



GRAZALEMA.

Dickinson. Bro. lith.



it appears to be seldom free; in fact, from what the people say, fine days here must be rather the exception than the rule, for it seems to be almost always raining. A whole mob of people followed us from the town. Their astonishment knew no bounds when my drawing-umbrella was unfurled, and no expostulation on our part could induce them to return to the bosom of their families. They continued to gaze, and I continued drawing, my companions assuring them they might as well disperse, there was nothing to see, for we were only men and women like themselves. We moved on to a more romantic spot, to take a general view of the town and precipice, and the scene now became rather curious. The people were perched in every direction on the rocks, gazing at us from every corner whence they could command a view of the strangers. In the most out-of-the-way villages of the East, I doubt if travellers were ever objects of greater curiosity. It became so annoying at last, that we were obliged to send for a "guardia," who kept them in some degree of order. Great was our disappointment at not being able to ascend the Cristobal, but the clouds were still heavy on its summit, and it seemed almost hopeless waiting for a fine day at Grazalema; so we gave up the attempt, and prepared to continue on our way to Ronda.

The scenery once more became wooded; the gaunt forms of the fantastic cork-trees rose around us, some still protected by their curious bark, others stripped of their profitable covering. All around and about us seemed a wilderness of wood and mountain, tall peaks and deep-sheltered valleys; here and there, an old Moorish castle crowning some giddy height with a yawning precipice beneath; gorges through which gurgled tiny rivulets, grey, towering cliffs rearing their heads in sterile grandeur, the intervening declivities covered with vast tracts of the

gum-cistus, whose large white flowers glittered in the sun, while the strong perfume from their branches filled the air.

But the aspect of the country changed before reaching Ronda. The vegetation gradually ceased; all became stony and barren, bare cliffs rose in wild, fantastic shapes, and we came at length, as it were, to the edge of the chain along which we had been travelling; a sudden and a steep descent led down to the valley beneath, and a vast panorama of arid mountains and verdant valleys was spread out before us. The wild aspect of the whole reminded me forcibly of the hill country of Judea. In the middle of the picture, but hardly distinguishable from the grey peaks around, lay the town of Ronda; from this distance giving the traveller no idea of its singular position. We walked down the slippery descent, and crossing a clear brook, entered upon the richly cultivated vale, full of trees, producing fruit of every description.

A weary road, up a stony, sandy hill, offers a very unpromising entrance to the town of Ronda; and the horses could hardly keep their footing on the slippery pavement of the first street we crossed, which consisted of the natural flags left bare and polished. The town was white and clean. We crossed the bridge over the Tajo, —that wondrous chasm which forms the glory and the pride of Ronda—and which bursts so unexpectedly on the traveller, as he rides through the town. We established ourselves at a very comfortable Casa de Pupilos, kept by two or three old ladies, in the Calle San Pedro, the back windows of the house overhanging the ravine itself.

We thus obtained almost our first view of it by moonlight, and exquisite it was, as the moon rose high above us, lighting up some projecting rock with its silver beams, the dark mass of the daring bridge which spans the gorge,

reposing in shadow on our right, and far, far below, a silver thread, dancing in the moonlight, wandering on its course amid rocks and trees and houses, the lights in the distant windows appearing like glow-worms from that towering height. In the distance the softened outlines of the rocky pinnacles we had been passing, bounded the horizon. All seemed strange and undefined, and in vain we sought to obtain a clear idea of the scene on which we were gazing.





PATIO IN RONDA.

## CHAPTER X.

“While they were in this conversation they were overtaken by a gentleman mounted on a very fine flea-bitten mare. He had on a riding-coat of fine green cloth faced with murrey-coloured velvet, a hunter’s cap of the same. The furniture of his horse was country-like and after the jennet fashion. As he came up with them, he very civilly saluted them, and clapping spurs to his mare began to leave them behind him. Thereupon, Don Quixote called to him. “Sir,” cried he, “if you are not in too much haste we shall be glad of the favour of your company, so far as you travel this road.”—DON QUIXOTE.

RONDA—THE TAJO—MOORISH HOUSES—ALAMEDA—CASA DEL REY MORO—CHURCHES—CUEVA DEL GATO—A TRAVELLING COMPANION—TEBA—CAMPILLOS—THE SALT LAKE—ANTEQUERA—PLEASANT QUARTERS—THE CASTLE—ARCO DE LOS GIGANTES—ROMAN ANTIQUITIES—BALLAD STORIES—MIRACULOUS IMAGE—A FIX—DIPLOMACY—CUEVA DEL MENGAL—AFFINITY BETWEEN CELTIC REMAINS IN SPAIN AND IRELAND—OUR LAST NIGHT AT ANTEQUERA—GHOSTS—DEPARTURE—PENA DE LOS ENAMORADOS—ARCHIDONA—HER MAJESTY’S MAIL—LOJA—ARRIVAL AT GRANADA.

RONDA is, indeed, one of those places which stands





R O N D A

Didrikson fecit lith.



alone. I know of nothing to which it can be compared. Some parts of its ravine, near the old bridge, reminded me of the chasm through which you enter Petra; but then there can be no comparison between the silent city of the Desert and the gorge of Ronda, overflowing with life and noisy industry. The river—the Rio Verde, so famed in Moorish story—winds through pleasant, undulating ground to the north of the town, when it suddenly finds, as it were, a lofty mountain thrown across its course; impatient of the obstacle, it has worn a way through the cliff, forming a rent, through which it pierces; gigantic fragments of rock impeding its onward course, while the sides rise precipitously some three hundred feet; a few straggling prickly pears growing near their summits, and many an old and picturesque house overhanging them. And on it goes until the gorge itself is spanned by a giant bridge, beneath which it flows; here the ground falls some three hundred feet, and down goes the stream, dashing, foaming in three successive waterfalls of surpassing beauty, and over huge boulders, which are scattered here and there: on one side the lofty cliffs still rise, and on the other a succession of little terraces, whereon mills are clustered, one below the other, whose busy labours give life and animation to the scene as they catch the water each in turn from the bounding river, which at length arrives in the valley, and flows on in peace and quietness to fertilize the fruitful orchards which clothe its banks.

Looking down from the bridge, it is grand beyond description, and equally beautiful is the view looking up from the lowest mill; cottage rises above cottage, the sparkling streams descending to each, glittering amid a mass of vegetation which this abundance of water causes to spring forth luxuriantly; while the main stream

descends like a silver thread amid this confusion of trees and stones. Wild brambles intertwine their branches, the light fronds of the water-loving ferns droop over the tiny fissures, ivy climbs along the walls, and a thousand brilliant flowers, some not naturally dwellers in such mountainous districts, tempted by the force of the sun against these rocky walls, put forth many-coloured blossoms to add fresh beauties to this unrivalled spot. And above, appearing from here almost like a speck, is seen the bridge, nearly three hundred feet in height, joining cliff to cliff, the white houses of the miniature town appearing against the azure sky. It is, indeed, a wondrous scene, and one of which neither pen nor pencil can convey any just idea. The artist may here find plenty of occupation, and while away many a pleasant day in the Tajo; every mill is a picture, and the whole so extensive, that the eye can scarcely embrace its varied beauties. At one place the water is conveyed in an "acequia" along the face of the hill, and the only means to pass is along its edge with a precipice below; here crowds of women may be seen washing in their bright red petticoats, neat white boddices, their heads covered with the usual coloured kerchief, and chattering away as only Spanish washerwomen can chatter. Peculiar as the scene is, and beautiful beyond description, yet when you have viewed and studied the Tajo, you have seen all that Ronda presents.

The lofty bridge of solid masonry, which connects the modern with the old Moorish town, was built in the last century, but the older one of San Miguel at the other end of the gorge is far more picturesque. A rickety old staircase leads down from a house adjoining it to the bottom of the cliff; its wooden steps affording rather an uncertain footing, while its trembling balustrade threatens to give way at the slightest touch. There are many

picturesque bits in Ronda, small gateways with their little chapels over the arch; shrines where the wayfarer might pause, to pray that no harm should befall him on his journey ere he leaves the town, or kneel upon his arrival to return thanks for the dangers he has escaped. There are likewise numerous fountains surmounted with their white crosses, round which throng ever-varying groups of water-carriers and thirsty animals, eager for the refreshing draught. Several Moorish houses still remain, their patios all intertwined with vines and roses. One we went to see could boast of some rather fine ceilings, their beams still covered with painted arabesques. Its present owner was an amateur artist; alas for the land of Murillo! his paintings were strange productions, but he thought himself a man of taste, and was proud of his house, a quality which would cover a multitude of sins, so rare is it to see anything of bygone days valued in this land.

He had a large collection of Roman copper coins, which still pass current for "ochavos," and informed some of our party of a Roman altar in the patio of a friend of his, which they went off to inspect. They found it used for the covering of a well in the patio; it was hollow, allowing the rope to run through. It was formed of white marble, of a bell-like shape, the top being turned to the earth as the reversed inscription indicated, the words, "Martis Altare" being clearly legible. While they were studying Roman antiquities, I sketched the little patio, surrounded by a group of noisy children. Their attention was diverted from me by the arrival of the parish priest, who sat himself down amongst them, and was soon overpowered by offers of "dulces," and cakes of every description.

The streets of the modern town of Ronda are straight and clean, with the peculiarity of the *rejas* projecting into