

A DRIVE THROUGH GIBRALTAR.

By ARTHUR M. HORWOOD, AUTHOR OF "TWO FAVOURITE RESORTS OF THE CHANNEL SQUADRON," ETC.



It is more than probable that if you ever chance to address the inquiry to the "travelled man" of your acquaintance, whether in the course of his world-wide rambles he has recorded a visit to the first of our linked stations on the highway to India, he will immediately reply in the affirmative; but on your further instituting inquiries respecting the duration of his sojourn there, the accommodation provided by the hotels, and the impressions various and many received, he will hasten to disabuse your mind on the score of his having ever *stayed* there, in the general meaning of the word, or having even so much as set a foot ashore. "It is only from the bay that I have seen Gib," he will apologetically explain; "just touched in there, you know, to coal; but the boats stay there such a moment, there is no time to go ashore—it always happens so." And here the "travelled man" speaks truly. Indeed, unless you decide to take your passage for Calpe, or hit on the plan of deserting your ship on calling in there, you will have little chance of ever threading its motley-peopled white streets, and exploring its world-renowned galleries. There are, of course, no lack of people who admire the giant rock from the deck of incoming steamers, but with that superficial acquaintance they are, perforce, compelled to rest content. The stately P. and O. liner just sweeps round the rugged breakwater, with its pagoda-fashioned yellow lighthouse, into the bay, lets go her anchor, discharges a handful of military personages, and a boatload of parcels, replenishes her bunkers from the coal-barge that has sheared alongside with the alertness and dexterity that one might expect from a Chinese junk of piratical tendencies, and away she goes almost before her passengers have had time to regulate their watches by the strident voice from the clock-tower which rears its tall proportions at the head of the new mole, or to regret their inability to land.

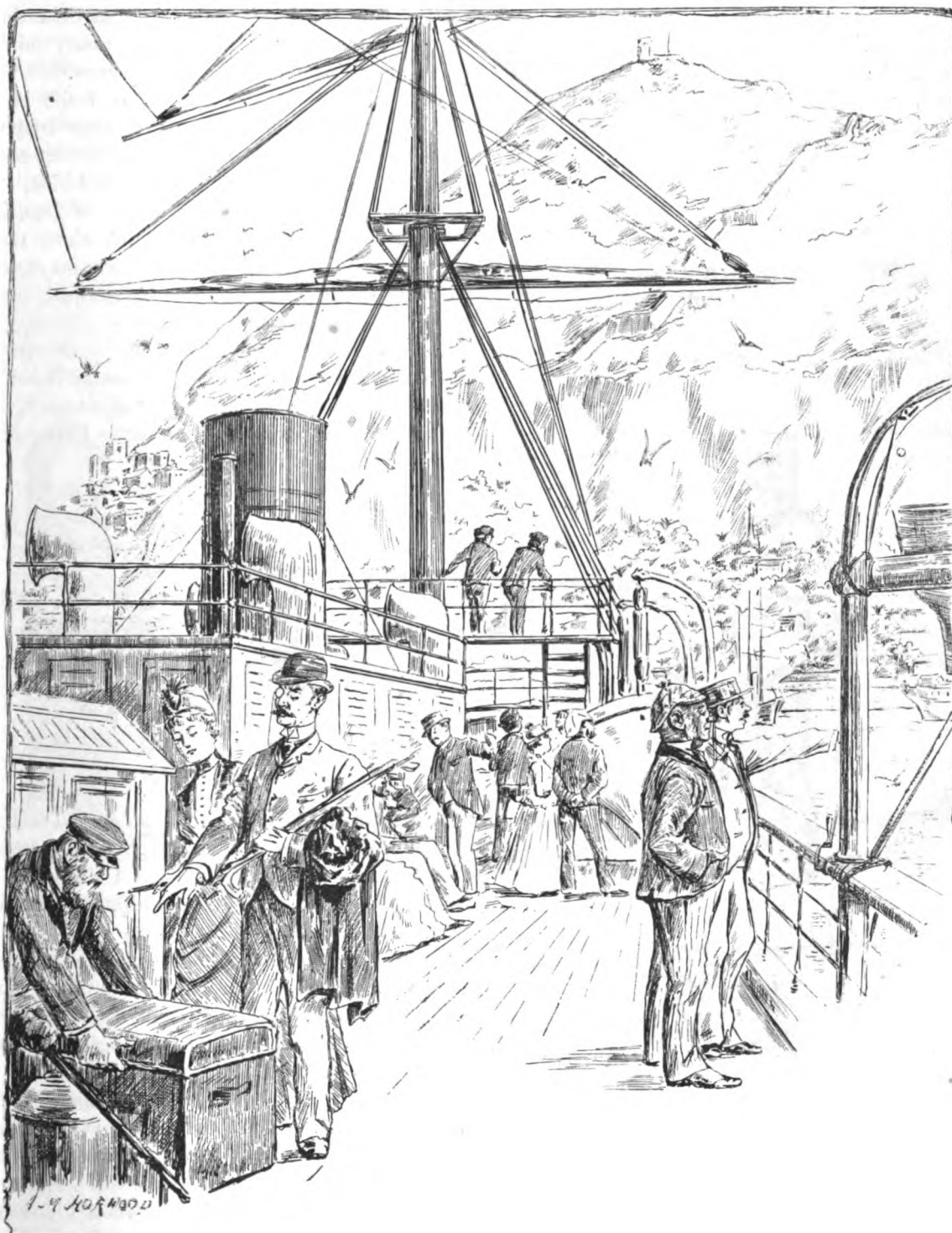
We will suppose, however, for this instance, that you—or say I—am of a daring stubborn temperament, that I have arrived at the determination that I will skip ashore and back before my ship leaves, merely to prove its feasibility—just to say I have been there, and scuffled my boots in the dust, to claim being an exception to the rule. Well; the captain to whom I laughingly impart my project—with a view, perhaps, to enlisting his sym-

pathies and obtaining, say, a quarter of an hour's grace, should haplessly unforeseen contingencies frustrate my timely return—is polite but firm: "We shall up anchor in an hour's time," he says pithily; "if you are not back by then, you will be left behind." It is a warning not to be disregarded, he is quite in earnest. Visions of a frantic gentleman wildly urging and piteously imploring his boatman, with promises of reward, to overtake a certain quickly-receding steamer that is bearing away his worldly goods and his passage ticket ownerless, may be to the Antipodes, leaving him to wander homeless and bereft of all—including his senses—in the streets of Gibraltar, rise in my mind. I waver and vacillate in my determination; but 'tis for a moment. Wilfulness that is not discarded with peg-tops and hoops asserts its supremacy; go I will *coûte que coûte*, and I tumble down the gangway into the gaudily-painted shore-boat, decorated with the same chaste taste that distinguishes the penny ice-barrows of our own metropolis, bidding the "rock scorpion" waterman set me ashore at the new mole stairs with all speed.

It is close on midday. Fiercely the sun strikes on my head and shoulders, and blindingly is reflected in my eyes as I sit close upon the surface of the glassy water. The sea-gulls appear huge as eagles by reason of their contiguity; they approach almost within arm's reach, uttering their shrill screams and flecking the bay with spots of shadow. The boatman pulls round under the stern of a spick and span government despatch-boat that trails its ensign, with the red St. George's Cross on the white field, in the still air, and is reproduced inversely, together with the whole fabric, in the watery mirror below. A multitude of sounds now come from the neared shore, intensified by the towering background of rock with minute distinctness, the clear ring of an anvil, the stentorian and regularly recurring cry of a man, presumably a street salesman, the rumble of a heavy vehicle, the twang of a bugle, and an indescribable hum or buzz that comes from all quarters at once on the deadened air. Then a dull concussion is experienced, and the boat oscillates from side to side. Looking in another direction, I am not aware till then that a row of rugged steps, topped by dark cavernous sheds, have reared themselves above my head. The mole is reached. On the bottommost step, with the water silently lapping at his feet, stands a sedate staff-sergeant, a family man, as though to receive me, firmly clasping the hand of

his youthful offspring, an embryo sailor, who is gleefully pointing to the shadowy fish that the translucent element reveals in scores, sporting hither and thither far beneath its placid surface. High above, on unstable

scantly-draped senile figure with hoary forelock and gleaming scythe, who holds his fast-emptying hour-glass grimly in my face, I surely fall into the weakness of human nature of craving for the impossible, of deploring



ENTERING GIBRALTAR BAY.

planks, trip to and fro agile, sure-footed labourers, black as gnomes, carrying baskets, with which they are unloading an equally dusky-complexioned collier.

Situated as I am, goaded and sore pressed by that

my present migratory lot. It is so natural to cry for the moon. To any person making a protracted stay at Gibraltar, the prospect of clambering up to the giddy heights of the signal-station may quite possibly en-

gender procrastination, a lazy conviction that it would be better to postpone the ascent till to-morrow, on the plea, say, of the heat, or on account of the delicate state of your health. But this noontide, as I step ashore and cross the drawbridge, although the heat is intense, and my boots are very new and tight, and pinch my toes most unmercifully, a positive yearning to make the ascent fills my breast. I crane my neck until my equilibrium is jeopardised, and drink in the imagined delights that would await me at the tiny gleaming white tower, with



THE LANDING STAIRS.

its signal-mast no larger than a single hair. High aloft, the foliage seems to sway softly, whispering of a charming breeze moving there. How refreshing it looks! Happy sea-gull, that can float to its crest and sink back again at will. Dearly would I delight mine eyes with the marvellous panorama that stretches around on all sides from there! Southward Ceuta, yea and over the "Dark Continent," the mysterious, the yet not wholly explored land of Livingstone, Burton, Stanley, &c.;

northward, the neutral ground, Algeciras, the peninsula of Spain, the rocky ridge, the Queen of Spain's chair, and the far distant mountains of Ronda; eastward, the blue "inland sea," the Mediterranean, the high road to the land of the Rajas; and westward, towards the setting sun, the broad Atlantic that Columbus' carvels once dotted as they set sail not many miles distant hence on their long and glorious voyage.

But wishing to see all this is futile in my case. 'Twould be as idle to hanker after inspecting the galleries or St. Michael's Cave, that, rumour asserts, open into a submarine passage, leading to Africa, extensively utilized by the monkeys as a means of transit between the two continents. A hurried flit along the skirt of the rock to the stairs in the old town must suffice, and to accomplish even this the prescribed hour is yet growing awkwardly short.

But fortunately an opportunity to accomplish this modest journey comfortably presents itself. A pony chaise, with a red and white-striped canopy, resembling a tent-bedstead, is plying for hire as I emerge on to the



EN ROUTE.

white roadway. It is a rare chance. The boy driving is signalled, and receives my explicit directions with an almost English "Yes, sar," and I dive into its shady recess, as, with a crack of a whip, the equipage starts forward in a cloud of dust.

To anyone possessing the martial proclivities of the Grand Duchess of Gerolstein, Gibraltar must be a perfect Elysium. *Ah! que j'aime les militaires*, would find a responsive echo at each progressive step. The rock might be likened to a red ant-hill. The first human being my eyes rested on upon landing was a man of war. I stepped into the wicker-work conveniency, in the presence of a whole sergeant's-guard under arms. I have been seated but a minute, traversing the barrack-like New Town, when I have rattled by a red-coated sentry in a white helmet, then another pacing the raised path or causeway; and have passed a squad of artillerymen in shirtsleeves; a bone-shaking, teeth-chattering, commissariat waggon; a member of the G.M.P. with his rattan, and a company of infantry returning from rifle practice at the neutral

ground, without mentioning the several and various bronzed warriors cruising about independently. A cursory glance at the Army List will account for this military preponderance in the wayfarers. Four battalions of the line, an equal number of companies of Engineers, and seven batteries of Artillery, quartered within the narrow limits of the rock, cannot fail to influence the character of the locality with the colour of their coats; and if there be any truth in the aphorism, "The more the merrier," Gibraltar should be a very lively place indeed, although I recollect hearing a divine, who had lived there a considerable time, declare the routine of the place to be monotonous to a degree. But

small part of its attraction. There is also, in addition to a race-course on the isthmus, the garrison library—held to be the largest of its kind out of England—that offers its beneficent attractions to the more scholastically inclined. For those lower in the social scale, to whom, sadly enough, "plenty to drink, and always a-dry," are words of comfort, Gibraltar must assuredly be held high in their estimation. The wine is so cheap that it can be indulged in as freely as malt liquor in their native country. There is, however, alloy in every bliss, and a malady—one peculiar to the locality—known as the rock fever, is their Nemesis.

Nor is to live in Gibraltar to be completely cut-off



DRIVING A BARGAIN.

then, are clergymen ever completely satisfied with their heritage?

That messieurs the officers of the garrison find the wherewithal to pass a portion of their leisure moments pleasantly is presently demonstrated by overtaking a man struggling to restrain the frantic efforts for freedom of a pack of hounds, just arrived from England and fresh from the confines of shipboard. They are destined for the Calpe hunt, a most popular institution, and largely patronized, not only by the gentlemen of the sword, but by the ladies of the garrison. The country on the mainland round about where the meets take place is considered to have considerable claims to beauty, and the sociable ride thither forms, perhaps, no

from the outer world. A day in Africa, for instance, is quite a popular excursion; just as we should take the boat to Rosherville and back. Then a line of English vessels leave weekly for Malaga—a delightful six-hours' run up the Mediterranean—and native boats run frequently to Cadiz, thence by rail to Seville and Granada, at which latter place the marvellous Alhambra is visited. There is also another mode of conveyance to the mainland—the *carro de correo*, or mail-cart, but this mode, though perhaps more expeditious, is not nearly such comfortable travelling. I once conversed with a man who had made the journey in this manner, and the description he favoured me with, of his sufferings on the way, was exceedingly distressing. On starting he had

been so packed in the vehicle by the *conductor*, that his knees touched his chin, and the road was not free from inequalities—*enfin* he arrived at the end of his journey with sore bones and bruised flesh, a wiser and a much sadder man. The day following his arrival at his destination he was compelled to pass in bed to recover from his sorry plight, so he considered the saving in time by this route thus effected was unimportant. I should be slow to imagine that many travel by land after a trial trip.

But my postillion is not making the progress that

ing on the roadside—to all appearances a well—and after directing some remarks (presumably to its attendant genii), lowered the aforesaid parcel with a string. My curiosity by this time was so much aroused, that I descended from the vehicle and advanced towards the mysterious opening. I cannot exactly say whether I was surprised or disappointed to find it was merely the courtyard of a house that opened down to the shore, upon whose roof I was standing.

Once again we are in motion. “The Alameda!” now ejaculates my driver, indicating with his whip a vast



STREET SCENE.

could be desired. First it was a trace became unfastened, and he had to dismount to repair the slip; then was encountered a flock of turkeys, driven by a man wielding a wand a good twenty feet in length, that enabled him to correct and direct any wayward bird—of which there were many—back to the right path, without exertion on his part, and a halt was necessary to permit the passage of the recalcitrant feathered horde; while yet another delay when the youthful Jehu again dismounted, this time with a parcel in his hand, with which he advanced to a railed-in open-

level plateau, encircled by cacti, acacias, prickly pear, almond trees, and spiky aloes. I pause in delight. It is like an imagined scene in fairyland, a grand transformation effect in a spectacular production, with its wealth of blooms, its verdure of foliage, its stupendous background, variegated and glowing with colour and sylvan beauty, lacking but a fairy-queen to rise from the centre of the expanse in a glittering casket, wand in hand, to summon attendant gauzy nymphs from the surrounding groves to complete the illusion. As a substitute for the *coryphées*, a row of brightly-coloured figures, garbed

as Moors, are practising some military evolutions in the distance, their white-stockinged legs beating time, as it were, to imaginary music. Of a surety they must be the renowned Forty Thieves; and that redoubtable personage in the white turban in front is their captain, putting them through their paces. Presently, I make no doubt, they will be dismissed, and filed off through a screened door in the mighty rock in rear that opens, perchance, into a second St. Michael's Cave, known to none else, not excepting the monkeys; and with "Close Sesame" all traces of the band and their stronghold will disappear. Unfortunately, for the verisimilitude of the scene, I do not see any Ali Babas peering through the

speech to its fullest power. For Private Tommy Atkins wants the value of his money in goods supplied; and upon this point the two are at variance. Juan, the orange vendor, has a very pretty gipsy-faced girl with him, who is referred to as arbitrator. She is addressed by the jocular Britons, who loungingly watch the progress of their comrade's bargaining, as "Polly." Polly merely shows her milk-white teeth and laughs merrily, but declines to express any opinion as to whether her partner is or is not a venerable old cheat, such as Tommy emphatically avers him to be. Epithets reflecting damagingly upon the Spaniard's fair character are being freely bestowed upon his devoted head, when the sentry, who has been an amused spectator of the scene and has not kept his eyes about him as he should, suddenly cries "Guard turn out!" There is a wild stampede into the dark recesses of the guard-house, and next moment they reappear, drawn up in a line, arms presented with a clash, as a portly general officer, with grey whiskers and an eagle eye, comes jingling and creaking by. His horse's hoof, in passing, strikes an orange that had slipped from Private Atkins' grasp at the word of alarm, and sends it rolling down the dusty road. Juan, as he trudges after his donkey, espies it, and furtively transfers it to the panniers. Pretty Esmeralda, I rejoice to say, has an honest little heart, and, observing the act, she fearlessly seizes the misappropriated fruit, and throws it back to its rightful owner. All honour to you, my pretty Gitana. I only hope the venerable cheat—as he has proved himself to be—will not dole out punishment to you for this act of probity.

Again onwards. We have skirted about three-fourths of the face of the rock; past another staring-white guard-house and more staring-white sentry-boxes, doubled the angle of the Moorish wall, and, with a gush of reflected light, we enter the streets of the old town.

There is a quaint mixture of the Spanish and English element, with a decided flavouring of the Moorish in all around. Many of the houses bespeak their oriental origin—flat-roofed edifices with overhanging foliage, rugged white walls and cell-like windows cheek-by-jowl with the more conventional continental style of architecture, with its green venetian shutters and chocolate dadoes. The English element obtrudes itself in the shape of street names of the most pronounced British character, such as, for instance, Victoria Terrace or Nelson Place; the incongruity perhaps heightened by the singular appearance similar legends bear, being executed in crinkly letters of foreign type. It is an anomaly as startling as though an Arab Sheik or a Tunis Dey were introduced by the familiar insular cognomen of Smith or Robinson. Equally incongruous is the intimation over a darkling shop that Ygnacio Almagro retails first-class ginger beer, and incomparable lemonade, or that Pedro So-and-so has on draught



ON THE NEW MOLE.

foliage, though, as we proceed onwards along the road, we meet plenty of men driving donkeys.

We come upon one at a guard-house on the line of our route; but his animal's panniers are filled with oranges in place of the cut-sticks from the forest. The owner of the shaggy quadruped is an Andalusian, with a stubbly chin, and a red handkerchief tied round his head. He has all the keen business qualities of the oriental, added to a verbosity eminently a national attribute.

At this moment, he is engaged upon a commercial negotiation with one of the men composing the guard, that calls forth the employment of the adverted-to gift of

Bass' pale ale, and some other celebrated firm's double stout.

This incongruity is equally noticeable between the street passengers. Scarlet-coated linesmen, artillerymen in dark blue, green-clad riflemen, Jack Tars in white, and officers of the garrison in *mufti* of the latest West-End fashion, rub shoulders with Spanish *paysanos* from Algeciras of La Linea, in their brown and yellow habiliments, "rock scorpions," as the natives are commonly dubbed, in their washed-out blue boatmen's garb, and stately Moors, olive-complexioned Othellos with coal-black pointed beards and bright turbans, majestic flowing drapery, and, *horribile dictu*, side-spring boots with the tags out, and the elastics in festoons. Salutations of "How's yourself, Jack?" and "Halloa Tommy! how goes it?" intermingle with "*Hola, José!*" and "*Como le va Paquisto?*" The *sombrero* that is courteously raised to the dark-eyed sallow wearer of the mantilla is at the next step doffed before a fresh-complexioned girl, in a sailor costume, whose nationality there is no mistaking.

Amid this heterogeneous compound of humanity, my scarlet and white equipage slowly makes its way. A sun-browned youngster in an Eton suit and orthodox collar, squeezing the juice of an orange down his throat and intently staring at some large jars in the window of an English chemist's shop, does not perceive our approach, and is shrilly admonished by my postillion. The Eton boy's reply, which comes as soon as the orange can be dislodged from his mouth, is drowned in the rattle of the wheels, all save the word "scorpion." It is the first and the last discordant demonstration that comes under my notice during my brief visit, between the natives and the imported populace. 'Tis an offensive epithet this by which the people of Gibraltar are designated, and it would be well, in my humble opinion, if it were left and forgotten, and a more euphonic and flattering title substituted.

I am thus wisely soliloquising when the clang in the clock-tower bell falls upon my ear. Twelve o'clock, as I live. No Cinderella ever counted the strokes with

greater trepidation than do I. Without losing a shoe, yet in a flight even more precipitate than that charming heroine's, do I hurry away on my legs, deserting my conveyance and the busy main street, and plunging into a labyrinth of turnings that lead down towards the water's edge. The fears for my timely return that had during my ride been forgotten, return with two-fold force. Breathless and palpitating after numberless inquiries for directions, I arrive at the landing-stairs and scramble into a boat plying for hire. Across the glassy bay lies the object of my solicitude, motionless as the hills beyond, but on the still air is borne the faint rattle of a chain cable that betokens the heaving up of the anchor. Inspired to huge efforts by the sight of a handful of silver, my boatman exerts himself to his utmost, and in the space of a few minutes—hours it seems to me—I have the supreme satisfaction of placing my foot on the bottommost step of the gangway, and of hearing a familiar voice exclaim, "Just in time." Certainly I am just in time, but only just; for I have but reached the deck when the clatter of the cable ceases, and the ponderous engines are set in motion.

Adieu, majestic Calpe! The black smoke is curling from our funnel, and the propeller lashes the limpid water into a plaited band of foam that has grown between us and our late anchorage. The dotted lines of windows on the houses ashore are becoming blurred and indistinct; and the trees on the Alameda melt into the rock. Still further, and the looming mass has contracted into the dimensions of a mere boulder of a uniform fawn colour. The transition is so sudden that I find myself asking, Have I actually in the flesh been ashore; or, the wish being father to the thought, was it but in the spirit dreaming, that I hied thither, as I reclined in a lounging-chair under shelter of the quarter-deck awning? Inadvertently my eyes wander downwards to my feet, and all doubt in a moment is dispelled. My boots are powdered chalk-white with dust.

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