sort of polite full stop thereto; it said, as plainly as words could say, "There, gentlemen, I have done all I can to enlighten you, we will now let the subject drop."

Many things are necessary to an even passably enjoyable sojourn in Fuerteventura, among them being a plentiful supply of food and good water, letters of introduction, and some means of understanding the inhabitants of the island. With my own personal luggage and my photographic appliances it will therefore be evident that my baggage was considerable; but as the only method of transport in Fuerteventura is by means of camels, and these animals seem to be totally indifferent as to whether they carry one package or a dozen, there is no reason why the traveller should not take all his belongings with him.

Thus it was that four o'clock on a certain Monday morning, March 6th, 1899, found me ready to start, with my luggage packed; while outside the hotel at Orotava, waiting in the half-light, was to be made out a carriage and pair, the figure of Lorenzo presently taking shape out of the gloom, as with a *buenos dias, Señor*, he passed me to go inside and bring out my luggage. I found it exceedingly cold, for it can be cold before sunrise even in Tenerife, and I noticed that there was a fresh covering of snow on the Peak, which rose up, white and chill, against the dim background of sky. Although I had with me an overcoat and a rug,

it was no easy matter to keep warm driving, because the carriages, in order to accommodate the quantities of luggage with which they are often burdened, had been denuded of their glass. However, I was too sleepy, being unaccustomed to rising at such an early hour, to notice this fact, but pulled up the empty window frames in turn and still wondered at the cold.

Many of the peasants rise early in Tenerife, and as we climbed the long winding hill which leads past the village of Santa Ursula, ghostly looking figures, walking barefoot and muffled up in their blankets, went silently by with hardly enough spirit to give the cheery greeting which would certainly have been forthcoming later in the day. All the poorer inhabitants of Tenerife wear these cloaks, or blankets, which are of the natural colour of the wool, and are simply fastened round the neck with a string; the peasants don these cloaks after the day's work is over, or in the early morning, when, as we have seen, the air is often chill. A cart, drawn by two oxen, would now and then lumber by, too often with the driver asleep; but the bells on the oxen always told of its approach, though we were sometimes stopped because the drowsy occupant of the cart had let his charges take up too much of the road.

The valley of Orotava and the Peak of Tenerife are soon lost to view as we at length reach the summit of this long incline, and it is noticeable that the snow on the top of the mountain is now tinted a delicate pink colour, it being the custom of the Peak thus to announce to lower altitudes, and indeed to passing vessels for many miles around, the approach of day. To us, who are perhaps twelve thousand feet lower down, the stars

are still visible, and on the sea below us lights may be seen dancing up and down, as the small fishing boats ply their trade.

We stopped for ten minutes or so at a wayside inn at Matanza, a small village and well-known place of call for carriages between Santa Cruz and Orotava. Here there was some excellent coffee to be had; the native coffee, by the way, is nearly always good in Tenerife, but is mostly consumed on the island. I had noticed on previous occasions that this inn seemed to be to a certain extent the rendezvous of sportsmen, and on the walls of the room into which I was shown were hung pictures illustrative of the chase, one, I remember quite well, representing a pheasant, a hare, and a green woodpecker tied up together, apparently not a work of art from Tenerife.

The invisible line which separates dawn from daylight generally seems to require some artificial aid to one's better perception of it, for when we resumed our journey, although we had not delayed more than about ten minutes at the *fonda*, it was already broad daylight. The various signs and sounds, too, were those of day, and the women who passed us now and again with clacking tongues were in decided contrast to the silent individuals whom we had met but an hour ago. These women carried large baskets filled with farm produce on their heads, or balanced pitchers of water with great dexterity; many of them had placed their boots on the top of these baskets, for when the authorities have taken the trouble to make such an admirable carriage road as the one which extends for a great part of the way along the northern side of Tenerife, it is not necessary to wear

one's boots out by putting them on except where custom orders it, in the approaches to the larger villages and towns.

Our way now lies along an extensive tract of high land, eucalyptus and plane trees shading the road at intervals; the latter still dangled their last year's leaves and bugles, as though in mute protest against a climate so equable as to give them no chance of a period of rest and bareness before again assuming their spring foliage. This high land is known as the Laguna Plain, and is a well cultivated district, much wheat being grown here.

The outskirts of the old city of Laguna are in time reached, and we soon find ourselves rattling through its narrow stone-paved streets, overlooked on either side by tall houses, many of them extremely picturesque and showing quaintly modelled old doorways. At Laguna, like two well-known companions of the shore, we might "talk of many things," of its Dragon Tree, of the beautiful silver lamps that hang in some of its old churches, or of the Library, with its neglected *patio*, containing orange trees now borne down with fruit, and climbing heliotrope that reaches almost to the balcony which overlooks the ground. But the outset of our journey is no time for loitering; we have a boat to catch, and though Spanish punctuality is proverbially a by word, it has occasionally a nasty way of reminding one that its existence is not altogether a myth, as I once found to my cost.

Soon after leaving Laguna the white, flat-roofed houses of Santa Cruz come into view, the town lying many hundred feet below us, with its natural harbour beyond, the whole bounded by the range of sharp,

rugged mountains, which stretches out to the extreme north-east of the island.

The steep incline down which the road winds between Laguna and Santa Cruz has, at almost all seasons of the year, a bare and burnt-up appearance, which I think gives the traveller who merely lands for a few hours from one of the ships a wrong impression of Tenerife.

The winding road takes us at length through the town of Santa Cruz to the harbour, and here we find the boat already waiting for us. There is, however, much cargo to be taken on board, and a long delay ensues before we finally make a start. Meanwhile the morning is fine, and a bright sun makes pictures of the various craft at anchor in the little bay; out-of-date old schooners, many of them painted black, with verdigris-coloured plates, sending reflections of indescribable hues into the deep-blue water beneath. In time we move off, getting a good view of the south coast of Tenerife as we clear out to sea.

I think Lorenzo was much excited at the prospect of this trip, though he was also inclined to be just a little home-sick. I am sorry to say he was a terribly bad sailor, and anathematised the sea vigorously as soon as he was out of its clutches. *Muy tempestuoso*, he would say to me after we had landed, with a graceful step backward, and with his shabby old hat, which he always took especial care to dust, raised ever so little from his head.

The captain of the boat, which was called the *Leon y Castillo*, was Spanish, as also were the sailors, the latter wearing very worn-looking blue canvas clothes

and no boots. Among the passengers was, I think, one of the stoutest little men it has ever been my lot to see. He was very short, and stood up towards the fore part of the vessel, puffing at a cigar and talking in broken English to one of the other passengers. It seemed he had been to most places, including the island of Fuerteventura, about which he was able to give me some information; he told me that I should find it very barren, and little else but a wilderness of stones.

"I vas dere," he said, "shooten, last autumn, but few people ever go dere." He knew something of the natural history of the island, and told me what birds I should find there. "*Avutarda*," he said, "Dat is your Bustard; *Tabobo*, your Hoopoe, and *Engaña*, is your Courser." I asked him the meaning of the word *Engaña*. "See 'ere," he said, taking me by the sleeve and leading me to a clear space on the boat, when he stooped down as far as his figure would permit him to, and ran a little way along the deck. "De boys run after dem, so—a little furder, so—a little furder, so—and den not catch 'em, *engaña*, he cheat, muchachos, de boys, *engaña muchachos*, he cheat de boys." "And the Bustard? *Avutarda*?" I asked him. He disclaimed all knowledge of the meaning of this word by putting his head on one side and spreading himself out in a vast shrug. "I am not a Spaniard," he said, and then resumed his place, leaning over the rail at the side of the boat. "But see," he continued, "Dere is Canaria, soon ve see de Isleta. Ah, you chust see it? Vell, across dat low bit of sand is Las Palmas, but ve go round de Isleta; anoder tree hours, it may be four hours, you never know."

Presently he continued, "Ven I travel, I put myself on to de boat as baggach ; if I a'ive, vell and goot, if not — !" Again he lost himself in a comprehensive shrug. "So far I have always a'ived, but you never know."

He presented me with an introduction to the Mayor of Puerto Cabras, with whom he had apparently stayed on his shooting expedition to Fuerteventura, producing a very large card on which was inscribed his name, and in one corner, printed in small letters, the words "Lieut. Colonel in retreat." The designation struck me at the time as a rather unfortunate one for an officer, but was probably due to the fact of his having got hold of the word "retreat" instead of "retirement." I must say he was very entertaining, and whiled away the half-dozen hours which on a small rolling boat would have seemed most tedious ; the Peak of Tenerife imperceptibly disappearing from view, while Grand Canary never seemed to be any nearer to us. Presently I saw the "Colonel in retreat" lying down on one of the deck seats, so I followed his example.

Another two hours, and we rounded the jagged rocks of La Isleta and found ourselves within easy distance of Las Palmas ; the harbour first, with its crowd of shipping, then a long stretch of sand leading up to the town itself, and last of all the cathedral, its two towers of solid masonry standing up, black and forbidding, above the crowd of white houses below. When we came into the harbour and were moored alongside the quay, the captain told us that the boat would not start for Fuerteventura until half past eight the same evening, so taking advantage of this I went up to one of the hotels to dine.

Eight o'clock found us assembled on the quay, and we certainly presented a motley crowd as we waited to be taken off to the boat, which, contrary to expectation, had moved from the side where we landed and now lay out in the harbour, one of many lights.

It was not without considerable difficulty that we had been able to discover the whereabouts of the vessel, nor was it until we had walked the whole length of the quay in the dark—a breakneck enough place at any time—that we discovered where the boat lay.

All my respectable fellow-passengers had ended their journey at Las Palmas, so that I was now left with some dozen gaunt-looking fellows clustered round the quay steps, one with a large lantern, almost the only light we had, and some with empty bird-cages. I had on my oldest clothes, but it was difficult to avoid feeling something of a "swell" in such company. My companions were wrapped up in the dirtiest of blankets, they seemed depressed, and disinclined to talk even among themselves, but moodily smoked their Spanish cigarettes. One of them at length, peering into the darkness, announced the arrival of the captain, and we were taken on board.

We sailed at about ten or eleven o'clock at night, getting into rough water as soon as we left the shelter afforded by the Isleta. The boat was due to arrive at Puerto Cabras—the chief port of Fuerteventura—at ten o'clock on the following morning, the distance being one hundred miles, or thereabouts.

I turned in as soon as we had started, and slept till six o'clock, when I found quite a transformation. The rough sea had given place to the smoothest water,

guarded as we were on the west by the island of Fuerteventura itself, and on the east by the African coast. In this desired haven the boat steals along, as boats should steal along, unaccompanied by those drawbacks that so often attend sea voyages; this smooth steaming along, I remember, impressed me at the time, as being unlike anything I had previously experienced on the sea. My blanketed fellow-travellers were sitting in the fore part of the vessel, smoking, or eating their *gofio*, and enjoying the warmth of the sun; the captain and the sailors seemed to be without occupation for the time being, and all appeared to be waiting for something which never came.

For hours we stole on thus, the open sea on our right, calm as a lake, the island on our left, a desert of sand-coloured ground without any sign of vegetation, leading up in the distance to mountains, which assumed a distinctly red-coloured tinge towards their summits. We saw no houses and no people. Still we crept along, the monotony of the view once broken by a school of porpoises playing on the surface of the water a little way out to sea, and raising a patch of white foam over which some gulls were hovering.

At length we drew in sight of a cluster of white houses sheltered by a bend in the coast-line, which turned out to be Puerto Cabras. Quite a small place, evidently. A nearer inspection showed us a clean-looking little port, composed of flat-roofed houses, a row of camels waiting on the beach lending a very picturesque touch to the scene.

Our steamboat anchored a little way off the quay, and we were soon disembarked, being rowed with the

baggage in a long, flat-looking boat to the landing steps, while on the shore only the tiniest ripples were doing duty for waves.

There was quite a crowd on the quay to welcome the boat, which stayed here for several hours; the advent of the captain being the signal for the preparation of a weekly dinner at the *fonda* which might be said to take the place of our "market ordinary" in an English country town.

When we got on shore, we found that the Spanish farmer to whom I had a letter of introduction had sent down two camels for us, one to carry the luggage, and one for Lorenzo and myself; this latter had a peculiar arrangement on its back with a seat at either side. The two animals were now lying down on the beach, a little way from their companions.

I left Lorenzo to look after the luggage, while I went into the *fonda* to get something to eat. We had about sixteen miles to go, La Oliva being our destination, and as the camels only travelled at the rate of about three miles an hour it would be some time before we arrived there. La Oliva is a village of some importance in the northern part of Fuerteventura.

When I returned to the quay I found that Lorenzo and the camel-driver had already begun to load up my belongings; I had six heavy packages altogether, for I had to take many things with me. The baggage-camel appeared to be lost in thought as they were loading it, gazing the while out to sea in an interested manner, and now and then turning its head to look at the men with a preoccupied air, as though they were loading some other beast and not himself. But when they

began to stow away the last piece of luggage and to tighten up the ropes his pride seemed to give way, and he began protesting in a series of bubbling grunts and complaining noises which increased in volume until he finally staggered up on to his feet, when he became quiet at once.

I sent Lorenzo to buy some provisions for himself and then we were soon ready to start. A minute or two sufficed to take us clear of the little town, and we found ourselves out on the desert, skirting the sea shore at first for a considerable time. The baggage-camel was sent on in front, picking its way along the narrow path, worn flat and smooth by many camels' feet, but being otherwise undistinguishable from the rest of the ground. The driver walked behind and urged the beasts on with many and varied cries, the one most often repeated being *arré camello, arré camel'*, with occasionally a tap from his stick, the animals responding with a shambling run for a few paces, which ill accorded with their lofty mien, and was exceedingly uncomfortable for me, inasmuch as whenever I had a reasonable expectation of being jolted forward I was jogged backward, and *vice versâ*. I had a fine view of the country round though, being perched up so high, but unfortunately there was little to be seen. The sea on our right, and a desert of stone-covered ground on our left, might truthfully be said to describe what view there was; this barren ground led up to a range of mountains some little way inland, which appears to extend all round Fuerteventura in an almost continuous chain, enclosing a long stretch of undulating country in the centre of the island. It seemed impossible that any life should be

sustained on such ground, as in the country which we passed through immediately after leaving Puerto Cabras there was no sign of vegetation of any kind to be seen.

I think the first birds that we saw, if I except a Vulture, which was circling over the distant mountains, were five or six of the Black-banded Sand-Grouse, rising in front of us with a quick, pigeon-like flight, very unlike that of any of our game birds. These birds made a very peculiar sound on rising, quite impossible to describe on paper. We met with these Sand-Grouse rather sparingly during the whole of our visit, and they did not appear to have started nesting by the end of March; the peasants call them *Ganga*, which means a piece of good luck. Now and again a Kestrel would hang over our path, floating away on the wind at our approach, and commencing afresh its search for food. These birds were not nearly so common here as they were in Tenerife, where one or more of them was generally to be seen in the air; what they could possibly have found to feed on in Fuerteventura it would be hard to say.

Lorenzo called my attention as we were gradually branching off from the coast, pointing with his stick out to sea, and there was the steamer in the distance, making her way to Lanzarote, another island which lies just to the north of Fuerteventura. Lanzarote is much more thickly populated than the island that we are in, and boasts of quite a good sized port, Arrecife by name, but it is not nearly such a clean place as Puerto Cabras, nor is the island so desirable from a natural history point of view, being more cultivated than Fuerteventura.

After leaving the neighbourhood of the sea shore

we began to ascend a low pass in the hills, in negotiating which the camels, whose anatomy is quite unadapted to climbing, seemed not at all at their ease; the baggage-camel especially staggering up the incline, his thin legs vibrating at each step. Once over the pass, we had another long spell of flat or slightly undulating country, presently passing a small village, near to which was a pool of mud-coloured water by which the camel-driver lay down and drank greedily, afterwards inducing Lorenzo to do the same. The pool had no doubt been filled by some recent rain, so rare in this island, and only occurring about February in each year.

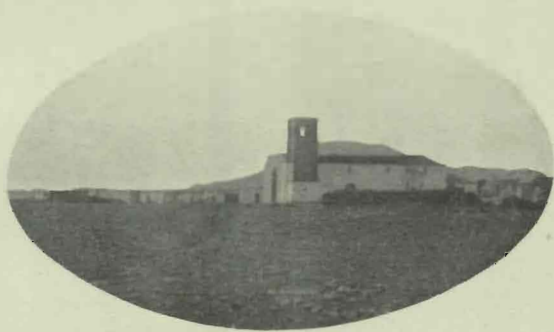
I found out afterwards that the water in Fuerteventura which looked the most uninviting, was generally the wholesomest, the clear springs, of which I only remember to have seen two, being almost always salt. On many of the rocks also there was a white deposit of salt.

The only birds to be seen near this village were a pair of Hoopoes; *Tabobo* the peasants call this bird in the Canary Islands. I believe *tabobo* means "stupid," and people would say to me in Tenerife, "Of course you've got a photograph of a Hoopoe? No? Why, they're so tame, I saw one to-day on my way to church." That only goes to prove that the Hoopoe, to borrow Lorenzo's phraseology, "knows much." To my mind they are anything but stupid; showing themselves when they choose, they take very good care not to be about when you want them, and as for their conspicuous plumage, it is only noticeable when they allow themselves to be seen. Sometimes on passing along the high road in Tenerife one of these birds may be noticed

flying up from a stone by the roadside, on which it has been lying down, its usually prominent crest laid back flat on its head, the bird itself remaining quite motionless. They are fond also of lying in this way on the rough lava rocks, and it is but rarely that one sees them until they fly up. The bird is conspicuous enough now, as he flies away and perches on the top of a wall, his crest now up, now down, or as he flutters in the air to secure a passing butterfly, and settles again with his victim held in his long, curved beak; but that is because he chooses to let himself be seen.

I walked up the pass, and also the rest of the way into La Oliva, the path being very good and the weather delightfully cool. Our road now led along the slope of a low mountain, and looking forward into the valley we could see the first tinge of green that had met our gaze since we landed, if we except the miniature and dried up specimens of vegetation which here and there barely raised their heads above the stones with which the ground was everywhere covered. The green tinge turned out to be young wheat, which is grown over a considerable area near La Oliva, and in other parts of the island where possible. When ripe the individual stalks are gathered by hand and placed in small heaps, as a cherished article, with stones on the top. La Oliva being one of the chief wheat growing centres, we were evidently getting within measurable distance of it, but we had still some way to go, the country as we pushed on becoming gradually more cultivated.

Towards sunset we came in sight of a white church, with some houses clustered round it, which our guide told us was La Oliva. Another half-hour and the



LA OLIVA.

camels were halted before a row of flat-roofed houses, the baggage-camel being made to kneel down on the narrow stone-paved street, always an uncomfortable proceeding to the onlooker, though the chief actor in the scene immediately commenced chewing in a non-chalant and contented manner.

After knocking at the door, Lorenzo announced our arrival, and we were welcomed and shown through into a large, clean-looking room, some coloured pictures hanging on the walls and a great number of chairs ranged round the room—the chair that one sees in the cottages of Tenerife and Fuerteventura, always the same pattern, plain Chippendale, and wooden seated. These chairs are made in Tenerife, and doubtless in Grand Canary too.

My reception here was really rather amusing. The household consisted of an oldish man, between sixty and seventy, his son, perhaps forty-five, and a very old and decrepit woman servant, who never seemed satisfied unless I was eating. If she came into the room and found me not eating, she would point to her mouth and nod a great many times. I found the only way to get rid of her presence was to keep a small store of biscuits in my pocket and when she appeared to stop her mouth, as it were, by filling mine, when she would go away, muttering to herself and apparently highly pleased. The old man did not say much, but his special duty appeared to be to see that I was seated, and also that I kept my hat on in the room. The moment I stood up he would approach me, and placing his hands on my shoulders, push me gently down again, saying at the same time, "*Sientase sientase.*" I had to keep

my hat on the whole evening, while they took theirs off, and if I removed mine for a minute one of them would come up and insist on my replacing it.

The son was a man with a black beard, very like his father, and he evidently had a rooted idea which nothing could drive out of his head, that if he only shouted loud enough at me in Spanish, I must eventually understand. I have said before that I could understand Lorenzo to a certain extent, but most of the people talked so fast, and clipped the words so in their patois that I was at that time at a loss to make out their meaning.

Soon I noticed one or two strange faces at the doorway; these belonged to men who were no doubt friends of the family, and they were brought in forthwith and introduced one by one. After each introduction I heard the black-bearded son say, in a very audible and hoarse whisper, behind his hand, "*Amigo de la Marquesa.*" Now I had not the honour of knowing the Marquesa at all, but, like many other people, I am not blind to the advantages of having my name coupled with those of the aristocracy. My letters of introduction were given me by a friend of the Marquesa's, and as these good people had honoured me so far as to assume that I was an acquaintance of hers, I did not think it at all necessary to undeceive them, especially as it evidently invested me with an importance that my own personality would not have secured. I also saw that it might smooth my way during our stay in the island.

Presently one of them took up a framed photograph from a table in my room and handed it to me. I saw

at once that this was a crucial point, the more so as they were all regarding me with great expectancy. I was apparently to stand or fall in their estimation according as I recognised the likeness or not.

"*La Marquesa*," I said.

They were delighted, and all got up and walked about the room, seemingly highly pleased with me, while every now and then I could hear above the clack of conversation, the words *Amigo de la Marquesa*. Presently the black-bearded son approached me stealthily and sat himself down about three chairs off. He then leaned towards me, put his hand slowly up to his mouth, and shouted out a sentence in a stentorian voice. I nodded, and said *Si* a great number of times, but I am afraid he was not satisfied, for he came a chair nearer and repeated his remark, finally shouting it down my ear from the chair next to me. This was disconcerting, and I wished Lorenzo had been present at the moment to be the recipient of his confidences. However, they left me in good time, with murmured blessings, and hoping that I should sleep well.

CHAPTER II.

La Oliva.

LA OLIVA probably stands at an elevation of not less than seven or eight hundred feet above the sea, and for this reason it is cooler than many other villages in Fuerteventura. We were not prepared, however, to find it really cold at breakfast time on the morning after our arrival; there was a keen wind blowing, and instead of the fierce sun that I had been led to prepare for, the day was dull and cloudy.

After breakfast I put my things together, and taking some lunch with us we started out, past the few houses which constituted the street in which our host's dwelling was situated. We took with us two Spanish boys to show us the country and assist us in looking for the nests that I was anxious to find; fortunately I knew the local names of all the birds, otherwise we should have been very much at sea.

All the towns and villages in Fuerteventura are surrounded by an open, desert-like plain, so that a very short space of time suffices to take one clear of the houses and out into the country. It was not until we were on the exposed ground that we realised the full force of the wind; we could hardly walk against it, and to make matters worse a heavy storm of rain came on before we had gone more than a mile from

the town. It was no weather for seeing birds about in, much less for photographing them, so we took refuge in one of the ravines, or *barrancos*, as they are called, which we were fortunate enough to find close at hand.

The rain continued to come down fast, being driven past us by the wind, now giving us a misty view of the mountains opposite, now obscuring them altogether. I suppose on almost any other day in the year the sun would have been pouring down with such intense heat that we should have been glad enough of the shelter of this cave as a protection against its rays; as it was, it felt decidedly cold and might well have been, save for the bare, stone-covered ground, a day in Scotland. It seemed ungrateful though, to complain, for the very rain that was keeping us idle for a few hours was the veriest godsend to the people who were entertaining us, and to the islanders generally, whose half-starved flocks had too often to be shipped in the steamboat to Grand Canary or Tenerife, to be sold for what they would fetch; sometimes in the case of goats for as little as one or two *pesetas* apiece, the *peseta* representing in our money about 7d. or 8d. Also in very dry times, when there has been no rain for more than a year, water brought over from Las Palmas sells at one *peseta* a quart, a prohibitive price, considering that most of the people are extremely poor.

While we were waiting in the cave before alluded to, I noticed our two small guides munching their *gofio* and pulling at some dried fish they had brought with them. *Gofio*, I might here explain, is the staple food of the islanders, the poorer kind is made from maize, the better kind from wheat, wheat *gofio* being rather a

luxury and eaten by the well-to-do farmers. I tasted some of this once at a farmhouse, mixed with a little sugar it is not at all bad; the people at the farm also showed me how they ground the wheat by hand, between two large mill-stones. The children in Fuerteventura have beautifully white teeth, as a result of eating *gofio*.

The weather having in some degree improved we now moved out of our shelter and walked along the side of one of the mountains, and although we made a large circuit round, I do not think we saw a bird of any description. The prospect also looked bad again, so we turned our steps towards home. In the vicinity of La Oliva I saw, perched on the top of a cactus, a Shrike, which turned out to be a specimen of the Algerian Grey Shrike, a bird which we found very common near the villages in Fuerteventura, where they were often to be seen in the small enclosures round the houses. I had not previously noticed this bird in Tenerife, as it is very locally distributed in that island. The peasants call this Shrike *Alcairon*, the meaning of which word I was not able to find out, but it is of Moorish origin.

The photographs reproduced I obtained a few days after our arrival, the nests being generally placed in almond trees, which grow sparingly about the houses in most of the villages in Fuerteventura, constituting a thick isolated bush, and during the time that I was in the island, generally speaking, you had only to find your almond tree to find your Shrike's nest.

The nests were in all cases made of thorny twigs forming a good sized structure, with the cavity very deep, open at the top and lined thickly with wool and



ALGERIAN GREY SHRIKE ON NEST.

(*Lanius algeriensis*.)

goats' hair and some pieces of woollen stuff matching the eggs in colour. Where the birds had not been able to suit themselves with such accessories to the lining there was always coloured hair or wool to match the eggs.

I remember reading an article in "Nature" some years ago on the subject of the same peculiarity of colour-matching in the nests and eggs of the Red-backed Shrike in England. Certainly in the case of the Algerian Grey Shrike the markings of salmon-clay colour on the eggs were reproduced in every shade in the lining of the nest. Four eggs seemed to be the usual number.

The birds were very tame at the nest, and would fly away a little distance and then appear at the top of a slender tree, which bent down with their weight as they balanced themselves; they never left off that sideways swirl of the tail peculiar to all the Shrikes, as they swung to and fro on the tree, and would put their heads on one side and watch my preparations with the camera.

The *Alcairon* has a curious way of appearing and re-appearing on the top of some conspicuous plant or low tree, and you may not be aware of its presence at all until you hear a loud *chack* and look up to find the bird regarding you critically; then it generally takes flight to a short distance to work its way unperceived to some other "look-out station," in order that another surprise may be prepared for you.

The following day was equally windy though less wet, so we went out again taking a different direction to that in which we had gone before. We soon saw a Courser running among the stones away from the path which we were following, after which it took wing for

a short distance, the nearly black colour of the primary feathers showing very distinctly as it was in the air. In flight it much resembled our Peewit, and after it had alighted on the ground it ran along with its wings half spread out. Although I saw many Coursers later on, I think this was the only bird that I noticed on the wing; during the nesting season, at any rate, they seemed to prefer to keep to the ground, where they were very inconspicuous. During our wanderings that day we met a small boy whom we questioned with a view of finding out whether he could show us nests of either these birds or the Houbara Bustard, which is also to be frequently met with in Fuerteventura; he told us, through the medium of Lorenzo, who generally constituted himself spokesman, that only a few days previously he had seen two *Engaña's* eggs, but that he had put his foot on them and broken them. Lorenzo was very much enraged at this and took the unfortunate boy by the shoulders, shaking him and calling him *Malo muchacho*, interspersed with sundry mutterings which were unintelligible to me. The breaking of every egg they find is a habit of the boys both in Tenerife and Fuerteventura; they couldn't tell you why, but they always do it. You may offer them a reward consequent on the eggs being intact on the following day, but it is rarely you find them so.

About the middle of the day one of the boys shouted to us, telling us that he had found a Houbara Bustard's nest on the summit of a low hill. There was only one egg, which was of an olive-green colour, marked with rather faint blotches of greenish-brown; this had been laid on the bare ground, the earth having been hollowed



NEST OF HOUBARA BUSTARD.
(*Otis undulata*.)

out very slightly to receive it. The accompanying photograph gives a good idea of the situation in which the egg was placed. Round about were a good many white stones, and growing among these stones was a plant which we found rather common near here, though we never saw it elsewhere in Fuerteventura. Lorenzo pronounced this plant to be *tacaronteia*, and as no one was in a position to be able to contradict him, I think he felt that for the time being he had distinguished himself. This plant grows also in Tenerife, and has a large bulb with leaves something like those of the lily-of-the-valley sprouting out from it.

We saw something of the birds belonging to this nest, as they flew round while I was photographing the egg, and settled some distance away; they have a powerful, rather heavy-looking flight, and keep the neck stretched straight out when on the wing. Their local name, *Avutarda*, means a heavy, slow sort of bird.

It was evident that the Houbaras and the Coursers, the two kinds of bird that I was most anxious to meet with, were only just commencing to nest, which was rather unfortunate, as it is difficult to do anything photographically with the birds themselves unless they are sitting. The only bird we found in that condition was at the end of our visit, not far from Tuineje, a village situated towards the south of the island. Unfortunately, when I went with my camera to try and obtain photographs of the *Houbara*, we found that some ravens had been before us, and broken holes into the sides of the eggs. Lorenzo couldn't take the ravens by the scruff of the neck and shake them as he treated the boys in Tenerife, but he growled at the invisible

Cuervo and scanned the horizon with his hand, shading his eyes, in a threatening and somewhat theatrical attitude.

Lorenzo's method of looking for nests was peculiar; he could not be made to understand that any bird would be so foolish as to lay its eggs on the bare ground, unprotected in any way by grass or shrub, consequently his time was taken up in peering into the small bushes, six inches or so in height, which were sprinkled here and there over the desert. Later on, when we found some Courser's eggs, it was with great difficulty that he could be induced to see them as they lay on the ground, although he was standing over them, and when at length he succeeded in making them out, his surprise and admiration were so great that he had to be led away to a safe distance in order that he should not inadvertently trample upon them. He was extremely useful in every other way, and had a happy knack of making us feel at home wherever we went in the island.

We found no more Houbara's eggs and no Courser's eggs at all in the neighbourhood of La Oliva, although we made long excursions each day we were there, going on one occasion almost as far as the sea shore; the weather gradually improved, but it still kept fresh and very windy. The only other nests which we did find were those of the Stone-Curlew. This bird, so frequently met with in Fuerteventura, is interesting as being a regular summer visitor to England, and is one of those birds which still breed with us sparingly in two or three of our counties. These birds were, like the Coursers and Houbaras, only just beginning to nest

when we were in Fuerteventura, and as they were so common here I did not trouble about them, thinking I should find them on my return to Tenerife, where, unfortunately, I got but little chance at them. The Stone-Curlews are adepts at concealing themselves, and will often start up into view on the rough ground a few yards ahead, run for a short distance in a very leisurely way, and then stand still, or fly away. The peasants in Fuerteventura call this bird *Alcaravan*, but in Tenerife it also goes by the name of *Pedro Luis*, both names being given to it by reason of its peculiar cry. This cry is heard almost exclusively at night time, more especially on moonlight nights, and the wild notes of the *Alcaravan* might often be heard around the villages in Fuerteventura when all else was silent.

The island contains few birds except those which are not able to avail themselves of its sand-coloured ground as a means of escaping detection ; there are no trees, speaking generally, if we except the palms which in some of the villages surround the water tanks, so that birds which are not of a protective colour are driven to make their homes in the vicinity of the villages, where they find the only available cover in the scattered almond trees, or among the cactus plants. Even the Hoopoes, conspicuous enough at times, as we have shown, combine in the varied colouring of their plumage many of the tints of the desert rocks, tinged as some of these rocks are with orange or red-coloured lichen.

One little bird that could certainly claim protection from the open desert was the Trumpeter Bullfinch, of

which we saw a certain number during our stay in the island. I think they were more numerous in the neighbourhood of the sea shore than they were inland, consequently we did not meet with them very frequently. I saw these birds also on a sandy piece of ground near the Golf links above Las Palmas in Grand Canary; there was a small flock of them feeding, and I might very likely have passed them over had not their peculiar cry attracted my attention. This cry has a far-away sound, and on first hearing it I took it to be the bark of a dog only just audible in the distance. After this had been repeated I then found that it came from the ground only a few yards in front of me, and on looking down I saw six or seven of these small birds. They were exactly the colour of the sandy ground on which they were feeding, and now and then one of them would hop up on to a stone; as I approached them they flew away to a short distance. Unlike most birds of protective colouration, the Trumper Bullfinches do not avail themselves of their similarity to their surroundings in choosing a nesting-site, for the only nest of this species that I found was placed in the roof of a tumble-down shed, and was well concealed. The eggs, four in number, were very similar to those of our Bullfinch in England, but were rather smaller.

Before I came to Fuerteventura I was regaled with stories of missionaries and others who had barely escaped with their lives, on account of being attacked by the wild camels which lived on the island, one lady assuring me that a missionary whom she knew had been chased "nearly the whole length of the island," a distance, by

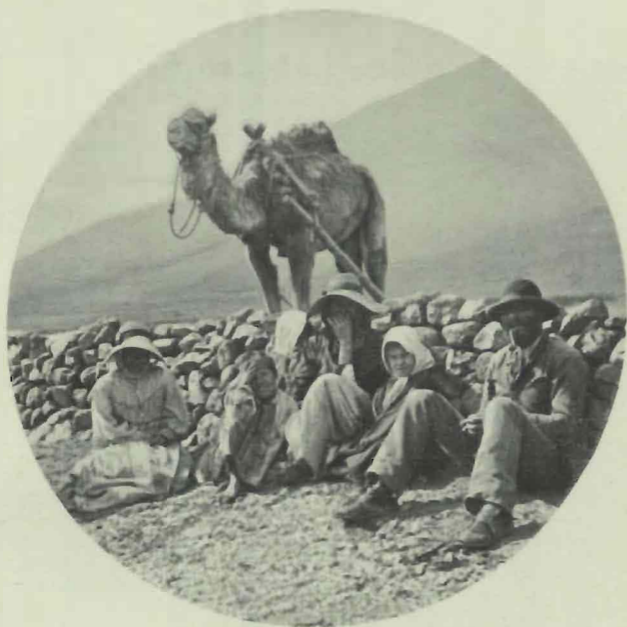
the way, of some sixty miles, more or less. The fact is that the camels are turned out on the hill-sides to feed when they are not required for work, and a familiar scene in Fuerteventura is one in which these animals are dotted here and there on the barren slopes, feeding on what isolated specimens of vegetation they can find. There is no fear of their over-eating themselves.

Camels and donkeys are the only beasts of burden in Fuerteventura ; the former carry cargo almost exclusively, while the latter are ridden by the inhabitants when they find it necessary to ride, as for instance in making a journey to some distant part of the island. The camels are also used for the purpose of ploughing, wherever it is possible to till the ground at all, the plough used being a very simple affair, and made of wood. The day before we left La Oliva, as we were returning home from a long excursion, we came upon some of the peasants engaged in ploughing, and had some conversation with them, or rather Lorenzo had, but they did not know of anything that would be likely to interest us. I took some photographs of them, one of which is reproduced here, and another forms the frontispiece to this book. They were much interested in the camera, and I should think it probable that very few of them had ever seen such a thing before.

The country where these peasants were ploughing was on the slope of a broad shallow valley, its sides gradually sweeping up to the bare mountains on either hand, and on these slopes it seemed most curious to see camels leisurely feeding their way, and cropping at the almost microscopic vegetation that grew here and there among the stones. As we walked up the centre of the

valley these camels would raise their heads and stand looking at us, not resuming their grazing until we had left them some distance behind. On our way back to La Oliva in the evening we passed at intervals a flock of goats and one or two camels being driven desultorily home by some small boy ; the camels seemed obedient enough and were quite at large, though had they taken it into their heads to rebel against their diminutive guide I am afraid there would not have been much of him left to tell the tale. I think nothing lowers one's self-esteem more than being met by a camel ; it is not merely the fact of being cut, though that is bad enough, but somehow they give you the idea that you are not there at all, gazing the while at the distant mountain tops, as they swing quietly along, with an intensely interested and preoccupied air. One feels as though one had been passed through, not merely passed by.

On nearing La Oliva for the last time we stopped to rest and have a smoke by the way, and talk over our chances of success in the southern part of the island, until we were reminded that the day was drawing to a close by our friends of the wayside now passing us, the camels stalking along with an expression of smug complacency, while the goats, with frequent bleats and tinklings of many bells, scrambled hither and thither on either side of the path, nibbling at what scant herbage they could find.



A MID-DAY REST.

CHAPTER III.

New Quarters.

THE four days which we had spent at La Oliva were certainly not productive of much, looked at from an ornithological standpoint; the birds in the neighbourhood were few, and those that we did come across were evidently only commencing to nest. In all probability the weather, and more especially the food supply, had much to do with this.

I had a further introduction, to a farmer who lived at Tuineje, a village situated some little way south of the centre of the island; this village is marked on the small map contained in the initial chapter. We were told that it would take us a long day's journey to reach Tuineje before nightfall, if indeed we were able to do so by then, accordingly an early start was arranged for.

Hospitable and kind though the people were at La Oliva, I should have fared badly without the provisions which I had brought with me from Tenerife, especially as the old woman to whom I have before referred was stationed over me while I ate my meals, various delicacies being pointed out by her in the homely dish which might with advantage be consumed in the next mouthful. Tea was apparently an unknown luxury in the island, but a very dilapidated and rusty old teapot was after some difficulty borrowed in the

village, and in this she was able to brew a concoction of some sort from the supply of tea I had brought with me. I think she considered this to be of untold value, she poured it out so carefully, and was much distressed if even a drop were spilt.

The same man who had piloted us from Puerto Cabras to La Oliva made his appearance in good time with the camel, which animal we found kneeling down ready to be loaded in front of the door of my room. After getting my belongings stowed away on to a kind of wooden saddle with projecting pieces at either side, the man made the camel stand up, and treated it much as though he were measuring it for a suit of clothes, giving a hitch here and a twist of the rope there, and being very careful to make an exact balance of the luggage; when at length he had adjusted this to his satisfaction he climbed up the animal's tail, so that he might make a last tightening of the ropes. Lorenzo was immensely pleased at this procedure, to which he drew my special attention.

We were sorry to leave the people who had entertained us so kindly during our short stay; they made Lorenzo a present of a stout wooden stick, which contained a whistle in the handle, with which he was much pleased, christening it by blowing several shrill notes on it, and saying in an explanatory way to me, *Para el Pico, Señor*; he then whistled again and put his hand to his ear as though listening, meaning that it would no doubt come in useful to him in his excursions up the Peak of Tenerife. Following this little performance, as usual, came the customary raising of his old hat, ever so slightly, with a step backward, *Si, Señor*. The only

time I ever saw him use this whistle was in Las Palmas, when we were driving from the harbour to the town, and he certainly made good use of it then, blowing a shrill blast at every vehicle that we passed, until he made us the laughing-stock of the road for the time being.

Our farewells over we made a start, the black-bearded son accompanying us for a short distance on our way. He still shouted in my ear as he had done on the first night of our arrival, but the process was more bearable out of doors. We dropped him at the first village we came to, some four or five miles from La Oliva, and then pursued our journey with only the camel driver for our guide.

The country to the south of La Oliva was bare in the extreme, more so I think than any that we had passed through; we saw a few Coursers, which would now and again run from our path, though they were not always easy to discern; one or two flocks of Sand Grouse, too, we also saw. I think the ground was too bare for the Houbaras, as no verdure was visible to relieve the arid prospect, not even the *ajulaga* shrub, which may generally be found growing where there is any vegetation at all, and with its feathery grey-green foliage forms a rather pleasing contrast in colour to the surrounding desert. On many of the stones which covered the ground there was a deposit of red lichen, this colour being especially noticeable towards the tops of the mountains as seen from a distance.

Six or seven hours travelling brought us to La Antigua, which is perhaps the largest village in Fuerteventura, and is more up-to-date than many, inasmuch

as it possesses a mill to pump up water, the only one we had seen in the island so far. Some of the inhabitants were engaged in carrying water from the small reservoir, the contents of which had a much more refreshing look than that of most tanks in Fuerteventura, where it appears green and uninviting in the extreme. This reservoir was surrounded by tall palm trees. The pumping in many of the smaller villages is done by camels, which are blindfolded, and walk round and round on a small parapet raised about six feet from the level of the ground.

We had now completed about half our journey, and it was necessary to give the camel a rest, for which purpose it was unloaded, and allowed to kneel down on the narrow street. We, too, required some refreshment, though it was difficult to know what to get; wine there is none to be had, if I except a thin, white, and exceedingly vinegary fluid that even Lorenzo's paved palate rejected as soon as touched. *Malo vino*, he would say, making a wry face and shaking his head.

One noticeable fact, or rather omission, in connection with these villages, is the scarcity of shops of any kind. In England we are so accustomed to have goods brought to notice as it were under our very eyes, that a shop-keeper who apparently takes a vast amount of trouble and pains to hide his wares in the remote recesses of his shop, and then to shut the door and wooden windows of that shop, would seem, to our enlightened minds, to court failure of trade. On the other hand, perhaps, in villages of this kind where few strangers ever come, the shops are so well known that it is unnecessary for the *tenderos*, as the shop-keepers are called, to advertise the



REPLENISHING THE WATER-TANK.

whereabouts of their goods by any outward show. Certain it is that in a good-sized village, as La Antigua evidently was, we had the greatest difficulty in finding even a provision shop; then, after opening the door and stepping in from the bright sunlight outside, a temporary darkness obscured such eatables as were ranged on shelves behind the counter.

We purchased some bread—fortunately I had other provisions with me—and then enquired if they could make us some coffee. No, they could not, but there was a house, so and so, in which we might be able to obtain some. We had still more difficulty in finding this place, and as nearly every house in Fuerteventura keeps its own special breed of mongrel dog, warranted to attack anybody whom it has not seen before, and a good many people whom it has, there was a certain excitement in approaching the doors of the various houses at which we tried. I began to think that I didn't care for coffee, and that life would be more pleasant without it, for at every house that I ventured near, Lorenzo shouted out, *Cuidado, Señor, el perro*, rolling the two *r's* in a most vigorous way, till I began to question my right to monopolise all this pleasure, and accordingly Lorenzo took up the quest, armed afresh at each dwelling with a large stone.

We found the house after much searching, and when we had been kept waiting for some little time they served us with coffee, which was quite drinkable, though not so good as is generally to be obtained in Tenerife. The people would not accept any payment for the coffee, so, leaving nothing but our grateful thanks behind, we prepared to continue our journey

On we went at the same level pace, the country becoming somewhat less arid and a tinge of wild vegetation appearing now and again in the landscape. Once we passed a house which was painted a brilliant blue colour; it was pointed out to me as quite the most beautiful object in Fuerteventura. I cannot say that I admired it, though the colour of most of the houses in the villages so far had certainly been monotonous, all of them being built of clay-coloured stone, more like boxes than houses, having exceedingly thick walls, unplastered outside. The immense thickness of the walls of the houses showed how well the Fuerteventuran Spaniards understood their own climate, for however hot the sun might be outside, their rooms were invariably beautifully cool. None of the houses, with very few exceptions, consisted of more than the ground floor.

Some way further on Lorenzo, after a conversation with the camel driver, pointed out to me a house standing by itself a little distance away from the road, and called out in his cheery voice, *Casa del medico, Señor, mucho dinero in banco, muy rico*. I asked them if he was the only doctor in the island, and they said they thought he was, though I should think there must be one in Puerto Cabras. The man certainly deserved to be rich if he had to doctor the whole of the populace. Towards evening we approach a range of mountains, and are told that our destination lies some little way beyond them, but the path makes a bend to the left hand so as to avoid the long climb up for the camels.

Another two hours' travelling and we round these mountains, and then see in front of us two good-sized

villages, the further of which, we are informed, is Tuineje. Soon we pass through the village, accompanied by barking dogs and wondering children, and then halt before a long, low house of the usual type, which is the residence of the farmer to whom I have a letter of introduction.

I sent Lorenzo down the path leading to the front of the house, soon hearing, as I had anticipated, a sharp encounter with the watch-dog. That animal being quieted by its owners, a pleasant-featured old lady came out and bade me welcome, saying that her husband, whom we will call Don Ramon, would not be at home until late that night, having gone on a journey to a distant village, but that their best room was at my service for as long as I would be their guest.

I do not know whether they had been previously advised of my visit, but whether they had or had not, nothing could have exceeded the quiet welcome of this farmer's wife. My luggage was unloaded, and for the second time on this island I felt that I had fallen among friends.

Don Ramon, an old man of about seventy, but very spare and active, came home later and joined his welcome to that of his wife; and I may here say that a kinder pair than these two old people, from start to finish of my visit, I have yet to meet. No trouble was too much for them to take, Don Ramon, while joining in our ornithological expeditions, or his wife when welcoming me home in the hot afternoon, with a quiet shake of the head and a smile, as she opened the door of the cool room and remarked on the heat outside. They had several children, but most of them were

married and settled in homes of their own. There was a brother of Don Ramon's, who often came in, though he did not live with them. He was a white-bearded old fellow, and used to be very amusing; he would have it that I understood what they said when they were talking among themselves, and would laugh and say, *Entiende, entiende*, notwithstanding my protests to the contrary.

I must now pass on to our doings after our arrival at Tuineje. The country around was much the same as we had previously seen, except that here we met with but little wheat in comparison with what there was at La Oliva; nor did they appear to have had the rains of the preceding few days. The only verdure to be seen as a rule was the *ajulaga* shrub, which was sprinkled here and there in districts, but never seemed to grow to more than about a foot in height; there were many small snails on it, on which the Houbaras are said to feed.

For three days we hunted without success, save finding a Stone-Curlew's nest, a photograph of which I reproduce here, so that on the third day, that being the day before the weekly boat left for Grand Canary, I had decided to go back to Tenerife. The peasants said that the birds were not breeding this year, as it had been too dry, or that they were not here, and so on, and it really looked as though there were some truth in their remarks, as we had seen few Coursers, and only one or two Houbaras. So, as the boat left Puerto Cabras at eight o'clock in the evening, and Don Ramon had sent out a large number of people to search for nests on the previous day without success, eight o'clock in the



NEST OF STONE-CURLEW.

(*Edicnemis crepitans*.)

morning found us ready to start home, with everything packed.

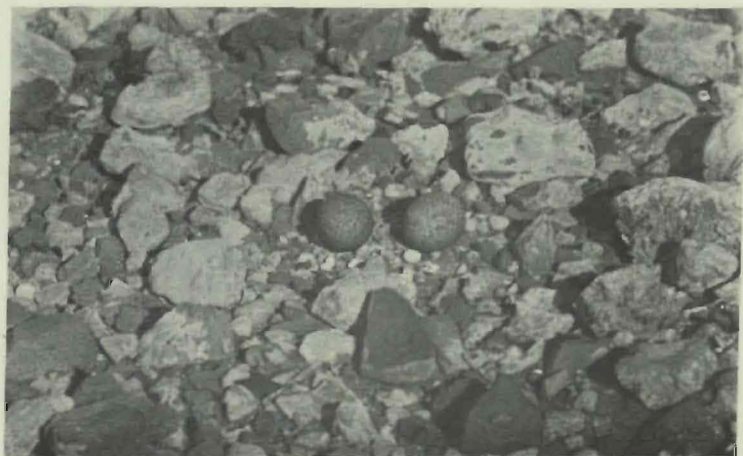
Just as we were going to load up a boy came to say that he could show us an *Engaña's* nest, about three miles distant; this was very annoying, as I had quite made up my mind to leave, disgusted as I was with our bad luck, but Don Ramon and his wife did all they could to persuade me to stay, while at last old Lorenzo, thoroughly homesick and tired of the place as he must have been, struck a tragic attitude and said "*Que lastima, Señor*" (what a misfortune), to go back having found nothing. Thus he turned the scale, so we set to and unpacked, turning out the remnants of provisions, some of which I had dispensed with a too lavish hand the day before.

An hour and a half's journey brought us to the place where the nest was situated; our youthful guide, dressed as were all the peasant boys, in white, trotting along in front of us to show the way. He pulled up near the centre of a flat piece of ground which skirted one of the stony ravines, looked about for a few minutes and then pointed to his feet, where we saw, matching in colour and size the surrounding stones, a Courser's egg. There was not the slightest attempt at any hollowing of the ground, only a small bare space, quite flat, and about six inches in diameter, cleared from among the adjacent stones. Evidently the birds had only just begun to nest now, and there would no doubt be another egg laid to-morrow or the next day, so after photographing the egg *in situ* and rewarding our guide, we marked the spot and went off in another direction.

It seemed we were to have some luck at last, for while we were searching along the ground in line, I was fortunate enough to find two Courser's eggs on the shoulder of a low hill, placed similarly in all other respects to the previous egg, except that the surrounding stones were slightly larger. Remaining where I was I called to the others, who came up and were much pleased at my discovery.

This nest I took photographs of, and then sent my companions some distance away, where they waited within hearing while I lay down under cover of a tumble-down cairn of stones that stood on a slight elevation about two hundred yards distant from the eggs. I had not seen the bird so far, and wanted to make sure that the eggs were being sat on.

I had to wait quite half an hour before I saw the Courser appear over the crest of the hill. She came very slowly and cautiously, going in and out among the stones, frequently stopping and standing still, then she stood where I judged the eggs to be and sat down on them, becoming, so far as the eye could tell, one among a wilderness of stones. I waited a few minutes, then whistled to Lorenzo and made him walk towards the bird, I keeping my glasses on her all the time, as I did not want her to see me rise from my hiding place. I was also anxious to see how soon she would get up from the eggs, to aid me in searching for other nests. I was surprised to find that she did not rise till he was within about seventy yards, although she could see him coming all the while; then she got up and began walking away, zigzagging about among the stones and stopping every few yards to look round, finally disappearing behind the brow of the hill.



CREAM-COLOURED COURSER AND NEST.

(*Cursorius gallicus.*)

g^o. g^o

Although it was rather late in the day for such work, I decided to try and take advantage of what seemed to be a good chance of photographing the bird sitting, and it was as well I did so, for it was the only opportunity I had. Arranging the camera to photograph a bird is always a long and tedious business, the least thing left undone and one's chance is spoilt. In photographing where there is cover it is generally not so difficult, the camera may then be placed on its stand and the whole concealed with branches ; on the open ground, however, where there is absolutely no cover, the case is different. Here the camera must be placed on the ground, or in some instances almost below the ground, and after focussing very carefully the exact spot to which the bird is expected to come, the lens must be "stopped down," to use a photographer's term, so as to make sure that the whole of the bird is in focus, for it may sit broadside to the camera, or it may choose to sit facing it. The direction of the wind, however, will often be a guide in this respect, as a bird generally sits facing the wind. After focussing, the shutter has to be pulled down and the dark-slide inserted, great care being taken not to shift the camera at all, which would throw the object out of focus. The camera should then be covered over with a piece of cloth of some kind matching the ground in colour, and stones, sand, or earth placed upon this, so as to present an even appearance with the surroundings. The shutter, always the most difficult part to disguise successfully, should then be chalked over so as to match the surrounding ground in colour, and a short piece of cotton attached to the spring which works the release of the shutter. Five or six skewers may then be stuck

into the ground, leading in the direction of the place where the would-be photographer intends to conceal himself. The next duty is to walk to this place of concealment with a fishing reel containing anything up to two hundred yards of line, leave the reel at this spot, undo the check, and the line will run out easily without entangling. This line must be passed through the five or six skewers, one of which should be close up to the camera, and then attached to the piece of cotton already mentioned; the object of the cotton being to avoid any jar or movement of the camera when the line is pulled. This piece of cotton is an important feature in taking photographs of this kind, because it enables the operator to pull as hard as he likes at the exact moment he wishes to take the photograph; the cotton being sufficiently strong to release the spring of the shutter then breaks off, thus avoiding any jar to the camera.

While I was photographing the eggs as they lay on the ground, Don Ramon's brother, who sometimes accompanied us on our expeditions, touched me on the arm and pointed out the summit of a neighbouring hill some half-mile away as a likely spot on which to place the camera with a view of taking the bird, assuring me that I should never be able to photograph it at a less distance. He altered his opinion somewhat on seeing the camera disguised on the ground, but still, as he retired with his companions to their own hiding place a little distance away, I could see him shaking his head and looking very wise, evidently feeling that I was putting a slight on the intelligence of the *Engaña*.

I think the bird came rather more quickly this time, pursuing the same tactics, and standing about, as before.

I was glad to see that she took no notice whatever of the camera, but worked her way up to the eggs and then sat down. It is always well to leave a bird alone for some little time and not to take the photograph at once, because it will almost invariably shift its position once or twice before settling down.

I was just tightening up the string preparatory to giving the final pull and securing perhaps one of the most interesting of ornithological representations, when three ravens, flying very low, came right over the bird, one of them making a feint at the camera, its sharp eyes evidently detecting something that the Courser had failed to notice. This had the effect of making my bird leave the eggs and stand still a few yards from them, while the ravens continued their flight. They seemingly did not notice the Courser's eggs, though they must have seen that she was sitting. She soon resumed her place, and then, seeing by the aid of my glasses that she had apparently settled down and was in a favourable position for being taken, I pulled the string.

The bird sprang into the air with a loud *squawk*, very different from the low note that it occasionally utters when flying, then settled a few feet away and began, metaphorically speaking, to "rub its eyes" and wonder if it had been dreaming. Apparently it thought it had, for, running a few steps it again went on to the eggs. I had to disturb the bird in order to change the dark slide, as I wished to take another photograph of it, and the afternoon was beginning to close in, so I went up to the camera and made the necessary alteration.

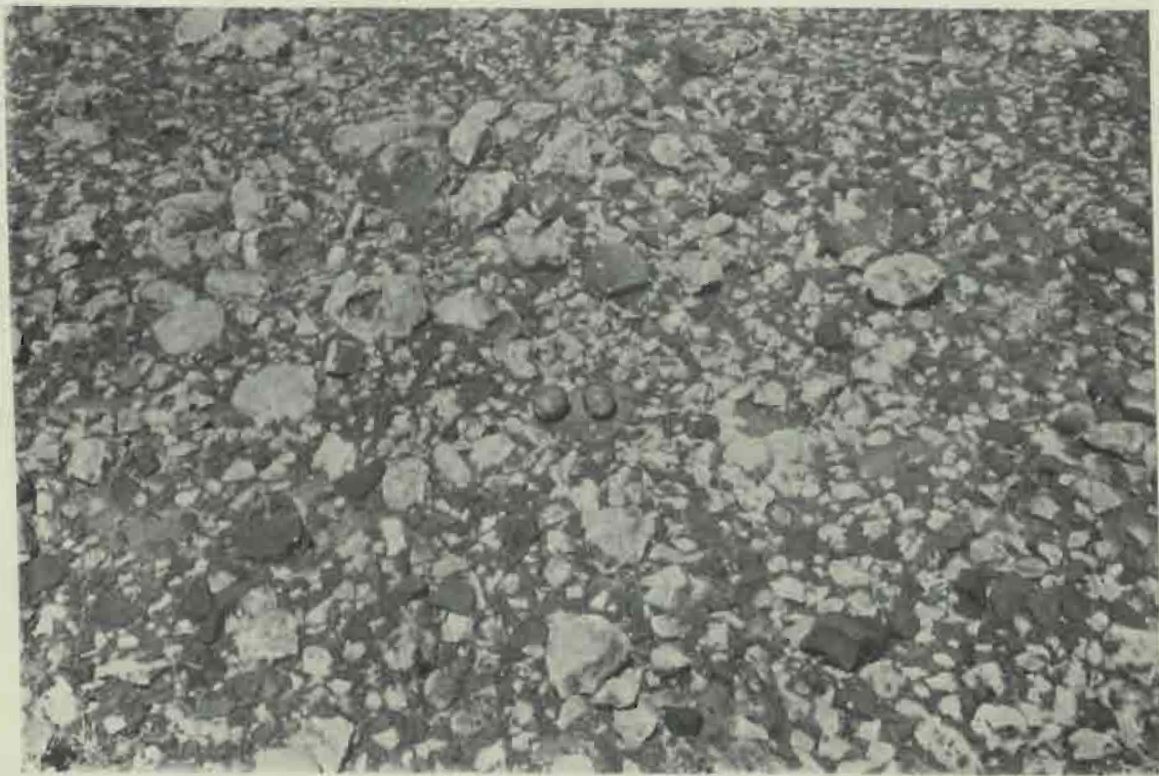
I obtained one more photograph, but this time the

bird did not move at the sound of the shutter, I think the wind prevented her hearing the click. In this instance she ran up to the camera and looked it over before settling down on the eggs.

I trust I have not wearied the reader in the above description with too many technical details; I had not intended to mention them at all, simply letting the illustrations present themselves naturally, as in the course of a ramble through the country; but so many people have an idea that these photographs are merely "snapshots," and that one can go out at any moment and "take" a bird, that it may surprise them to know how much time and trouble is really necessary to obtain good results.

While I was waiting to take the photograph described in the foregoing, the sun came out with quite desert-like force at times; generally speaking though, we found a nice breeze on any elevated ground, it was on reaching the village that we learnt what the sun really could be in Fuerteventura. The nights, however, were nearly always cool, and the air was beautifully dry.

Lorenzo always took great care of my cameras, but as we were going home on the evening of the day on which I had photographed the Courser, he quite exceeded himself in this respect, wrapping up my long-focus camera in his blanket as though it contained the bird itself. He always insisted on carrying his blanket, even on the hottest day; none of the peasants in Fuerteventura carried theirs, but then Fuerteventura was very much behind the times, and I am afraid Lorenzo had not much opinion of the place, in which he was right from his own point of view. I asked him once



NEST OF CREAM-COLOURED COURSER.

(*Cursorius gallicus*.)

how he liked the island, to which he replied, "*Buena gente, Señor, buena gente, pero le país*——" and he shrugged his shoulders and spat on the ground.

Don Ramon and Lorenzo would often take a stroll round the village of an evening, and sometimes I went with them, during which times I think I learned more Spanish than in any other way. While on these walks Lorenzo would pat the children on the head in a fatherly way, using some term of endearment to them, such as *chiquillo*; the termination *illo* is often tacked on to the end of a child's name, and implies smallness, as *Antonillo*, the little Antonio. It seems to render the name of a small child less ponderous; many of the commoner names are exceedingly pretty, such as *Celestina*, *Cipriano*. We found the children in Fuerteventura always courteous and well-behaved, in striking contrast to those about the larger towns in Grand Canary and Tenerife, where, unfortunately, they have learned the commercial value of being impertinent.

Strolling along on one of these evenings past a row of houses, I heard Lorenzo give a low growl, somewhat similar to that given by a large dog when it passes any one to whom it owes a grudge; I asked him what was the matter, when it transpired that he had taken a pair of shoes which I had given him a few days previously to a shoemaker to be re-soled. This man had reduced them so much in size by the process that it was an impossibility for Lorenzo to wear them without extreme pain. Accordingly he shook his fist at the dwelling of the shoemaker, telling me that he was a bad man. When we returned to Orotava he took the shoes to his own shoemaker to be re-topped, but he still referred to them as *zapatos del Caballero*.

One evening we spent at the priest's house, which was quite an imposing building for Fuerteventura, and possessed a *patio*. Lorenzo enjoyed himself vastly that same evening, and I think monopolised a large share of the conversation. I heard him speaking of the life in great cities, though he had never been outside the Canary Islands. Then he could speak a little English it seemed, and the Englishman before he went to bed always said "Gool nai," and again, if he were to find himself in London, he would be able to speak English quite well in three weeks. I think the glass of beer which the priest produced for our delectation picked him up a little, for he had had some long days carrying the cameras about, and I noticed, as we found ourselves at home again, that he patted the brindled watch-dog, a thing I had never seen him do before.

CHAPTER IV.

Our Last Week in Fuerteventura.

WITH the assistance of some of the peasants we were now beginning to find more nests, or perhaps it was that the birds had only just commenced to lay. One morning a man came into the village from a distance, and said that he could take us to the nest of a *Guirre*, this being the local name for the Egyptian Vulture. We were told that the nest was placed in a position in which it might be possible to photograph it, and as this bird usually selects the most inaccessible situation for its eyrie, it seemed worth while visiting the place.

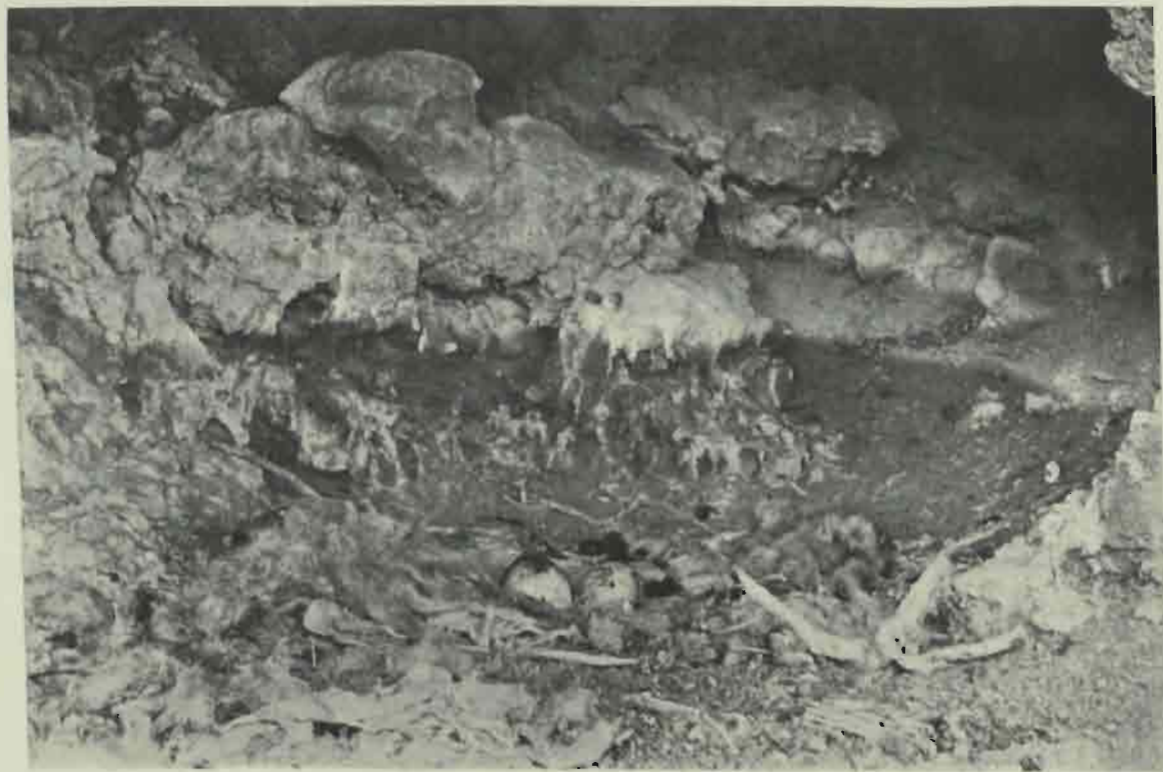
We started off in a southerly direction, and had covered a considerable distance before we passed a lonely *finca* or farmhouse, possessing, as must do every house that stands by itself in Fuerteventura, a water tank. At this house we stopped to ask if one Zachariah was about on the premises, but we were told that he was in the ravine which skirted the farm with his goats, accordingly we went in search of him.

Our guide now shouted out "Zachariah," "Zachariah," to which Lorenzo and Don Ramon joined their voices, until the mountain-side which bordered the ravine threw back a continuous echo, "-reeyah, Zachareeyah," but no Zachariah appeared; so we sat down

and waited. "Could nothing be done without Zachariah?" I asked Lorenzo, who was rolling a cigarette and preparing to enjoy himself in the hot sun. He made no reply, but hunched himself up and shot out his under lip, which after all expressed more than he could have put into a few words.

In the possession of such a name I naturally expected to see some hoary patriarch of the desert, weighed down by years, and still more so by a lifelong sojourn under a name so ponderous; judge of my surprise, therefore, when the mellow tinkle of a bell caused us to look round, and there we saw a small boy, clad in white, make his appearance leisurely over the side of the stony *barranco*, followed by his flock of goats. This was Zachariah, and as he greeted us our guide spoke to him and took his place, while Zachariah expressed himself ready to show us the nest of the *Guirre*. We had still some distance to go when we came in sight of a steep volcanic mountain standing out by itself, a sight common enough in these islands. As we drew near to this mountain we saw one of the birds whose nest we had come to seek sailing majestically round and round in widening circles; doubtless he had come out to reconnoitre, his keen eyes having sighted us from afar. This bird presents a very different appearance in the air to what it does at close quarters, when it looks a ragged and ugly creature. In the distance, as it gradually rose higher and higher, its black and white plumage showed in relief against the background of blue sky.

We had to go round to the far side of the mountain in order to make the ascent, as it was impossible to



NEST OF EGYPTIAN VULTURE.

(*Neophron percnopterus*.)

climb up the loose cinders except by a winding foot-path, which led us, after about half-an-hour's walking, to the summit of one side of the crater; this seemed to dip down almost as deep as the base of the mountain, the mountain itself being really nothing but the sides of a gigantic cone. Our small guide, Zachariah, now pointed out a large face of rock, standing out a little way below the summit of the crater; in this rock was a good-sized cave, within which we could just make out one of the Vultures sitting. She remained till we had walked half-way round towards the cave, and then flew off and settled a little way above the nest.

On reaching the rock we found that the cave was easily accessible from below, and with a little care it would be quite possible to photograph the nest, though there was very little light inside. I first went along to the cave, in which I found two eggs; they turned out to be quite fresh, and were of a dirty white colour, marked very sparingly and indistinctly with dark reddish brown. There was a sort of nest made of a little wool; the cave also contained one or two bleached bones. I asked Lorenzo to hand me my camera, which he was hugging in a very determined manner on the narrow path which overlooked this rock, but to my surprise, for the first time since we had been out together, he definitely asserted his authority, saying repeatedly, *No quiero, Señor, no quiero*, and at the same time waving his forefinger backwards and forwards in front of his face, a habit many of the Spaniards have when they wish to imply a very determined negative. I think he considered himself resposi-

ble for my safe return to Tenerife, and although there was no possible danger, he was no doubt so well acquainted with these peculiar formations that he knew, had I slipped, I should not have stopped until I had reached the bottom of the deep cone-shaped hollow, to climb up the shelving sides of which would have been well-nigh impossible.

The photographs were not a great success, as I had to place the camera almost within the cave itself in order to obtain them. I took the eggs, as I thought it was the only Vulture's nest I was ever likely to get up to, and then we descended and had some lunch at the foot of the mountain, both birds wheeling high in the air and watching us off the premises before returning to the nesting site.

On our way home we were shown a Houbara's nest, the eggs, two in number, being of the same olive-green colour as before; one of them was of a very narrow, oblong shape, and scarcely marked at all. There was no nest, properly speaking, the eggs lying in a very slight hollow, a small bush a foot or so in height growing close to them and acting somewhat as a foil to the eye, inasmuch as it was of about the same colour as the eggs. There was also a sprinkling of vegetation round about. I never saw the bird at all, though I waited for some time; but another day, while I was watching some Coursers, a Houbara ran by me within about thirty yards; it moved very quickly, keeping its long neck perpendicular.

We found two more Coursers' nests during our stay on the island, one pair of eggs having distinct zones round the smaller ends, while in all the other eggs that we saw the markings were evenly distributed.

In no case was there any hollowing out of the ground to receive the eggs, merely a small space cleared of the surrounding stones and flattened down so as to be quite level. There were a certain number of places slightly hollowed out, which the peasants told us were made ready for eggs, but I do not think this was really the case.

One of the difficulties I had to contend with, as mentioned in a previous chapter, was that the boys, although invariably polite, would insist on breaking every egg they came across.

I am inclined to think I should have had more success if I had been allowed to look for nests in my own way. We had too many people out with us as a rule, but as some of them insisted on accompanying us out of politeness it was difficult to explain this to them. I think the reason why the Coursers' eggs are so exceedingly difficult to find is that the ground on which the birds nest is open and comparatively flat. The eggs of Ringed Plover, Lesser Terns, and others are often hard to discover, but then there is generally some limit to the ground to be searched over—a strip of beach, with perhaps some rising shore from which you can watch the birds. Here there may be one Courser's nest in half a square mile of country, and if you see the bird in front of you it is impossible to tell whether it has run twenty yards or two hundred, or whether it is simply standing by the eggs. The Houbara's eggs are very much easier to find; probably the ravens, of which there are a fair number, take toll of them, but I should doubt if these birds find many of the Coursers' eggs.

We found a nest of the Morocco Raven one day, containing six eggs, and placed on a ledge of rock in an absurdly accessible situation ; I give a reproduction here which presents a good idea of the materials of which the nest was composed. The day was intensely hot, and after I had finished photographing I took up two of the eggs ; they were so heated that I could scarcely bear them in my hand. I had not a suitable camera with me that day for trying to photograph the bird on the nest, so while I was thinking how best to set about it, Lorenzo entertained me with the remark, whispered into my ear, *El cuervo sabe mucho, Señor*. He seemed to stand in great awe of the Raven, and I think gave it credit for the possession of a large amount of sagacity, in which surmise he was probably correct.

Although my fortnight in Fuerteventura could not be called exactly successful from the point of view that I had anticipated, yet I certainly did manage to obtain photographs of nests, at any rate, of some of the most interesting birds. Had we arrived in the island a month later in the season I should have had more to show, the Sand-Grouse for instance, or *Ganga* as the peasants call them, were still going about in small coveys, and had evidently not started nesting at the time I write of, about the middle of March. I must however add that I did not visit the southernmost extremity of the island, which is, I believe, the most interesting, and is certainly the most wild ; but I had no introductions to any one in those parts, and though I had a tent with me I never used it, owing to the difficulty of obtaining water.

Food also was another stumbling block, and I was



NEST OF MOROCCO RAVEN.

(*Corvus tingitanus.*)

very glad that we had taken a fair stock of provisions, as meat, excepting now and then a small chicken, bread, vegetables, in fact all the commonplace articles of consumption, were rarely seen wherever we went. *Gofio*, dried fish, and very indifferent water seemed to be the diet of nearly all the islanders. Lorenzo came to the door of my room one evening looking very mysterious, and poked his head inside, being evidently the possessor of some secret intelligence not lightly to be parted with. Pointing over his shoulder to the shed where the cooking was done he nodded his head several times, to an accompaniment of sniffs. *Carne de carnero, Señor*, he said. I understood him quite well, but this was not enough. Dropping on all fours he gave a loud *baa*, at which I could not help being amused. This pleased him, for he thought the sweets of anticipation were aroused in my breast as they were in his, so with his well-known salute he left me. A special effort had seemingly been made to give me a treat, and if the brindled watch-dog evinced that evening a somewhat suspicious desire for my company that he had not shown before, who was to know that he, and not I, was the consumer of that mutton? In a word, the brindled watch-dog helped me over a difficulty, and although it was not exactly an animal one would care to be under an obligation to, the arrangement happened in this case to suit both parties.

The people were greatly interested in my cameras, which I think they regarded with some amount of superstition, even Lorenzo appearing relieved when the shutter had gone down and the photograph was taken. Sometimes four or five of them would stand

round while Lorenzo was handing me the things I required; he was very useful in that way and would steal up to me silently with a dark slide concealed about his person, as though the sun could hear as well as see. After the silence that always accompanied the taking of the photograph their tongues would be loosed, and Lorenzo would give them a sort of extempore lecture on photography. This of course was while I was photographing a nest.

A day or so before we left I offered to take photographs of Don Ramon and his family, and a little while before the time appointed a secret expedition was made into my room, which contained a large wardrobe, to extract therefrom Don Ramon's best Sunday suit, while Lorenzo was preparing, in the next room, to attack him with scissors and razor. This was not what I wanted, as I was desirous of photographing him as he looked in his everyday clothes, and as he used to accompany us on our expeditions, so I intimated as much, and finally induced him to come out and be taken.

The event must have been noised abroad, for no sooner had I photographed Don Ramon and his family than their places were taken by other families, who had walked quietly in, all decked in their very best, while a thin stream of people could be seen threading their way from the village.

On the evening of the day previous to our departure we find ourselves returning home across the bare undulating ground for the last time, meeting now and then on our way peasants, who give us a *buenas tardes, Señores*, as they pass. Occasionally a string of camels would go by, laden with cargo from Puerto Cabras, where the

boat touches on a Tuesday morning on its way to Lanzarote, calling at Puerto Cabras again on the following day on its return voyage.

Fuerteventura had but little that it could export beyond its own inhabitants, these migrating, after an unusually lengthened period of drought, to Cuba or the Peninsula, by which name they always referred to Spain; chiefly to Cuba though, where nearly all of them seemed to have relations of one sort or another.

When the last string of camels has resolved itself into a mere dot upon the horizon, and the sun is tinting the mountain-tops an even deeper red than usual, we find ourselves outside the little-wine shop close to Tuineje, while the cheery brother insists on making every one feel very uncomfortable by taking a small glass of the thin vinegary wine of the country.

The Spaniards in Fuerteventura are great cigarette smokers, but the older men will as frequently smoke pipes. The flint and steel too are in general use among many of the inhabitants in outlying villages, in which matches are rarely seen. Certainly no more satisfactory method of lighting a pipe in a strong wind is to be found than by the use of the flint and steel. The native match, as made in the island, is a homely affair, consisting simply of a broad strip of touch-paper cut into notches on one side, so that pieces may be torn off as required, the ends of the pieces so notched being dipped in phosphorus. The cigarettes, which may be bought at twenty for a penny, are composed of dry, chopped up tobacco, enclosed in a roll of paper, which is closed up at both ends.

The poorest class of Spaniards here, as in Tenerife,

have an odd name for penny and halfpenny. If you go into a shop that is kept by one of these people, they will tell you that the price of such and such an article is *perro grande* or *perro pequeño*, which means that it costs a "big dog" or a "little dog," the former being the word in general use amongst them for a penny, and the latter for a halfpenny. I think smoking is almost the only luxury indulged in in Fuerteventura, and poor though the inhabitants are, it says much for their native courtesy that they should seldom be without the means of offering the traveller some civility, even though that civility be represented only by a cigarette costing the twentieth part of a penny.

For the second time all is packed and ready for the journey to Puerto Cabras, a journey we are told that will occupy the best part of twelve hours; the boat is to leave at eight o'clock in the evening, so we make a start in good time in the morning. Don Ramon is to see us, as is the custom of the island, some little distance on our way.

With many good-byes and good wishes we take leave of them, the last words being an invitation from the cheery brother for me to stay at his house next year; there is an almond tree in his garden, he says, in which the *Alcairon* nests every year; the nest shall not be touched until I come. Even the brindled dog grudgingly puts in an appearance, and lies in the hot sunshine with its nose on its two paws, looking up at the proceedings with bloodshot eyes.

Soon clear of habitations, we strike out into a new direction, to complete the triangle of which our former journeys have been two sides. We drop the pilot, our



NEST OF THE ALCAIRON.
(*Lanius algeriensis*.)

old friend and companion Don Ramon, after about an hour's travelling, and then we are left to ourselves with no sound but the soft tread of the camel and now and again the strange cries of its driver.

The question of leave-taking reminds me of that of remuneration for board and lodgings. Among people of such good manners one's natural impulse would be to scout any idea of payment, but the inhabitants in the out-of-the-way places in these islands are poor, and sentiment must not override common sense. Any allusion to the matter, however delicately put, is generally met with a positive refusal to take anything, and yet they expect something. I usually found that the most satisfactory way was to leave what I intended to give them in an envelope, so that in opening this after my departure they might avoid the embarrassment of being "insulted"—to use a Gilbertian phrase—in my presence.

One man with whom I stayed for a short time provided me with a donkey to ride, much against my own wish ; I was on good enough terms with the animal until it took to falling down, which it would do without the slightest warning. After it had repeated these performances two or three times I said I thought I would walk ; this evidently seemed to be the donkey's wish too, but they would not hear of it. "*Montese, Señor,*" they said, "*montese, montese,*" and so I was forced to get up again. Its next obeisance was made on the edge of a steep ravine, down which I narrowly escaped rolling ; this strengthened me in my resolve to walk, and I ultimately had my own way. I think the donkey, being Spanish, was too polite to *kick* me off,

so it adopted this subterfuge to try and get rid of me, which after all amounted to much the same thing. This leads me round again to the leave-taking question, for the owner of this donkey, having accompanied me as usual for a short distance on my way, and being about to say good-bye, I asked him if I might be allowed to make some small return for his kindness. We were sitting down, smoking, at the time, and he waved the suggestion aside vehemently, "*No, Señor, nada,*" he said most emphatically, moving his hand quickly to and fro in front of his face. Here was evidently a deadlock; I did not know what to say next, but after we had been sitting for some little time without speaking, he said in a very low voice, apparently addressing himself, *Para el burro?* then shrugged his shoulders and put his head on one side as though to see how the suggestion looked, now he had got it out. I did not catch his meaning at once, and it was not until he had repeated the words, this time a little louder, and again surveyed them, as it were, after they were spoken, that I saw what he was driving at. It appeared that the donkey was to be the scapegoat, so I asked him if he would accept something for the use of the donkey. He was still very diffident, and had evidently not accustomed himself to the idea yet, so he gave a deprecatory shrug, as much as to say if I would insist on it, that was the only way he could see out of it. I must confess, after my experiences of the said donkey, I would rather have had some other object made the medium of payment, but that was evidently the only solution of the question.

We saw but few birds on this our last journey in

Fuerteventura, although the country gradually became less arid, with here and there an attempt at cultivation. They are a dull lot, the birds of Fuerteventura, and it says little for their musical capabilities that the Hoopoe's note is the most often heard of any during the daytime; the monotonous "Oo, oo, oo, oo, — Oo, oo, oo, oo," heard in the early mornings, being a sound that associates itself in my mind with the yellow stone walls and blue-green cactus plants round about the village of Tuineje. The cry may be exactly imitated by three or four whistles on a very low note repeated again and again. It has a strangely *wooden* sound.

Lorenzo returned from a foraging expedition in one of the villages that we passed through and showed me an orange, quite a rarity in this island, and the first that we had seen; I admired it, but he still held it out impatiently to me, evidently meaning it as a gift. Villages were more numerous along this route than we had found them on any of our previous journeys. Once we passed a spring of clear water, which looked very inviting, but was, so they informed me, salt. During one of our expeditions a few days back, while we were walking up the bed of a dry *barranco*, Don Ramon stooped down at a certain point and dug away some sand with his hands to a depth of about a foot. After waiting for a few minutes this hollow began slowly to fill with dirty-looking water, which he said was good to drink. There were some camels and goats standing near the place, so I think they must have been aware of the fact of water being about, though they could have made but little use of it themselves. In this *barranco*, in which a few tamarisk bushes were growing, I saw

a specimen of Mr. Meade-Waldo's Chat (*Pratincola dacotiæ*), the only one that I came across in the island. This bird is, I believe, peculiar to Fuerteventura.

When we are within five or six miles of Puerto Cabras we strike into a carriage road, much to our surprise; it seems it is newly constructed, and appears to be feeling its way out into the desert in a very tentative manner. It certainly does not get much encouragement, for so far as I know there was nothing on wheels in the island at the time we were there. The camels evidently mistrust this road, as they have worn a narrow track on one side of it, and avoid walking in the middle. It was decorated on both sides with rather small stones placed at intervals of about twenty yards, apparently as ornaments, for they were not of much use, being merely placed on the ground where they could be kicked aside. This road necessitates bridges and all sorts of extravagances, and our camel, after studiously ignoring the existence of the road for some miles, starts off down the steep side of a *barranco* instead of going over a bridge, so that it has to be ignominiously driven back by the man.

A long incline breasted, and we look down on Puerto Cabras—the Port of Goats,—still an hour's journey away, although it appears to be so close. The sea, as yet, is untenanted, and there is no sign of the *Leon y Castillo*, which should soon be putting in an appearance on her return from Lanzarote; we are early yet though, and take our time over this, the last stage of our journey.

We pass the little white-walled cemetery which overlooks the town, and then find ourselves in the

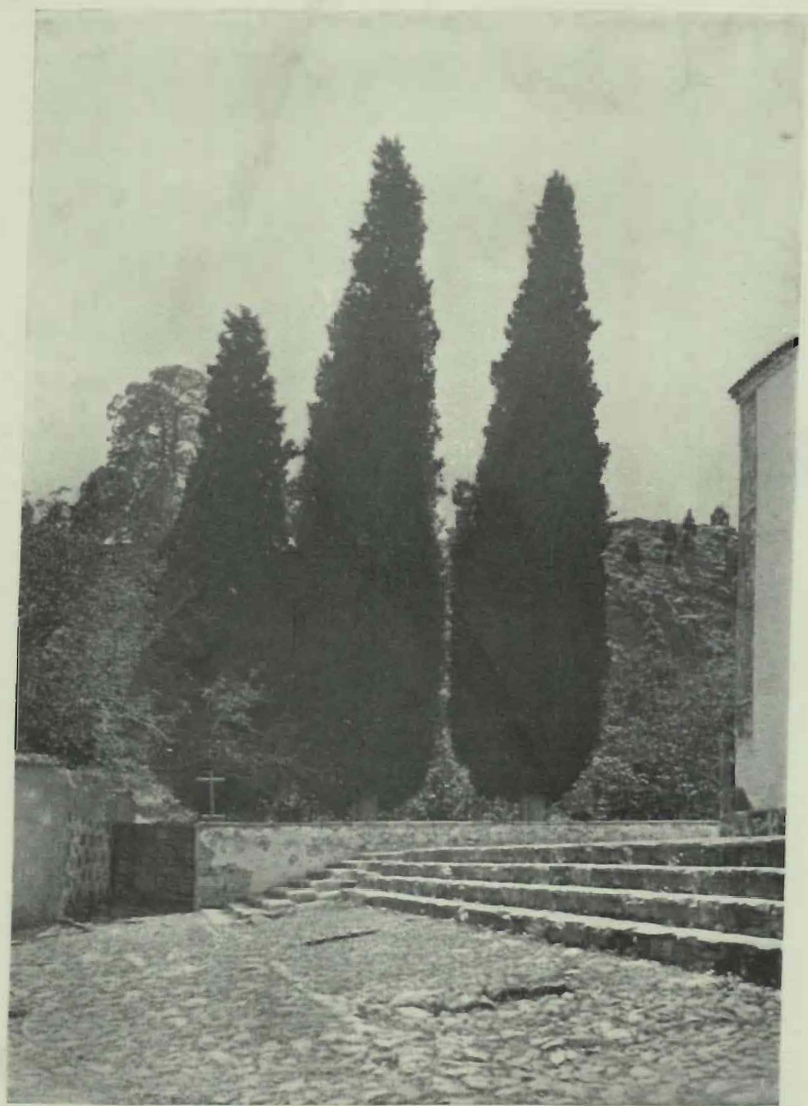
narrow street ; a geranium growing in front of one of the houses being the only flower we have seen during our stay on the island. There are no flower gardens in Fuerteventura, water is too scarce a commodity for gardening. Our luggage is left down by the quay, now laden with stores waiting for the boat ; a row of camels may be seen reclining on the shore, the same abstracted gaze far out to sea, the same nonchalant chewing. Before we reach the *fonda* the boat slips quietly in unnoticed, and takes her accustomed place.

There was a crowded table at the *fonda* that night, and many quaint and curious dishes, to which justice was certainly done by the majority of the guests. Among these I noticed a highly-coloured old gentleman from Lanzarote, with a napkin tucked round his collar, his grey moustache doing a vast amount of work over the various courses. He was rude enough to say to his neighbour, in whom I recognised a face from La Oliva, "The gentleman seems very fond of the bottle." This was in allusion to my nose, which had borne the brunt of the sun for a fortnight. There was a slight hush, then in an undertone, *Amigo de la Marquesa*.

By nine o'clock we were on board, Lorenzo appearing very jovial, either on account of the prospect of returning home to his wife and family, or else because he had found some wine more to his taste than that which he had been able to get in the villages.

My closing recollection of Fuerteventura was certainly a weird one. The sea was calm, and after most of the cargo had been taken on board I saw two long boats being rowed laboriously towards the steamer, the

moonlight shining on the ruffled water at every stroke of the oars; these boats were each laden with forty lambs, two camels, and four oxen! The lambs were disposed of in the spaces not taken up by the camels and the men who were rowing, the four oxen floating in the water, two at each side of the boat, to which they were attached by a kind of wooden yoke fastened to their shoulders. The lambs were unloaded first, bleating helplessly, and were passed from hand to hand into the hold of the vessel. Next came the oxen, lifted and swung round into position by a crane; and lastly the camels, bound as it were hand and foot, with their long necks stretched out horizontally, uttering the while a gurgling sound, as they were finally deposited with a soft bump in the hold. I think there must be some charity in me, because although these camels had passed me again and again with the most contemptuous demeanour and insolent drooping of the eyelid, yet now, when they were helpless and bound, with the prospect of a sea journey before them, I felt sorry for them and pitied them.



CYPRESS TREES AT VILAFLORE.

CHAPTER V.

Vilaflor.

FOUR thousand feet or more above the sea, on the south side of Tenerife, is situated the small town of Vilaflor. The mountain slopes on which it is built are for the most part composed of rocky ground, from which springs, here and there, one of the giant pine trees so often to be met with in the higher districts of Tenerife; these trees unite in places to form isolated woods, remnants of the forest which at one time clothed these mountain sides.

It is a quaint village, built round a large square, the church standing at the top, the *fonda* on the left-hand side, while leading out of the two bottom corners of this square are two narrow streets. To the right of the church are three magnificent cypress trees, the row of steps included in the accompanying illustration of these trees leading up to the church itself.

Like some old families, this village is touchy about the spelling of its name, and one must be careful not to confound the *Vila* with the Spanish word for town, which is *villa*. Orotava people have a great love for Vilaflor, and in that I think they show good taste. Sometimes enveloped in cloud for days together, its full attractions are not realised until the sun draws from its woods the warm scent of the pines, which here

attain an almost fabulous size. The healthiness of the surroundings of this, the highest situated village in Tenerife, or the example of great age set by its pines, is not without its effect upon some of the inhabitants of the district, and it was a touching incident that the old priest who had ministered to the people of Vilaflor for so long should have been taken from them only a few months ago, when he lacked but three years of the hundred.

A long journey is necessary in order to reach Vilaflor from Orotava, and the traveller must follow the stony path that leads past the few straggling villages on the lower slopes of the mountains, passing through a thousand feet of drenching cloud, where everything is green, and the peasants live for some portion of the year in a genuine Scotch mist; then out of the mist into the bright sunshine, the yellow bloom of the *genesta* marking one altitude; the white flowered *retama* another. When the *retama* zone is reached, the Cañadas are not far distant.

Above the cloud-belt which so often surrounds the Peak of Tenerife, shutting out all view of the mountain from the coast, lies an extensive level plain, composed entirely of small pieces of pumice stone; this plain extends for many miles, at an altitude of some seven thousand feet above the sea, constituting what is generally known as the Cañadas, and rising out of these same Cañadas in every conceivable shape, are jagged pieces of black lava. Then again, with almost startling distinctness as viewed through the dry, clear atmosphere, towers the Peak of Tenerife. It is May, and the only signs of winter snow are the pencil streaks

of white that mark the courses of its crevices and gulleys. The air is fragrant with the scent of the flower of the *retama*, a kind of broom that flourishes here where little else grows; single bushes of it are dotted here and there for miles around, some exceptionally large ones growing to a height of three or four feet.

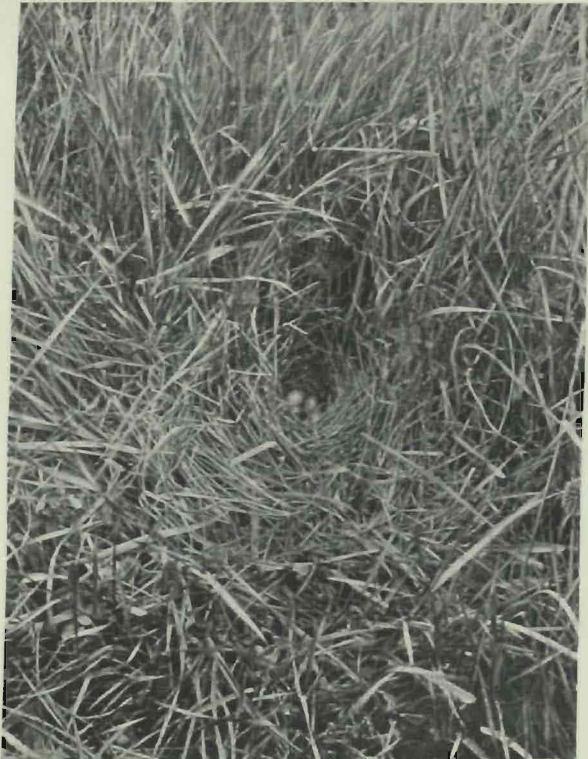
Keeping well to the left of the Peak, the path leads on for many miles, skirting now and again walls of black lava that rise to a height of fifty feet out of the plain, the light pumice stone yielding a sound as of half-frozen snow under the foot. Now the far side of the Cañadas is reached, and the traveller looks down, not over the blue sea on the south side of Tenerife, but on to a billowy plain of white cloud, stretching out into space, while near at hand, like rocks out of the sea, jagged points of black show themselves.

After descending perhaps a thousand feet, the path skirts a bold sweep of black cindery ground, from which it is separated by a narrow gorge; the colour-effect of the *retama*, growing in isolated bushes, on this dark background must surely be unique in nature; the black cinders, the sage-green stems, and lastly the white flowers, merging in perspective into a delicate mist of white. The cloud-belt soon obscures the view save to a short distance, where occasionally a rugged pine tree takes indistinct form, with its stem bare of branches except near the top. These trees now become more frequent and more distinct, until in time the lower limit of the clouds is reached, and sunlight begins to dispel the mist. Bird life begins to show itself, and the *Caminero* may be seen along the path, now settling on a stone,

now flying on for a few yards and then alighting again. This bird, Berthelot's Pipit, is quite one of the most distinctive birds of Tenerife, and indeed of all the islands, and what the Blackcap and the Canary are to the more wooded parts, the *Caminero* is to the rough, open ground. It is met with more frequently, I think, than any other bird in Tenerife, and will fly along in front of the traveller, settling on a stone or a wall by the wayside, and remaining just long enough for him to note the dull-brown of the upper parts of its plumage, its striped breast, and its delicate flesh-coloured legs. The bird is interesting as being found only in the Canarian Archipelago; even in Fuerteventura it was to be observed on ground which was not absolutely barren of all vegetation.

After descending one side of a deep wooded ravine the path leads uphill, past orchards of pear trees in full blossom, and so to the outskirts of Vilaflor.

The weather was very hot during the first few days we were at Vilaflor, afterwards it became cooler, with occasional immersions in cloud. No fear of bad water here; one has only to go about a hundred yards above the village to find the clear stream racing down in a hollow wooden aqueduct, and there one is "top man," always an enviable position in these islands, where the chances of fever lurk below the villages. Above us are no habitations, nothing but the rocks and pine trees. Following up the path a little way above the village we come to the great pine tree of Vilaflor, attaining I am afraid to say what altitude, but it was certainly seven feet in diameter, measured at the height of an average man from the ground. Nearly all the trees are of



BERTHELOT'S PIPIT AND NEST.

(*Anthus bertheloti*.)

5" 7'''

enormous size, but none of them I believe is as large as this one. The peasants, though wood is everywhere abundant, have cut a large wedge-shaped block out of this tree at its base, but this has been somewhat atoned for now by a wall of stone having been built to guard the tree.

As we follow the path through the forest, various sounds show that our movements are noticed by the lawful residents of the woods. A raven "waits on" us from a great height up, and so plainly does he see us and know all about our movements, that he is in no hurry to give his hoarse croak, a sound that travels down very audibly to our ears through the clear air. After all it was not exactly a warning, it was merely a sort of clearing of the throat, as though he would say, "Ahem! I know you're there, you know." But his nest was safe enough, and we were not on the path that led to it, so he soon leaves us alone. "Not even dangerous," he seems to say as he sails off, giving another croak.

A very paradise this for the *Fraileisco*, the Tenerife Blue Tit, as it flits here and there, now dumping down on to a twig, ducking first to one side and then to the other, with a chattering twitter, then off as soon as settled to its home a hundred feet up among the tangled *débris* near the tops of the giant pines.

The "little friar" is an engaging bird, and one of the few inhabitants of the forest that seems to give you any sort of welcome. He evidently thinks you ought not to be there, but being there he is content to scold you and then bustle up under cover of some undergrowth to examine you more closely. He has few companions of

his own lively disposition in the sombre woods besides his own kith and kin, unless it be the Tenerife Robin, who is nearly always hunting for food among the pine needles on the ground, and when he has finished he just flies up to some little loop of a branch, where he sharpens his beak and waits till he is hungry again. Not much of a companion this, after all, for the lively *Frailesco*, who is always on the alert, never still for a moment, and seems perpetually to be trying to have his head and his tail in the same place at the same time. He spares time occasionally from his bustling life to come out into a patch of sunshine which carpets the ground here and there amid the gloom, and search a flower for insect food, hanging head downwards from a dependent twig; sometimes, in his impetuous way, he shifts his position on to the flower itself, which of course breaks down with his weight, so he scurries off again into the woods. There are hundreds of these little birds far up in the tall trees, and their incessant chattering may continually be heard.

Another resident in the forest is the Kite, *Villano*, which may often be seen in the air as he glides over the tall tree-tops, steering himself with his forked tail, and giving now and then his peculiar mewing whistle. He settles for the most part on an old lightning-struck tree close to his nest, which is built near the top of one of the tallest pines, a tree some six feet across at the base. On the withered branch of this tree he waits for us, and when at length we have scrambled up over the slippery bed of pine needles, not without many back-slidings, his attitude seems to say, "Well?"

He is quite right, for it is an impossible tree to climb,



TENERIFE BLUE TIT.

(*Parus tenerifæ.*)

4" 8"

so there he remains, with his grey head slightly on one side, and doesn't seem at all perturbed. Nevertheless, he watches us through the forest, gliding above us with outspread wings, and then floats down to the valley below.

We retrace our steps, passing the water-course above the village, where the Grey Wagtail catches flies in the air, or sits balancing his long tail. He is always there, except when the washerwomen have taken possession of the place, when he balances his tail from a distance and wonders when they will cease their everlasting "clack, clack," with its accompaniment of wet linen dabbed down on stones, and their cackling laughter.

The pace at which some of these women talk is almost incredible. There are no pauses, and each syllable is dropped out with very nearly the rapidity of the punctuations of a sewing machine; and when it is explained that the poorer class of Spaniards in these islands frequently clip both the beginning and end of some words, often substitute an *l* for an *r*, and hardly ever pronounce the *s* at all, the difficulty of making out what they say will be to some extent understood.

My friend Mr. W., who accompanied me on this expedition, left Vilaflor for Orotava after a stay of a few days, I remaining a little while longer. Imagine my state of feelings then, shortly after his departure, when our landlady, by name Livoria Cano, came in at breakfast time and clacked off an interminable flow of words at me, none of which I in the least understood. If she had brought in the coffee-mill and ground it at me I should have been quite as much enlightened.

She left the room, still talking, and returned almost immediately with a bunch of knives and forks in each hand, with which she was gesticulating freely.

I began to understand now, my friend had gone away and taken some of her cutlery, instead of that which we had brought from the hotel with us. There was evidently nothing to be done till she "ran down," so I waited patiently, the more so as directly I tried to get in an explanatory word the pitch of her voice was raised considerably, she could hardly increase the speed.

All things come to an end in time, and when she had no breath left to talk with she began to cry. A word now and then, followed by a sob—and in the lull of the storm I could catch such expressions as "*Muy pobre . . . pero no sé, Señor . . . Muy pobre.*"

Now was my chance, as she gradually relaxed her hold on the knives and forks and placed them on the table. I was very sorry, I said, but Mr. W. was not a thief; I would send a letter that day to him at Orotava, and the *Arriero* should bring her things up next time he came. As to being very poor, and not knowing anything, I assured her that her cooking was most admirable, as indeed it was. The sun now shone through her tears, she collected her weapons, and left the room.

We got on very well after that, and she flattered me by saying she could understand me quite well; I wished I could have paid her the same compliment; however, she subsequently modified to some extent the speed of her talking. This good woman certainly cooked plain dishes very well, and in the English way,

which latter circumstance was accounted for by the fact that she had been for some time housekeeper to an English lady who lived for many years at Vilaflor, and died there. On one occasion a live partridge was brought into my room, with a string attached to its legs, and my landlady wished to know if I would like it for dinner that evening. I asked her how it was caught; she seemed surprised at the question, and explained, in a sentence lasting over several minutes, that it had been caught on the nest. I tried to make her understand that in England it was not the custom to eat partridges during the nesting season, at which she began to cry. I had several more partridges after that one, and they were certainly very good, and only cost fourpence apiece.

One day I asked her what time it was; the day was misty, and as she pointed up towards the sky she shook her head and gesticulated. "*No hay sol, Señor, no sé que hora es,*" she said.

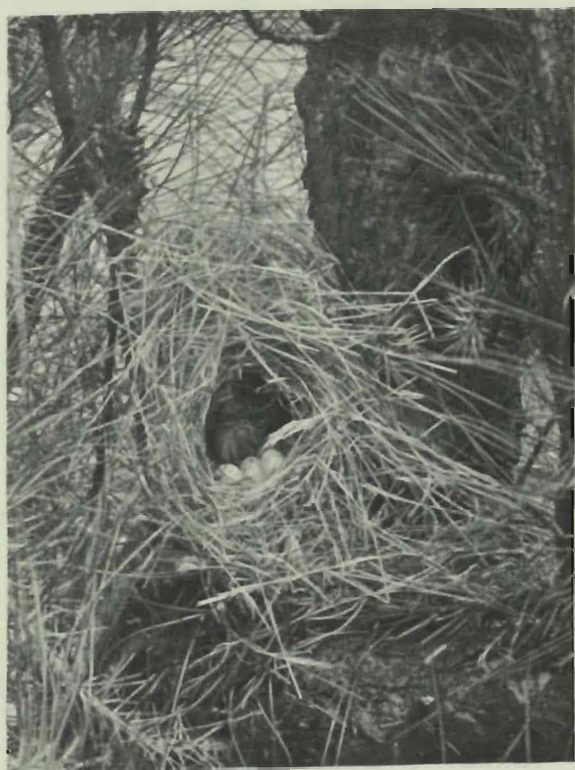
This was quite true. They had no church clock in the village, but when the sundial which stood against the church indicated mid-day, the bell in the tower was rung twelve times.

There is no carriage road within many miles of Vilaflor; stores and merchandise have therefore to be brought by way of the steep paths which lead up from the villages along the south coast of Tenerife, or from Santa Cruz, which is a very much longer journey. Mules are the chief beasts of burden in Tenerife, although there are a few camels in the island. I remember one evening hearing a bell ring outside my room at Vilaflor, and on looking out I saw a camel

kneeling down in front of a small shop which faced the house where I was staying; the number of boxes and packages that were being unloaded from the poor beast might well have filled a cart, and I could not help wondering at what stage the proverbial "last straw" would have had its effect. The whole business was done so silently, the men being bare-footed as well as the camel, that I should have known nothing of the proceedings had it not been for the ringing of a small bell which was suspended from the head-gear of the animal.

In the more open country about Vilaflor there were many small birds to be seen, commonest among these being perhaps the *Triguero*, or Wheat-bird, in which may be recognised a familiar English species, the Corn Bunting. These birds were very numerous in almost every part of Tenerife, nesting in the more cultivated portions of the island, where their mechanical note was uttered monotonously again and again. The Spectacled Warbler, too, which is abundant near the coast, finds its way up as high as Vilaflor, though I did not actually see the bird there, but only found its nest, placed in a cistus bush. This looked very pretty amid the white flowers, the eggs much resembling those of our Whitethroat.

Chiffchaffs were very numerous in Tenerife, and their notes might generally be heard wherever there was a sprinkling of wood. At Vilaflor these birds were nesting in May, the nests being hardly ever placed at a less height than three feet from the ground, and sometimes as high up as ten or twelve feet. Possibly they build them thus in order to keep the eggs more



CHIFFCHAFF AND NEST.

(*Phylloscopus rufus*.)

to mind our presence at all. "That?" he seemed to say, screwing his head on one side and looking down into the nest, "Oh! that's an old nest, been there as long as I can remember, that's nothing to do with us," and he lolloped a little further along the branch and hitched up one foot, as though to dismiss all possibility of argument, finally drawing in his head and giving one or two little flicks with the tips of his wings, so as to ensure for himself the acme of comfort.

I hate doubting anyone's word, and unless the Raven were a consummate actor, it seemed useless to pursue investigations further; but with the business-like training which had for so many years been instilled into my mind, I felt it my duty not to leave the spot until I had found out for myself whether the nest were untenanted or the reverse. Accordingly I threw a stone up at the nest, with the result that four or five gaping beaks at once showed themselves, making a horribly immature croaking noise; they then dropped down, one by one, into the nest and were silent. *El Cuervo* was in a great rage; to think that, after all his training, his family should have been caught by a trick like that; and in his anger he ruffled up his feathers, and dug his strong beak many times into the pine branch, splintering bits of bark off at each dig, while the gorge resounded with the hollow sounds.

I took several photographs from the rock opposite the nest in this way, though they were not very successful ones, and each time the young birds showed themselves the Raven went through this extraordinary performance, until at last, as though he could contain him-

self no longer, he flew to the tree where his mate was, and dug with his beak at the branch close to where she was sitting. "Why don't you do something?" he seemed to say. "Sitting there!" "I suppose you know what's going on?"

While I was photographing these young Ravens a *Carpintero* flew out into the sunshine and settled on the trunk of a large pine tree close at hand, commencing at once a diligent search for insects in the deep crevices of the bark, his red nape and mottled back showing very conspicuously in the bright sunlight. He was not allowed to stay there long though, for almost as soon as he had alighted, half a dozen "little friars" came down from the top of the tree and surrounded him from all sides, chattering and pecking at him, while many others were on their way to join in the fun; so he flew quickly and silently back into the woods. This bird, the Great Spotted Woodpecker, is not uncommon in the pine woods round about Vilaflor, although it is chiefly by means of its ringing cry, and an occasional rounded hole in one of the older forest trees, that its presence is to be detected. No bird takes better care of himself than the *Carpintero*, as the peasants call him, and if you are on one side of a tree he is almost sure to be on the other; thus the observer may become the observed, and he will probably find out more about your habits than you do about his.

Towards evening we retrace our steps in the direction of the village, and as we find ourselves clear of the forest, the mewing whistle of the Kite, as he goes back to his favourite tree, tells us that he has watched the last travellers out of the woods.

CHAPTER VI.

The North Coast of Tenerife.

IT says much for Tenerife, that without the aid of those two accessories, *rivers and lakes*, which are so closely associated with much that is beautiful in scenery, the island should yet be able to hold its place as one of the beauty spots of nature. The north shore of Tenerife has a charm peculiarly its own, and at no spot on the island is a more pleasing wealth of colour drawn together than at the Port of Orotava. Here the sea is almost always rough, and it is but seldom that the deep blue of its water is not separated from the shore by a line of white surf. All along this coast the colour-changes are rung on black, white, and blue; the unusually deep blue of the sea, the snowy whiteness of the foam, and the black sand of the shore. There is always change in this prospect, for the waves of the Atlantic as they roll in, time after time, are of such a size that they thunder on to the rocks, transforming the black shore for the time being into a carpet of white foam.

But if change of colour were needed, it is supplied in the vegetation which grows in places almost down to the margin of the shore itself, or in the villages and small ports which alternate with deep ravines along this coast. Chief among these is the Port of

Orotava, the red-brown roofs of its houses forming a pleasing contrast in the foreground to the sea beyond.

But little trade is done by boat along this side of the island, the people preferring to trust their goods and their lives to the excellent carriage road which runs from Santa Cruz, the chief port of Tenerife, for a considerable way round the coast.

The sea on these shores is jealous of any improvements, and even the short breakwater that has been constructed at Port Orotava with a view of affording a kind of shelter for the small fishing boats as they are pulled up on the beach, has been treated as a mere plaything by the waves. Whole blocks of masonry have been dislodged at the end of this breakwater, and it is only a question of years how soon the sea will have completed its work. On a rough day, when the waves run unusually high, this little breakwater is in a constant state of appearing and disappearing; its decks, so to speak, being only cleared just in time to make room for the next onslaught of water, with its accompanying shower of spray. Here there is no harbour, and the two or three fishing schooners which often lie at anchor some little way out to sea, swing monotonously from side to side as the big rollers pass beneath them.

To the west of Orotava are situated the small towns of Icod and Garachico; to the east lie the cliffs of Santa Ursula, these latter frequently steeped in a blue haze so characteristic of views in Tenerife. Above these cliffs a pair of Vultures may often be seen, circling in the air, or following up the course of some ravine in their search for food. These ravines, of which there are many, find their way down to the shore, passing

beneath bridges, over which the carriage road runs. These are well built and of immense strength, being doubtless made so in order to withstand the sudden floods of water that occasionally, in the winter time, rush down the deep *barrancos*. The rocky beds of these *barrancos* are for the most part dry, although along their banks many different kinds of plants may be found growing. The bramble here is common, and the *Zarzalero*, or Blackberry-bird, may often be seen, its plumage of black and white, chestnut and grey, rendering it a conspicuous and handsome object. This little bird, the Spectacled Warbler, generally builds its nest in blackberry thickets, to which fastnesses it can retire on the approach of danger; it is also fond of churring at any intruder with a harsh, scolding note, from some exposed position, such as the one figured in the accompanying illustration, where the bird is perched upon a broken cane. These canes attain a considerable height in Tenerife, and when fully grown are utilised by the fishermen as rods.

Other inhabitants dwell in these ravines besides the *Zarzalero*, and here may be found a peculiar insect, having some resemblance to a locust, which goes by the name of the Praying Mantis. This insect, the whereabouts of which it is not always easy to discover, earns his reputation for piety from the peculiar way in which he holds his two front legs, these assuming the position of hands when clasped in the act of prayer. He will thus sit motionless on the foliage of some tree or plant, and as the small creatures on which he feeds perceive him they are struck with the reverence of his devotional attitude. "How good he is," they seem to



SPECTACLED WARBLER.

(*Sylvia conspicillata*.)

4' 8"



NEST OF SPECTACLED WARBLER.

say as they cluster round, "and what an example to all of us," and it is not until the prayerful one, rising from these exercises with a wearied and somewhat abstracted gaze, has disposed of three or four of the congregation, that they begin to realise that if he prays at least he does not fast. In this strain, at any rate, runs the legend.

To the west of Orotava the road continues along the coast, passing through some of the most beautiful scenery in the island. In this district there is no lack of water, and the springs which come racing down from the heights above are pulled aside as it were in their impetuous rush, and conducted by wooden watercourses to feed, here one village on the mountain slopes, and there another.

Icod is one of the more important towns in Tenerife, and, like the Villa of Orotava, it prefers to stand a thousand feet above the sea, being represented on the shore by its small harbour, from which a steep and villanous path leads up to the town itself. This little harbour, so far as I know, is the only one that can lay claim to such a title along the whole of the northern coast of Tenerife; when I was there a schooner arrived, laden with stone from one of the eastern islands, a commodity which the inhabitants could no doubt well dispense with.

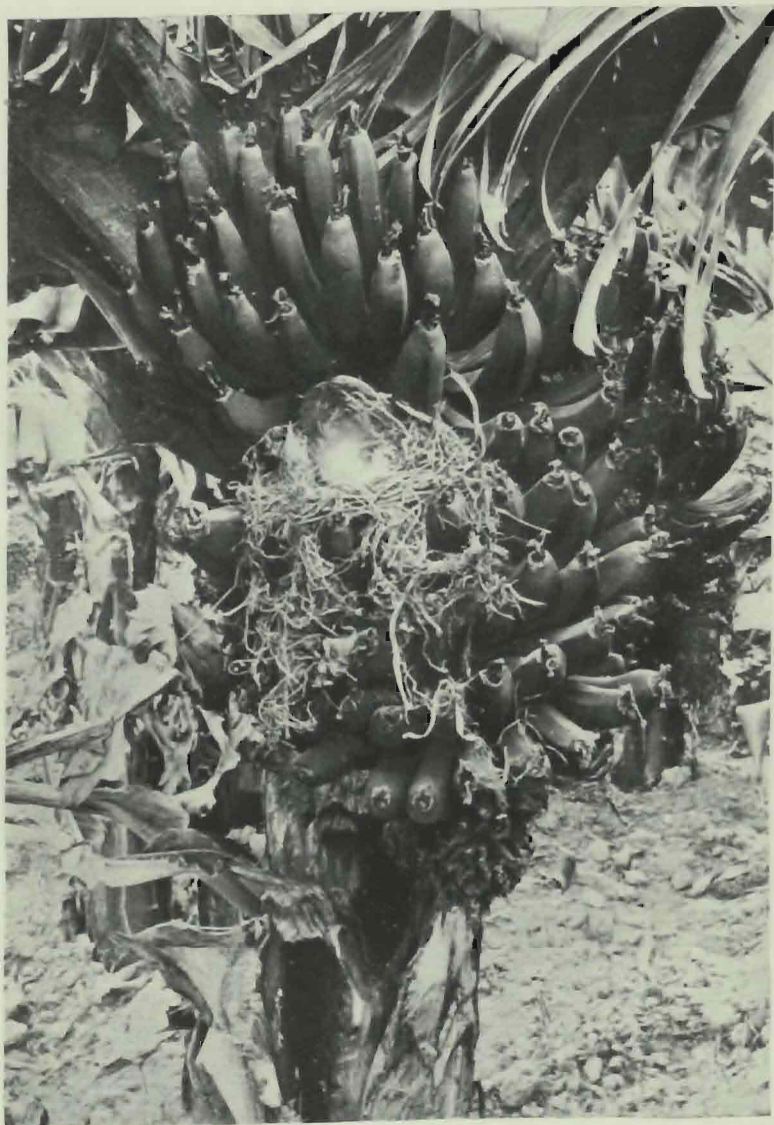
The view of the Peak from Icod differs entirely from that obtained at Orotava, for while from the latter place the foreground is spread out around the wide valley of Orotava, gradually leading up to the steep mountain range above which the Peak shows itself, at

Icod there is but little foreground, and the mountain rises up eleven thousand feet above the town itself.

More bananas are probably cultivated in the neighbourhood of Icod than in any other district in the island, and as one stands in the large square that overlooks the sea, the intervening ground is mostly taken up with banana groves. These groves are a favourite resort of the Tenerife Robins, which seemed to be rather locally distributed over the island. The three nests of this species which I found were each of them built in the space afforded by the breaking off of one banana from a bunch, in which situation the birds constructed an untidy-looking nest, as shown in the illustration here reproduced. There is scarcely any difference, to a casual observer, between these Robins and those with which we are familiar in England; the peasants call them *Pajaro de San Antonio*—Bird of Saint Anthony.

One of the birds peculiar to the island of Tenerife is the Teydean Chaffinch. This species, which is also known as the Blue Chaffinch, inhabits the pine forests on the higher slopes of the mountains; it breeds very late in the season, and as I left Tenerife in June, I was unable to obtain photographs either of the bird itself or of its nest. We expected to meet with it at Vilaflor, but saw nothing of it there, although we were shown a spring where these birds were said to come and drink, and where the peasants used to snare them.

Many of the birds of Tenerife have a hard struggle to rear their young, not that they are harassed by many natural enemies, but the land is worked in such small holdings, and men and boys are so constantly



NEST OF TENERIFE ROBIN.

(*Erithacus superbus.*)

passing over almost every yard of the ground, that the nests are naturally discovered, and when discovered, destroyed. Their natural enemies are few, save in the wooded districts on the mountains, where there are many Sparrow Hawks. As a rule the birds of prey are more of scavengers than hunters, and the Peregrine Falcon, a bird whose requirements would seem to be met in every way in this island, appeared to be conspicuous by its absence. A friend of mine, who lived at Las Palmas, in Grand Canary, told me that a few years ago he saw a pair of these birds near the town; one of them stooped at, and killed, a pigeon out of a flock of those birds, which fell to the ground, but was immediately seized upon by some Vultures, so the Falcons had to kill again for themselves.

Kestrels are very common in Tenerife, and it is rarely that one or more of these birds is not in the air, hovering over the dry rocky ground in search of lizards, or above the water tanks, in the neighbourhood of which they sometimes pounce on one of the green frogs which are so numerous there. These frogs may often be seen during the daytime among the foliage of the rose trees, the leaves of which they simulate in colour; they make a dismal and incessant croaking after sundown.

Tenerife can boast of possessing several of our most attractive song-birds, conspicuous among which are the Blackcap, or *Capiroto*, as the islanders call it, and the Chiffchaff. To these must be added the Canaries, which sing constantly in the orchards and in the trees along the roadside; while in the wooded and more secluded *barrancos* the intermittent notes of the Blackbird, deep and mournful, are often the only sounds to be heard.

In Tenerife the eye is catered for and not the ear, and the song of birds represents much of the music in the island, even the church bells, from which might be expected some sweetness, emitting but a discordant clanging. Some few of the peasants play the guitar, and there is a little band at Port Orotava, composed of a violin and three or four guitars, which discourses excellent music; the various members of this band are persons who are engaged in trade in the Port, and each is a thorough musician. This reminds me that when we were staying up at Vilaflor we were much entertained one night by hearing a man's voice, evidently in the throes of a love-song, accompanied by a guitar. The singer possessed a very deep bass voice, which he confined within a compass of three or four notes, in a minor key, for the best part of an hour. We thought that he must be proposing, in song, to his *inamorata*, but were told on the following morning that he had been refused by a young lady in the village about a month previously, since which time he always, at midnight, serenaded her dwelling; it was certainly a far more effective and sensible way of taking his revenge than some methods adopted by other love-sick swains. The brass band, which is located at Santa Cruz, is let out on the occasion of any *fiesta* of unusual importance in one of the smaller towns, on which it descends rampant, and eager for the fray.

Saints days are almost as plentiful as blackberries in Tenerife, and none are allowed to pass without some token of remembrance, whether it be the humble bonfire that flickers after sunset from the dwelling of some peasant on the mountain slopes, or the really splendid

pageantry of the Flower Carpet, held annually in June at the Villa of Orotava.

To attempt to depict in a few lines that which should take a whole book to describe is to do such a subject injustice, and apart from this, I hesitate to allude to it except in the most cursory way, having been only a superficial observer of the ceremony, and being quite uninitiated in the why and the wherefore which go to build up much of the interest attaching to such a scene. From early morning, on the day of the Flower Carpet, crowds of peasants flock up the steep incline that leads to the Villa, the men dressed for the most part in black, the women and children in the brightest of coloured shawls and headgear; and the picturesque old town never shows to better advantage than when viewed thus from below, its church spires and many-storied houses, relieved by the fresh green of the surrounding trees, standing out in varied colouring against the distant background of mountain, or grey cloud. Every one, from far and near, who is able to go, turns out to see the Flower Carpet. For days beforehand mules, laden with heath and broom, have come down from the mountains in order to supply materials for the background of this effective "carpet." The petals of the flowers only are used, and a separate design is worked out in each principal thoroughfare, the patterns being laid into a setting of dark green; as soon as the patterns are formed, water is sprinkled over the "carpet," in order to keep the petals from blowing away. The whole is a mosaic, executed in flower petals of almost every conceivable shade. Nearly every species of flower and shrub in the island is brought

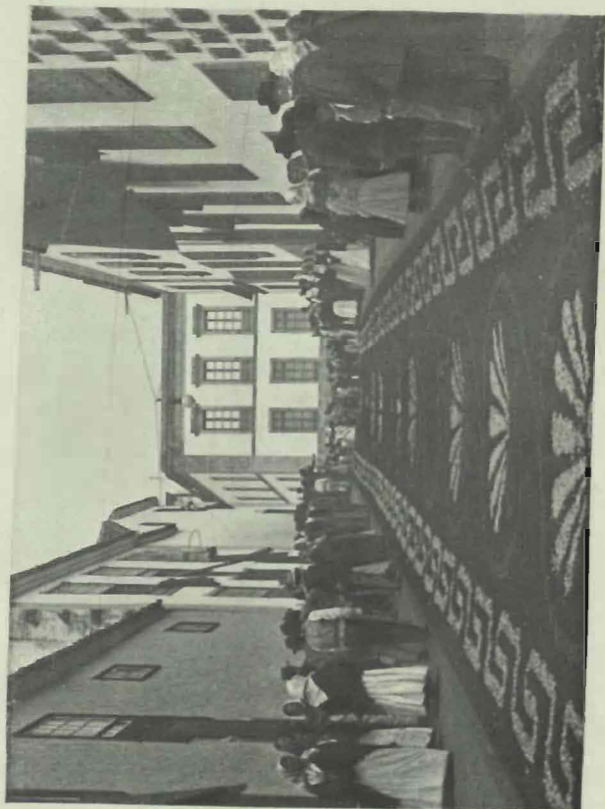
into requisition, the gradations in colour being quite remarkable when it is considered that the designs are all laid in the natural colour of the flowers, except where black is required, when it is obtained by filling in pieces of the broom which have been previously burnt for the purpose. In the large squares of the town pictures are worked out, introducing various figures, and in one of these pictures a very effective texture was obtained by utilising the long fibres which hang from the Indian corn when ripe, as a representation of an old man's beard.

All traffic is suspended in the town on this day, and when the brilliant procession, headed by the ecclesiastics, emerges from the church, it passes along the chief streets in turn, reducing what was, but half-an-hour since, a blaze of colour, to a dingy mass of nothingness. Some of the special pictures into which figures are introduced are executed by members of the old Spanish families who have been represented in the Villa of Orotava for many generations.

Some of the old gardens in the Villa are very charming, as are those also down at the Port, notably the Hotel garden, which has been transformed from a rugged crust of lava into a garden of flowers. The soil, buried for centuries beneath this crust of lava, is most prolific, roses and innumerable other flowers blooming with a total disregard of time or season.

There are few seasonal sounds in Tenerife, and the passage of time is not marked, as in England, by the whirr of the machine or the sharpening of the scythe. One of the few sounds of nature's almanack during the spring in the Hotel gardens at Orotava is the musical

PLATE XIX.



FLOWER CARPET AT OROTAVA.

tinkle of the cone-shaped covering which encloses the petals of the *eucalyptus marginata*, as it falls to the ground, knocked off by the Blackcap or the Chiffchaff in its search among the petals thus liberated for insect food. Another sound that is always there is the rustle of the dried leaves as the lizard scuttles away to its hole beneath the lava rocks.

Passing over Icod, of which some mention has been made, the carriage road leads as far as Garachico, one of the most picturesque little ports in Tenerife, and noted for being the victim of the last eruption of the Peak, in 1706. Here the presence of a high projecting cliff of rock which runs a little way out to sea has been taken advantage of to form, in connexion with a short breakwater, a miniature harbour, its shore broadly margined with black sand. A harbour is of little use, though, unless its presence be recognised in some way by incoming boats, and the small fruit steamer from Santa Cruz, which creeps slowly round the coast, anchors disdainfully outside Garachico and waits for its cargo of bananas to be rowed out in small boats. The slight offered to their harbour passes unnoticed by the inhabitants of Garachico, who must sell their bananas if they are to make any sort of a living.

The carriage road ends its duties at Garachico, and will doubtless pause there for some time, as it has done at so many other towns in Tenerife, before going a stage further. The road from Icod to Garachico was only just completed when we were at the latter place, at which time a quarrel between the engineer who had planned the road and the authorities of the district

resulted in the engineer closing the road for the time being. The inhabitants, who had taken no part in it, were thus made the scapegoat of this quarrel, and had perforce to take the old road which passed by the sea on their journeys between the two places. I do not know how the quarrel ended, but when we returned the road was open again.

There are two or three villages beyond Garachico, but the country soon becomes very bare, several large "cinder heaps," or small isolated volcanos, standing out from the level ground near the coast; further on the mountains gradually recede from the shore, leaving an almost uncultivated plain between them and the sea. There were few birds to be noticed here, the only ones that showed themselves being the *Camineros*, as they flew a little way along the path and then alighted.

There is little of interest along this plain unless it be the ice-plant, its separate bead-like partitions glittering in the sunshine, and the attention is gradually centred on the blue sea, on which, now and again, the presence of a sunken rock is indicated by a cool-looking patch of white surf, until, long after the last village is reached, a headland of rock runs out to sea which seems to bar further progress. This promontory goes by the name of El Fraile, by reason of the presence of a natural column of black rock which stands outlined against the sky on its topmost edge, and looked at from a distance there is a marked resemblance in this column to the figure of a cowed friar descending the ridge. This black headland serves to further emphasise the play of colour so characteristic



THE PROCESSION EMERGING FROM THE CHURCH.

of the northern shore of this island, and we might perhaps find a less fitting spot in which to bid good-bye to Tenerife than the lonely rock which *el fraile* has been so many centuries in descending.

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