

compelled to do so by dire necessity. Nay, the mere exhibition of that grinning double row of polished ivory, might not unfairly be regarded as a mocking insult (had the action proceeded from a man), to a traveller in the hungriest region of Europe, where a very slender apparatus of molars, &c., is quite sufficient for all practical purposes; our sole difficulty, day by day, having hitherto been, not so much to provide *teeth*, as materials for keeping them in healthy exercise.

The Antequerians are evidently an observant race, and had we not become inured to such demonstrations, we should doubtless have felt much flattered by the attention they paid us. We considered ourselves fully justified in drawing two conclusions, after witnessing the pertinacity with which a crowd of men and boys hung about the posada, for at least a couple of hours, solely to do us honour. First, that the good people of Antequera are in no danger of injuring their health from excessive application to business; nor, secondly, are they much in the habit of seeing natives of the British Isles.

Our start was deferred until after eleven, as we hoped by that hour to receive some tidings of the poor horse; but after waiting in vain we

set out for Campillos. Our ride was most enjoyable; the day lovely, bright and warm with the soft sunshine of autumn, while the neighbourhood of Antequera is highly picturesque. We not only recovered yesterday's view of the rocks of Archidona, and the pass so dimly discerned the night before; but other mountains of even bolder character came into sight, bounding the prospect to the south, in effective contrast to the broad basin of olive-ground and corn-land (where once a lake had spread its waters), through which for some time our course lay.

Further on we entered upon a wild tract of forest, and oak-scrub, reminding us more vividly of the *dehesas* of Estremadura, than any scenery we had fallen in with for some weeks, and as we approached Campillos, our resting-place for the night, a salt-lake, teeming with wild fowl, added an entirely novel feature to the landscape, being the largest sheet of water we had seen anywhere, since entering Spain. This lake, which did not exceed a milé and a half in length, is crown-property, carefully guarded by a company of custom-house officers, salt being a royal monopoly. It was amusing to hear, that one of the first consequences, in this out-

of-the-way district, of a *pronunciamento* or revolution at Madrid, takes the form of a vigorous inroad upon the salt-pits, the country-people gladly availing themselves of every political disturbance to secure, without expense, a good stock of an article so indispensable to a bacon-loving population.

As we entered Campillos, a village of some size, surrounded by extensive tracts of wheat-plain, with the mountains of Ronda far away on the horizon, the eve of a great Roman Catholic festival, the Conception of the Virgin, was being ushered in with all the hubbub and lack of melody, characteristic of Spanish bell-ringing. We alighted at a posada opposite the church, and finding the evening-air fresh enough to make a fire agreeable, we sat down beside the open hearth, where three generations were assembled, the youngest being represented by a stout baby in its cradle, which one of our party good-naturedly rocked, an attention very graciously received by the senior branches of the family. It was quite one of those pleasant posadas, where travellers meet with civility, cleanliness, and homely, native ways; and though our bed-room windows had no glass, and the doves cooed above our heads at the

first approach of daylight, with no other partition to separate us than a thin ceiling, we thought ourselves well entertained, and the bill was not extortionate.

Although no rain had fallen, and yesterday was quite lovely, the weather had been unsettled for some days. I was not, therefore, much surprised, on first going out, to observe broad masses of dark cloud with ragged edges, chasing each other in rapid flight across the heavens, an omen, I feared, of an immediate down-pour.

Having a long day's ride before us, we set off, nevertheless, through the corn-plain, and had just entered upon some broken woodland, when down came a smart shower, which threatened speedily to render those narrow tracks of stiff clay impassable to the donkeys, and I thought we were fairly in for a wetting at least, if not a detention of two or three days, for heavy rain soon converts such roads into channels of tenacious mud. But suddenly the wind changed, the clouds drifted away, and the sun came forth to shed warmth and gladness over the landscape, inspiring man and beast with new vigour and spirit, that sent us on our way rejoicing.

At that moment we were rounding the barren

heights upon which Teba is perched, far above the plain, and although the town itself was quite out of sight, being built on the other side, we could hear its church-bells, as they rang for the feast, sounding high among the clouds, and reminding me of those unearthly peals described in legend and goblin-tale. The effect of those bells pealing forth their notes from mid-air, without any visible *point d'appui*, was most singular and weird-like.

Teba, though the bleakest spot we saw anywhere in Spain, being a sort of inland "Wolf's Crag," is by no means unrenowned, either in modern or ancient days. The Empress of the French, as every one is aware, takes her title of Condesa de Teba from this mountain-town.

Looking back some 500 years, we read that, at its siege in 1328, when the Moors held possession of the place, Lord James Douglas threw the heart of Robert Bruce, which he was then conveying to the Holy Land, into the thickest of the fray, and followed it to the death. The craggy height upon which Teba stands, rises like an islet out of a broad sea of corn-land, broken up into many a creek and bay running in and out among the hills, the whole of this singular district giving one quite the idea that,

once upon a time, these fertile plains, which are said to produce some of the finest wheat in the world, were all under water, and formed the floor of an ocean.

One of the things that cannot fail to strike a traveller in Spain, more especially in this particular neighbourhood, is the utter absence of farm-buildings. From time to time you see, in riding along, a village or small town high up on a rocky brow, a situation chosen for safety in those troublous days when Moor and Christian strove for mastery, and now retained with loyal fidelity to the past in this change-hating land. But nowhere else does the eye, as it ranges over a sweep of many thousand acres, discern the smallest indication of those buildings, with which the farms of other lands are dotted. The fact is, Spanish farmers have no more store-house, nor barn, than the birds of the air, and the operations of threshing and winnowing wheat and barley, are carried on by them, at the present hour, precisely after the fashion we read of in the Bible, as being in vogue throughout the East, thousands of years ago!

On first entering the country, I used to notice, near most villages, a large paved circle, perfectly level, of about an acre in extent, and stupidly

wondered what purpose it could be intended to answer! At last I discovered (whether by dint of mother-wit, or through the good-nature of some informant, I cannot now recollect) that these open areas, as I ought to have known from the first, are the identical threshing-floors spoken of so often in Holy Scripture, where oxen or horses, yoked to a sort of crate or harrow, and driven round and round continually, still tread out the corn, as in the days of Patriarch and Prophet.

Any one who wishes to read an account of the operation, will find a very spirited description in Ford's "Gatherings from Spain," p. 115.

One of the natural consequences of adopting this method of threshing is, that the straw, through the rough treatment it meets with from the combined action of the teeth of the harrow, and the hoofs of the horses and oxen, is broken up into very small pieces, never exceeding two or three inches in length, so that really it is not available for many of the purposes to which it is applied in other countries. Let no traveller, therefore, unable to meet with a bed of the usual kind, and wishing to find a substitute, ever betake himself to that place, which in some parts of the world supplies a very

comfortable extemporized couch ready for all comers—the straw-loft—for in a Spanish *pajar* he will find himself surrounded by a bristling array of *spiculae*, that will effectually banish sleep.

A portable steam-engine, for threshing out corn, might be safely recommended to enterprising capitalists, as a very profitable speculation in many parts of the Peninsula, where fuel is procurable.

As we journeyed along through some of the less interesting districts, I used to amuse myself, when there was nothing particular to engage attention, by remarking the various soils, and road-stains, with which the legs and flanks of horse, mule, and donkey were chequered. Each *posada* is supposed to have attached to it a man called *mozo de la cuadra*, an official corresponding to the ostler of an English inn. For the most part, however, his office is a decided sinecure. He will, it is true, if properly looked after, feed the animals placed under his care, and lead them to the nearest fountain for watering. Beyond these narrow limits his ideas of duty do not extend. As for rubbing down a horse, or combing out mane and tail, or, in short, paying any of those *petits soins* with which a good English

groom delights to make him comfortable after a hard day's work, such a notion never enters his head; and next morning your beast comes forth from the stable with his coat precisely in the same condition as when he entered it twelve hours before. Every soil and stain stands out *in statu quo*, while saddle and bridle present an appearance of mingled dirt and rust, that would send a respectable English ostler, with the smallest grain of professional feeling, into hysterics, *if anything would*. Indeed I used to indulge my imagination with the fancy that a geologist, well up in Iberian formations, might almost have made out our route through the various districts of the land, by a careful inspection of the different strata our horses' coats exhibited; and when we drew bridle in front of the *Fonda de Londres* at Seville, they carried upon hoof and leg specimens of most of the clays, and other soils, we had traversed during the previous three weeks in the provinces of Toledo, Estremadura, and Andalusia!

CHAPTER XLI.

AS we advanced to-day, December 8th, on our road towards Ronda, we learned to appreciate, with more and more thankfulness, our good fortune in having dry weather. Miles and miles of this route would have been utterly impracticable during rain, owing to the nature of the soil. We had, in particular, one steep ascent of nearly two miles over a bed of stiff clay, where every donkey must have "come to grief" had the day been wet, and we should thus have been brought to a stand-still in the midst of a very bleak, and almost houseless region. Even as it was, it cost Cordova, Moro, and the rest of the donkeys, whose names used to be so familiar, many a hard struggle, ere they achieved the ascent, to enter at the summit upon a sounder line of country.

Just before we halted for luncheon, Marcos, and his Cordova purchase, "the donkey of re-

spect," had a tremendous quarrel. For some reason, which to this day is enveloped in mystery, Marcos, who was on his back, could not induce him to go through a shallow brook, crossed by each of his brethren without boggle or difficulty before his very eyes. His rider applied the wonted argument of a stick with such vigour, that, in an Irishman's phrase, "it broke all to smithereens," leaving the donkey for the moment "master of the situation," an advantage he improved by throwing Marcos over his head amid screams of laughter from the rest of the party, and then galloping off to some distance from the scene of action. Caught with infinite trouble, the rebel was driven back to the ford by his still weaponless owner (for in this hedgeless country, sticks are not to be met with at every turn), and there a fresh trial of strength ensued, donkey pulling one way, Marcos another. This went on for several minutes, and just as I was going to canter back to his assistance, another vigorous effort had landed the recalcitrant beast on the right side of the water, and given victory where it was due, on the side of legitimate authority.

After passing Teba, the wayside abounded with clumps of iris in full flower, which were

not only very pretty to look at, as they gave colour and brightness to the bleak slopes of the mountain-path, and emitted a most fragrant perfume, but recalled many a home-scene far away over the sea.

In due course the mountain-ranges of the *Serrania de la Ronda* came into sight right ahead, glowing with the flaming hues of a superb sunset, that, according to Milton's fine phrase, "vaulted with fire" the whole horizon to the westward, and gave hopeful promise for the morrow.

A moonlight ride of some hours, however, still lay between us and Ronda, our destination for the night; and though occasionally some of the most long-sighted of the party caught a glimpse of the place, it was only to mock us by its seeming nearness for the moment, to recede, at a fresh turn of the road, to a greater distance (apparently) than ever.

This certainly is one of the trying circumstances of a riding-tour through Spain, though really proceeding from one of the good qualities of the climate, the wonderful transparency of the atmosphere, which to the eye almost annihilates distance, and brings remote objects within apparent proximity. At the end of a

long day's march, when food and rest have become objects of special interest both to man and beast (more particularly to the unfortunate donkeys, condemned to fast from morning to night), it is in no small degree tantalizing to have your destination pertinaciously thrust upon the sight for hours, during which, despite repeated experience, and many a secret resolution, you cannot help flattering yourself, that twenty minutes more will witness your arrival, when all the while you have at least two hours' travel still to accomplish. This was particularly the case, I well remember, the day we entered Seville, when we could distinctly make out, not only towers and churches, especially the Giralda and the Cathedral, but even single houses, hours before we actually arrived at the gates. This illusion occurs with most frequency in Andalusia, where the towns, as I have before remarked, are generally placed on the highest ground in the neighbourhood, and may be almost said to gleam with white-wash, which the Spaniards of the South apply to all their buildings in liberal profusion.

At length our cavalcade clattered through the streets of Ronda, to stop about the middle of the first street at one of the numerous *posadas*

with which the place abounds, prefacing our entrance, as usual, by that most necessary preliminary of making a bargain for accommodation, which specified the smallest particulars, *before dismounting* (for thus you negotiate with tenfold advantage), as soon as Purkiss had concluded his inspection of the premises.

Stern experience had long taught us the necessity of adopting this system of tactics, which to-day, as on many a previous occasion, soon repaid the trouble, nor was a single donkey unloaded at Ronda, till the host had reduced his demands by about one-half. Nowhere should travellers be more upon their guard; for the inhabitants bear a very equivocal character, and a glance at the countenances of the master and mistress of the posada, convinced us they were perfectly up to the ways of the world, and thoroughly competent to take care of their own interests. This town used to be a grand centre of smuggling for the mountain-district, of which it is the capital, and from the nature of the country, and its proximity to Gibraltar, "Free Trade" was once a very feasible, and (in the estimation of the community at large) a highly respectable, and even virtuous, method of earning a livelihood. Nor in all the South of Spain

was there any spot, where travellers met with so much dancing, and strumming of guitars, so much liveliness and gaiety of manner, and picturesque splendour of costume, a few years ago, as in the neighbourhood of Ronda. Every second man you met was a *contrabandista*, while, as a very natural result, smuggling, in all its branches, was regarded by the public opinion of the district with as much favour, as along the coast of Cornwall, during the palmy days of the last century.

But now all is changed. Revenue-officers and the Guardia Civil have made smuggling a line of business that does not "pay," and scores of people, who once were substantial housekeepers, know not, it is said, which way to turn for a meal. Their only resource is to plunder travellers, and, to do them justice, every opportunity for cheaters and extortion is zealously taken advantage of.

We had, it is true, by bargaining beforehand, cut them off from the widest field for the exercise of their craft, and any spoil they could hope to win from us, would be mere scraps and fragments of booty, compared with the chance offered by inexperienced travellers, not up to the ways of the country. Still cheaters is very

elastic, and turns up, when least expected, as we found next morning, Friday, December 9th.

Though unable to make any stay at Ronda, as we had once proposed until detained again and again upon the road, we still felt very anxious to see what we could of one of the most interesting spots in Spain; and several of its "lions" being quite close to the town, we set off betimes on Friday morning for that purpose. A young lad of fifteen offered himself as our guide, and never thinking it was necessary to make a regular bargain with so young a hand, we placed ourselves under his guidance in unsuspecting confidence. We were not away altogether more than an hour and a half, and our young friend, who certainly had been uncommonly amusing and lively, with a very cheerful flow of conversation that quite fascinated his audience, had the assurance to demand a dollar (4s. 2d.) for his services, and being the son of our host and hostess, invoked their intervention to support his claims when he found they were resisted, and a pretty scene we had in the kitchen before starting; though I am happy to say, that in spite of all the disturbance, and the air of deeply-injured innocence assumed by our cicerone, he succeeded in obtain-

ing no more than a fair remuneration for his services.

One characteristic of robbers, however, in such a country as Spain, commands admiration (to borrow copy-book phraseology)—they generally choose some romantic scene, amid the umbrageous recesses of a forest, or the rugged fastnesses of a mountain-region, for their lair. This is pre-eminently the case with the good people of Ronda. Nothing can be finer than the situation of the town, which has acquired an almost world-wide renown for beauty.

A long tract of table-land (as well as we could make out by moonlight the night before) terminates, with the abruptness of an ocean-cliff, in a precipice varying in height from 800 to 1000 feet. On this natural platform stands Ronda, and a single leap would carry you from the margin of its Alameda into the depths of an almost Alpine Valley, though the orange and olive, flourish there in rich luxuriance. The view from the bridge is perhaps still more wonderful. A chasm, 300 feet wide, called the *Tajo*, dividing the old town from the new, is spanned by a massive modern bridge, under which, at the depth of some 700 feet, the Guadalvin rushes forth into open day from the

caverns, which hitherto have imprisoned its waters, and then with a bold leap over a ledge of rock (that forms a lovely waterfall just where a narrow channel drains off an arrowy shoot to the old Moorish mills below), it dashes onward down the slope, until, having fertilized the green meadows of the valley, it finally empties itself into the principal stream of the district, the green-hued, and romantic Guadairo.

Descending to the mills, and standing at the base of the bridge, near the waterfall, we realized more distinctly the height and depth of that singular cleft, and as we turned in the opposite quarter, the effect was almost as if we were looking through the tube of some enormous telescope, so closely at this spot do the rocks contract into a gorge, before they finally open out towards the valley. The sides of the cliff are covered with festoons of creepers, looking so moist and fresh, that to descend in the summer-heats from the sun-baked town into those cool depths, where the spray of the waterfall, dropping unseen like gentle dew, maintains a perpetual freshness, must be a delicious transition. The spot forcibly recalled the imagery of Lord Mornington's well-known glee, "Here in cool grot," which indeed so exactly describes its

various features, that it might have been written there, though the fairies would have to adjourn to the meadows below ere they could "frisk it, frisk it," on "the turf with daisies broider'd o'er."

We saw it under circumstances widely different, with nothing to remind us of either fairy forms, or summer skies, the frosty air of a December morning, as well as the pressure of time, forbidding us to linger, and in another half-hour we were once more in the saddle, to descend the valley of the Guadairo.

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

CHAPTER XLII.

HARDLY had we cleared the town, before I discovered the loss of a very useful Spanish scarf, or *faja*, I had bought at Seville, which I distinctly remembered to have had in my possession that morning. It was, however, too late to go back, as, with a long journey before us, I did not wish to detain the party, and though it was doubtless at the posada, its recovery out of the hands of such gentry, more especially while the incident of the dollar was still so fresh in their recollection, would have been simply hopeless.

Judging from our own experience it is a very common practice with the women at posadas to conceal any article they may covet, belonging to travellers, by throwing something over it, in the hope that, on the principle of "out of sight, out of mind," its existence may be forgotten,

and so in the hurry of departure the guest probably goes away without thinking of it, and the *muchacha* (or waiting-maid) comes of course into possession of such waif, as a sort of residuary proprietor.

Tricks of this description were constantly played upon us; for, with the usual unsuspectingness of the masculine gender, we *could not* bring ourselves to believe, that *women* could be guilty of such practices! Indeed, I may say, a considerable time elapsed before we had fully fathomed the depths of female artifice in Spain; it seemed to meet us at every turn; no sooner had we discovered one "dodge," and turned the knowledge to account by greater circumspection of conduct, than a new manœuvre assailed us from a totally opposite quarter! It would take a long time to relate all we had to go through, and I should be unwilling to detain my readers with so painful a subject. One or two of their stratagems, however, may be mentioned for the benefit of future tourists.

A pair of comfortable winter-gloves, which our long rides, early and late, rendered worth more than their weight in silver, would chance to be lying on the bed before breakfast, ready for the day's wear; or a pocket-handkerchief, or

trusty knife, a companion in travel for years, or small hair-brush, or any of the sundry knick-knacks so convenient to travellers. On returning to your room to finish packing, something (and that of course precisely the article most frequently in request) was sure to have disappeared. If lucky enough to recollect its existence, and sufficiently alive to Spanish stratagem, you would, almost to a certainty, find your missing chattel lying in a fold of the bed-clothes, carelessly, yet artistically, concealed. The obvious advantage of the trick over downright positive thieving, consisted in the impossibility of bringing home the offence, while it proved, in most instances, an equally effectual method of conveying property from one owner to another. It was nearly as certain in its results as actual stealing, and much more safe, by compromising no one.

So it happened, no doubt, to my missing faja. I had carefully put it out with my paletot, &c., before we set off to see the sights of Ronda, so as to be quite ready for use on my return. During my absence the maid-servant had, of course, taken the opportunity of reconnoitring my room to see which of my goods and chattels would serve her best. The faja, with its gay

colours so dear to the female heart, was the very thing to suit her complexion! Besides, she may have had strict notions about clerical costume, and perhaps thought I had no business to array myself in the pomp and vanity of a scarlet scarf. At any rate, without removing it, I dare say, many inches from its former position, she managed to conceal it so effectually that I never saw it again, and I can only now wish her health and strength to wear my faja from Seville!

Sometimes bolder methods are adopted, and I have had the pocket of my paletot, lying in my bed-room, picked, while I chanced to be out of sight. I mention these various particulars not only to illustrate the character of a class with which travellers must unavoidably come into frequent contact, but because, moreover, the very articles most needed on a journey are sure to be most in request with posada-keepers; not to mention the additional fact that Spanish travel soon teaches the value of the little appliances and comforts Englishmen are wont to carry about with them, in a land where it is utterly impossible to replace such conveniences.

CHAPTER XLIII.

HAVING achieved in safety the stony descent from high-perched Ronda, we soon reached the banks of the Guadairo, and fording its crystal stream, followed a road skirting its right bank for a considerable distance.

A more charming companion for a ride cannot be imagined than this bright mountain-river, as it sped along swiftly, but gently, through some of the loveliest scenery we saw anywhere in the Peninsula. Of quite a distinct character from anything we fell in with elsewhere, it reminded me, in many places, of scenery among the Wicklow mountains, with the addition of Spanish accessories, and the more varied and choice vegetation of a southern climate.

Ford mentions a route from Ronda to Gibraltar, which avoids Gaucin, leaving it about three miles to the left. This route we were anxious to follow for several reasons; but chiefly

because it appeared, from Ford's description, to be a shorter and better way to "the Rock," than the one by Gaucin, and some of our animals were beginning to show symptoms of fatigue, which made it desirable to choose the easier line.

Next day we enjoyed the satisfaction of learning that, apart from facility of travelling, the direction we were now following was far preferable in point of scenery also, to the road through Gaucin.

Our course lay between a double mountain-range, which, clothed with many a southern shrub—oleander, myrtle, arbutus, gum-cistus, and Spanish gorse—declined in gentle slopes to the water's edge. Here and there, when an occasional tract of level ground gave room for man to build his home, the wilder features were for the moment softened down, and orange-groves, almond and olive trees, imparted a variety to the landscape.

About two leagues from Ronda, on the opposite bank of the river, we passed *La Cueva del Gato* (the Cat's Cave), a celebrated cavern, lying at the base of the mountain, out of which leaps forth a full-grown stream, which at once doubles the volume of the Guadairo, by the influx of its

sea-green waters. A lovelier spot cannot be conceived. How I longed to cross the river (for we had now for some time returned to the left bank) and explore the hidden beauties of its "untrodden stalactical caverns"! But the day was wearing on, and having no guide, we could command no reliable information respecting our route, which was evidently, from what we saw before us, by no means a desirable road to travel over in the night-time. It was seldom better than a narrow mule-path, sometimes skirting, by a mere ledge, the precipices overhanging the river, sometimes descending abruptly into the bed of ravine or torrent, to ascend as steep a slope on the other side. Nor was it always an easy matter to pass, at such points, the numerous trains of mules and donkeys we fell in with between Ronda and La Himera. Some of them, going in the same direction, with little regard to civility or safety, would try to pass us, and push ahead. At another time, perhaps, we might have resented such rudeness, so different from the general demeanour of the different wayfarers we had fallen in with heretofore. But we were now too much absorbed in the loveliness around us, and too fearful of losing any portion, to think of anything else, while every bend of the

river enchanted the eye by disclosing some new beauty.

Every now and then the Guadairo opened out between craggy banks of brown copse-wood into tranquil reaches, that mirrored the cloudless sky, and caught some tinge of its deep azure; those quiet breadths of still water, where swarms of fish were glancing to and fro, contrasting most effectively by their repose, with the rushing mill-race that borrowed from, or the tributary mountain-brook that added to, the volume of the main stream.

Sometimes the entire landscape became a broad sweep of woodland, all-gorgeous with the tints of autumn, and the eye catching every moment some new effulgence of colouring, here a mass of scarlet and gold, there a dark rich green, or mellow brown, travelled onwards with delight, to rest finally on some bold crag or wooded promontory, which thrusting itself beyond the general line of mountain-slope, and forcing the river out of a direct course, quickened it into speedier flow over rocky ledge and gravelly ford.

Having forded the Guadairo on first descending from Ronda, we crossed again ere noon, keeping always afterwards to the left bank. By

this time it had attained the dimensions of a goodly stream, and though many a mill was indebted to those crystal waters for the means of setting in motion the rude machinery, which had remained almost unchanged since Moorish days, the loan was soon repaid, and as the foaming runnel leapt out of the mill-slucice to regain the parent-stream, the Guadairo flowed on, not as is the wont of Spanish rivers (each of which is generally laid under tribute for the purposes of irrigation, and robbed, or, according to the national expression *sangrado*, bled, of half its current), but with undiminished, and ever-enlarging volume.

About two or three o'clock, we made a brief halt beside one of the old-fashioned mills, under the shade of spreading walnut-trees, while the horses ate their mid-day allowance of barley, and, hastening onwards again to make up for the lateness of our start, reached in a couple of hours a solitary Venta surrounded by orange-trees, just before sunset. The river is here crossed by a ferry, intended for the convenience of persons going to Cortes, one of the largest villages in the neighbourhood.

It was now time to be thinking of night-quarters, and having heard of a hamlet in this

direction, called La Himera, we inquired of the people, to whom both the Venta and ferry belonged. La Himera, they told us, was about a mile and a half distant on that side of the river; but naturally desirous to take in so large a party, they used their best powers of persuasion to convince us we should be much better off under the roof of the Venta than if we went on further. Being decidedly sceptical on this point, as the whole premises appeared to contain no more than two rooms, and these on the ground-floor, like most Spanish houses of ordinary description, we declined their invitation (at any rate for the present, until we had made a reconnaissance), and diverging from the bridle-road about half a mile below, were not long in reaching La Himera, which in its breezy position, upon a steep brow under a range of high hills, had a far drier and healthier aspect than that damp and squalid Venta, close to the water's edge, suggestive of nothing but mosquitos, malaria, and low fever.

La Himera, which is large enough to aspire to the title of a village, possesses a posada, whither of course we betook ourselves, only, however, to meet with disappointment, the mistress of the house being too ill to admit of our being taken

in there. Purkiss, in consequence, had to go about from door to door, like a mendicant, begging for accommodation; and after trying several houses in vain, at last, when we had begun to fear we should after all have to return to the Venta, he discovered one that would do. It belonged to some peasants, of whom indeed the entire population of this sequestered community is composed, there being in the place not even a resident Cura.

Our host, and hostess-elect, were most civil and obliging, and having a very tidy chamber containing two beds, in addition to another room at the house of a relation "up the street," where Mr. Sykes found comfortable quarters, they were thus able to accommodate the whole party, though I fear this result was not accomplished without much inconvenience to themselves and their families.

We could not have found a better illustration of the superior comfort and cleanliness in which the Spanish peasantry live, than what occurred on the present occasion. *La Himera*, as already stated, is a small mountain-village, in a remote district, while the only road we saw within several miles of the place, lies at some distance out of sight, and is little frequented by travellers

of any description. Yet here, in the house of a common peasant, we met with unimpeachable accommodation, and far better beds than may sometimes be found at inns of considerable pretension.

The preparation of dinner became quite a public affair, for there was but one fire-place, and between our party of nine, the household, and sundry neighbours, who came dropping in, some to assist, and all to have a peep at the *Señores Ingleses*, Purkiss had much ado to get to the hearth, though he bore the trial with his usual good-temper. The village-barber, a poor lame young man, particularly distinguished himself by his activity and general usefulness, turning his hand to anything, skinning rabbits, washing, and then slicing potatoes, and holding the frying-pan, with such ready cheerfulness, that it was quite a pleasure to see him.

There was also a very tall woman, looking like a domesticated Meg Merrilies, who professed to be making herself generally useful; but from the eccentricity of her behaviour she rendered, in reality, very little service, though we gave her full credit for the best intentions. I do not know how many times she patted, nay I may well say, slapped me on the back, exhibit-

ing all the while so benevolent an expression of countenance, that offence, or even remonstrance, was out of the question; it was her way of manifesting regard and affection! After this she proceeded to offer her services to Purkiss, to his sore embarrassment, doing always the very thing he particularly wished not to be done. This was too provoking, as delaying still further the preparation of dinner, which under the most favourable circumstances could seldom be accomplished in a shorter space than two hours. The old lady's last freak took place several hours after dinner, when she entered our bed-room, almost perforce, with a large apple in each hand, one of which she persisted in poking under Lord Portarlington's bed-clothes, awakening him out of his first sleep, while she presented the other to me. Fortunately I was still dressed, and with many thanks for her unseasonable gifts, which eventually, however, stood us in good stead, I managed by degrees to get her out of the room.

Despite all difficulties, Purkiss in due course contrived to serve us up a very superior dinner, which we ate in the bed-room, returning to the kitchen as soon as the servants had finished their meal, and a merry group we formed round

the fire-side, while Marcos, Tomas, the Barber, and the man from Loja, were discussing, a little apart, the remains of our dinner, out of which, by the addition of a few handfuls of rice, supplemented with various items of native seasoning, they soon concocted a huge dish of food, that looked quite appetizing. Into this each of them dipped his broad *navaja*, or clasp-knife, after the Spanish fashion, and it was astonishing how speedily the whole mess disappeared, as they quaffed two or three bottles of wine we had given them, amid a chorus of jest and laughter.

The Barber delighted us with his good-natured, pleasant ways. Being the handy man of the village, he is at every one's call on emergencies, practising among his various avocations blood-letting both in arm and foot, as he took care to inform us, like the barber-surgeons of our own country a couple of centuries ago. This art he evidently regarded as the most honourable department of his profession. He was very anxious to exercise some branch of his calling upon one of us; and first proposed letting a little blood, of which the meagreness of Spanish diet had left us no superfluity; and when we, not unnaturally, declined the proposal, he begged at

any rate we would permit him to exhibit his tonsorial skill, an offer that met with no better acceptance from any of the party.

Thoroughly did we enjoy that evening at La Himera, not only because the people were so exceedingly kind-hearted and obliging, and we saw them very much as they are at their own fire-sides ; but we felt, moreover, it was perhaps the last scene of the sort we should ever witness, now we were drawing so near the end of our expedition. I often look back to the night we spent at La Himera, with a feeling of peculiar pleasure.

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

CHAPTER XLIV.

WITH a day's journey of unknown length in prospect, we were called next morning before six, having enjoyed an excellent night's rest in clean, comfortable beds; though the servants, who went through a great amount of fatigue and discomfort during the whole expedition with most praiseworthy patience and good-humour, had, as often happened, nothing but the floor to lie upon. When I first went out into the open air, it was still glorious moonlight, with a solitary fire of charcoal-burners glowing on the hill-side opposite, like the flaming eye of a Cyclops, while over mountain and valley, woodland and river, the calmness of perfect repose shed its soothing influence.

Tomas, whom by this time we had discovered to be a thoroughly lazy fellow, very different from Marcos, would not get up when first called, and thus delayed us provokingly, at least an hour, so that in spite of our virtuous exertions

in quitting bed long before daylight, we did not succeed in making an earlier start than 7.30.

Having now to regain the main road, from which we had diverged to reach La Himera, the good-natured Barber, though very lame (apparently from his birth), volunteered to guide us, and led the way with right good will. We traversed about two miles of rough ground before we regained the road, not where we left it the preceding day, but some distance lower down the valley, high above the Guadairo, with Cortes over against us on the opposite bank. Here we parted from the Barber, and wishing us good-bye with hearty kindness, he turned homewards, supremely happy in the possession of his well-merited earnings, while we set our faces down the river in the direction of Boca de Leon, a point for which he had given us careful and oft-repeated directions.

While debating the evening before, whither we should betake ourselves for sleeping-quarters, we had entertained some thoughts of making for Cortes, fancying it was no great distance ahead. We could now perceive, as we approached that village, how much more wisely we had acted in going to La Himera, Cortes being not only on the wrong side of the Guadairo (and it takes

some time for a party like ours to cross a Spanish ferry, with its clumsy boat and dilatory boatmen), but, as was very evident when we stood opposite, really much further off than it appeared. Its situation is most charming, especially when viewed from below, as we saw it basking in the morning sunbeams, half-way up the mountain, and combining, on that sheltered plateau, the double advantage of a warm climate and fresh highland breezes.

The Guadairo, which we still skirted for several hours, led us to-day through scenery of a different description from the landscapes with which it had made us familiar yesterday. Its banks were much less uniform, sloping at one time down to the water's edge in a strip of green meadow, fenced by aloe-hedges, at another swelling into rounded headlands of some elevation, that overhung the stream in precipices of rich brown soil; and, as our path wound in and out between groups of lichen-clad oak-stems, river and meadow, woodland and mountain-glen, would burst suddenly into sight, presenting a combination of beauty, which united in a single view both the features of English forest-scenery, and many of the characteristics of a Spanish landscape.

About mid-day we finally quitted our now familiar companion, the Guadairo, which we had skirted for a day and a half. But before I bid farewell to its romantic scenery, let me point out, under correction of philologists, who are very apt to be "down" upon any unlicensed intruder into their domain, the frequent occurrence, in the South of Spain, of the first word which enters into the composition of its name.

A very cursory glance at the map will discover at least twenty streams, including the two great arteries of the district, the Guadiana and the Guadalquivir, in addition to a third almost identical in name, the Guadaira near Seville, all of which begin with the same prefix. This an ignoramus like myself, would derive from *Wada*, the Arabic term for a river, the well-known "Wady" of the East being, I presume, a cognate word. The pronunciation too would seem to favour this crude surmise of mine, each of those names being pronounced as if it began with a *W*, *G* being here ignominiously disregarded, as non-existent. Words so compounded are found, as might be expected, with very rare exceptions (Guadarrama near Madrid being the principal), in those parts of Spain alone, where Moorish ascendancy was of longest duration.

CHAPTER XLV.

QUITTING then the river and philology, at once, we strike abruptly to the left, on crossing a torrent, and for a few miles follow the road to Gaucin, of which town, perched like an eyrie among the mountains, we catch a glimpse on reaching the ridge of a rough, half-ploughed hill, our proximate destination, according to the reiterated instructions of that faithful ally the Barber, being Boca de Leon, a spot of which we had formed the most indistinct conceptions, not knowing exactly whether it was hamlet, venta, or mountain-pass. From the ridge on which we now stood, we could make out the route for some distance, as we looked down upon a copse-clad glen, watered by a small brook, with Gaucin to our left. Descending about half the depth of the glen, and following a path which ran, terrace-like, high above the brook, we threaded two or three miles of the

most beautiful woodland scenery imaginable, arriving in due season at a solitary cottage, standing in a vineyard, just where the valley makes an abrupt bend at right angles to its former direction.

Here we pulled up to take counsel. Two paths presented themselves, one proceeding straight down to the brook, to ascend on the other side a steep slope of well-timbered ground that almost deserved to be called a mountain. The other turning to the right, past the cottage, led on to a gorge of singular beauty, hemmed-in by lofty cliffs of rich brown soil, through which the brook made its way to join the Guadairo. There being no one in the cottage to give us information, we naturally chose the easier and pleasanter course, where the path was level, and the scenery most inviting, having no mind to face that long pull up-hill, to which the other route would have condemned us.

How far we should have gone on in our error (as it turned out), it is impossible to say; some peasants fortunately were at work further on, and from them we learnt, that Boca de Leon was that very slope of woodland on the other side of the brook, which we had just declined to encounter. Turning back we regained the right

road, and after a laborious ascent (through groves of magnificent chestnuts), which proved most fatiguing to the horses, the day being very warm and sunshiny, we gained at length the summit of the pass, to descend abruptly on the other side by a long tract of bleak wold. A sudden bend of the path turning our eyes in another direction, what should we see, to our intense satisfaction, but the goal of our journey, and the object of our hopes,—the Rock of Gibraltar! which, looming grandly through the hazy atmosphere far away to the south-east, lifted its vast form, towering in solitary majesty, with proud defiance against the African coast.

It was a moment of delighted surprise; and, in spite of the haze and dimness caused by the east wind, the grandeur of its form and outline more than realized our expectations. Apart from its history, and all the associations called forth in the minds of Englishmen sighting it for the first time, I have seldom seen a finer natural object, its position on the dead level of the sea-shore rendering effective every foot of elevation.

We were, however, evidently still a long way off, and as the day began to draw to a close, it was impossible to say when we should be able to ac-

comply with the intervening space, a distance (apparently) of some twenty-five or thirty miles. The road too, along those upland pastures, was villanous, being at once boggy, and stony, threatening at one moment to break our horses' knees, at another to engulf them in some very suspicious-looking swamps, among which we had for the time to pick our way with extreme caution. This was the only occasion I remember ever to have met with anything of the kind in Spain, bogs being a formation quite foreign to that arid climate. As we advanced towards the lower country the ground gradually became sounder and less toilsome to the horses.

Just at this moment Mr. Sykes and I happened to have ridden on ahead, and on reaching a venta standing in a grove of noble orange-trees (the loftiest and largest I ever saw), covered to their topmost bough with ripe fruit, we waited for the rest of the party. A very extensive prospect lay before us in the direction of Gibraltar, and we were in full enjoyment of the scene, when, suddenly chancing to look back upon the road we had been travelling, great was my astonishment to behold a Skye-terrier shuffling along on three legs at a quick trot towards us, and looking as natural and in-

dependent as if his shaggy species belonged to the *indigenæ* of the Peninsula; one's thoughts being instantly carried homeward by a sight so unexpected in that out-of-the-way spot! And while, like the flies in amber, its appearance prompted us to think of the lines—

“Not that the thing itself was rich, or rare,
But we wondered how on earth it had come there!”—

the mystery was solved by the approach of two horsemen, unmistakable English gentlemen, with their servant behind, coming from the same quarter. In the pleasure of meeting countrymen, and exchanging a few words, the rigour and stiffness of English etiquette was at once cast aside, and we spoke as naturally as ships hail each other at sea.

They, like ourselves, were bound for Gibraltar, having left it only three days before, for a short excursion through the Serrania. They had started from Ronda that morning, and being in light marching order, and well mounted on Gibraltar hacks, which are supposed capable of any amount of exertion under English riders, had accomplished in one day what had occupied us nearly twice the time. They were now making for Ximena, the only place of any size

n the neighbourhood, where they had secured sleeping-quarters, and, as they hoped to arrive shortly, very good-naturedly offered to bespeak accommodation for us. We could not, however, avail ourselves of their kindness, our destination being San Roque. These gentlemen proved, as we learnt at Gibraltar, to be Captain O'Hara, and a friend, whose name I cannot at this moment recollect. Before parting, their servant a guide from "the Rock," thoroughly acquainted with the country, gave us full instructions as to our route, which proved of the greatest use. Indeed I do not know what we should have done but for that chance rencontre, for we had no guide, and not one of the party had ever been that way before.

Day was now rapidly closing, and in spite of the directions we had so recently received, it soon became no easy matter to find the road, which lay sometimes over a tract of arable ground, where the plough had newly obliterated every vestige of a path; sometimes it skirted the steep banks of a rivulet on its way, like ourselves, to the Guadairo, which we had just discovered we must ford once more. Under the deepening twilight it became scarcely less difficult to trace than an Indian trail, obliging us

continually to make casts in every direction, before we could venture to proceed, more especially on one occasion in crossing the brook. The moon, however, came erelong to our aid, and for some time we advanced at a good brisk pace, and had fairly reached the low country, when suddenly we found ourselves so hopelessly involved in a succession of ploughed fields, deep with stiff clay, that seeing a small farm-house standing at no great distance on a bank, I rode towards it, and with Purkiss' help as interpreter, prevailed on a young man to guide us to the Venta de Guadairo. Mounting his mule he struck off at once across a trackless sweep of wheat-land, where none but a native could find his way at night, and in about an hour and a half brought us to a ford of the Guadairo, at which one of the mules made a difficulty, and it was some time before he could be got over, though the water was not more than two feet deep. Following the right bank of the downward stream, in another hour we reached the Venta, which stands in a most dismal situation not far from the river-brink, in an atmosphere where damp, fog, and malaria reign in undisputed supremacy.

I had always felt a sort of presentiment, that although we had experienced a good many vicis-

situdes of travel, and, in Ford's phrase, declined quite as many moods and tenses of the verb "to rough it," as served to give zest to our adventures at the moment, and a piquancy to their after-recollection, yet there was still awaiting us somewhere, a culminating point of the ups-and-downs of a traveller's career in this quaint old-fashioned land, and a still lower deep of discomfort, ere our expedition came to a close.

At the Venta de Guadairo we found the complete fulfilment of that presentiment. For here were we, six hungry men, at the hour of nine P.M., under the roof of the most deplorable-looking abode imaginable, with just enough of food and wine to excite our appetites to an insatiable degree, after a ride of fourteen hours through fresh mountain-air! Nor was there the remotest chance of adding anything to the slender store we had brought with us, except a few eggs, which we hailed with rapture, and divided with as scrupulous an exactness as a shipwrecked crew doles out its scanty supplies.

But it may be asked, "Where were the panniers, of which we have heard so much, with their manifold resources of wine and comestibles?" That was precisely the question we had been putting to ourselves, and to each other,

so many times for several hours past, without eliciting the smallest response; no, not even the friendly echo, which is supposed to be always at hand, in moments of extremity, to furnish a reply, when nothing else will. The fact is (can the reader wonder I am loth to make the confession?), we had been guilty that day of a gross indiscretion, the grossest indeed, I think, committed during the whole expedition—we had actually parted with our victuals!

The prospect of finding ourselves so soon under the protection of that redoubtable quadruped, the British Lion, at Gibraltar, had, apparently, proved too much for us. Like the Kamtchadales, as I once heard them described by a lecturer at the Great Globe, we had suddenly become, "without any regard for futurity," elevated by the excitement of the moment far above the sublunary concerns of eating and drinking. Forgetful of the old saw, "Mass and meat never hinder work," we had fancied to-day, for the first time, that the provisions were an incumbrance, mere impediments to our speedier progress, and so, after a hasty meal taken in the forenoon, we at once pushed on, leaving Marcos, Tomas, and the man from Loja, to come on after us with the donkeys to San Roque, as

speedily as possible, flattering ourselves we were, somehow or other, going to enter Gibraltar that very night, at gun-fire, when the gates are closed, being in December soon after five P.M.

Some one fortunately had possessed sufficient "regard for futurity," to put up a fowl, and half another, of very slender dimensions, with the remains of a bottle of sherry, and to this forethought did we owe the pittance of food we were now swallowing with so much thankfulness, and still unappeased hunger, at the Venta de Guadairo.

As soon as the sherry had disappeared, we tried for the first time that vile stuff, *aguardiente*, which, being in taste worse than any physic, did us, I hope, some good afterwards.

The apples, presented the previous night in so eccentric a manner by the old lady at La Himera, and which we then regarded as so unseasonable a gift, were now more esteemed than golden fruit of the Hesperides (who, by-the-way, must have lived somewhere in these parts, "the Far West" of classic ages), while we watched each of us his own individual apple roasting in the fire, with most jealous concern, and so eager was our hunger, that I believe all three burnt their mouths in eating them. At any rate I did.

Beds in such a place were utterly out of the question. For any one wishing to lie down, there was the floor and a sort of settle, without a back, attached to the wall round the fire, on which the rest of the party contrived to snatch a sedentary nap, while I, unable to sleep, had to content myself with listening to the peculiar sounds uttered by somnolent humanity, an entertainment which a musician might haply, in this instance, describe as a quintett, with an obligato accompaniment by one or two performers on the only instrument available at the moment—the nasal organ.

This concerted piece lasted perhaps an hour and a half, giving me ample time "to chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancies," the latter inspired no doubt by aguardiente. Will any one wonder that on the first opportunity I should propose to go on all night, now that men and horses were refreshed with rest and food, and there was a full moon at our service, so that we might reach Gibraltar betimes next morning, instead of having to ride, soiled and travel-worn, through the streets of a British garrison-town by broad day-light on Sunday? It was now between eleven and twelve, and we might easily arrive soon after morning gun-fire.

No sooner said than done; every one was willing, and in a short time we were once more on horseback, taking the landlord of the Venta for our guide. The horses were wonderfully fresh, considering the distance we had travelled, and mine was ready, as usual, to kick up behind on every occasion. It will easily be imagined we were not at that moment a very lively party, and I had become so very sleepy, I could with difficulty keep the saddle. For some time it was a most dismal ride, while our course lay along a dank, muddy valley, and as we penetrated the dense body of fog extending in all directions, it seemed as if a curtain were drawn between us and the moon, deadening all her brilliancy, and chilling mind and body alike.

After fording a stream of some depth, we came out upon a pleasanter line of country, and at length found ourselves on a tract of dry sand, just before entering the celebrated "Cork Wood," which we saw as few travellers have seen it—amid the profound silence and solemnity of midnight, with floods of chequered moonlight streaming through its long-drawn avenues, which at the moment appeared like the realms of Dream-land, while, as the horsehoofs fell with noiseless pace on the fine pow-

dery sand, our party might have been taken for a cavalcade of ghosts.

My horse being at all times an unpleasant neighbour, I rode a little ahead, and in my then dreamy state, " 'twixt sleeping and waking," it seemed the most natural thing in the world to look any moment for the ghostly form of by-gone Moor, or Spaniard, issuing from the depths of the forest, to challenge us on our night-march, as intruders on their shadowy domain.

Nothing, however, ghostly or bodily, Christian or Paynim, did we encounter through all that long reach of forest-glades, stretching out, so it seemed to us, some ten or twelve miles; nor did even a scudding rabbit, or stealthy fox, once cross our path. The solitude was absolute. No living thing, besides ourselves, was in motion, in thicket or glade, and that strange, midnight, ride of December the 11th (for we now had just passed "the hour, of night's black arch the key-stone"), became a fitting conclusion to our various wanderings through the *dehesas*, and *despoblados* of Spain's most solitary wilds, being itself the most silent and solitary of them all.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ON approaching San Roque we began to meet parties of muleteers on the road, even at that early hour, and as we were going to, not from, the coast, and could not consequently be smugglers, our cavalcade of seven must have excited some surprise, as was indicated indeed by the tone with which they replied to our greetings.

While riding through the silent streets, we espied a café already open, and the proprietor (concluding, I suppose, that none but Britons could be going about at such an hour) called out to us, in foreign English, that he had some coffee "all hot," an announcement which fell upon the ear like pleasant music, and, as we could not enter "the Rock" before gun-fire, we once more dismounted, to feed the horses, and regale ourselves with coffee and bread-and-butter.

Scarce had the first glow of dawn streaked the East, when with a BANG! forth bellowed old

England's thunder, and while the boom reverberated among the fortress-caverns of "the Rock," coming out again and again in multiplied echoes across the Lines, till the houses of San Roque trembled in unison, it sounded to our ears like a welcome, homeward, call.

We had now only about three miles to go, and while "the Rock" loomed in shadowy grandeur out of the grey dawn, we began to realize those mingled sensations which crowd upon the mind, when regarding the close of such an expedition as we now had so nearly accomplished. It has been truly said, it is always painful to do anything, consciously, for the last time. We had so thoroughly enjoyed every portion of our riding-tour, a distance, as far as I have been able to make out by careful calculation, of about 800 miles from the time we started from Toledo, that it was impossible to contemplate its termination without feelings of liveliest regret; though no doubt they were considerably blunted, at the moment, by the fatigue of this last ride, which, including our three halts, had now extended over some twenty-five successive hours.

Still, on the other hand, had we not very great cause to be thankful, as I trust we all

were? We had accomplished most successfully, without sickness or accident, an expedition, which we, at any rate, reckoned a considerable achievement, the illness and death of poor Barbarossa being the sole misfortune befalling the party, from beginning to end. We had been able to carry out in all its details, except the *détour* to Alcantara, the plan originally sketched before starting; had been favoured on the whole (considering the lateness of the season) with excellent weather, and had seen most of the objects situated on our route to peculiar advantage. It was something, we felt, to have become acquainted with one of the most remarkable, and least travelled, countries in the world, not merely along its highways, or through the windows of a diligence, but in some of its most remote and unvisited regions, under the broad sky, in the fresh open air, moving when we chose, and where we chose. This plan of travelling had brought us into contact with every class of the people, except the highest, more especially with the peasantry, the very bone and sinew of Spain's body politic, and (according to the convictions of foreigners well acquainted with the country) the best hope and promise for her future. We had witnessed Spanish life in not a few of its

phases, had been received as guests, both in private dwellings, and in houses of public entertainment, visiting not only cities and towns renowned in the history of mankind, but unheard-of villages also, and sequestered country-towns, where foreigners are almost unknown.

Upon all this it was very pleasant to look back, as we rode onwards between hedges of towering aloe, in the sunshine of early morning, or skirted the waves, which rippled gently upon the shore of Algeiras Bay; while the superb panorama, encircling "the Rock," which extends from the snowy crest of the Sierra Nevada on the one hand, to the lurid fastnesses of the African mountains on the other, spread out before the eye a spectacle of such beauty and interest, as can hardly, perhaps, find its parallel in any part of the world, where earth and sea, mountain and lowland, fleet and fortress, citadel and harbour, crowded town and straggling village, present themselves to the view in bright and rapid succession.

It was nine o'clock on Sunday morning, December the 11th, and Church-Parade for the troops under canvas had just concluded, as we rode through the streets of Gibraltar,—thronged, even then, with market-people, and camp-follow-

ers, who suspended for a moment their buying and selling, to stare at so strange-looking a company as we must, doubtless, have appeared after our long ride,—and alighted at the Victoria, glad indeed to find ourselves once more under the roof of a comfortable Hotel.



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA

CHAPTER XLVII.

OH! the delight of opening a budget of letters, after an interval of nearly two months passed in drear ignorance of home, and its beloved inmates! In travelling, it is always a difficulty to arrange about one's letters when the route cannot be determined beforehand, as was the case with us. This difficulty is greatly increased in Spain by its lack of railways, and remoteness from the chief lines of European traffic, not to mention the fact, that even from the southernmost districts of Andalusia, letters for England are invariably sent up to Madrid by *correo*. (the mail of the Peninsula), a plan which, though highly profitable to the national exchequer, adds immensely to the time necessary for their transmission. Besides, our route having remained undetermined until we had quitted Madrid, it became impossible for me to make arrangements for hearing from home, either at Seville or Cor-

dova. Thus it came to pass, that an interval of seventy-five days elapsed between the date of the letter I last received (at Madrid), and the hour when, to my delight and happiness, I found no fewer than five awaiting my arrival at Gibraltar, every one of them being, thank God! a messenger of good tidings.

With my mind thus relieved from suspense and anxiety on that most important subject, it was high time to think of paying some attention to personal appearance, which certainly, on my first entering the hotel, did not, in many essential particulars, come up to the ideas commonly received among English gentlemen, whether lay or clerical. At that moment a more unkempt, neglected figure could not easily be found, nor would I for much have been seen, as I then appeared, by the most lowly of my parishioners, one of whom, a private in the 4th Foot, stationed at Gibraltar, had for several weeks been on the look-out for my arrival, so that an incident, so seemingly improbable, had become a very likely contingency.

But here we were again confronted by the consequences of yesterday's indiscretion. The most necessary part of our baggage was with Marcos, and Tomas, wherever that might be, far away

from where it was most wanted. Fortunately we had sent all the weightier luggage direct from Seville to Gibraltar, and having duly reached its destination, it was now available for our use. But in spite of all the appliances for the toilette supplied from that quarter, we were still destitute of several articles considered indispensable, on Sundays especially. For instance, however irreproachable the rest of his costume may be, it is a most damaging fact to a clergyman's respectability, if indeed it does not vitiate his whole moral character, to have to go about on that day among troops of his countrymen, with nothing better on his head, than a very shabby old wide-awake.

Such was precisely the predicament in which I found myself at Gibraltar, on Sunday, December 11th, 1859. I had somewhere or other, with the rest of the missing baggage, one of those head-coverings, modelled after the fashion of a chimney-pot, which form so important an item in an Englishman's most correct costume. Unhappily, like many other things in this world, it was not forthcoming when most wanted; and as I desired to go to church in the afternoon, I had nothing better to put on than the battered head-gear above mentioned, which, though still

in all substantial respects a most valuable travelling companion, exhibited some objectionable points, that did not exactly recommend its adoption for Sunday-wear. Originally black, the vicissitudes of travel had converted it into a neutral tint, where sun-burnt patches of brown, and many a road-stain of dust washed in by copious showers, strove for pre-eminence over the primary colour, in which it had come forth from the maker's hands. I found it a very trying exercise of moral courage to walk about the streets that day in so shockingly bad a hat; and it argued, methought, no small amount of friendship in Mr. Sykes to be willing to bear me company, while we sought in vain for a church open for afternoon service.

We tried the Cathedral. Memories of Toledo, and Seville! what a THING to dignify with that august title, suggestive of so much grandeur, solemnity, and reverential awe! Surely there can hardly be in Bath, Brighton, or Cheltenham, no, nor yet in London itself, a proprietary chapel even, that would not blush to see the building, where the first English Bishop of Gibraltar is supposed to have set up his episcopal throne! No wonder the bishop does not live there! And as if it were not anomaly enough to designate