



ENTERING THE MEDITERRANEAN

THE ROCK OF GIBRALTAR

Gibraltar is the harbor of Gibraltar, and are about to land. To land! How little does that phrase convey to the inexperienced in sea travel, or to those whose voyages have begun and ended in stepping from a landing-stage onto a gangway, and from a gangway onto a deck, and thence to the shore! And how much does it mean for him to whom it comes fraught with recollections of steep descents, of heaving seas, of tossing cock-boats, perhaps of dripping garments, certainly of swiftness of foot! There are diversifications in which you come to for them all; but not at Gibraltar, at least under normal circumstances. The waters of the port are placid, and from most of the many sea vessels that touch there you descend by a ladder, or as agreeable an inclination as an ordinary flight of stairs. All you have to fear is the insidious bilge-water, who, unless you strictly covenant with him before entering his boat, will have you at his mercy. It is true that he has a tariff, and that you might imagine that the offense of exceeding it would be punished in a place like Gibraltar by immediate court-martial and execution; but the traveler should not rely upon this. There is a deplorable relaxation of the bonds of discipline all over the world. Moreover, it is wise to agree with the boatman for a certain fixed sum, as a military check upon undue liberality. Most steamers anchor at a considerable distance from the shore, and on a hot day one might be tempted by false sentiment to give the boatman an excessive fee.

Perhaps, however, no one ought to grudge a high payment for the pleasure of landing at Gibraltar—a pleasure only to be tasted in its full sense by those who have been spending some weeks in Spain. The sensation of finding oneself suddenly put ashore on a strip of England is curious to the last degree. To pass in a moment as it were from Spanish speech, Spanish manners, Spanish food, and, above all, Spanish custom-houses, to the language, the ways of living of this English settlement, is to most persons a wholly novel, and to all, one would think, a delightful experience. Fortunately, it is a little bewildering for the visitor to arrive at midday, for before he has made his way from the landing place to his hotel he will have seen a sight which has few if any parallels in the world. Gibraltar has its narrow, quiet, sleepy alleys, as have all Southern towns, and any one who confined himself to strolling through and along these, and avoiding the main thoroughfares, might never discover the strangely cosmopolitan character of the place. He must walk up Waterport Street at midday in order to see what Gibraltar really is—a wonder of nature, a mart of races, an Exchange for all the miscellaneous varieties of the human species. Europe, Asia and Africa meet and mingle in the singular harbor. Tall slender, silver-haired Moors from the northwest coast, white-turbaned Turks from the eastern gate of the Mediterranean, thick-lipped, and woolly-headed negroes from the African interior, quick-eyed, golden-brown Levantine Greeks, Spanish musketeers in "Spanish" uniforms—"rock-lancers"—and red-headed Irish soldiers—all these composed, without completing, the motley moving crowd that throngs the main street of

Gibraltar in the forenoon, and gathers densest of all in the market near Commercial Square.

It is hardly then as a fortress, but rather as a great entrepôt of traffic, that Gibraltar first presents itself to the newly-landed visitor. He is now too close beneath its frowning batteries and dominating walls of rock to feel their strength and measure so impressively as at a distance; and the flowing tide of many-colored life around him overpowers the secret and the imagination alike. He has to seek the outskirts of the town on either side in order to get the great Rock again, either physically or morally, into proper focus. And even before he sets out to try its height and steepness by the ascent, if unaccustomed, process of climbing it—say, before he even proceeds to explore under proper guidance its mighty elements of military strength—he will discover perhaps that sternness is not its only feature. Let him stroll round in the direction of the race-course to the north end of the Rock, and across the parade-ground, which lies between the town and the larger area on which the reviews and field-day evolutions take place, and he will not complain of Gibraltar as waiting in the pasternoque. The bold cliff descends in broken and irregular, but striking, lines to the plain, and it is fringed in rapidly from stair to stair with the vegetation of the South. Marching and counter-marching under the shadow of this airy wall, the soldiers show from a little distance like the tin toys of a nursery, and one knows at whether to think most of the physical insignificance of man beside the brute bulk of nature, or of the moral—or immortal—power which has enabled him to press into his service even the vast Rock which stands there brooding and hovering over him, and to turn the Rock itself into a sort of Titanic man-of-war.

Such reflections as these, however, would probably whet a visitor's desire to explore the fortifications without delay; and the time for that is not yet. The town and its buildings have first to be inspected, the life of the place, such as its military and such as there is of it—its civil aspect, must be studied, though this, truth to tell, will not engage even the minutest observer very long. Gibraltar is not famous for its shops, or remarkable, indeed, as a place to buy anything, except tobacco, which, as the Spanish Exchange knows to its cost, and the Spanish customs officials on the frontier to, it is to be feared, their advantage, is both cheap and good. Besides, however, of all descriptions of fairly active, as might be expected, when we reflect that the town is pretty populous for its size, and numbers some 12,000 inhabitants, in addition to its garrison of from 3,000 to 5,000 men. With a life of civil activity, however, the visitor is never likely to forget the air of a camp of time—that he is in a "place of arms." Not to speak of the shocks communicated to his unwarmed nerves by morning and evening gunfire, not to speak of the farthing fantasia of the beggars, scattered as over the border of a crack regiment can exercise it, and needed and resorted to and far from far from the Rock, there is an indefinable air of stern order, of discipline, of authority whose word is law, pervading everything. At the day when

on toward the evening this aspect of things becomes more and more unmistakable; and in the neighborhood of the gates, toward the hour of sunset, you may see residents hastening in, and men quickly quickening the steps of their departure lest the hour of the fatal cannon-clock should confine or exclude them for the night. After the closing of the gates it is still permitted for a few hours to permeate the streets; but at midnight this privilege also ceases, and no one is allowed out of doors without a night pass. On the 31st of December a little extra indulgence is allowed. One of the military bands will perhaps parade the main thoroughfare, the sweet strains of "Auld Lang Syne," and the civil population are allowed to "see the old year out and the new year in." But a timid and respectful cheer is their sole contribution to the ceremony, and at about 12 they are marshaled off again to bed. Such and so vague are the permissions against trespassing within the walls, or surprise from without. In Gibraltar, undoubtedly, you experience something of the sensations of men who are living in a state of war, or of those Knights of Drakoon who ate and drank in armor, and lay down to rest with corselet level, and with the buckler for a pillow.

The lions of the town itself, as distinguished from the wonders of its fortifications, are few in number. The Cathedral, the Garrison Library, Government House, the Alameda Gardens, the drive to Europe Point, and the list; and there is but one of these which is likely to invite—unless for some special purpose or other—a repetition of the visit. In the Alameda, however, a visitor may spend many a pleasant hour, and—if the peace and beauty of a hillside garden, with the charms of sub-tropical vegetation in abundance near at hand, and noble views of coast and sea in the distance allure him—he assuredly will. Gibraltar is immensely proud of its promenade, and it has good reason to be so. From the point of view of Nature and of Art the Alameda is an equal success.

And the afternoon promenade in these gardens—with the English officers and their wives and daughters, nurses and their charges, tourists of both sexes and all ages, and the whole surrounded by a polyglot and polychromatic crowd of Oriental laborers to the military band—is a sight well worth seeing and not ready to be forgotten.

To those, however, who visit Gibraltar in a historic spirit, the work of a visitor of this order is hardly yet begun. For he will have come to Gibraltar not mainly to stroll on a sunny promenade, or to enjoy a shady drive round the seaward slopes of a Spanish hillside, or even to feast his eyes on the glow of Southern color and the picturesque varieties of Southern life; but to inspect a great world-fortress, reared almost imperceptibly by the hand of Nature, and raised into absolute impregnability by the art of man; a spot made memorable from the very days of the modern period by the rivalry of nations, and famous for all time by one of the most heroic exploits recorded in the annals of the human race. To such an one, we say, the name of Gibraltar stands before and beyond everything for the Rock of the Great Siege; and he can no more think of it in the light of a Mediterranean watering-place, with a romantic, if somewhat limited, sea-front, than he can think of the farmhouse of La Haye as an interesting



LOOKING AT GIBRALTAR