

MISCELLANEOUS.

PEAK OF TENERIFFE.

From a Narrative of a Voyage to Maden a, &c. &c. by W. R. Wilde, M. R. J. A., &c.—a recent and highly interesting work.

AN EXTRACT.

In November, Mr. Wilde was at Teneriffe, and ascended the celebrated Peak. The travellers had proceeded towards the foot of the mountain before, and made all necessary preparations for their journey, intending to be on the summit, if possible, by day-break. At half-past ten, on a bright moon-light night, the moon being within a day of the full, they started.

"As soon as we got into the open country, our dogs commenced beating, and continued the whole night enlivening the solitude by his short quick bark as he started a goat or a rabbit across our path. I have so often descanted on the grandeur of moonlight scenery, that it would be now going over old ground to touch upon it again; but here, by the extreme clearness of its silvery lustre, we were enabled to distinguish every trace of vegetation with the greatest accuracy. We had already passed the regions of the vine, the fern, and the heath, which, with the pine, the arbutus, and the broom, form successive belts around the lower parts of the Peak, rising one above another perfectly distinct, and with lines between of the most accurate demarcation.

"After this, we entered the vast plains of spartium, (the broom,) where the ground is more rugged, and the path so broken as to permit but a very easy walk. The cold increased momentarily as we gained the summit of the range of hills that topped the vale of Oratava, which lay beneath us, slumbering in the most death-like stillness—the towns, the cottages, and the sea had a most grand and imposing effect. At half-past two o'clock, we stopped to feed the men and horses, at a place called the 'Black Rocks.' Here we remained about half an hour—the thermometer was 40° Fahr.; the men seemed rather inclined to rest, and would have delayed, had we allowed them, in order to avoid their being at a very high elevation at the coldest part of the morning, which is just before sunrise. Strange to say, that, long before I had reached this, and when at an elevation of scarce five hundred feet, I found my breathing improved; and when two-thirds of the way up, was perfectly free from all trace of asthma or cough, and was the only person of the party, including the guides, who did not suffer from the rarity of the atmosphere. We resumed our way at three o'clock, fortifying ourselves with a little brandy, a cigar, and what we found still more acceptable, a few cayenne lozenges, which I strongly recommend to all persons exposed to extreme cold.

"We now commenced crossing the 'pumice-stone plains,' which lie at the foot of the actual Peak; and here it was that the novelty and sublimity of our situation most forcibly impressed us. The 'pumice-stone plain' is a term applied to a gradual ascent of great extent, and composed of exceedingly small grey lava and volcanic ashes, stretching far and wide as distant as the eye can reach, and the comparatively level surface immediately at the base of the Peak. From this rise occasional masses of dark obsidian, of immense size, and scattered plants of retama, (a species of broom,) the only vegetable that exists in this barren waste. At the commencement of the plain, it is growing in great strength and luxuriance; it gradually becomes more detached, and at the higher extremity it is scattered 'few and far between' in stunted bushes.

"There was a peculiar wildness in the hour and the scene; the night was truly propitious—not a cloud to be seen throughout the intense azure of the starry vault above us; not a breath of air stirred around us; the full moon shone forth with a splendour the most dazzling, as she sailed majestically through the broad expanse of blue, barely allowing the stars to appear as they twinkled in her path, whilst an occasional plant would now and then start up as if to challenge her improved radiance. Before us lay the clear and boldly defined outline of the Peak, frowning in all the grandeur of monarchy, and the great rarity of the

atmosphere showed every break and unevenness that bounded our horizon; all was wrapped in the most solemn stillness; the deep silence, seemed to impress each of us, not a little increased by our momentarily decreasing temperature, which had now completely silenced our melodious muleteers. The tread of the horses made not the slightest noise, as we wound our way across that weary plain, where, for the first time, I felt sleep come heavily upon me; indeed I did dose for a few moments, and it was on awaking that I so forcibly perceived our loneliness. The three men, in their long white cloaks, closed the line, stalking along like so many of the ancient Guanches, who had come out of their caverns to speed us on our way; and the shadows of the great masses of obsidian rose like castles, which assumed every fantastic shape the imagination could picture.

"Sunrise.—As soon as we had taken our place, we perceived a thin vapoury rose-coloured tint to stretch along the eastern horizon; the moon was still full up, but she had thrown the shadow of the Peak over where we stood. As we continued to gaze steadfastly on this first blush of morning, it every second increased, especially towards the centre, extending likewise in length along the horizon. This hue soon deepened to a pink, and then followed such a glorious halo of colours, in which the flower and the metal lent their most dazzling lustre, as to baffle all attempt at description; and the hazy undefined light that ushers in the day, began to chase the moonlight shadows from the plain beneath. At six o'clock, the thermometer stood at 18°, the light increasing, the cold intense, and the heavens presented a scene such as we read of in the arctic regions, being formed by the resplendent glories of the Aurora, but with this difference, the most brilliant colours gathered here as it were into a focus. All the east presented a lustrous semicircle, which, if you took your eyes off for a moment, seemed to increase tenfold. Between the horizon and the spot on which we stood, floated a confused sea, which we at first took for the ruffled bosom of the ocean, but it turned out to be nothing more than a thin white mist. At a quarter past six, the temperature fell as low as 15°, and sunrise took place a minute after; he rose very suddenly, and his whole disc was almost immediately clear of the horizon. It was a glorious sight, and cheering after all the cold and suffering of the preceding night, to see the great centre of light and heat come up to speed us on our way.

"We left the old man to guard the horses, and again set forward. Large masses of pumice, lava, and scoriae, continue some way further up to the small platform of Buona Vista, where there is a plant or two of stunted retama, and here the domain of vegetation ends. From this we climbed up a steep ascent, composed of detached masses of sharp rock basalt and obsidian, some loose, and others with a coating of scoriae; it reminded me of a magnified rough cast. Our halts, as might be expected, were frequent; at half-past seven o'clock, during one of these stoppages, I found the glass had risen to 33°. From the moment the sun rose, the heat began to increase, making us throw off our extra garments, and leaving them in the ascent. With a good deal of difficulty, we at last reached the base of the cone, which crowns the summit—the effects of the last irruption.

"We reached the summit at half-past eight o'clock; and my first impulse was to crawl to the highest pinnacle upon the wall of the crater, on the southeast point, whence it slopes on both sides towards the west. This solfatara, (or half-extinguished volcano,) was more active than usual this morning; large wreaths of smoke proceeding from numerous cavities and cracks in the bowl of the crater. This was smaller than we expected, not being more than a hundred feet in the widest part; shallow, and the edge very irregular, of an oval shape, having a margin of dense whitish lava. We descended into it, and found the opening, from whence the smoke issued, was near the south-west corner, encased with the most beautiful crystals of sulphur. On opening up these with a stick, we found them enlarged into little chambers, encrusted with the same crystals, the substance on which they rest being a kind of mortar, crumbling in the fingers, but hardening on exposure to the air. Some of these crystals are singularly beautiful, of the greatest brilliancy of colour, and varying from a deep golden orange to

the palest straw colour. The largest of these holes was about the size of my two fists; from this, and two or three others similar, a loud boiling noise was heard, even when standing on the edge of the crater. Large fissures intersect the crater in different directions; the crust between them varies under the foot, and produces a hollow sound. Besides the sulphur encrusting around the chinks and holes, large quantities, also crystallized, occur both within and outside the crater, formed in little nuclei embedded in a compact and glistening white substance. The fume or smoke is of a dense whitish appearance, and quantities of a watery vapour proceed out of the larger holes; but, although the sulphureous vapour is so much complained of, and that some of our party suffered from it, I was able to remain in it fully five minutes. The thermometer, when plunged into one of these, rose to 90°.

"The view that awaited us on the summit amply repaid us for all the toils of the ascent. The morning was beautifully clear, and without a cloud; the finest that had occurred since our arrival. The whole island of Teneriffe lay in the most vivid manner, like a map, at our feet, with its white towers, its vine-clad valleys, and pine-crowned hills.

"Immediately around the Peak, the mountains form a number of concentric circles, each rising in successive heights, and having it as a centre. It is this appearance that has, not inaptly, gained for it the simile of a town with its fosses and bastions. These are evidently the walls of former craters, on the ruins of which the present has been reared. What a fire must have come from the first of these, which enclosed a space of so many leagues! Or, again, how grand the illumination that once burst forth from the place whereon we stood, a height of nearly thirteen thousand feet, and which it is calculated would serve as a beacon at the distance of two hundred miles at sea on every side. The crater or circle next below us appears to rise to the height of the Estanza des Inglishes, ten thousand feet.

"There are a number of smaller cones scattered irregularly over the island; their red blistered summits glance in the sun like so many mole-hills: the largest is towards the west; it rises to a great height, and is the most elevated point on the island next to the Peak itself. Towards Santa Cruz, the marks of recent volcanic action become less, the stratification more perfect. There is less appearance of lava or pumice, and the basalt assumes more of the columnar form. We could perfectly distinguish the few vessels that lay opposite the port of Oratava, a direct distance of thirteen miles, while the ascent is calculated at about thirty. So clear was the atmosphere, that our friends at the port could distinguish us distinctly with the glass. They had been anxiously looking out for us, and hoped, more than expected, our accomplishing the ascent.

"The Archipelago of the Canaries seemed as if stretched at our feet; Grand Canary was particularly plain, being immediately beneath the sun. Palma and Gomera seemed so near that you could almost grasp them in your hand; and far away in the distance, Heiras seemed to mingle with the horizon. Our attention was now called to a vast body of clouds that brooded over the sea to the east. They were at first perfectly still and motionless, and of that description commonly called wool-packs. They then advanced towards the island, passed beneath us, and finally rested over the heights of Grand Canary."

THE HINDU WIFE.

"SHE enjoys no companionship with her husband in those domestic endearments with which Christian females are blessed. She is considered his inferior; he treats her as such, and he encourages his sons in doing the same. I have heard boys give authoritative commands to their mother, accompanied with the basest epithets, under the eye and approbation of their father, while she must address them with an appellation equivalent to sir. Behold the family meal! Instead of every one sitting down and sharing with comfort their mutual repast, the husband is served first, then the sons; and the wife must not sit while they are eating, but stand at a proper distance, and look another way, and be ready to attend to their wants. This ceremony being past, she is told to take what is left."