

even the most water-loving Spaniard could desire, and flows down in the channels cut for it to spread fertility around, irrigating the thirsty land on its way to the town of Granada, which is supplied in a great measure by this crystal stream.

It is a sweet spot, this Fuente Grande ; above rise the jagged peaks of the Sierra, bare and bleak, although many a rare flower nestles among its wilderness of rocks. Below the spring the scene is changed ; all is green and verdant ; the olives cover the declivities, and all is clothed with the most luxuriant vegetation ; for water here is the magician which converts, by a stroke of his wand, a desert into a paradise.

Those who care for flowers are advised not to stop at the fountain, but to climb the arid-looking cliffs, and their labour will not pass unrewarded. In the interstices of the rocks, the most exquisite little flowers live and die unnoticed, while the more gaudy peony raises its bright showy blossoms, whose crimson colour forms a beautiful contrast to the grey stones among which it flourishes.

Such are some of the many excursions which may be made by those who have sufficient time to while away at Granada, in which all may find some employment or another wherewith to pass away the sweet days of spring in the enjoyment of the beauties which nature has lavished on this delicious land, and where history has rendered each spot of ground sacred to the mind of the traveller.

As summer advances, an excursion may be made to the Sierra. The Picacho de Veleta is not the loftiest summit of the chain, but as it is easiest of access from Granada, it is the one most frequently visited, the ascent of the Mula Hacen involving a tour through the Alpujarras, a wild and beautiful mountainous district

lying on the southern side of the Sierra. Those who ascend the Picacho must make up their minds to spend a night in the open air, at an elevation of some 8000 feet, where even in July and August the cold is disagreeable enough. We were prepared for all adventures, and accordingly, one morning, we sallied forth, accompanied by our guides. We left Granada about 2 o'clock in the morning ; it was quite dark as we passed through the town, and climbed the ascent beyond it. When day dawned, we had already attained a considerable elevation ; the vega lay like a map behind us. And now the sun rose, and words cannot describe the beauty of the scene presented to us as it spread its glowing hues over every object ; first tinging the distant mountains, then stealing over the vega, driving before it the cold morning shadows, infusing light and life as it advanced, until at length it penetrated into every nook and corner, and illumined the red towers of the Moorish palace.

Behind us the verdant plain ; in front the lofty summits ; and around far as the eye could reach on the opposite banks of the Xenil, a perfect sea of mountains, their rounded summits rising one above another like the waves of a tempest-tossed ocean, intersected by various channels worn by torrents as they sweep into the valleys below. A few cortijos, or farmhouses, dotted about here and there, relieved the look of loneliness which the barren appearance of the mountains gave, and a three hours' ride up a precipitous path, against bare chalky rocks, brought us into the Puche. This is a sort of caldron, surrounded by barren heights, and covered with corn-fields ; signs of the industry of man in these elevated regions. Behind us lay the gorge, through which the Monachil rushes on to fertilise the vega ; before us rose the rough peaks of the Dornajo,

whose limestone crags give shelter to many a rare and beautiful flower; below us a deep valley gradually descending to the bed of the Monachil, where stands a small cortijo. Beyond this valley rises an amphitheatre of stupendous hills, with the pyramidal-shaped crest of the Trevenque peering over them, and loftier still, the dark summit of the Veleta itself; the white snow-fields still sparkling on its grey schistose rocks.

From the Puche you gradually ascend towards the Dornajo, and the character of the vegetation becomes more Alpine. On the way, a small and scanty spring tempts the traveller to rest and seek refreshment; for small as it is, there is no other to be met with before reaching the summit; and here you must supply yourself with sufficient water for the night, or be content to drink of the melting snows from the nearest drift. Here the calcareous rocks are covered with the stiff prickly tufts of such Alpine plants as the *Erinacea Hispanica*, *Astragalus creticus*, &c., the deep purple blossoms of the former covering the ground. Here we stopped to breakfast. Our guide was quite an original; not one of those accustomed to go about and lionise travellers, but a genuine specimen of a rough mountaineer; tall and strongly made, it was quite impossible to tire him at walking. Francisco had been always employed by a Granada botanist to accompany him in his excursions, and he had picked up a sufficient knowledge of flowers to recognise most of them by their Latin names, and could lead you at once to the spot where any of the rarer kinds were to be found. He used to come and pay us visits very often, and bring some of the spoils of his wanderings, marching into the drawing-room with his cigar in his mouth, and seating himself down in the most unceremonious manner. A genuine specimen of an Andalusian

peasant, always at home, but at the same time never permitting his easy familiarity to lead him beyond the bounds of proper respect.

Our repast over, we proceeded on our way, climbing the sides of the Dornajo, the silvery leaves of a dwarf convolvulus forming quite a carpet on the stones. Here the aspect of the Sierra changes ; we leave the limestone rocks and enter upon the dark slaty formation which forms the culminating portion of the chain. The path now leads along the shoulder of the mountain and passes under the craggy rocks of the San Francisco, until at length we arrive at the Choza or hut, which serves as a refuge to travellers for the night. A small shed of smaller stones has been raised against a huge rock, into which two people can just creep and lie down, while two or three large stones form a wall to protect the rest of the party from the violence of the winds.

This place of refuge has been arranged by the *neveros*, the men who go up every night from Granada to fetch the snow required for the consumption of the town, and here they rest sometimes on their journey.

Wearisome indeed must be this constant ascending and descending, for they never meet a human being on their way from Granada to the summit, save now and then one or two wretched peasants who wander for hours over the bare slopes of the Sierra to collect a few handfuls of the Manzanilla Real (*Artemisia granatensis*). This small plant is highly valued for its medicinal qualities, and a few reals reward them for their long and toilsome walk. The day was beautiful, and we preferred ascending at once to see the sun set from the summit instead of waiting till the following morning to see it rise ; so, leaving all our preparations for the night at the Choza, we continued

on our way. The path ceases to be so good after leaving this halting-place and descends into a hollow where several little ponds are dignified with the title of Lagunillas; the clear water oozes forth and actually clothes the damp ground around it with a mass of verdure, the grass sparkling with small white and yellow ranunculuses.

The road now climbs the face of a slaty precipice, crossing fields of snow, along whose edge the little violet spreads out its blossoms, peeping from between the stones, reminding one of home and spring-time. Here the road reaches the edge of a tremendous precipice, and you look down into a deep crater called the Corral de Veleta, surrounded by the precipitous cliffs of the most elevated summits of the mountain chain. In front rises the Picacho, forming an almost perpendicular wall of rock, extending on to the Mula Hacen and the peaks of the Alcazaba; the base fringed with the wavy ice of the glacier, whose melting waters feed the Xenil, which takes its rise in this ravine. Here we left the horses, and the remainder of the expedition was performed on foot; the western side slopes gradually down, but it is tiresome walking, the ground being encumbered with vast blocks of micaceous schistose rocks, thrown about here and there, tossed one upon the other, at times offering a very insecure footing. Bare and dreary-looking from a little distance, the interstices of these rocks are full of gay-coloured flowers, blooming in Alpine loneliness far beyond the range of a more showy vegetation. The orange-coloured lichen imparts a brilliant hue to the dark stones, while between them grow thick tufts of a bright pink daisy (*Erigeron frigidum*), and bunches of a beautiful Linaria (*Linaria glaciale*) cluster in all the crevices. Small and low, like all plants which flourish

in so elevated a region, they seek the shelter of the protecting rocks, and only await the disappearance of the snow to put forth their blossoms, while their roots twine amongst the loose stones in search of some little speck of earth to nourish them. The road winds along the edge of the dizzy precipices which fall at once into the Corral de Veleta, lying like a huge and dreary gulf some thousand feet below.

At length the summit is attained, and here from one of its loftiest peaks you may look down upon the world below. The sun was just setting. The distant vega which seemed a mere speck, was lost in a dense mist through which the rays of the sun vainly strove to pierce, and all the mountains beyond were shrouded likewise. The blue ocean lay in the far horizon, and the dark mass of the Mula Hacen, a few hundred feet loftier, rose before us, joined by a ridge of slaty rocks whose knife-like crest is quite impassable. Sloping gradually to the southern and western sides, these mountains all descend in abrupt precipices to the north and east—perpendicular heights, whose giddy edge even the boldest shrink from approaching. There is something inexpressibly grand and solemn in being at a height like this, so far above and away from the living world: overhead the bright unclouded sky; and the earth receding from below;—standing on one of these towering pinnacles, man feels his nothingness compared to the vast works of nature which lie beneath and around him. But the sun was setting, night was closing in, the lower world was losing itself in shadow, the jagged peaks were alone standing out with their gaunt unearthly forms against the sky, and we felt it was time to abandon our elevated position and retrace our steps over the loose unsteady rocks before night overtook us. We did not, however, succeed, and it

was with difficulty we had light enough to find our way back. We preferred continuing on foot, for the night was dark, only illumined by the stars, and the footing for our beasts was none the surest. How, I know not, but we lost our way, and we wandered about for an hour or two in utter ignorance of where we were; nothing could be more wretched, for the loose slaty rocks are bad enough to scramble over by day, but at night they are anything but pleasant. By dint of our guide's knowledge of the mountains we managed at length to reach the Choza, although not without having received sundry bruises in our endeavours to scramble down the declivities. We were not sorry to find our resting-place again, and welcomed it with as much joy as many a traveller would welcome the most luxurious inn. Every thing goes by comparison, and the fatiguing walk we had, had made us thankful to see the blazing fire round which our guides were most picturesquely grouped.

Our bivouac that night was wild enough; two of our party ensconced themselves in the little hut, while the rest threw down their mantas near the shelter of the rocks, and disposed themselves to sleep as best they could. The dry juniper bushes, which had been collected by some of the guides during our absence, rapidly kindled into a blazing fire, and the flames threw their lurid glare around, lighting up the rocks in all manner of strange fantastic shapes. How strange the picture which such scenes as these present—how novel the feelings they create! 8000 feet above the level of the sea, with the stars twinkling above in the dark vault of heaven; ourselves the only living beings in that vast mountain land; the men, with their mantas wrapped around them, trying to warm themselves by the fire;

their shadows flitting about among the rocks like unearthly visitants ; and a stillness so profound as almost to be oppressive. We passed the night without suffering any inconvenience even from cold. Fortunately there was not any wind, or else we should not have found our airy quarters quite so pleasant. The dawning day gave us notice to arise and see the glorious sun as he gradually peered forth from behind the distant mountains ; the summit of the Picacho first catching his rays ; the first to welcome him, the last to bid him farewell. Soon the light was diffused over even the distant vega ; and, hastening over breakfast, we started on our return, for we had a long day's march before us.

We crossed the snow-drift which lay near, and turning to the right, skirted the western slopes of the Picacho, and bent our steps towards one of those lovely little lakes which abound in these Alpine regions. We passed the source whence flows the Monachil, surrounded by the same grassy plots which mark all these springs. Soon afterwards, in winding round a low ridge of rocks, we came upon a green sward, verdant as an English meadow, the soft grass mingling with the gorgeous purple flowers of the gentian ; and close to this grassy plot a small but beautiful sheet of water reflecting in its mirrored surface the snow-capped peaks of the surrounding hills. So strangely quiet and so lovely it looked, that mountain lake, we almost started as we saw the tall figure of a man seated on one of the rocks on the opposite side of the water. The clearness of the air made him appear so close and so large, he seemed like the spirit of the scene guarding the lovely waters from all intruders from the world below. He was wandering across with his flock of goats, waiting while they stopped to browse in so tempting a place. The



road across to the Alpujarras leads by this secluded spot. Ferns grow around in the crevices of the rocks, and the snow lies heavy on the peaks around. There are several of these small lakes in the Sierra Nevada which feed the streams that descend from their heights, the melting snows keeping them well supplied. The water was icy cold, and many a snow-drift was still glittering in the sun.

We now retraced our steps and crossed the summit of the ridge, whose sides slope down to the valley of the Monachil, which separates this from the Dornajo and the road by which we had ascended the day before. Barren indeed were these ridges—loose stones which afforded but a dangerous footing for the horses, and dreary beyond description. At length we descended into a valley where signs of cultivation began once more to show themselves; the bushes and flowers which grew around denoted that we had reached the range of a more luxurious vegetation, and bade adieu to the low plants of the more elevated regions. On leaving this valley a lovely view burst upon us. The Trevenque rose in front, a bare pyramidal mountain, its naked rocks apparently destitute of all verdure; a large oak forest swept along the base, and contrasted with the white dazzling cliffs. The Trevenque rises to the height of about 6500 feet above the level of the sea, and its summit appears almost inaccessible.

We lunched in a lovely valley at its base, under the shadow of fern trees; it almost resembled a halt in the desert, the mountains which skirt this valley are so snowy white, painfully glaring to the eyes, and stand out against the deep azure sky in striking contrast. Once more on horseback, we left the splendid gorge of Dylar to our left, skirting the face of the mountains towards the vega. Here we passed one or two cortijos,

famous as having been robber-haunts in days gone by. A long ride brought us down behind La Zubia, and it was very late in the night before we reached Granada, our complexions not improved by the scorching we had received.

We made several excursions into the Sierra Nevada, and remained for two or three days in one of the cortijos in the valley of the Monachil. Our habitation in these secluded regions was not most inviting: a sort of loft above formed my bedroom, and when I lay awake at night, I could see the stars peeping through the rafters, and almost felt that the night in the open air at the Choza was preferable to such quarters. We scrambled up the mountains and wandered about through the valleys, chiefly in pursuit of flowers. I have seldom seen anything prettier than the Prado de las Yeguas, the long slope which falls from the rocks of San Francisco down to the valley of the Monachil; here an immense number of horses are turned out to pasture during the summer months, and roam about over its grassy land, drinking at the springs which here and there gush forth. The whole place in the month of June is enamelled with many-coloured flowers; low brushwood of the light yellow broom, the laurel-leaved cistus, the yellow barbary, and the splendid flowers of a most magnificent honeysuckle, all mingling in such profusion and with such a richness and brilliancy of colour—a perfect wilderness of every form and every hue. These prairies are covered with snow during six months of the year.

There are two or three cortijos scattered here and there, where the people live in summer to look after the flocks which come to feed in those mountain pastures, contriving at the same time to draw from the ground some scanty crops of corn. There are but few

villages on the northern sides of the Sierra Nevada, while the southern slopes are covered with towns, which formed the last strongholds of the Moors after their expulsion from Granada.

The Alpujarras, as they are called, face the sunny Mediterranean ; the lower portions of their declivities are clothed with oranges and lemons, while above them vast forests of chesnuts afford pleasing and romantic scenery. We made a charming expedition to these romantic valleys, where the bold independent spirit of the mountaineers bade defiance for a long time to the hosts of Philip the Second and the brave Don John of Austria. The kindness of Talavera, the good Archbishop of Granada, comforted and assured the Moors that the treaties signed by the Christians would not be violated ; but the fierce unyielding spirit of Ximenes, or Cisneros, as he is always called in Spain, soon changed the aspect of affairs, and his severity and ardour in converting them to Christianity was productive of fatal consequences. The treaties which had guaranteed them the exercise of their religion, the preservation of their costume, etc. etc., were all in turn forgotten, and oppression and cruelty drove them to rebel against their conquerors.

Charles the Fifth continued in the course Ximenes had commenced, and sought to force them into becoming Christians by every means which the spirit that reigned under the Inquisition could suggest. Every promise was broken, every compact violated ; their costume forbidden, and they were even deprived of the use of their baths. But persecution never gains its end ; a spirit of discontent was gradually being fostered, and at length in 1568 the smothered flames of rebellion burst forth. The signal was given, and the Moriscos were soon in arms from one end of the