

WAKEMAN'S WANDERINGS.

LONDON, Feb. 6, 1893.—When I first tramped over the heights of Nasciar, descending into the valley beyond, and saw spread before me the Bay of St. Paul, a sense of awe mingled with glorious elation came with the stillness and beauty of the spot where the heroic Apostle was shipwrecked. The bay, which is about two miles long and one in breadth, is situated on the northern coast of Malta, and is hardly distant a brisk two hour's walk from Valetta, the chief city of Malta. Countless excursions are made hither by water from Malta's capital, and often the roads are filled with all manner of vehicles conveying pious or curious pilgrims. I preferred coming in the early morning and alone.

As I stood on Nasciar heights, the sun was just rising above the promontory of Ras el Kaura. Its rays fell softly upon the sleeping waters. They gave the little memorial chapel a bright and smiling face. They deepened the shadows on the eastern shore, where fishermen were lazily spreading their nets. They pierced the copses and chines of the Mellihha slopes, disclosing the huts and cabins of the lower folk who are nearly as naked and quite as listless of civilization as were their "barbarian" forefathers among whom St. Paul was cast nearly 2,000 years ago. They mellowed the grays of the massive walls of the ancient Salmona Palace, which crowns the Mellihha rocks to the northwest. And where the little island of Gzeier, like a bit of the cliffs tumbled into the sea at the north, showed its saffron surface between the blue of the bay and the sapphire of the sea, they flooded the great statue of the saint with such transcendent shine and seeming, that the quickened fancy, for an instant at least, swept across the centuries and basked in the very presence of that far and mighty soul.

A winding road skirts the beautiful bay. An ancient wall half hidden with shrubs and flowers forms a boundary with a second pleasant roadway behind. The fishermen with their nets, some donkeys grazing at the edge of the hillslopes, seagulls in countless numbers, and a half-naked lad urging along a herd of goats with rocks and pebbles, were the only living things in view. Soon a kindly faced priest joined me. We wandered down the road together. He had come with the key of the chapel which is set on that point of the shore on which tradition holds Paul's bark was wrecked.

As we came leisurely along the shore something in the water attracted my companion's attention. We stepped closer to the wimpling edge of the sleeping bay. The face of the priest showed momentary excitement, and he made the sign of the cross. There, softly bumping against a low-lying, shelving rock, floated a water logged piece of a broken spar—wreckage flashing instantly to the fancy a wilder scene of nearly 2,000 years ago, when the fearless Apostle found a hospitable friend in "the chief man of the island." It proved a startling incident to my guide. He recalled the tradition that since St. Paul's shipwreck within this very bay, no craft had ever gone to pieces on this part of the coast; and not even so trifling a hint of the terrors of the sea had ever come to the shore as we had just seen. Ruminatively

and much disturbed he led the way to the chapel.

It is a tiny chapel with an interior of utmost simplicity. But three of its pictures, whose subjects are the shipwreck, the miracle of the viper, and the healing of Publius' father, are remarkable, while the yearly votive offerings, the good father told me, are very great. The priest's adios and blessings followed me from the place, and as I turned my steps towards ancient Citta Vecchia, the last object in St. Paul's bay my eyes rested upon was the ledge of straggling rocks "where the two seas met." It was rimmed with a shimmer of glistening ripples as tiny, shining and slumberous as though but echoing the dreadful song of sirens inviting to a heaven of endless sleep.

From my habit of wandering alone, and much in the country, in foreign lands, I have come to regard their birds as my most charming chance acquaintances. I can recall no place where their companionship has seemed so enlivening and precious to me as in the almost sterile island of Malta.

Absolutely without trees, save those transplanted and nurtured like exotic flowers, Malta would hardly be regarded as the haunt of birds. And yet I have seen or heard here in midwinter nearly every one of the loved and humble sort well known in summer-time in northern climes.

Along the stony roads I have kept exultant pace with the hopping stonechat and redstart, and chirped back a cheery greeting to flocks of chaffinches among the white and gold of the orange-trees. Climbing the cliffs, or pottering among the ruins, the melodies of thrush or linnnet have flooded the sky from the olive-trees in the valleys below. Crossing the walled fields I have often come upon marshalled hosts of titlarks. Rooks, wrens, crossbills and fieldfares all welcomed me in a homeland language I knew. The call notes of the reed-sparrow peopled the famous island of the sword and cowl with olden forms and faces; and as the balmy evenings came, the still, murmurous songs of the blackbirds thrilled me with half-forgotten voices of ever-haunting youthtide days and ways.

This recalls the exquisite pleasure I have enjoyed from my acquaintance with the birds, and especially the song-birds, of Cuba. Their variety and melody roundabout the grounds of old plantations are ravishing. It has been written that what tropical birds gain in brilliancy of plumage they lose in variety and quality of song. That is not true in Cuba. The birds seem numberless. Their voices and singing are startlingly beyond anything possible for one to come upon at any one time in the States.

On one occasion when riding from Trinidad but a short distance into the Vale del Aguacate, I saw—eighteen distinct species of birds—the crow, the parrot, the indigo-bird, the paroquet, the lapwing, the oriole, the flamingo, the robin, the brown pelican, the pigeon, the mocking-bird, the canary, the golden-winged woodpecker, the English lady-bird; the blue-bird, the ibis, the cat-bird, and the humming bird of which there are said to be sixty varieties in Cuba! All of these birds are to be seen or heard about country homes; and besides, I have passed charming hours in the acquaintance of as many more, all of which re-

garded the plantation trees, shrubs and hedges theirs as surely as their human owners.

Among these were the following: The solviros, which live by sucking honey from the flowers. They have brilliant green jackets with yellow vests. As large as our robin, they live in gourd-shaped, double-windowed nests attached to the under side of large tropic leaves. The male is ruminative; but its mate is full of joyous song. The mayitos are as large as our Southern mocking-bird, and in form and action resemble them. Their backs are blue-black; and they have gorgeous yellow breasts, and a yellow slashing along each wing. Their songs are precisely like those of the canary, but bolder and stronger.

The negritos are here called the black canary-birds. Their wings have a few dainty white feathers and their singing is marvelous. The savaneros are delightful inhabitants of the shorter Cuban grasses, and have the form of our thrush, with dark puce-brown feathers, delicately mottled, clinging close to the frame; and their cheery chatter is endless. Other frequenters of the ground and grasses about plantation-houses are the totises and the chinchinguacos.

They are alike black, and in their resemblance to the American black-bird in form and movement. Both are melodious but noisy. They flock in great numbers and cry "Kl-ee-ing!—kl-ee-ing—kl-ee-ing!" with the rhythmic modulations of silver bells. First, the totises sound their triple notes, with rising scale, as if questioning. Then from hundreds of hidden places answer is made in descending scale, by the chinchinguacos. The notes are almost identical; simply reversed. A singular fact is that when the former sing their tails spread laterally, and the latter, perpendicularly. Thousands at one time will flock about these home-spots, ringing these bird-voice chimes until the din is often startling.

The cabrerros are between the mocking-bird and canary in size, and are very beautiful. They are a mottled black, yellow and red in color. One of their interesting characteristics is to eat so freely as to barely enable them to remain upon their branch of shrub, when they twitter and sing with wondrous and plaintive sweetness. Two dainty species are the tomerines del pinar and the pioreras. Both are much smaller than the smallest canary, and but a trifle larger than the humming-bird. For its size the former has the most striking plumage of all Cuban birds. With a Robin Hood jacket of brightest green, its breast is set with a silver crescent, while a gleaming black, plume-like comb surmounts its tiny head. Its notes are similar to those of the American robin, but with more of the piccolo in them than the flute.

The piorera is smaller with a black-and-white back, a white breast and a red neck. He is an incessant singer, with a pretty variety of trilled notes. But the zorales are the buffoons of these plantation choristers. They are the size of our wrens, of ash color, mottled with black and yellow, with yellow bills and feet. Their impish activity is astounding. Differing from the crow, magpie and mocking-bird, they possess many of the qualities of each; though their gibes, taunts and teasings seem directed against other birds, rather than humans. Their imitative powers are marvelous. They will mock the notes of all song-