

A VISIT TO THE CANARY ISLANDS.

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During the winter season as we gather round the fireside, we are inclined to meet and talk over our summer doings, even with the rhythm of the Ping Pong balls in our ears. "I went with one of my brothers to the Canary Isles," to some conveys surprise and a feeling of curiosity, but to many it conveys no idea at all; but, when the matter becomes a subject of conversation, it has awakened sufficient interest to make one think that a short account of the journey might be interesting to a good many.

We went from Dublin to Liverpool in the "Carlow," coming up the Mersey when the New Brighton tower, the promenades, and the docks are a blaze of light and very beautiful. We spent a most restful night at the Exchange hotel and awoke with a strong sense of being about to face the unknown. It was a beautiful morning, Saturday, August 31st, which lessened the worry of looking up luggage, getting on board the tender, &c. Once there, there was a great deal to interest us—the departure of the "Lucania," the various ships and big boats, and the passengers with whom the next few days were to be spent. In a short time we were all on board the steamship "Angola," and soon under weigh. That day we viewed the Welsh coast and our fellow-passengers, trying to give to each his or her name from the passenger list. There was still a little strangeness and diffidence until, on Sunday afternoon, a trivial incident brought most of us together on the promenade deck; the captain joined us and later the purser, and, to use an appropriate phrase, those who knew the ropes were drawn into telling the new comers, or "Canary Birds," many wonderful tales of life on sea and on the West African coast. During this and many other talks we had with the "coasters" we learned much of the manners and customs of both whites and blacks, and we were also made aware of our great ignorance on these and on geographical

points concerning that wonderful country. We were a very pleasant party composed of many nations—English, Irish, Scotch, American, African, Dutch, and Spanish.

The sea was not quite kind all the time; we had a strong wind and rough sea for a day or two, but then came the full moon and a couple of glorious nights. We had concerts and dances on board, and in the day time deck games of various kinds, besides the interest of seeing “the ships that passed in the day,” and some of the monsters of the deep—whales, sharks, etc.

On Friday night we sighted the Madeira lights, and about five o'clock next morning we were in the harbour; the throbbing of the engines ceased, and we were in time to see a glorious sunrise and to hear the Portuguese boatmen sing the “Ave Maria.” The view of the island and the town of Funchal are most picturesque, and so are the pirates who invade the ship in the form of merchants of lace, silver, baskets, and photographs. All these were of less interest than the diving boys; these came round in boats and performed some marvellous feats, jumping from various parts of the rigging of the ship, and in one case upsetting a boat, turning it over and over with a boy under the seat; but, alas, instead of some of their National airs, there came from beneath the boat the sound of Tara-boom-de-ay! Having much enjoyed these various entertainments, we went on shore to breakfast and see as much as possible of that land of flowers. The drive in the bullock car and the marvellously exciting expedition on the rock railway and tobogganing slide showed us a great deal, the conductor of the bullock wagon picking for those who showed an interest in them, gorgeous bunches of boganwillia, ibiscus, and geranium. There is not far from the town a specimen of the Ichod or Dragon Tree, said to be 3,000 years old. There is another very old specimen in a garden at Las Palmas. We saw the cathedral with its beautiful silver work and wood carving, the marine drive, and the market place, and then we had to leave this isle of beauty.

Next day we reached Teneriffe in the afternoon, having all day long seen the glorious peak as it rises out of the sea and far above the clouds, to the height of 15,396 feet; unfortunately our photographs of it were unsuccessful. When we landed the town was asleep; it was a hot and drowsy afternoon; we saw the bull-ring where a bull fight was in pro-

gress, but this few of our party cared to see. We visited the cathedral, which also has some beautiful carving and *repoussé* silver work, some old pictures and tapestry, and two English flags captured from Nelson. These flags it seems were a short time ago taken by some British tars, but were immediately restored by the British Government as the lawful property of the Spaniards. We saw camels being led about, and there were a few heavy vehicles with awnings and drawn by mules. After a pleasant dinner at the Pino de Ore we adjourned to the band promenade, and, on our way through the dimly-lighted streets, we saw and heard many cavaliers serenading the dark-eyed maidens who looked down on them from their balconies; these sights ceased to surprise us after our stay in Las Palmas. In the harbour and on returning to the ship we were favoured with a truly wonderful display of phosphorescent light, every movement of the boats, every dip of the oars, every ripple of the water showed new beauty—fire or gold or gems—one does not know which to liken it to, as the shimmering lights partook of all three. We left behind us another member of our party, one had already gone at Madeira, and both were regretted. On Monday morning, about five o'clock, we sighted Grand Canary, and the Deserters, La Palma and Forteventura. It took some time to steam into port and longer still to get through the preliminaries of departure, the doctors' visit, debarkation, &c. We were glad to find that we need not just then say good-bye to all our good friends, for all the passengers, and as many of the ship's officers as could do so, came on shore with us, and we spent a gay day together. We lunched at the Metropole—a most beautifully situated hotel just on the sea—the building airy and bright, all green and white, with verandahs running round each story and the climbing convolvulus in full flower. After we were shown our pretty rooms, we started to make the most of the few hours our party should still spend together, and we went in tartanas to the town, visited the markets, and, in some unexplained manner, we found ourselves in the reception room of a Spanish hotel, where we had an afternoon dance and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Then the syren from the "Angola" began to call our friends away, so we all drove to the Mole and watched them embark, and waved a last good-bye as the good ship sailed on her way, those on board singing as long as we could hear them, "Say *au revoir* and not good-bye."

During the period of nearly three weeks that followed we enjoyed the most perfect of climates and the novelty of a strange land. The drives up the mountain are most beautiful. There is always the grey, arid-looking ground rising into mountain peaks, the greyness relieved by the green of the banana, the maize, and the sugar cane. The roads are bordered by the graceful pepper trees and eucalyptus, and the inevitable prickly pear and cactus. Though so little rain falls and water is so scarce, everything that is planted seems to grow most luxuriantly ; in addition to those already mentioned, palm trees and tree ferns grow to an immense height ; gardenias, oleanders, stephonatis, and vines flourish, as do also gourds of various kinds, tomatoes, oranges, lemons, citrons, castor oil, and coffee. The only home plants we noticed were the potato, the double dahlia, the maidenhair fern, and the bramble. There are interesting visits to be paid to Monti, Terror, the crater of the Caldera ; the cave-dwellers and pottery makers of Arucas and the Fergas springs. One of the resources of the island is the cultivation of cochineal ; it is a little insect that feeds on the cochineal palm.

Along the road the peasant travellers are most quaint ; they are generally mounted on beautiful little donkeys or mules, on a peculiarly shaped saddle, their feet straight in front of the neck of the animal ; they carry large coloured umbrellas, and men and women all smoke cigarettes. A remarkable feature in the landscape is furnished by the channels of streams and rivers which are quite dry, yet they must have some time been flooded, and they are here and there spanned by beautiful bridges.

In the short space that can be allotted to a sketch like this we are obliged to reserve a great many interesting details. Las Palmas itself, from the description of which we have been led aside, is worthy of attention—the flat roofs and green shutters of the houses, the white veils or mantillas of the women, who in early morning wear no other covering for the head ; they go to church, to market and to shop in this graceful headgear ; their magnificent stately walk and glorious dark eyes seem set off by it, as when at band promenades, or at the circus, they wore Parisian hats they did not look nearly so handsome. In this town is the church at which Columbus heard Mass before embarking on his voyage of discovery. The cathedral is a splendid structure of a rather mixed architecture, and there are many other churches. The

people are earnest Roman Catholics, true to the requirements of their faith, and as a people marvellously temperate; they all seemed well clothed, well fed, and contented. Their faults all rise from their fierce, quickly inflamed tempers. They are true Spaniards, except in some districts and among the cave-dwellers where the original inhabitants, the Guanche, are said to have left descendants.

When the day came to leave Las Palmas and the Metropole, we did so with regret. We came home in the "Bornu," under the care of her kind and genial captain; again we were singularly fortunate in our companions who made the journey very pleasant. We had men belonging to most of the West African military forces, some of them had seen much hard service—one of these, Captain Leyland, of the Munster Fusiliers, gained his D. S. O. and led his troops to the relief of Kumassi armed only with a blackthorn stick cut in the grounds of Adare Manor; his sword had got broken, but this trusty weapon did him good service, he was very proud of it and showed it to us—and were going home having gained some of the most coveted military honours in the Kumassi and other expeditions; these as well as some of the miners and mining engineers were coming home with a goodly supply of wealth. They all had much to show of the products of the industry of the blackie man—hammered brass, Nupea work, Benin paddles, Hausa work in leather, carved calabashes, and some extremely beautiful specimens of old gold dust boxes and gold weights, fashioned most wonderfully in shapes, some of which we are accustomed to call idols, and some representing birds, beasts, including the famous juju bird, or plants. We were well supplied with deck games and had music, concerts, &c., and as for the glorious sunsets, they are beyond description. We sailed closer to the coasts than on the outward journey, and so had a very good view of the Spanish coast, and later on saw the Eddystone lighthouse and the other points of interest. At Plymouth the greater number of the passengers left the ship, and in Liverpool the Irish party said good-bye to the rest of their companions, and added to their regard for the "Angola" a warm friendship for the "Bornu."