

# TO KUMASSI WITH SCOTT.

A DESCRIPTION OF A JOURNEY FROM LIVERPOOL TO  
KUMASSI WITH THE ASHANTI EXPEDITION, 1895-6.

BY

GEORGE C. MUSGRAVE.

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H.R.H. PRINCE HENRY OF BATTENBERG, K.G.

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TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
COLONEL PRINCE HENRY MAURICE OF BATTENBERG,  
MAJOR V. J. FERGUSON,  
AND  
THE OTHER OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN,  
WHO LOST THEIR LIVES  
IN THE CAUSE OF HUMANITY AND CIVILIZATION IN  
ASHANTI, 1895-6,  
THIS WORK IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

## PREFACE

The 1895-6 Expedition to Ashanti took place at a time when the British Empire was in a ferment; wars and rumours of wars abounded on all sides. Excitement ran high, and in the midst of the turmoil, the operations in West Africa were forgotten or put aside for matters of more pressing import. Newspapers were full; the international troubles caused much pressure on their space, and little beyond brief telegrams on the movements of the force, was published; therefore, a more comprehensive account of the expedition will be of interest to many.

The campaign was a bloodless one, but none the less heroic; for that march to Kumassi, through dense forest and deadly swamp, was fraught with perils more to be dreaded than the arms of the savage Ashantis.

The British force marched 140 miles through the jungle, leaving numbers on the road, sick of fever and dysentery. They invested the capital; the King and his chiefs were captured, the bloody fetish power destroyed, and the force, sadly reduced by sickness, returned to the coast, having freed a large district from the tyranny of a bloodthirsty despot and opened up a vast territory to trade and civilization.

This record of the expedition is chiefly comprised of a series of articles and letters written at different times and places on the journey from England to the Gold Coast and on the march up country, which I have endeavoured to make of general interest by touching on the habits and customs of the people, digressing somewhat from a formal account of the campaign alone. The march did not lack interesting incidents, especially as we drew near to and entered Kumassi, and I have attempted to faithfully portray these various scenes on the road.

GEORGE C MUSGRAVE

Folkestone, June, 1896.

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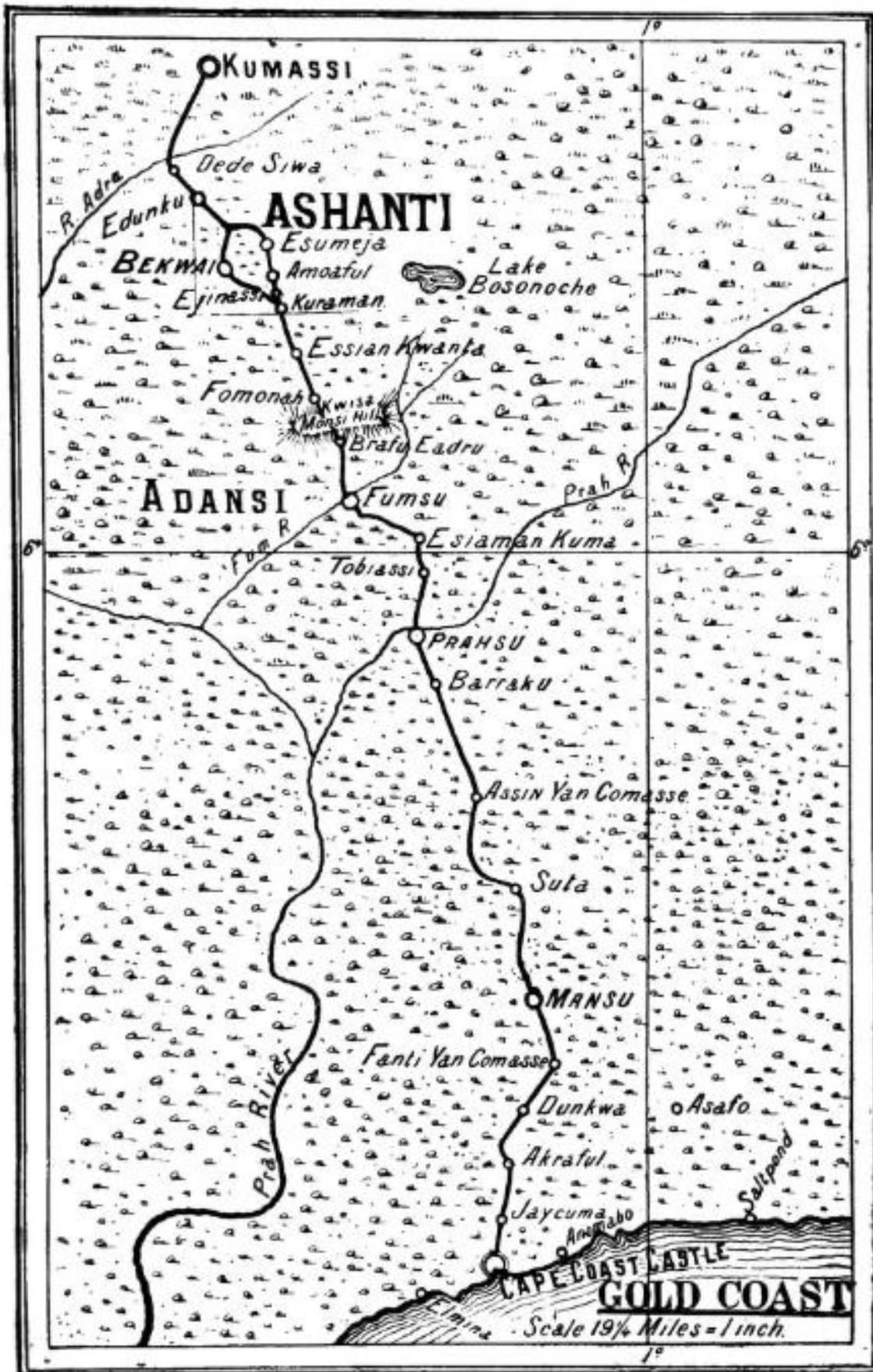
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## TO KUMASSI WITH SCOTT - CHAPTER I

Leaving England • Our Passengers • The Canary Islands • Las Palmas  
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LIVERPOOL LANDING-STAGE in a thin slanting rain, with grimy dock labourers shifting hawsers off the bollards on a dirty wet quay, releasing the tender, and by so doing they part husband and wife, lover and sweetheart, mother and son. The outward bound ones crowd to the port side, the others cling to the chains on the edge of the wharf. Young wives, struggling to keep back the tears that will come, wave wet handkerchiefs to dear ones on board, while mother and sister say the parting words to son and brother. The tender reaches the ship, luggage is transferred and the vessel slowly steams down the river as cheer after cheer goes up from those on board and is answered by the crowd on shore. Then England, the dear old mother country, grows less distinct, till only a faint grey line is visible, and the feeble echo of a last cheer is borne across, almost drowned by the swish of the waves as the tide runs up the Mersey.

Such was the scene on November 30th, 1895, when the good ship "Loanda" started for West Africa.

We had on board officers and men to the number of 100, chiefly of the Army Service Corps and Engineers, also a detachment of Artillery for Sierra Leone. The holds were full of baggage, ammunition, niters, tanks and other stores for use in the forthcoming expedition to Ashanti for which the majority of passengers were bound.

There was a mixed company on board, among others being His Excellency Colonel Cardew, Governor of Sierra Leone, returning with his wife to resume his duties there; also his aide de camp, Captain Morant; Surgeon Colonel Taylor, Principal Medical Officer to the expedition; Captain Benson, commanding the Ashanti Artillery contingent; Surgeon-Captains Maher and Josling; Captain Norwood, R.A.; Captain Hall; Lieutenant Faber, R.E., and Mr. Haddon Smith, Assistant Colonial Secretary at Lagos; Mr. Bennett Burleigh of Daily Telegraph fame, and Mr. Seppings Wright, special Artist to the Illustrated London News, represented the Press, the remainder of the passengers being health-seekers for the Canaries to winter.

After passing Holyhead, we lost sight of land and everyone prepared to settle down for the voyage. The first day past, we were getting over what one may call the unsociability of the average Britisher, and officers and civilians alike were soon rubbing shoulders in the comfortable smoking room, driven in by a sweeping wind off the Channel. The ladies soon disappeared, and there were the usual melancholy faces of passengers vainly trying to ward off the remorseless mal de mer and appearing cheerfully at dinner, but their heroic efforts would only last through the soup, when a hasty retreat was beaten to watch the seascape from the ship's side. Many of us, more fortunate in not dreading the horrors of sea sickness, found plenty

to occupy the time as we ploughed our way through the choppy outskirts of the Bay; but once passed Finisterre, the ladies emerged from their cabins, the sick ones re-appeared, and things brightened considerably on board. In the evenings we were enlivened by impromptu concerts on the troop deck, and it is marvellous what a large amount of talent can be found among British "Tommies" when opportunity arises for them to show it.

After Finisterre the temperature sensibly changes, the sun gives notice that it has come to stay, and we realised we were at last reaching the delights of a more southern latitude. Life on board became a pleasure as we steamed through a calm blue sea, and the time was passed by many diversions. Our genial skipper, Captain Jones, never let conversation flag when he was near, for he had an inexhaustible stock of anecdote ever ready. A sweep on the day's run of the vessel was instituted, and shuffle board or deck quoits freely indulged in. A week after leaving Liverpool we reached Grand Canary, dropping anchor in the port of La Luz at 5 a.m. A glorious day was just dawning, the sun rising in almost eastern splendour. After the usual formalities were gone through, we got a clean bill of health from the authorities, and as the yellow flag was hauled from the fore-peak, dozens of waiting bumboats closed in, our decks being swarmed by eager vendors of the various commodities that delight the eye of the traveller. The majority of these swarthy merchants dealt in tobacco, cigars, and Florida water, but there were many others with baskets of fruit, canaries in wicker cages, and native-worked fans and shawls. The collection was completed by two light-skinned Parsees with their suave salaams and stock of silks, shawls, and Benares work. One or more of these itinerant Hindoo merchants are to be found at every port of any size east or west. How they come and how they return to their own country again is a mystery, but they apparently thrive and are born traders with all their outward cringing and hypocritical cast of countenance.

From the ship, the Puerta de La Luz, and Las Palmas, which is some three miles distant, have a most picturesque appearance, the low flat-roofed white buildings looking truly oriental as they stretch away up the sides of the hills, which form a pleasing background in dark outline against a cloudless sky.

We were soon pulled ashore in one of the native boats manned by picturesque looking ruffians who crowded round the foot of the gangway. Though the distance to the breakwater is barely 100 yards, the fare is on a sliding scale, which never goes below one shilling for each person, however you may try to beat them down. There were eleven passengers in the boat I journeyed in, and we were asked two shillings a head, reduced under pressure to one shilling - not a bad four minute's work for three men to earn eleven shillings. It is as well not to remain late onshore when your vessel is leaving, especially at night, as the tales are many, of unwary travellers who have lingered till the warning whistle has sounded, and then found, to their dismay, the boat men in league together, requiring a large sum before any of them will row to the ship. Remonstrance is in vain, and you must either accede to their exorbitant demands or lose the vessel. I heard of one case in which a belated traveller was

rowed a few yards from the landing stage when the boatmen drew in their oars and demanded £5 before they would proceed. Unfortunately his ship had signalled twice and was on the point of sailing, so he had to pay up and look pleasant, hoping to obtain redress on arrival at the ship's side. The men rapidly drew off the moment he put his foot on the ladder, and disappeared in the gloom with a derisive "A good evening, Johnny."

By the way, every Englishman in Canary is addressed by the street boys and other pests in the familiar style of "Johnny," greatly incensing a pompous fellow traveller of ours visiting Las Palmas. As he stepped on the quay he was greeted by a volley of cries from the waiting cabriolet drivers, "Hi, you Johnny, take my car," to his evident annoyance and our amusement.

The Port of La Luz has almost a natural harbour formed by a small peninsula joining Grand Canary by a narrow isthmus, and a stone breakwater, built at right angles to this, forms the three sides of a square within which the largest vessels can float in safety. The harbour is easy of access at fall tides, and this fact has no doubt done much in recent years to bring Grand Canary to the front as a coaling station.

Las Palmas can be reached from the landing stage by train, or rather steam tram, or a light tartana drawn by two or three horses may be hired to go by road, the charge being one peseta for each person. The horses of Canary are a distinct breed, being small, well formed, and very swift, but no proper care is taken of them, and few can be found that are not more or less covered, with festering sores, while the drivers use the lash mercilessly. The hotels have private carriages and horses of their own for hire, and these are necessarily kept in a better condition.

Las Palmas itself does not offer many attractions to the visitor, and a day is sufficient to make one thoroughly acquainted with all places of interest in the city itself. The Cathedral is a large edifice in the centre of the town, and its two towers make it conspicuous at a long distance. It is a fine building from an architectural point of view, and contains some large and well executed frescoes, while the wood carving inside well repays a visit. The interior is Gothic, with three large naves, four transepts and chapels at the side. An intending visitor would do well to try and be present at the regular afternoon service which is fully choral. The organ is a splendid instrument, while the excellence of the choir quite keeps up the reputation that the Spanish Church has always held for its fine music.

The Bishop of Las Palmas had returned a few days before our visit and the island was en fete to receive him. He had been to Madrid to try and stop the conscription, which was denuding the Canaries of men to serve in the Spanish army in Cuba. Several had evaded the order by fleeing to the interior and hiding in the mountains, but two thus captured were shot as an example, and the offer of a free pardon to all who gave themselves up at once, had the desired effect. The Bishop's mission was only partially successful, and the streets were thronged with miserable weedy looking conscripts lounging about in ordinary clothes, but arrayed in white helmets many sizes too large. The few Spanish regular troops stationed in the island appeared to be a smart body of men, with none of the slovenliness of dress usually a

characteristic of continental armies, but the poor conscripts just about to start for Cuba were very inferior, appearing ridiculous against the smart English "non-coms" who were allowed on shore from the "Loanda." Spain at that time had more men in her last remaining American possession than the whole of the standing army of Great Britain, exclusive of the troops serving abroad, and yet she has been unable to quell the insurgents. She has depended a great deal on these young untrained men with the obvious result, and from reports I heard in Las Palmas, if the figures are ever published, we shall find the story of France and Madagascar re-told with more action and bloody detail. Yellow Jack has made fearful ravages among these unacclimatized youths; for Cuba has a worse reputation perhaps for unhealthiness than any other part of the West Indies. The little news that does leak out is carefully watched and cut down by lynx-eyed officials before it can leave the country, and no reliance can be placed on any report published. The Canaryites have been specially favoured with conscription, as they are supposed to stand the climate better than their brothers in Spain.



SCENE NEAR LAS PALMAS.

Las Palmas boasts of a theatre, visited by various opera companies of more or less ability. Putting the merits of the performance on one side, the building itself and the interior fittings would put many more pretentious English playhouses in the shade. Near the Cathedral is a handsome building, the lower part of which is used for the municipal offices, the upper chambers for the museum. The interior of the building is elaborately fitted, the corridors and passages being decorated in a

specially fine style, and the upper galleries are filled with a miscellaneous collection containing many unique specimens. Some of the corridors resemble our Royal College of Surgeons' Museum, but less ghastly and more interesting are the Guanche remains to be viewed. The Guanches were the original inhabitants of the islands, but any exact information as to who and what they were, is difficult to obtain. As a race they were a harmless people, almost civilized in their habits, and having a good system of government. Spain attempted to obtain possession of the Canaries in 1385, but they did not succeed in bringing the whole group into subjection till a hundred years later. Under the cruel persecution of their relentless conquerors the last of the gallant Guanche race disappeared in the sixteenth century, since which time Spain has retained almost undisputed authority over the islands, which have become a Spanish province rather than a colony.

The guide of the museum was as great a curiosity as any of the specimens under his charge, for he not only refrained from asking for a gratuity, but firmly and politely refused one when offered.

I tried to obtain an order to visit the bone-yard attached to the cemetery, but found it was too difficult and tedious a matter to get the requisite permit, for the wheels of Spanish Officialism are clogged with red tape and move but slowly. The rich in Canary rent graves in the cemetery for their deceased friends, but with the poorer classes the remains are buried for a few months, the bones then being dug up and deposited in the adjoining bone-yard. This is certainly not a practice that commends itself from a hygienic standpoint, and shows little consideration for the feelings of the relatives, who know with what scant ceremony the remains of departed friends will be treated.

Las Palmas is well supplied with hotels, the three leading ones being under English management. Of these Quiney's, the oldest established, is right in the town, but the others, the Metropole and the Santa Catalina, are built in the outskirts on the road to the port. The Metropole is the leading hotel in Las Palmas, and as a sufficient guarantee for the excellence of all the arrangements, I may mention that it is one of the many enterprises of Mr. Alfred Jones, through whose indefatigable exertions the Canaries have entered a prosperous period after a chequered career under the proscriptive policy of Spain. Living is cheap in the islands, and at this palatial hotel it is possible to live in first-class style for 8s. per day inclusive. The streets of the town are narrow but fairly clean, and the main thoroughfare is lined with pretentious looking shops. What strikes one forcibly is the air of listless indolence that pervades everywhere. The proprietors of the shops sit lazily enjoying a cigarette at the door, drivers lounge on their carts with reins hanging loosely and horses going as they please; sentinels stand negligently at their posts leaning on their rifles and moodily smoking, while the people saunter in the streets in a languid but contented fashion of their own. The Canaryite is a lover of idleness, and shut off as he is from the outside world, he cares nothing for the rush and turmoil of the nations around him, but lives in perfect contentment, knowing he has enough for to-day and not caring what to-morrow may bring forth.

The chief food of the lower classes is gofio, a mixture of Indian corn and water. It is neither a difficult nor expensive meal to prepare, and the peasantry apparently thrive well on it with the addition of a little goat's flesh as an occasional treat.

The market presents a busy scene with rows of stalls heaped with fruit, and it is thronged by country people, who bring their produce to town on ponies or donkeys which stagger under the combined weight of well-filled panniers and the lazy owner mounted on top.

The mantilla is the favourite head-dress of the women of all classes. The high-bred dames drape their heads in fine black lace, but their humbler sisters are content with black and white cashmere, the latter being the favourite, and serving to heighten the olive complexions of the dark-eyed *senoritas*.

Life is never dull in the islands, and if other things flag there are plenty of gay fiestas or semi-religious holidays, when the towns are brilliantly illuminated and the peasants flock in from the country, decked in glorious finery that has been purchased by many previous days of hunger. Then there are the plazas, where bands play every day, and golf, lawn tennis or cricket can be indulged in on well-kept grounds. The houses are irregular but well built, enclosing many glorious little piazzas and gardens, shut out completely from the outside world. Here the children can play and the elders rest in shady bowers amid dazzling visions of flowering magnificence, with gushing fountains and gay music of the bright yellow little songsters which we hear only in captivity, but which flit from tree to tree in Canary as free as air. Passing down the streets dark eyes gleam and flash dangerously through the green *postigos* or shuttered jalousies, but a peep behind often shows the splendid eyes belie the owner. Young ladies from fifteen to twenty-one are exceedingly beautiful, but Spanish loveliness is transitory, and when they reach maturity the beauty so rapidly fades that in a few years they are positively plain.

Unquestionably, the one charm of the Canaries, or as they may well be called, the "Fortunate Islands" is the splendid and equable climate. They form the ideal spot for invalids as they have every advantage the health-seeker needs. The climate is warm, but dry and bracing, and the heat is not too great as it is tempered by the stimulating breezes from the sea. The islands are too far south to feel any effect from the north winds which have expended all their force before they reach such latitudes. The east winds have a thorough sweep of the desert, being thus warmed and dried before they touch the islands, and the gentle westerly and southerly winds agreeably temper the heat and sometimes produce a gentle shower of rain that keeps the ground fruitful and moist. The average temperature in the coldest period, from November to March, is 63 degrees, which is much higher than the average of the South of France during the same months. There is no excess of heat, no cold, little rain and no heavy night dews. Bathing is carried on all the year round, and while we in England are raving over burst pipes, plumbers' bills and perpetual fogs, the Canaries are enjoying glorious sunshine, invalids are able to sleep with windows thrown up, and the country round is gorgeously arrayed with flowers and fruit.

Thus as a winter resort for invalids they far surpass the Riviera, and though the journey has to be considered, a week on board one of the first-class Mail Steamers, under the management of Messrs Elder, Dempster and Co., is almost an added delight to the trip. This firm issues a ticket for Saloon passengers to the Canaries or Madeira for the low sum of £15 return fare, available to or from any of the islands for twelve months.

A few years ago the natural attractions of Grand Canary and the other islands were almost unknown, but their fame has now spread far and wide. Much has been done to improve sanitary conditions, and accommodation for travellers is provided in plenty. It will be well if the Spanish Government, realizing what a prize they have in these possessions, do all they can to assist the English enterprise now developing them, and seeking to attract the thousands who annually flock to a warm climate for the winter.

Many are the enjoyable excursions that can be made into the interior from Las Palmas. The scenery is varied, the vegetation so rich and tropical that a trip into the country is a series of delights. The roads are mountainous, but the sides of the hills and fertile valleys are industriously cultivated, lemons, oranges, figs, tomatoes, bananas, melons, cereals and sugar cane being grown in abundance. Cochineal once formed a staple industry in the islands, and though the trade has much dwindled, a large number of the insects are still collected from the prickly pear which is cultivated for the purpose.



SANTA CRUZ DE LA PALMA



CAVE DWELLINGS OF ATALAYA

Up among the peaks behind Las Palmas are many ideal spots for a picnic within walking distance, but the favourite drive is to Monte, which makes a delicious excursion a few miles inland. Driving up the steep winding roads, through patches of bananas, acres of delightful flowers, young vines, groves of eucalyptus and figs, with graceful trees on each side of the track, red flowered oleanders and the brilliant pepper tree, the eye revels in hundreds of acres of richly cultivated land, but broken with imposing barrancos, volcanic peaks of solid lava and stupendous cliffs around. A day spent among the mountains is one to be remembered. The curious hamlet of cave dwellings at Atalaya should also be visited, and the most interesting trip of all

is to the Caldera, about eight miles inland. The first part of the journey may be undertaken by carriage, but the latter part must be performed on foot as the road is uneven and very steep. After a long and fatiguing ascent of the Bandana hill the crater is reached, and it gives one a good impression of the volcanic disturbances that have taken place on the islands. The Caldera is the most perfect crater in existence, and it is a mile across with a depth of over a thousand feet. As if in strong contrast to what is past, a small farm nestles securely in the centre of this yawning basin; a charming Ceres resting in the arms of her thunderous brother Jupiter.

Visitors to Grand Canary would do well to extend their visit to the neighbouring islands, the chief of which may be easily reached by the coasting steamers which ply from port to port. The Canary group is composed of thirteen islands, but six of these are very small. The origin of their name is attributed to the fact of Juba visiting them, and sending two large dogs to Rome from the islands, which he reported as clothed with eternal fire. Pliny mentions the existence of the Fortunate Islands, but in 1330 a French vessel was driven upon them by stress of weather and they were thus rediscovered, afterwards falling into the hands of Spain. Teneriffe is the largest of the group and is almost as popular as Grand Canary. It is chiefly remarkable for its lofty volcanic peak, which rises almost in the centre of the island, of which Santa Cruz is the capital, possessing a well sheltered harbour. It is a great commercial centre and the chief inhabitants of the town are engaged in trade with Great Britain; but it is, nevertheless, a delightful little place, built at the foot of high mountains, though not greatly patronised by visitors, who flock on to the more fashionable resort, Orotava, about thirty miles distant. The cathedral is specially interesting to English men, for it contains two flags captured in 1797 from the English, and they may still be viewed, a solitary record of Nelson's one failure, which cost him his arm. The anniversary of this event is still marked by a grand fiesta to celebrate what they call, a glorious victory. The whole of the inhabitants turn out in the morning to attend solemn mass, which is followed by a bull-fight, and at night the city is illuminated with myriads of fairy lamps, the inhabitants gaily dancing and singing ; and the sky ablaze with rockets and fire balloons.

The scenery round Santa Cruz is almost awe-inspiring, and within reasonable distance are glorious pine forests at Las Mercedes and Mina, with majestic mountains and imposing barrancos where the surrounding country rivals Switzerland.

Laguna and Orotava are the fashionable resorts; the latter especially should be visited, as it is situated in the midst of lovely scenery, wild and mountainous, but with richly cultivated hills and valleys between. The ascent of the lofty Peak or Teyde of Teneriffe can also be made. For days it is never visible, but occasionally a partial view can be obtained through a break in the clouds. The transparent atmosphere then enables one to distinguish even small houses and trees at a great distance, and a magnificent view can be obtained from the top of the crater, which attains an elevation of 11,950 feet above sea level. A vast expanse of ocean, studded

with the whole archipelago, stretches away on every side, and it is perhaps the most extensive view in the world.

The western group of islands also includes Palma, Gomera and Hierro, but they are seldom visited by travellers, the two latter being practically unknown. The chief town of the first island, Santa Cruz de la Palma, is important from a commercial point of view and is lighted by electricity. There are some splendid medical springs in Palma which will prove a great attraction when the natural beauties of the island are better known to the health-seeker. The island is a mass of picturesque rocks and precipices, and the Caldera is the largest crater in the world, being nearly seven miles across and 7,000 feet deep.

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