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Traveling in the Radiant Old Mediterranean

A VIVID PEN PICTURE

BY

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Gibraltar, March 29.—Gray skies and grayer water, dull leaden color o'er all the world save far off in the south, where light falls through rifts in the clouds, warming the waves to sparkling life. A rippling line where the bay flows into the sea, and where we soon will pass with the promise of the careless joy of the wanderer.

'Tis the moment long waited for, rush, bustle, disturbance, hoarse cries of the seamen, haste of belated passengers, good-bys being said, handkerchiefs commencing to wave and drawn back surreptitiously on finding the ropes are not yet cast off. At last! the gangplank is up and silently, quietly, the great ship moves slowly forward. There are some wet eyes, but the skies are responsible for most of the dampness, it is dristing rimely, but it does not cool the ardor of those on the lower decks who are singing manfully.

There are many hundreds down there. Italians, Portuguese and Sicilians, going home for the winter, with a comfortable bank account, accumulated through the nine months of work in America, on rail roads, in mills and iron works, and heavy stone cutting.

With great propriety their first song is one of farewell to the land they are leaving, but it soon passes into a joyous greeting to Italy. They sing well, as with one voice, and with quick spirit the Italian national anthem.

Later they are quiet, very quiet, with no appetite for their macaroni, for deep water is soon reached sailing from New York. After three or four days, however, they are all back on their decks and happily settled with their lotto, which they played unceasingly through the voyage.

THIRD CLASS NOT IMMIGRANTS

At first we called these emigrants, but were sternly corrected by the Italian doctor, who explained the difference between the third-class passenger and the aforesaid emigrant. The emigrant has his passage paid for him by his Government, the third-class passenger pays his own, quite independently, and is entitled to corresponding privileges.

The Italian Government, however, exercises a paternal care over its citizens, and requires all ships carrying over 500 third-class passengers to have an Italian doctor in addition to the ship's doctor. As there were nearly 3,000 third-class passengers aboard (a not unusual number), it will be seen this is a wise provision.

Each ship also carries an Italian commissioner, appointed from the royal navy, whose duty is to inspect the food served three times daily, and keep a strict watch over the welfare of his people. This gentleman was so quiet and unobtrusive that his full importance as a ship's officer was perhaps not fully appreciated until a day late on the voyage, when a game of shuffle board was interrupted by a delegation of his countrymen, who suddenly appeared at the head of the small steps leading from the deck below, loudly vociferating and showing their tin basins of macaroni and tomatoes, together with a small can of coffee, each carried.

They were an excited company and looked very fierce; evidently their macaroni had not been cooked sufficiently, and their coffee did not please them. The shuffle-board players startled, at first by the invaders waving their weapons frantically to and fro as they talked. But the two jolly tars in charge of the upper deck quickly assisted the irate ones down the steps just ascended, a second look showed the shining weapons to be only the cook's huge spoons, the commissioner as quickly appeared, and an immediate calm closed the episode.

Altogether, the third-class passengers seemed a very happy, good-natured crowd; their songs and dances and their mock actions, with peculiar features, were very entertaining in an uneventful voyage.

But there were some unhappy ones among them, for it is stated on good authority that a very large percentage of Portuguese and Italians return unsuccessful from America; this is to be attributed to their not speaking English as well as their unwillingness to leave the large cities. Disappointed in securing work, they return to their native countries.

On the afternoon of the seventh day after leaving New York after long days of rain, with decks shut in by turpaulins, the clouds lifted, melting in golden mist before the welcome sunlight. To the north a purple horizon line lay in graceful slopes against the blue sky, fairy mountains, every moment growing closer and not less beautiful. In the knowledge that it was land, the first sight of Europe, the Province of Portugal, the Islands of the Azores.

FLORES LOOK LIKE MUMMY

All the afternoon we were running among them. Flores the first passed, is a long hill, the outline of which has the appearance of an elongated mummy in its case. The head is quite perfect, with the tall body and the turned up toes added by a square-like box of a rocky islet, that only at close approach is seen to be a detached mass. The fields are quite green, there appear to be but few uncultivated, and no sign of winter is apparent.

Closely adjacent is the island of Pico, which has some lofty heights; these, too, presently fade away, darkness falls, and we can see no more; our ship makes good time, and we have passed the greater part of the 400 miles of latitude occupied by the Azores, when the dawn finds us anchored off St. Michael, the largest of the group.

Later the ship steams into the harbor, but not within the protecting Mole, some nautical etiquette with another steamer preventing. The Portuguese third-class passengers are impatient, for they have reached their island home, they have brushed up astonishingly, and are quite clean as well as happy as they scramble down into the boats which take several hundred off the ship.

The first-class passengers are also in a state of excitement, gay with the prospect of landing for a few hours in the pretty town of Ponta Delgada, which seems so very close. All are ready and boats, broad and strong, each manned by several rowers, have put out from shore.

Alas, the wind has risen and the waves with it, white caps appear on the suddenly dark waters, the big ship itself is not quite steady, and the boats bringing out passengers for Naples pitch and toss. The first two to board are young Portuguese soldiers, bright-eyed and rosy, scarcely more than boys; they have come on some business of the Port, and soon re-embark.

We watch the process and speculate, but think we can manage it. Another boat arrives with several ladies in it, trunks and piles of small luggage and—delight of the eyes—enormous bouquets of red and white Camellias. Our boats are waiting at the foot of the gangway; the fruit boats with their loads of pineapples and tropical flowers are alluring, and the town itself looks beautiful with the rows of pink and green and snowy-white and yellow and blue houses.

We are impatient to be off to gather roses, violets and Camellias in December. All are ready, when suddenly, as the crack of doom comes the fiat, "No first-class passengers to land, seas too rough, squalls threatening."

The next few moments are not quiet, and the tempers of the first-class do not compare favorably with those of the gentlemen whose macaroni was not acceptable. Some eager ones desire to assume all responsibility in landing, and waive claims to damages from the steamship company should their shoes be spoiled or their clothing spotted with the salt water.

But all requests are refused, the disappointed passengers are obliged to accept the situation and sit for four hours on the deck watching the town, the water front, the streets and the people on them. In the meantime the wind is going down and the water quieting, but it is now too late.

A passenger, looking back through life to find consolation in an analogous environment, recalls one instance, that of a fond father, who, loving his little girl, and wishing to teach her self-denial, bought a stick of candy which he unwrapped and showed to her on Sundays. The candy was kept indefinitely.

The child survived and so did we, but the four hours were long, though slightly brightened by the quantities bought and eaten of pineapples and oranges, fresh from the plucking, till the decks of the third-class and the water were thickly covered with the golden rinds.

The December day was lovely, like that of an English May. Ponta Delgada which we had the pleasure of contemplating so long, must be a land of perpetual summer, with little changes of temperature, tropical fruits growing out of doors. Only the pineapples are under acres of glass.

LAND OF PERPETUAL SUMMER.

The gardens showed magnificent evergreens, the fine foliage of the camphor tree, palms and tree ferns. Noting two very handsome trees, new to all, and asking their names of one of the Portuguese ladies who had come on the ship en route to Naples, we were told that one was the Magnolia, the other the Emina; both were natives of Brazil, but, like other vegetation transplanted to the Azores, had thriven and spread.

TOWN ON WATER'S EDGE.

It was a very pretty picture. The surf upon the beach, the town rising directly from the water's edge, the vari-colored pastel tints of the houses, some built directly on the gray sea wall; others set in the luxuriant growth of the gardens against the background of sharp-pointed and serrated hills close about the little city that looked so gay in the sunshine.

The houses are small, two-storied, and mostly with flat roofs and no chimney visible; only two or three could be counted in all the town. The building material is the coarse volcanic rock of the island, covered with stucco, which is colored in these rainbow contrasts.

They rise beyond and above each other on the hillside, all overtopped by the tall white tower of the cathedral church, with its pretty Renaissance facade.

It is an enterprising little city. Windmills on the crest of the hills supply water. The pineapple industry, for which the island is justly noted, is very extensive. The apples are small, but of delightful flavor and sweet as sugar. There is a respectably sized furnace for the making of iron and bronze, extensive barracks, which at first sight might be supposed a hotel; a coal depot, which has its sign in English, and an agricultural college, with many other indications of a wide-awake community.

The Mole, which was being repaired, is an object lesson by which larger cities might profit, built on this isolated bit of land, remote from the path of travel. It is between 25 and [illegible] feet in height, a little engine runs along its broad top with materials to add to its 24 arches. The round arch is used in the Mole, as in the sea wall and other buildings, and is supposed to add to its strength in these volcanic regions.

From our posts of observation we could see the people passing up the narrow streets leading from the waterfront and recognized the national cloak, previously seen in pictures; it is of dark blue cloth and fits over the top of the head quite smoothly. It has a crescent-shaped front and is turned up at the sides, and a cape attached hangs over the shoulders, ending in an embroidered point.

The women we saw had handkerchiefs tied over their heads, and a huge cloak, also of dark blue, and their shoes, of many colors, being the only part of their costume that escaped the guardianship of the long wide cloak.

The Portuguese lady already mentioned told us much that was interesting of the island and of Ponta Delgada. She had been educated in England and spoke English well; also French and Italian. She was a lady of many names, with "de" between each one, as we discovered when receiving the address, to which we promised to send some American papers. She was devoted to the King and Queen, and was much pleased when reminded of the descent of King Carlos III from King Charles I of England. Her lovely gray-blue eyes shone brightly with interest as she talked and when reference was made to the surprise of their color, where we only expected sparkling black or melting brown, she said: "Blue eyes are frequent among us. The ladies of the Azores are called the daughters of the sea, so we must wear her colors."

Two days later our disappointment at not landing at the Azores (so infrequently visited) was somewhat forgotten in a visit to Gibraltar.

GIBRALTAR AT DAWN.

In entering the Mediterranean on a former visit fortune favored us by giving the sunset hour for the passing, and it made a scene of unequaled natural splendor, never to be forgotten. This time we came with the dawn, cold and dark, at 6:30, on the hurricane deck.

Outlines of the shores of Spain and Africa were just discernible through the mist, faint indications of color in the East showing the approach of day. Mount Leone loomed up splendidly, a band of cloud encircling its girth below the summit, which was black against the gray sky.

To the left Gibraltar grew more distinct with each moment, the rising sun's strange glo with the mist throwing marvelous phantasmagoria on sea and sky, a rich cerise against the background of deepening blue the key to the color scheme.

Mount Leone was passed now and Mount Sirius, to our right—the 'Abyla' of the ancients—as our vessel altered its course and turned into the bay of Gibraltar, where anchor was dropped about a mile from the side of the great fortress, in the fine harbor opposite to the North Town. Waiting for the tender to take us to the landing we looked up and up the side of the old Citadel of the Moor, the rock of "Jebel."

Throughout its length of over three miles and between the east and west side rises a ridge, one of its highest points occupied by the signal station, from where every ship must receive permission to pass in and out of the Mediterranean. Below is the old Moorish wall, built by Jebel, and his castle, arched, battlemented and with square buttresses. Further on is another wall that looks quite new and bright, running down the hillside. It seems incredible that it has stood there since the time of Charles V, built by him to defend the Spanish Gibraltar.

This entire west side of the fortress is a series of terraces, with lovely gardens filled with gorgeous flowers, greenhouse plants, transformed into trees, a mass of bloom and beauty.

Now and then, by the aid of a glass, the mouth of a cannon can be detected in the face of the rock. The whole of this mighty fortress is a mass of mining, of which there are but few who know the scheme.

Carthage and Rome, with other countries, left their mark in the record of Gibraltar, but none so deep as Jebel's, until the British hand clasped it tightly, when a few of her red-coated soldiers climbed the narrow steps up the cliff, surprised the garrison and won this bit of Spain, which now holds from free to six thousand men in permanent encampment.

Gibraltar's past is interesting, but the present calls loudest, and the tender at last arriving, a few more moments found us in the strange old town.

HAS MODERN EXTERIOR.

The first impression is not of ancient, but of modern military engineering. The Mole is wide and strong, as of the living rock. Further on there is a large warehouse for luggage and freight. We see many queerly shaped packages through the open doors. Queerer-looking vehicles just beyond at once proclaim the Spanish characteristics of the English town.

At the wide gate, guarded by bonnetfaced "Tommies," the sad intelligence was received that to enter the fortifications one must be not only a British subject, but be English born. So rightly have the rules been drawn within the last few months.

Calling up all our equanimity and recognizing the propriety of the rule, we again accepted disappointment and drove on into the strange scenes beyond the gates.

Narrow streets, filled with every variety of the genus homo; scarlet and khaki, mantilla and French hats (who wears a bonnet nowadays?); gaberdines and English frock coats, an Anglican parson amidst Moors, barelegged and yellow-slippered, burnous, fez and sovereign; water-carriers, venders of charcoal; donkeys, loaded with huge grass panniers, piled high with loads of green vegetables, covered with boughs, upon it all sitting the placid owner; turkeys in flocks, driven by men wearing broad brimmed Spanish hats and guiding the birds with long sticks; enterprise, undoubtedly, in every form, especially in postal cards and paper fans depicting gorgeous bullfights; all this you see and more.

An Englishman canters past, mounted on his tall hunter, an Arab guide rushes out of a hotel and claims the acquaintance of an American, shaking hands in English fashion with this lamb, whose wool well sheared has made comfortable this desert chief.

Yet over this meeting-ground of Eastern apathy, vivacitation of Southern Europe and British stolidity, a certain calm appears to brood, the Orient working it's spell as the strange assemblage goes daily on its way.

A touching spot in Gibraltar is the tiny God's Acre. At the foot of the mighty overshadowing cliff, simple stones bear witness to lives of honor by those who here sleep well, beneath the waving boughs of acacia and palm. The December roses drop their fragrant petals upon these soldiers' graves. We think of our own heroes, some beneath the blue sea that we turn to dreamily gaze upon, remembering the gray shaft that bears Herndon's name at Annapolis, where

The flowing Almond casts her rosy bloom
'Round the dark shaft that bears the Hero's name.

So his brave deed illumined his country's gloom
And marked him with imperishable fame.

Further are the the Alameda Gardens, flowers and trees of all kinds happily transplanted to this favored spot. Datura hang their heavy white heads in fragrant somnolence, borders of crimson cactl mingle with the heliotrope's purple; sturdy firs rear their lofty tops; bottercups shed gold on the general green of the grass. Thus, glory of glories! we are greeted by the dear, homely wild flower of cornfields and wayside thickets, for whom no better name could be devised than the "morning glory." A whole pergola of these, fragrantness, fading with touch of human hand. Fruitness and strength, the Rock of Gibraltar and springing from it the airiest film o're spun by Mother Nature.

On the way to the north face of the rock the Moorish market is well worth a visit. The imperturbable Moor! There is no invitation to buy. If you want their goods you can have them, but not a word.

The snowy eggs are attractive in their wire baskets; hardly so, the turkeys, which are being plucked while the customers wait; rabbits and hares are hung up as in other markets, whilst a flock of turkeys, as yet unplucked, wait outside the iron fence, their fate in the balance with the arrival of new customers.

The vendors are all Moors, of every shade of complexion, their costumes varying in degree, not fashion—a long loose gown of cloth, dark blue, the favorite color, long snowy white stockings, the inevitable yellow slippers and turbans of this muslin wound around a crimson fez. The poorer class wear the coarse brown gown, no stockings, but are quite clean—remarkably so, when the character of the occupation is remembered—that of killing and plucking the turkeys.

The center of attraction is the letter-writer, a portly Othello, who sits in a chair, his feet upon a footstool, reading in a tiny book. His customers also are slow in coming, but he is as calm as a statue, and very, very fat. His robe is disposed imposingly around him, his turban is in innumerable folds, his long crooked horn of ink is on a bench beside him. Several wooden tablets rest upon his knees. He realizes that he is an important man and it is not for him to show impatience.

Though we could not enter the galleries within the rock, we could, and did, drive along the base of the west and north sides. Bench marks to come with difficulty when looking up at that overwhelming height of fortification. Line above line of open logs in the rock indicate the level of the passages and the rows of guns within.

The lowest is far above our heads. It is the face of the line, overlooking the low, sandy isthmus, the neutral ground between the British possessions and Spain.

The point of view from which the grand rock is seen alters its aspect, the west side smiling with vegetation, rows of bright-colored houses and pretty villas; the east frowning and bare, with many caves, in which dwell the apes of Tarshish. The north is majestic and terrible, for we know that a word or sign would transform its broad expanse into a sheet of destroying flame.

The height of Gibraltar is best realized after passing the strait and looking back at its rising from the level of the sea; sailing away, the lines soften into mysterious shadows; those, too, presently fade, leaving us only the vivid impressions of the morning and the determination to return another day to the ancient rock of Calpe.

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THE HISTORIC OLD PROMONTORY AND FORTRESS OF GIBRALTAR

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