



GRANADA.

CHAPTER II.

CLIMATE OF MÁLAGA—SOCIETY—AMUSEMENTS—LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION—MORNING VISITS—KNOWLEDGE OF THE LANGUAGE INDISPENSABLE—AN EXCURSION—ALHAURIN—COIN—CHURRIANO—TORRE MOLINOS—DEPARTURE—RIDE TO GRANADA—VELEZ MÁLAGA—MOUNTAIN MISTS—A NIGHT AT ZAFFARAYA—MURDER CROSSES—ALHAMA—ITS SIEGES—PULGAR—DREARY ROAD—FIRST VIEW OF GRANADA—THE VEGA—THE ARAB SETTLERS—APPROACH TO GRANADA—HOUSE HUNTING—DIFFICULTIES—CARMEN SAN ANTON—ITS CHARMING SITUATION—TORRES BERMEJAS—AN HONEST COURIER—SELECT NEIGHBOURHOOD.

THE last few years Málaga has become a very favourite residence for invalids. Its climate, certainly, is exceedingly mild and genial; and the invalid who can obtain rooms facing the sun will seldom suffer from cold during the winter. There is but little rain: in fact, its excessive dryness might be hurtful to some constitutions, to which the moister air of Madeira might prove more beneficial. It is, however, occasionally visited by bitter winds, called the Terral, which are the warmest in summer and coldest in winter. They blow across the plain to the westward of the town, and while they prevail, the want of rain makes the dust quite insupportable, particularly in the Alameda. A cloud-

less sky and glowing sun may offer great and deserved attractions to the invalid, whose hopes are all centred upon climate ; but let no one be tempted to fix on Málaga, as a residence, for any other reason.

Society there is none ; and with the exception of the theatre, there are no amusements whatever which could contribute to make time pass agreeably, and no objects of interest to attract the attention of the traveller. With the exception of Madrid, there is no society in Spanish towns, in our acceptation of the word.

People go to the theatre every evening, and sometimes visit each other in their boxes ; but never receive at home except their intimate friends or relations. Even the carnival does not rouse them. At Málaga no notice of it seemed to be taken beyond one or two masked balls at the Lyceo and at the theatre. The former was more select ; and, doubtless, amusing enough, in the by-play of the masquerade, to all those conversant with the "ins and outs" of the assembly. Many of the ladies went unmasked, in ball-dresses. Though a southern race, they do not appear to have any genius for the peculiar spirit of the masque, as seen in Italy. The ball at the theatre was deadlively ; no one danced, not even the masks ; and it seemed as though the people were sitting in their boxes merely to be looked at.

The tourist in visiting Andalucia may spare himself the unnecessary trouble of taking with him letters of introduction ; except such as relate to matters of business. It is true, when he does present them, nothing can be more polite and engaging than his reception. He is met with a profuse generosity, or rather prodigality, which to the uninitiated is positively distressing. Everything is his, "*a su disposicion*," but in most cases they are mere words of course, and there

it ends. Not that the Spaniard is really inhospitable ; but it is not the custom to entertain. Formerly, I am told, it was otherwise ; but continued civil wars, and the unsettled state of society which resulted from them, have broken up social intercourse. These remarks, however, do not apply to the English settled in Andaluçia ; whatever other customs of their adopted country they may assume, that is one which they seem to consider "more honoured in the breach than the observance."

What is seen of Spaniards is very much limited to morning visits ; and of all dreadful things to undergo is the first visit in a Spanish house. A most important preliminary is the toilette : the richer it is, the greater the compliment. Formerly evening dresses were considered indispensable ; but this custom is now gone out. Dressing accomplished, you sally forth, and reaching the house, ring at the door, which seems to open by some inscrutable means, for no attendant is visible ; but on looking round the open court or *patio*, in which you now find yourself, you discover the dumb porter to be a cord attached to the door, and acting through a window in the floor above, through which you see a head protruded awaiting your commands. You ask whether the lady is at home ; upon being answered in the affirmative, you look round for some servant to usher you into the drawing-room, but you look in vain. You have no alternative but to trust to your own guidance, and ascending the staircase you find yourself in a large corridor running round the patio, out of which several rooms open. You see one door which looks more promising than the rest ; you enter, and find yourself in sudden darkness. A little time enables you to see, through the twilight of half-closed shutters, a handsome room with a stately sofa at one end, a most

uncomfortable looking arm-chair on each side of it, and chairs and tables ranged in due order round the walls ; looking the very picture of stiffness and formality. A minute or two elapses and the lady of the house enters : she makes her fair visitor take the place of honour on her right hand on the sofa, while the gentlemen place themselves at her feet, not in reality, but in words, according to the indispensable form of Spanish politeness. She then begs he will place his hat upon a chair, this article of a gentleman's toilette being treated with nearly as much consideration as its owner. And now conversation begins, as lively as conversations must be among strangers who have not even the delightful and never-failing resource of weather to talk about ; for what can one say of weather in a country where it is always fine. Fortunately your first visit, which is looked upon quite as a thing of etiquette, need not last long, and you soon rise to take your leave amidst an overpowering amount of offers, in which you find the house and everything else placed at your disposal—a compliment you must return by declaring everything you possess is hers ; for in Spain you have a right to do what you like with what is not your own, and the hotel in which you are staying must be offered as though it belonged to you. Absurd as all this strikes the stranger, it is, after all, but another way of assuring him they will be delighted to see him whenever he likes to call, and be happy to assist him in everything he may require. The lady of the house always accompanies you to the top of the staircase, where a second edition of civil speeches is gone through and you descend, feeling thankful that so formal an undertaking should at length be accomplished.

All this stiffness, however, soon wears away, and you gradually become accustomed to this very independent

manner of finding your way about a stranger's house ; and habit soon teaches you to distinguish the reception-room, the folding doors of which are generally open. Spaniards never sit in the room in which they receive ; in fact, the principle of Spanish visiting seems to be to make themselves and their guests as little comfortable as possible, from the feeling of formality which always prevails. They would consider it a downright insult to their visitors to be seen working, or engaged in anything save ceremonious attention in doing the honours of their house. Nothing, however, can be more friendly than their manner, and they offer you their house, &c., in a way which would make you imagine you could not confer a greater favour than by accepting them.

Stiff, but courteous in their manner to strangers, when once you become on intimate terms with them, you find them the most unceremonious people in the world, and entering into every sort of amusement with such a zest that they appear very like over-grown children. The women here have, in fact, but little conversation, except about the theatre and all the *on dits* of society, concerning which they certainly can discourse in a most lively and agreeable manner ; but they are thoroughly uneducated. As children, they are always running about with the servants ; taking a few lessons in music and in French, and keeping as late hours as their parents ; but as to having education under regular superintendence, such a thing is almost unknown. They seem to consider our treatment of children as something too barbarous, and are always pitying them for the wretched lives they are made to lead.

A knowledge of the language is indispensable to enable travellers to get on at all in Spanish society in the provinces, for it is very rare to meet any one

who speaks or can understand French. In fact, I know no country in Europe where a knowledge of the national language is so necessary to enable the traveller to get on among all classes. Save in Granada and Seville, there is not even a *laquais de place* to assist him as to what he ought to see, or interpret his wishes.

Indeed, in all the luxuries to which travellers are accustomed in other countries, Spain is sadly deficient. In Andalusia the accommodations at the inns are bad, and the cookery still worse. At Málaga and Seville, the principal hotels have some approach to comfort; but in all the other towns nothing can be worse. No one ought to travel in Spain who is not prepared to bear with oriental resignation whatever may fall to his lot.

Before leaving Málaga we made an excursion to Alhaurin, a village beautifully situated in the mountains to the west, about four leagues distant. We went on horseback—the only pleasant mode of travelling in a country where the roads are so intolerable. After a monotonous ride across the plain, we reached the Guadalhorce, a river taking its rise in the mountains of Antequera, and the bed of which really does contain water. It is, in fact, a very respectable stream. Here are the remains of a large bridge which, like many other things in Spain, was commenced on a grand scale but never finished. The piers, covered with creepers, are in a state of most picturesque decay. The arches of the aqueduct of which this bridge was to have formed a portion stretch some distance along the plain. The Sierra de Mijas now gradually interrupts the view of the sea, and the valley at its foot as it opens before you presents a beautiful picture of verdure and fertility, thickly covered with olive farms and orange groves. This part of the road many years ago was much infested with robbers, who, on payment of a certain sum, gave

the inhabitants of Málaga a regular pass to enable them to go backwards and forwards unmolested to their country houses in Alhaurin. On emerging from the valley, the road crosses over bleak, high ground, covered with the low fan palm. This plant, which grows to such perfection on the Rock of Gibraltar, is rather stunted here; it is, however, converted to some use, the root of it being eaten as an esculent by the peasantry. Descending a hill, you arrive at Alhaurin, situated on a slope, with a magnificent valley below it, reposing in a perfect amphitheatre of mountains. It is quite a scene of enchantment; and shows what wonders cultivation can effect in this favoured land wherever water is abundant.

The entire valley is one continued garden, and the prevalence of shade, and constant supply of water, which gushes noisy and sparkling through a thousand channels, facilitate the production of every species of fruit. Oranges, lemons, cherries, strawberries, grapes, and mulberries, flourish equally well, and enable the inhabitants to provide for the markets of Málaga. The village itself is remarkably clean, and the houses within doors are in keeping with their external appearance. Just above the town is a *nacimiento*, or spring, whence the water flows as clear as crystal from the base of a wall of rocks, which runs along for half a league, cutting the arid slope of the Sierra. Above, the mountains rise to the height of 3500 feet, their barren and sandy sides furrowed by numberless ravines. From a small chapel in the neighbourhood, the eye takes in the whole chain of mountains beyond Málaga, crowned by the snow-capped summits of the Sierra Nevada, of which we here obtained a view for the first time. We watched the effect of the setting sun as it left peak after peak in shadow, until its rays

lingered on the loftiest point of all, casting a roseate hue on the glittering snow, and showing well the immense height of the Sierra. From Alhaurin we proceeded to Coin, and on our route passed some unusually fine orange trees. Coin is likewise prettily situated, surrounded by gardens and rushing waters. In the latter village our appearance excited a good deal of amusement among the inhabitants, who all turned out to see the strangers—rather a novel sight in this out-of-the-way place. They paid us the compliment of taking us for *titeres*, or an equestrian company of strolling players; and one little urchin mounted a horse, and accompanied us to the *nacimiento* above the town, showing off his horsemanship, evidently in the hope of being engaged as one of the troop. He offered to follow us to the world's end, horse and all, if we would have him; the fact of walking off with his father's horse not appearing to lie heavily upon his conscience. Here, too, the water springs from a sandy bed deliciously fresh and clear. To the west is the village of Munda, the scene of the celebrated battle of Monda, in which Cæsar defeated the sons of Pompey, A.D. 45.

Returning to Alhaurin, we started on our way back to Málaga. On the southern slope of the Sierra de Mijas, facing the latter town, is Churriano, a favourite summer resort of the Malaguenians. Near it is a villa called the *Retiro*, belonging to the Conde de Villacáyar. It contains some very pretty fountains; but the great rarity of water and of shady walks in this treeless land makes the natives exalt it into a fair rival of Versailles. The fields round it, planted with olives, as old, they say, as the conquest, appeared one sheet of snow, from the quantities of the large white iris with which they were covered.

At the extreme point of the Sierra is the small

village of Torre Molinos, where, as well as at Churriano, most of the bread consumed at Málaga is made. Nothing can exceed the cleanliness of the houses here. The stream which flows through keeps several mills at work. The greatest care is bestowed upon the corn preparatory to grinding. It is carefully washed in running water, and dried again in the sun several times before it is consigned to the mill. A man of the name of Parody has a very pretty villa here, at which strangers can make arrangements to stay; and it certainly is a desirable place at which to spend a little time during the spring or summer months.

From Torre Molinos to Málaga, the road crosses the Guadalhorce by a ford, and you ride over a large sandy tract, covered with the yellow flowers of the *Ononis*. The fields are irrigated by enormous water wheels, having jars attached to their circumference, which, as they are moved slowly round by oxen or mules, draw up the water from the wells below, and turn it over into channels, whence it is distributed through the country. They are the very counterpart of the Egyptian *Sakayeh*, and are one among the many things which remind the traveller of the long dominion of the Arabs, and give such an eastern character to Andalusia.

The time having now arrived for leaving Málaga, we determined on riding to Granada, instead of taking the diligence, which goes through Loja, performing the journey in about eighteen hours. We left Málaga in the afternoon; the ride to Velez not occupying more than five or six hours. Our road lay along the coast the whole way; now stretching along the sandy shores, now rounding some jutting bluff, its atalaya, or old Moorish watch-tower perched, crumbling and weather-beaten, on the summit. To the right, the blue waters of the Mediterranean lay extended to the horizon, and

on the left rose the low chain which runs between Málaga and Velez, covered with vines, while the intermediate plain was one carpet of flowers of every hue. We left the first week in April, when the vegetation on the sea-coast is in all its vigour, and as we approached Velez Málaga, the fertility and richness increased. We passed between gigantic hedges of cactus and aloes, among which our own common blackberry was growing in singular contrast, while through the whole a sort of pitcher-plant, the *Aristolochia Boetica*, with its dark purplish flowers twined round and round in every direction. The wild aloe covered the rocks in thick tufts, with its large pendulous yellow flowers just coming into bloom; and here and there a beautiful statice, called the Blue Everlasting, from the crispness of its bright flowers, which do not fade. These in very Cockney fashion are much used in Gibraltar to ornament the fire-places during the summer months.

Large fields of sugar-cane occupy the rich valley which stretches for about half a league from the town of Velez to the sea-shore, through which a small stream winds, shaded by the silver poplar. The view of the valley which we obtained as we surmounted a precipitous rock, jutting out into the sea, was very beautiful, as it lay steeped in the richest verdure, and backed by the range of the Sierra Tejada, which was still partially covered with snow.

The town of Velez stands on the slope of this chain, which preserves it effectually from the cold north winds. Its ruined castle, standing on a craggy rock, occupies a striking position in the centre of the town. We put up at a posada on the Alameda, a raised walk planted with orange-trees, and had our first experience of Spanish inns. This was not so very bad, as we had