

SAINT'S DAY AND THUNDER AT CASTELLO DE VIDE

XIV

Third Trip: Castello de Vide

CASTELLO DE VIDE, which means "the Castle of the Vineyard," reminded us somewhat of Mertola, but on a much larger scale. The little hotel had a garden wholly covered with a vine pergola growing over a big umbrella-like frame made of iron tubes. Under the pergola were two fountains and many beds of gay flowers. Deck-chairs invited us to lounge in a small, leafy belvedere, resonant with the busy hum of bees. From this point we could look across a deep valley towards rocky peaks opposite, on which was perched the small white shrine of Nossa Senhora da Penha. Here we had left the region of the cork-woods, the chief cultivation

now being the small black olive, the grey-green trees of which spread their regimented ranks on either hand, marking the contours of the ground as if for map-making.

Having settled ourselves in a comfortable bedroom, with a wide outlook on the Serra Mamede, we went out to explore the town. The market-place was crowded with queer types: old men in broad-brimmed hats and fustian coats, and sturdy women with coloured kerchiefs and blouses of huge tartan patterns. In spite of the fact that the railway passes within a few miles of Castello de Vide, it is one of the less visited parts of Portugal (excepting perhaps the North-western Algarve, which has been well described by John Gibbons in *Afoot in Portugal*). The Serra da Estrella, rising to five thousand feet, was visible from the walls of the citadel as a blue line of peaks. There, in the most mountainous part of the country, the shepherds defend their flocks against the wolf packs with splendid dogs of a special breed, faithful, brave, and tawny. Tradition says that these Serra da Estrella dogs were interbred with the wolf, but, if this is really true, their build gives little evidence of the mixture.

The host of the inn had advised us to get the castellan to guide us through the upper town. The latter was a wizened old man with a lively spirit, and went up the precipitous streets to the castle at a pace that left us gasping.

"Look at that!" he said, pointing to a sign over an ancient door. "A fish, eh? That means Christian. All this bit was the Jewish quarter. Ha! you come with me. I'll show you Castello de Vide. Why, most of the people who come here never see it at all. That part down there—that's not Castello de Vide. It's just a watering-place—modern baths, eh?"

The old streets leaned over us more and more. Ogival doors, often finely ornamented, graced slum houses, and labourers' children gazed down at us from the mullioned windows of carved stone. A tall gateway, flanked by a massive tower, of which one side had fallen completely out,



THE SMUGGLING WOMAN

opened the way into a narrow, cobbled street along which the women paced under their balanced water-jars.

"See that?" chirped the castellan. "That's the prison."

We needed no telling, for by this time we knew the Portuguese prison, with its windows on the street and its haggard prisoners cramped against the bars hoping for small offerings of alms or cigarettes.

"What crimes are they in for?" we asked.

"Crimes!" ejaculated the little man indignantly. "They aren't in for any crimes. We've no criminals here. They are prisoners for debt or smuggling—but no criminals."

At the last window sat an old woman.

"And she?" asked Jo.

"Smuggler, smuggler," said the old man, chuckling. "The worst of the lot. Oh, she's a cunning one, she is. Why, once," he went on, "they had a grand Lisbon lady here. She thought she could get by. Hundreds of yards of silk—but they caught her. And then she thought that they daren't do anything to her because of her fine Lisbon friends. But they did. And a nice sum it cost her before *she* got out..."

Jo stepped over and gave the old woman a few escudos.

"That's all right, that's all right," chuckled the old castellan with approval. "But please don't go thinking that we have criminals here, because we haven't."

With an immense key he unlocked a door, and led us up narrow stone stairs to the ramparts, which surplumbed the valley—immense distances of deepening blue, northward towards the Serra da Estrella, southward towards Alter do Chão, where on one Sunday in the year a garlanded ox is taken to church and tied to the altar.

"See that?" said the old man, pointing to where a glitter of water was set like a jewel in the wide landscape. "That's the new reservoir and the electrical works. Yes, the foreigners thought we couldn't build our own dams and put up our own machines. But that's all Portuguese—capital and everything. . . . Portuguese, that is."

This lent an added point to what we had already noted in Elvas—the curious resentment that continual dependence on the bigger nations must brew in the minds of the smaller.

"And over there," went on the old castellan, pointing to the vision of yet another and higher castle, which seemed to shimmer in the quivering air over the crest of an intervening hill. "That's Marvão, that is. That's where you can look over the castle walls and spit on the eagles' backs."

He led us into the tall ruin of a tower, one side of which lay open to the sun.



"That's your Wellington, that is," he said. "Full of English powder it was, and a French grenade fell into it..."

"Now," he concluded, as he locked the door to the ramparts, "come along and see the Roman fountain. If you've not seen that you've not seen Castello de Vide. The finest water, and cold, ice-cold, on the hottest day."

Down streets even more precipitous than the ascent he led us to an amphitheatre of white, gleaming houses, topped by the huge mass of the exploded tower. The fountain was covered by a pyramidal canopy supported by six slender stone pillars. It was a charming and romantic spot, made all the more delightful by the procession of girls in bright-coloured cotton dresses fetching water for the houses round. This carrying of water is a constant household task, but we must admit that the Portuguese girls invest what might be a very

dull job with an atmosphere of great gaiety. Something in the water-carrying seems to excite a jaunty spirit, a spirit of flirtatious femininity and of swagger. Coming to the fountain, the girls carry the pitchers on their heads balanced sideways: that is to say, on the rounded part—a feat most expert. We have seen small children practising with an orange. Going from the fountain, pitchers full of water, the often lovely natural curves of the amphora seem to add another swelling shape to the curves of the girl's body. But, alas! the fine lines of the clay vessels are rapidly giving place to hideous things made of tin, to which no amount of argument based on the functional aspect of beauty will reconcile us.

Here was surely a spot of which the peasant satirist sang:

Black eyes going to the fountain,
What do you seek there? Tell us,
Is it for water merely,
Or to make the lads jealous?

There are times when one is forced to ask oneself whether the advantages conferred by civilization on humanity are not more than balanced by the drawbacks. We are teaching humanity, as a whole, to read, while depriving it of its natural and spontaneous culture; we are saving humanity from pain, but at the same time destroying its nerves; we are providing it with effortless amusement, and simultaneously suppressing its unconscious gaiety. Once in Chicago we were asked by an interviewer what we considered the greatest difference between Europe and America? We answered, it might be that in America nobody ever seemed to sing or whistle for their private pleasure. In Portugal the quality of self-stimulated gaiety, so characteristic of the girls going to the fountain, also expressed in song was very striking. In the districts round Coimbra, as we have told, a maid might refuse to stay in a house where she was not allowed to sing at her work. We came across a peasant *copla* that expresses the point of view:

When bread is short
And appetites too long
Take your children by the hand
And sing them a song.

No doubt in Castello de Vide bread was short enough, though none of the children looked starved. But an enchanting atmosphere of simple and genuine gaiety pervaded the place. The hotel itself we will always think of as "the Happy Hotel." The *patron* himself was a good-natured man-of-all-work, doing his own painting and plastering. He had repaired the dado of *azulejos* in the w.c. with great success, putting the tiles back all in their wrong places, sometimes upside-down or sideways, and so had made a regular Picasso of a design, most modern in appearance.

The servants were a family: the creaking grandma, who did the washing; Maria, who did the house; Carmen, aged sixteen, who was the serving-maid, and little Izarra, who spent most of her time upside-down, and who when right-side up called the *patron* godfather. She was an example of the patriarchal spirit still prevalent in Portugal. On the steamer an English nurse to a Portuguese family—for many of the best families pride themselves on their English nurses—explained how servants expect their employers to stand as godparents to their offspring, and by the act assume responsibility towards the child's future. In rich houses this often becomes a heavy obligation. When we criticize the small wages paid to Portuguese servants we should not overlook the fact that there are often compensating factors which should be taken into account.

Carmen, the little serving-maid, was a continual joy. Hard as she worked, long hours and poorly paid, she danced through her labours. In England or America she would have been pruned into correct behaviour, and in the pruning would have lost both her charm and her spontaneous energy. She would also have worn herself out the quicker; for, as she

almost turned her task into a game, she expended on it far less fatigue than it would have cost a serious servant. What is the verse?

A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a.

Early in the morning we would catch her washing in the larger of the two fountains under the big pergola. This fountain, with the simple humour that still serves in Latin lands, was watered by the terra-cotta figure of a manikin *pis*. The comparatively small basin held a dozen or more golden carp, so large in comparison with their container that if overcrowding laws existed for fish they should surely have been brought into operation here. And yet the golden monsters flourished, and, although never fed, seemed to find ample nourishment. The basin during most of the day was in deep shadow. The fish seemed, nevertheless, to have some solar instinct, and had a set of dial figures been inscribed round the rim we felt sure that the almost unanimous direction of their tails could have been used for telling the time.

Over the top of the pergola, under which we took breakfast, soared hundreds of house-martins. Their clay nests were clustered closely under the eaves, and their droppings lay thick on our window-sill. "Why don't you clear them all out?" we once asked the *patron*.

"Oh," he answered, "I couldn't possibly do that!"

We asked him why, but he dodged the question. Only later, from one of our anthropologists, we learned that such an action would have brought bad luck, for the martin is a sacred bird, popularly supposed to take trips to heaven itself, where it washes the feet of our Lord.

The second fountain was set under the centre of the shaded pergola. It had only a small shallow, octagonal basin, into which the water played on holy days and holidays. One morning while breakfasting by this fountain I happened to notice a continual twitter on the surface of the water. This

constant movement interested me, and on closer examination I found the water packed with larvæ, wriggling in short, convulsive jerks from the bottom to the surface, whence they allowed themselves to sink slowly, only to struggle upward once more. In fact, they might have been used as an allegory of the constant backslider from grace.

I called the passing *patron*.

"Are you much troubled with mosquitoes?"

"Certainly we are," he assented.

"But isn't there a regulation that you must keep fish in all standing water?"

"We tried to put fish into that basin," said he, "but it isn't deep enough. The silly things always jump out, and we find them dying on the path."

"There are your mosquitoes," I said.

"But that cannot be!" exclaimed the *patron*. "Why, those things never leave the water. They are there every summer and all summer."

At last I convinced him, and we extracted the cork of the outflow pipe. The actions of the doomed mosquito larva were fascinating to watch. Wherever the water was undisturbed they continued their habitual ascents and descents, unconscious of the fate impending, but the slightest hint of a current sent them spasmodically kicking and struggling to get back into still water. We watched, wondering. How could they become so quickly conscious of the slight movement of the very medium they were immersed in, and how could they be so keenly aware that for them running water meant inevitable destruction?

We used to breakfast on coffee and bits of hard toasted bread with a Latin butter, which means that it was always just off the edge of rancid. Every other day I strolled to the market, returning laden with fruit, of which the best at the moment were the figs, green or purple, costing twelve a penny. Of all figs that we have tasted those of Castello de

Vide are, we think, the most luscious. One day Jo saw a commercial traveller hurry into the hotel dining-room. In his hand he carried a paper bag. Placing it on the table, he broke it open, to reveal an escudo's worth of figs—twopennyworth!

Some weeks later we were accosted in a humble eating-house at Constanza by a young man. Jo gazed at him.

"I remember!" she exclaimed. "You're the man with the figs from the Castello de Vide."

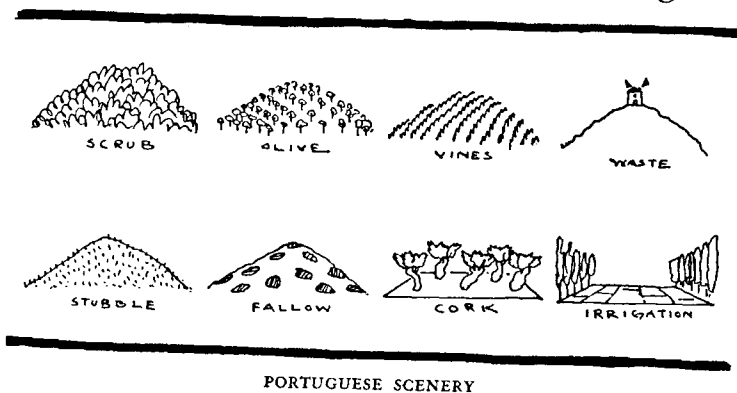
The commercial traveller laughed.

"So you remember that!" he cried. "Aha! But weren't they marvellous? Two dozen for an escudo! I ate the lot at a sitting."

The air was filled with the heavy, sweet scent of the fig-trees, a smell so seductive that the peasants say it is capable of soothing even an angry bull. We have never tried soothing bulls with fig-trees, but its savour was vividly characteristic of the Peninsula at this season. Blend it with the faint tang of the thyme smoke drifting from those gargantuan chimneys, and thread through the hot, sweet air the steady *thud-thud* of the flails as the labourers beat out the grain on the primitive threshing floors—so Portugal lingers in the memory.

Setting out to sketch in the morning, we would pass the children going to school. Already the small girls were solicitous for their complexions, for in sunny lands the tan, that we so admire, is considered low. All the well-to-do children carried parasols to fit their sizes, and the school porch was hung with rows of small sunshades. The maids who escorted the





richer children carried the school books on their heads, and used the slate to protect their own complexions. We would also meet the bread-boy going his rounds. On his shoulder he balanced a huge basket, but his method was so original that we give a sketch of him on the previous page. Women carried pastries on trays five feet long, and the washerwomen piled everything on their heads: one we saw walking cheerfully under the burden of two mattresses!

Castello de Vide was in many ways an almost perfect sketching centre. The people had fine manners, never intruding, but often offering little services such as chairs or a glass of water or keeping the children in order. Within the town there were the castle and its ramshackle streets, the old Jewish quarter, the newer streets, the picturesque market, and the public park. The place was full of unexpected vistas; strange blocks of angular, piled-up houses or narrow, almost Moroccan passages. Outside the limits there were crags, pine-woods, olive-groves, vineyards, and irrigation. From one place I made a water-colour sketch that combined almost every aspect of Portuguese agriculture. In the foreground was wild scrub-oak, at the edge of which grew a fine cork-tree, its branches lopped into perfect shapeliness, its darkening under-skin the colour of a frozen mulatto. From

the foot of the cork-tree spread an olive-grove, the foliage whitening like plush whenever the wind stroked it, the prim ranks stretching to the valley, where, spread on earth which seemed to burn a scorching orange under the sun, lay fields of irrigated plants, a raw and yet sumptuous green. Beyond a small ochreous farmhouse the vines stretched away up the hillside like ribbons of blue-green silk, and behind the top of the vineyard ran ridge after ridge of moorland and forest, climbing to bare eminences topped by large boulders. The third ridge, dim in the heat haze, was the frontier of Spain, across which those smugglers now squatting in the windows of the gaol, waiting for cigarettes like monkeys for nuts, had played their games of hide-and-seek with the frontier guards.



SHOES AT BOTH ENDS

XV

Third Trip: Marvão

AUBREY BELL says that the Portuguese have many traits resembling those of the Irish. Among which can certainly be counted a desire to please rather than to give accurate information. At lunch one day we asked the genial *patron* how far it was to the strange village of Marvão, the castle tower of which we could often see shimmering against the sky.

"Oh," he answered airily, "no distance at all. An hour and a half."

We decided to walk there that afternoon.

"You'll do it easily," he said. "Don't keep to the road all the way. Turn off to the left and go through Scusa. You'll be there in no time."

After about an hour's walking we met a military road patrol—a sergeant and a man. They wore white helmets and grey uniforms, and kept their rifles for immediate use. We accosted them, luckily, for they were standing at the entrance of the side-road to Scusa.

"And how far to Marvão?" we asked.

"Oh, no distance at all—about an hour and a half."

Through lanes of deep-red dust overshadowed by the massy leafage of the fig-trees we came to a small white-washed village clustered round a staring yellow church. Outside the local pub, which had an enormous birdcage, made like a cathedral, we again asked the distance to Marvão.

"Oh," said one of the cheerful loafers, "no distance at all—about an hour and a half."

From Scusa the road began to climb steeply through chestnut woods. Here we overtook a couple of women, apparently mother and daughter. They were walking in string-soled *alpargatas*, but carried, balanced on their heads, the smart shoes that they would assume at their destination.

"How far is it to Marvão?" we asked in desperation.

Had they said an hour and a half we should have turned back, we had arrived at such a stage of desperation. But, surprisingly, we had at last come within measurable distance of the place. They answered, "An hour."

However, ten minutes later, climbing to the top of a ridge, we saw Marvão, apparently just above us, leaning back from the crest of an immensely steep hillside. The women had inverted the Portuguese optimism, we thought. But they were right. The vision was elusive. The strong sunlight and the translucent air hid from us the fact that the huge boulders, which seemed to be set on the very slopes of Marvão hill itself, were actually the crests of another hill nearer to us. A long, tiring, and perspiring climb lay before us ere we

stepped under the dark portal into the narrow, cobbled streets.

Here indeed was a romantic haunt of men. Perched a thousand precipitous feet above the valley, what purpose could this robbers' nest now serve? But why should people continue to live in such a place, climbing every day a thousand feet to work and back? Marvão was an eyrie, and though, when we gazed over the walls, no eagles actually presented themselves as targets for exhortatory exercises, they might well do so on occasions.

The village wine-shop, decorated by a bush, was a dark, secretive place, frequented by well-tanned and sun-baked faces. There, after a few desultory remarks, we ventured to put the question which had been bothering us.

"What is Marvão really for? And why do so many people live here?"

A silence answered our question.

Then, deciding to throw a deliberate brick into these sluggish waters, I said, "Well, the only use I can see for Marvão would be for smuggling. Plenty of that about, I'd think."

"What is he saying?" asked an old and wizened man.

"He is saying things which ought not to be mentioned between gentlemen," answered another drinker. "There are things talked about and things not talked about. He is trying to talk about the things not talked about."

Whereat we all laughed, and the incident passed over.

Flattering myself on a sense of direction, I reasoned that we had followed a rather twisty road in coming here. So from the drinkers I asked if there were not a shorter cut back to Castello de Vide.

"Yes," said one, "I'm riding back to Scusa in half an hour. You wait for me, and we can go along together. Then I'll show you just where it branches off."

Marvão comes to a precipitous point at both ends. But

from the eastern we could look down along a deep valley towards Spain, Valencia de Alcantara and Albuquerque. The sky was patchy, with clouds drifting along in slow procession, so that across that mountainous vista a gigantic play of light and shadow held us enchanted. Peaks and cliffs sprang unexpectedly out of blue shadows and faded into the shadows again. A hundred dramatic compositions and contrasts were revealed. We could have sat there as if hypnotized for hours, merely content to watch and admire. But the afternoon sun was steadily declining to the west, and Castello de Vide was at least two and a half hours away. The short cut might save us time, but, on the other hand—we have had experience of short cuts—it might not.

Though we loitered by the big gate, the man with the horse did not come, but the sun continued to sink relentlessly. At last we set off alone, and, taking advantage of the hill, put our best feet foremost. Walking downhill over stony roads heated all day by a Southern sun is not an enviable proceeding. The continual descent drives your toes into the caps of your shoes, where the inevitable grit that has filtered in lurks to raise blisters. We had been happier though hotter scrambling up to Marvão.

Just as we had reached the bottom and were preparing to breast the slope into the chestnut woods our horseman caught up. He rode with the peculiar grace of one long used to horses, a lax swing developed by a hot climate and long hours in the saddle. His mare was finely decorated with brass-bound harness, and for stirrups he had big wooden, brass-bound boxes which had not changed in pattern since the time of the Moors. But as soon as we had him we could have wished him away, for he rode persistently in front, his horse kicking up the dust, which we perforce breathed.

By now the horseman had changed his mind. Seeing us as an adventure, he tried to lure us away from the short cut to his village of Scusa and the pub with the cathedral birdcage.

But we, suspicious of the alcoholic quality of village entertainment, had little wish to get loaded up either with local wines or cheap brandy. We persisted in taking the short cut, which at last he pointed out with his riding-whip—a narrow track, rough and rocky, leading into bare and sun-baked hills.

“Straight up and bear to the right below the ridge!” he shouted.

We waved him *adeus*, and turned towards the sinking sun. Before us the hillside mounted like a hog’s back, and over this we went, to find ourselves just below a long ridge with a deep valley on either side. We knew that we could not actually lose ourselves, for on one side ran the road deep in its valley and in the other valley was the railway. As long as we crossed neither road nor railway we must eventually reach Castello de Vide.

About a mile along the deserted hillside we found a shepherd lass. The young Portuguese girls are often lovely, and here was a fine example, pretty enough for an Academy picture. So we stopped to ask if this were the road back to Castello de Vide.

“This?” she exclaimed. “I never heard that it was.”

We felt as if smacked in the face.

“But,” exclaimed Jo, in dismay, “can’t we get there along this way?”

“Oh, I don’t know. I suppose if you keep on going you’ll get there. But I never heard of anybody going this way before.”

Despite her doubts we kept on. The track faded out, but, guiding ourselves by the sinking sun, we went ever westward, through fields of stubble, through vineyards, through copses. We climbed over stone walls, we slid down the sides of the ravines, we scrambled over ditches. At last the sun went down behind the ridge, although there was probably still an hour or more of daylight. We had our only rule: as long

as we crossed neither road nor railway we must reach Castello de Vide. But what would happen if the light failed us altogether?

Then the ridge played a trick. It suddenly turned downhill into a deep valley.

“My goodness!” said Jo. “What are we going to do now?”

“It’s just as if Castello de Vide had disappeared from the map,” I said. “I’d have sworn it was on this ridge.”

“Wait!” said Jo. “Listen!”

In the extraordinary silence of the evening air we heard a steady *thud-thud*, like the sound of carpets beaten with vigour.

“Flailers!” said Jo.

We made our way through chestnut woods towards the welcome noise. There, between the tree-trunks, we saw a small clearing with a tiny white house, before which was a threshing floor. A man and two women were flailing the yellow straw, swinging the long, jointed sticks with the rhythmic regularity of a pendulum. Cheerfully they unbent their backs to point out to us a winding path that dipped into the valley. The ridge had divided, and we were on the wrong branch. The man on the horse had evidently mistaken his right hand for his left.

We limped into the hotel resolved that for the future painting and not exploration was our proper occupation.



THE WINE-JARS

XVI

Third Trip: The Wine-shop

THE wine-shop in Marvão had been nothing special in wine-shops, but that of Castello de Vide was most picturesque and typical of many local wine-shops, which combine the making with the selling. We who live in a land of tin and galvanized iron have lost the simple art of pottery. But in these more primitive lands they still can take a few barrow-loads of clay and spin them into an earthen pot six feet high and fourteen feet in circumference. Thus all over Portugal you will find in many a wine-shop earthen jars into which you could easily drop three or four of the Forty Thieves. Exactly how they turn, bake, and transport these fragile monsters of the potter's art we do not know, but there you find them, lined up at the back of the shop, maturing in their

rounded bellies the fragrant grape juice. In our too sophisticated lands the art of pottery has been revived as an outlet for the cultured artist in pure form, but for all his intellectual ingenuity the sophisticated potter cannot rival the simple amplitude of these grand, easy shapes. Sometimes we are tempted to think that in trying to return with so much insistence to simplicity modern man is making an error. Simple magnificence of shape is not difficult if you are simple enough yourself. The uncultured artist achieves it with the greatest of ease. But for the complex man to produce simplicity is another problem. The thing doesn't lie instinctively in his fingertips. Cultured simplicity somehow tastes insincere.

The owners of the wine-shop were a charming young couple, the young woman expecting—with a peasant simplicity about shape—her first baby. They were delighted that Jo thought their shop worth painting. The husband in particular was puzzled at the thought that anybody could wish to draw those old fashioned wine-jars.

"Come along with me," he said to Jo. "One afternoon we'll go off together, and I'll show you something worth drawing. Why, down in the valley there we've got a real modern lemonade factory. You draw that—there's something for your trouble."

During every afternoon of the first week we had enjoyed coffee and a rest under the little arbour at the end of the garden. But one day a pair of plump visitors arrived and unconsciously ousted us. So we were almost naughtily delighted when they in turn were ousted. The creeper of the little arbour suddenly blossomed, and swarms of buzzing bees crowded to this feast of sweetness. The visitors fled. "Who cares for bees?" we said, and promptly took possession.

A moment later a bee that fell headlong on to my shoulder

rather disturbed my complacency. The bee was soon followed by a rain of ants. Other bees and more ants followed one another rapidly. Apparently over our heads, a strange battle was being fought for those succulent flowers, bees *versus* ants, a contest of Gullivers against Lilliputians. In turn we retreated.

Next day the fight was still going on, and the cement paths below the pergola were dotted with bees, some already dead, some at death-grips with the ants that swarmed over their bodies.

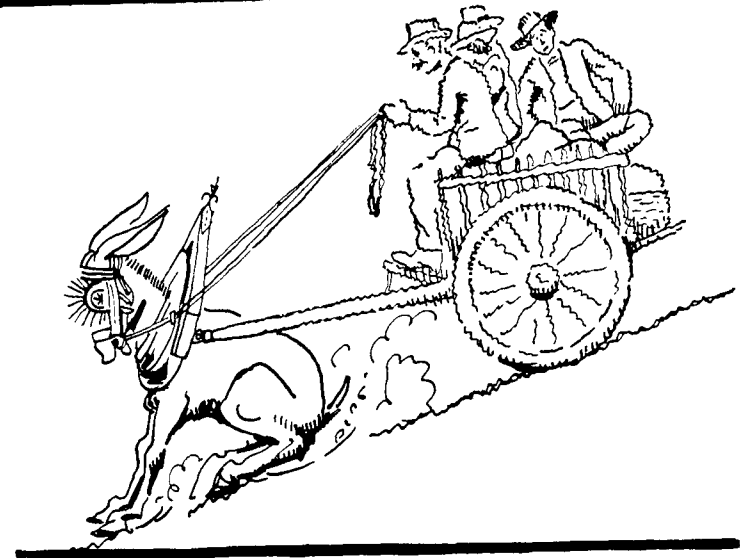
Next day we decided that the little maid Carmen would not stay all her life in service. Give her talents half a chance and she would become a figure on the music-hall stage. She had a good voice, was an excellent dancer, and had that last essential—a vivid personality and a keen interest in other things. She begged us to teach her some English words. Unhampered as she was by alphabetical preconceptions, she picked up both the pronunciation and the intonation like a parrot of genius.

Unluckily another guest, a pretty Portuguese woman, already knew a few words of English. One day we heard her correcting Carmen.

"You should not say 'the'; you should say *ze*. Nor is it 'butter,' but *boutaire*. The English is very difficult to pronounce correctly, but I will assist you."

At last came the day when we had to leave the Happy Hotel. Our bags were packed, our paintings rolled up. The station was two miles away, but the *patron* had arranged for the post-cart to transport us. It was an open, two-wheeled, ramshackle affair drawn by a big mule with a tall decorative yoke over his neck. Jo and I sat side by side with the driver on a highly placed, backless plank. Our luggage was stowed behind in the open cart with the mail-bags and other packages for the train.

The cheery family waved us adieu; the driver chirruped to



THE POST-CART

his mule. Horrors! Every movement of that heavy-footed beast was transmitted directly through the yoke, along the shafts to which it was attached, and by the fulcrum of the axles to the driving seat. We have not ridden on camels or elephants, both reputed to be back-breaking experiences, but would be prepared to bet that they can hardly be worse than a Portuguese country cart going down a steep hill. The steeper the hill became the more the old driver screwed his brake, and the more heavily the yoke pressed on the mule's shoulders, until we wondered that the animal could keep its feet. In consequence the more crushingly descended every hoof-fall, and the more cruelly was every bang and bump transmitted directly to our suffering spines. This journey the driver must take every day.

Half-way to the station we were signalled by a young man. The driver managed to stop the mule, but protested that he had no room for another passenger. However, here was the

young man, there was the station, the train was due shortly. With some difficulty we managed to squeeze him in at the back, sitting on the edge of the cart, his feet firmly anchored among the packages. The sides of the cart were made of open-work stakes, and the points of these stakes stuck up through the top bar like the prongs of a wooden rake. On these prongs the young man had to seat himself. If we suffered what must have been his tortures? The hill became steeper, and at times the mule lowered its haunches till it was almost squatting on the ground. Once or twice it slid for a dozen yards. Now we could see why it had no saddle, for with a saddle this odd operation would have been impossible.

At last we reached the station. With a groan of relief the young man leaped to the ground. Jo tried to get down, but the shaft was high and there was no step. Then the young peasant did an unexpected thing. Taking out a clean handkerchief with a lilac border, he dropped on one knee, and spreading the other with the handkerchief offered it to Jo as a step. The peasant Sir Walter did this with so natural a grace that it could have hardly been rivalled by a skilled courtier of our ruder Northern lands. How we have lost the art of easy gesture, and how sad that Jo was not Queen Bess!