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An Easter Holiday in Spain and Morocco.

BY E. H. BLAKENEY, M.A.

IT is just nineteen years ago that I first visited Andalusia; and the memory of those days, spent in incomparable sunshine and beneath the cloudless blue of the Spanish skies, has never faded from my mind. So this year I resolved to repeat the visit, feeling that it might be of interest to compare the experiences of 1913 with the recollections of 1894. It is not always wise to indulge in such repetitions; but wisdom is justified of her works. True, I have visited the Peninsula several times since 1894, but have chiefly confined my attention to the northern and central provinces; this time the call of the South was insistent, for it is there that the romance of Old Spain still lingers.

Most visitors to the Peninsula do so by way of Irun and Burgos; others—not a majority—through Barcelona; but, apart from the tiresomeness of a long and fatiguing land journey, these are the least attractive ways of getting to Andalusia. It is better to go by sea; so, at least, I thought. Hence, on a cold, drizzly morning in the early part of April, I found myself at Tilbury Docks, preparatory to taking passage in the Indian mail boat.

There is a great deal of amusement and interest to be got out of a five days' voyage by sea. The mere novelty of things, to anyone who is jaded or tired, comes as a sort of rest; and the absence of letters, telegrams, newspapers, and politics, is all to the good. Then the sweet monotony of the sea, in one aspect, combined with its infinite variety in another aspect, help our minds to swing healthfully between the extremes of calm and activity.

One of the touching little sights on the voyage was the dropping of the pilot off Dover. There was a fairly heavy sea on—heavy, at least, for so small a boat as that which took the

pilot to land; and the contrast between this cockle-shell and the 8,000-ton steamer was irresistibly attractive. Perhaps it was this that helped to make this otherwise commonplace incident "touching"; perhaps, too, at the back of one's mind were literary or other reminiscences connected with the word "pilot"—Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar," for example, or Tenniel's wonderful cartoon in *Punch*.

Thirty-six hours later we were off Cape Finisterre. Up till then the voyage had been free enough of incident; like the fat boy in "Pickwick," we divided the time into little alternate allotments of eating and sleeping. But I was a witness, on the afternoon of Sunday, April 13, of an interesting phenomenon. At 4 p.m. we went down to tea; the weather was bright, but the sea was rough, and the wind bitingly cold; and we were glad to be wrapped up in thick coats. But, on emerging on deck about 4.45, a transformation in sea and sky had taken place; we had passed suddenly from winter to summer. The sea was smooth like glass, the weather warm and balmy; not a touch of winter remained. It was, indeed, good to be alive. Great, lazy, black-fish tumbled slowly in the summer sea; porpoises played at hide and seek about the ship's bows; the outlines of the coast rose up, clear and peaceful, at a brief distance away. A touch of gaiety communicated itself to passengers and crew; subtle, perhaps indefinable, but insistent. The sunset that followed was magnificent: the great stretch of waters, so lonely in their beauty and pride, seemed suddenly thrilled through with a strange sense of mystery. There was a poignancy as well as a loveliness about the unfathomable blue of the evening sky; the ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα faded swiftly from the ocean, unruffled now by the smallest wind; the stars rose, beautiful and tranquil, as twilight deepened into darkness; then the night fell, and all was still as at the morning of creation.

Cape St. Vincent, Cape Trafalgar, were passed in due succession. Browning's lines came unbidden into the memory; and I wondered, as I watched my fellow-passengers at their deck-games, how many of them felt moved—so evanescent a

thing is the memory of great events—by the thought that, beneath the shining surface of the sea, we were gliding over the cemetery where repose the remains of the heroes who had fought their last battle there more than a century before.

> "Afloat, ashore, old England's sons—each one—
> Must hold life low, as they hold duty high,
> And ask not how nor when 'tis theirs to die,
> So they but die like men, their duty done."

Five days after leaving London, Gibraltar, "grand and grey," suddenly comes into view. Many have recorded their impressions of this unique mass of rock rising so abruptly from the low-lying Spanish coast; none more adequately, perhaps, than Théophile Gautier in his "Voyages en Espagne," written just seventy years ago. To the south are seen the stern mountains of the African coast, with Jebel Musa dominating the lesser heights; while, at the opposite side of the bay of Gibraltar, stands Algeciras, rendered famous a few years back by the European Conference held there. Gibraltar—Jebel Musa—Algeciras,—all these names are Arabic in origin; and their history, though too little known to visitors, reads like a veritable romance of destiny. But, ages before Tarik appeared, bringing over his victorious hosts to sweep through Spain and to inaugurate a new chapter in the chequered annals of ancient Iberia, the ships of Phœnician, Greek, and Roman must have been familiar objects to the dwellers in these regions. And, ages before the earliest of those intrepid voyagers, the Pillars of Hercules were the chosen home of fable and mystery, the inwardness of which remains impenetrable as the Sphinx itself.

> "Time's undiscoverable secret sleeps"

along these sunbright coasts, and above the solemn movement of the waves.

Gibraltar, despite its amazing interest to any Englishman who has patriotic instincts, is not a place for a sojourn, but rather a centre from which expeditions can readily be made elsewhere, whether by rail or sea. But one thing is surely essential—a stroll across the neutral ground to Linea, a Spanish

town not more than half a mile from English territory. The sudden contrast between the cleanliness, trimness, and orderliness of the one place, and the dirt and squalor of the other, is scarcely to be overlooked even by the most casual observer. "Which thing is an allegory."

Tangier is about three hours by boat from Gibraltar; one naturally makes it the object of a visit, however brief. It is one of those "lost possessions of England," of which Mr. Frewen Lord has written for our learning. It is internationalized now, and very few traces remain (if any) of its former owners. If current rumour be correct, English prestige in Morocco has of late years suffered grievous eclipse. All along the coast, from Ceuta to Mogador, the inhabitants are being slowly but surely Europeanized; drink and depravity are ugly reminders that latter-day Europe, in coming into contact with an effete civilization, has so far done nothing to Christianize the populations it has touched, while it has superimposed upon the vices of barbarism iniquities all its own. I met at Tangier a Captain S——, a traveller whose knowledge of the East must be, in its way, unrivalled; and his report on the condition of things, within the European sphere of influence in Morocco, was painful enough. "The old order changeth, giving place to new"; but the new is supremely disquieting. The very picturesqueness of the old towns is fast going:

> "Science grows, but beauty lingers—roofs of slated hideousness!"

Still, after making every deduction, Tangier is abundantly worth a visit. The older parts of the town, as yet untouched, serve to remind us of the days when Saracenic art was a veritable marvel; though nothing on African soil can hope to vie with the splendours of Seville, Cordova, and Granada, where the art of the Moorish invaders reached its zenith in the palmy days of Abdurrahman and his successors.

There are few sights more interesting or amusing to a spectator than that of the Great Sok, or market. And this not because of any charm of beauty either in place or surround-

ings, for it is dirty in the extreme, and the buildings that encircle it—mainly of recent growth—are mean; the interest lies in the spectacle of a vast aggregation of human beings of every class and of many nationalities jostling one another in a comparatively narrow space. The mixed multitude of men and donkeys; the noise, dust, smell, clamour, and the general atmosphere of the East—they are indescribable. Up the narrow lanes, clad in resplendent attire—for native customs in dress do not, thank heaven, soon change in these parts—you may watch a solemn-visaged Moor, preceded by lackeys who clear the way before their master; as you pass into the market-place you are greeted by vendors and buyers, intent on business; hard by is a group of silent tribesmen listening to the strident voice of some soothsayer or peripatetic story-teller; within a stone's cast a snake-charmer will at once fascinate and disgust one, as he inserts the heads of reptiles into his cavernous mouth; yonder is an eager group of chafferers handling sheep and goats with a view to barter; there, a group of merry-visaged black children beg for coppers, or offer you unbidden services; while a witch-doctor from the far interior, armed with bells, sticks, and knives, and costumed in a fashion that beggars description, holds the motley crowd agape. The scene is full of life and colour, primitive as only Morocco can be; yet within a hundred yards are the finely laid out gardens of the German Consulate; and within a mile, or less, hotels where Europeans might imagine themselves, not in Northern Africa, but in some fashionable seaside town in Southern France.

The future of Morocco is still uncertain; ταῦτα θεῶν ἐν γούνασι κεῖται. But of this we may be sure: with a railway from Tangier to Fez, branching out (later on) into side lines, the old secludedness of Morocco will have disappeared for ever. And, with this, will evaporate the air of romance that has long hung over this distracted land. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico.* Not but what the romance has worn somewhat thin during the past quarter of a century. Materially, no doubt, the land will prosper. Under French auspices, cafés (both of the bibulous and the

"chantant" type), electric light, "billard," commercial rapacity, trade unionism, and democratic ideas, will become ubiquitous; hideous new houses, with the cheapest of stucco fronts, will become common as mushrooms. This is what the average Frenchman, a materialist to the backbone, regards as "civilization." Roads will be driven this way and that, over which screaming motor-cars, with their tourist and official occupants, will ply. Justice will be administered according to the latest republican notions. But will the kindly influence of a patient Christian life become known throughout Morocco as a standard for all men to measure themselves by? It seems doubtful. Yet the duty imposed on the Churches is not therefore diminished; in the wake of commerce the Cross must follow, whatever the chances be of final success. Only before the reiterated strokes of Christian teaching may the hard shell of Mohammedanism be broken, and the human soul liberated from its age-long bondage.

After a brief stay in Tangier, I returned to Europe, and made my way to Ronda. The journey through the cork woods is singularly pleasing, but it is not till we reach Ronda itself that the full charm of the countryside is revealed. The situation of this old Moorish town is remarkable, built as it is on two sides of a deep chasm, spanned by a fine eighteenth-century bridge. It reminds the traveller a little of Constantine. The houses cluster along the perilous edge of the ravine, in the trough of which flows a swift stream, which in winter must become a torrent. Round about rise the hills in a picturesque amphitheatre; and the fields that spread far and wide are rich in orchards and vineyards. It is a dreamy old town, this Ronda; its streets are, for the most part, rough and unpaved; the windows are heavily grilled, according to immemorial custom; and there is scarcely a corner where an artist will not find an opportunity for making delightful sketches. There is a pleasant air of *dolce far niente* in Ronda; and one might spend several days here, wandering through the quiet lanes of the town, or strolling down the precipitous sides of the gorge by the old

mills. The chief church of the place is thoroughly Spanish; its quaint tower, flanked with a charming loggia, gives the impression of lordly indifference to the flight of time and to the movements of the outside world.

A few hours by train bring you to the goal of every serious student of Saracenic art—Granada, set proudly at the feet of the Sierra Nevada, and dominating the wonderfully fertile Vega, which stretches away for miles in the shimmering distance. One cannot, however, help being struck by the changes that have been wrought in the city itself during the past twenty years. Formerly the place was infested with beggars who were apt to molest one at every turn; now it is possible to wander about in any direction without interference. The atmosphere of the town has altered, too, in a fashion not quite easy to describe; and this, apart from the constructions and reconstructions that have been, and are, going on in so many directions. It must be granted that the roads and streets are improved; but the new buildings are ugly indeed; for the modern Spanish architect seems signally devoid of the sense of fitness and beauty. Consequently, we have to deplore the passing away of many charming old things, as well as the intrusion of shops, hotels, and public buildings, erected in the least attractive of modern French styles.

Nevertheless, when all is said, Granada is unique. The Alhambra is unchanged for the most part; and it appears that the Government is really anxious to preserve, as far as possible, this singular monument of the romance and devotion of a bygone age. There is nothing quite similar to be found elsewhere, alike in its conception, its setting, and its ultimate plan.

> "The light that never was on sea and land,
> The consecration and the poet's dream"

hover about its colonnades, made trebly beautiful by the waters that murmur there, by sharp contrasts of sunshine and shade, and the flickering of the trees in its retired and tranquil courts. And what a tale it could tell if only those old walls were made

vocal but for an hour! Fanaticism, fierce energy of conflict, swiftness of imagination, exquisite craftsmanship, a haunting sense of mystery, instability of purpose, an inexhaustible yet irregular fancy, love of mere life elaborated by a passion of unrest—we find these features of the Arab character translated here into one imperishable whole.* It is, perhaps, easy to criticize the details of this work of Semitic genius; yet, when all is said, the total effect left upon us by what we have seen can only be described as magical. Little do we marvel, as we read in the annals of the chronicler, that the last native prince to reign within those now crumbling walls, wept (how unavailingly!) to find himself dispossessed of all that sometime splendour and magnificence.

No one who visits the Alhambra would willingly forgo a sight of the Generalife Gardens, that lovely pleasaunce that overlooks the Darro and the distant hills. From the "mirador" the quaint Gipsy quarter faces us; to the left rise the towers of the palace itself. The place was redolent, on that calm Sunday morning when I loitered there, with roses and orange blossoms; the tanks were alive with innumerable gold-fish; doves, nightingales, and swallows gave a delightful touch of everyday reality to what might else have seemed some fragment out of dreamland itself. And everywhere, as one moved upward from tier to tier in that pleasure-ground, glowed magnolias and purple irises, while the vines hung tenderly to the trellised arcades; and, amid all, came the recurrent sound of waters — waters fretting their way from height to depth; the sound of fountains bubbling, and of streams making music in the hollows.

It struck me that, during the interval between 1894 and 1913, the Church had lost something of its old prestige. Spain is gradually ceasing to be a "Catholic" country in any complete sense of the word. The marvel would be if it were otherwise. During the times of the Ignorance, the Church has been purely a static force in religion; and it has of set purpose discouraged

* See the brilliant chapter on "The Arab in Architecture" in Mr. L. March Phillipps' recent volume of essays, "The Works of Man."

all efforts towards social amelioration and progress in knowledge. But knowledge could not ultimately be kept in the logic-tight compartment of ecclesiastical dogmatism. Hence, as the climate of thought gradually but surely changed, people have grown (rightly) suspicious of the Church, her methods, and her claims. The best intellects in Spain are to-day, openly or covertly, hostile to religion, which they have so long been taught to identify with Romanism. The result could have been foretold. Notwithstanding, the old paganism still flourishes in districts not yet affected by modern thought; and paganism may long survive; but of pure Christianity there are few traces in the Peninsula. Romanism, in the places where it has held so long an unchallenged supremacy, is a sterile system; the pity of it is that the ecclesiastical authorities appear blind to the signs of the times. A Spanish Luther is sorely needed to infuse his gallant spirit into the dry bones of that baptized paganism, which is what Romanism really is.

I have seen Seville on various occasions; during the present visit I was impressed by the growing modernity of the place. Somehow, the "atmosphere" of this pleasure-loving city has changed; whether for the better it is not easy to say. The great monuments of Seville's haughtiest and most flourishing epoch are untouched—Giralda, Alcazar, Cathedral, and the rest; and for centuries to come they will probably be visited and admired. One could not help being struck by the way in which the Spaniard is giving up the delightful old national costume. To pass along the Sierpes of Seville in the afternoon and evening is to receive a shock; it is crowded nowadays with ill-dressed loungers, clad in the ugliest of cosmopolitan suits—imported, no doubt, from the emporiums of Belgian, French, and English "shoddy." What does *not* change is the national enthusiasm for the Bull Fight. The "corridas" begin on Easter Day; and all through the Feria (or Fair), every afternoon the Plaza de Toros is packed with a mob of people eager to witness the doing to death of dozens of sorry hacks and of superb bulls. The "toreadors" are as popular in Spain as jockeys are with us; indeed, a great deal more so; for the enthusiasm which, in

England, spreads itself into manifold fields of sport, is there largely concentrated. And the focus of interest is the ring.

A visit to Cadiz fitly rounds off a tour in these parts. Its unique situation on a long tongue of land running out into the sea; its cleanliness; its superb climate; the part it has taken, in earlier days, in the history of the Peninsula—all these things make it worth while to spend a few hours there. Yet Cadiz lacks the *élan vital* (to borrow a phrase from Bergson) which one finds in many another less happily situated city. To be frank, the place is a trifle dull; there is little, barring the old fortifications, to call up visions of the past, and to invest the present with the air of romance. Ten miles distant lies San Fernando; here one may profitably loiter, and find in its peaceful old streets—as yet wonderfully undamaged by the modern craze for improvement—many charming vistas. Few visit it, however, save for the purpose of taking the motor, which runs now daily along a dusty highway, to Algeciras. Doubtless the advent of the motor here, as elsewhere, is bound to exercise a considerable influence on the development of the Spanish countryside. That this influence will mean the disappearance of many pleasing old habits and customs is scarcely to be doubted. Anyway, at present the run from San Fernando to Algeciras (a five hours' business) is well worth making, if only for the peep one gets at Tarifa, a battered old town, Moorish in origin, as its name indicates. The views from Tarifa onward, as you skirt the coast over the solitary hill country, are not easily forgotten. We breathe the veritable air of sixteenth-century Spain as we pass through the sparsely-populated districts, or catch sight of villages perched high upon the hills, so lonely, and so isolated from the teeming life of the great cities. And it is not till the last hill is traversed that the spell is broken; then suddenly we awake to the realities of things as we begin the long descent that leads to Algeciras, the rays of sunset falling "silent over Africa." What echoes come, pensive and wan, from that dark, mysterious country, so silent in the pomps of evening?

"This is—Gibraltar; yonder is the sea."