

icemanship and equable temper will, I hope, have appeared in the course of my paper. For the success of our last campaign a special word of thanks is due to the Graham brothers, whose encouragement and expert knowledge were invaluable to the party on ground completely new to them, and who supplied our needs with such detailed thoroughness that nothing of importance was missing in our camp. Nor shall we forget the pleasant days we spent after our return, when we could afford to laugh at the teeming rain, which kept us not unwilling prisoners indoors. One last word of thanks must be rendered to the demon who presides over Friday. Sealy, the Silberhorn and Tasman, Malte Brun, Cook, Graham's Saddle, Torres, all these succumbed on that reputedly unlucky day. But the secret of how we won the demon's favour is a mystery, which I cannot reveal to the uninitiated.

## SOME SPANISH MOUNTAINS.

BY W. T. ELMSLIE.

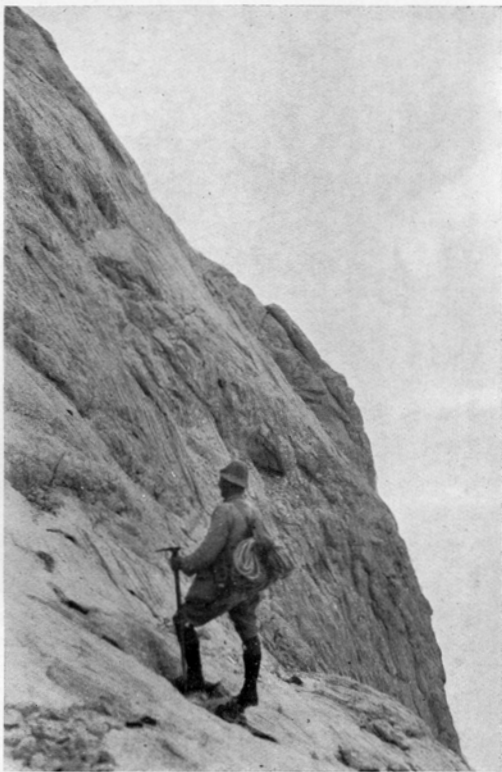
### THE SIERRA NEVADA.

TOWARDS the end of last July we <sup>1</sup> made a brief visit to the Sierra Nevada—the highest range of mountains in Europe, it will be remembered, after the Alps. We ascended the two highest summits, and traversed the ridge between them, thus seeing what is admittedly the finest scenery to be found in those parts.

The range is distinctly disappointing, and has been over-written, although Charles Packe's article in 'A.J.' 4 gives a good general impression of the district. John Ormsby's remark ('A.J.' 3, 12) that 'the north face of the Wetterhorn . . . is soft pastoral scenery compared with the Corral de la Veleta' is simply grotesque. Though on a much larger scale, the main range is little wilder than the ridge of Helvellyn. The crags are for the most part composed of rotten outcrops of rock, divided by slopes of shale; and though many of the corries are fine and impressive, they are more akin to British hills in character than to the Alps.

An electric tram now runs at frequent intervals from Granada up the Genil valley to a terminus ('Sierra') a mile or two beyond Güejar. The valley presents imposing gorge scenery

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. G. Manley, R. G. R. West, and the writer.



Phot. G. Manley.

PART OF N.E. FACE OF NARANJO.  
The Great Slabs.



Phot. W. T. Elmslie.

CORRAL AND PICACHO DE LA  
VELETA.

The Summit is immediately to the  
right of the vertical crag in the centre.

at places. From the terminus a rough road winds up the hill for  $4\frac{1}{2}$  kilometres to the Hotel Sierra Nevada. This is under the same management as the Alhambra Palace at Granada, and is thoroughly comfortable, though expensive. It is beautifully situated, with fine gardens, and is a popular centre for winter sports. It claims to be at a height of 1500 metres, but this is perhaps an over-estimate. Close by is an unpretentious *posada*, which is said to be quite good.

A way may be found amongst a labyrinth of paths up the hillside to the W. of the Barranco San Juan, till the patches of barley, maize, and potatoes are exchanged for the open hillside at San Francisco (about 2250 m.;  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours), an unoccupied building resembling an observatory. There is a peasant's cottage alongside. The Picacho de la Veleta (3430 m.) is now in sight at the head of the valley, and is attained in three hours by keeping up the ridge on the right, till it is possible to look down on the tiny patch of *névé* (dignified by the title of the 'most southerly glacier in Europe') in the Corral. The ridge hereabouts is narrow and slabby, and the easiest ascent of the last thousand feet lies somewhat to the W. of it.

It may be possible to descend directly on to the ridge which connects the Veleta with Mulhaçen; but we preferred to avoid the crags, turning them by way of the Col de la Veleta, and so keeping along to the S. of the ridge. This involved descents into the heads of four valleys, and long traverses on large, loose scree; but the route was interesting throughout, and it would clearly have been foolish to try to keep along the ridge itself, which was largely composed of crumbling little crags.

The N. face of Mulhaçen and of the Alcazaba is quite imposing at a distance; but the dark crags are seen to be much broken up when they are approached more nearly. It is not correct to speak of the Corral occupying the whole area between the Veleta and Mulhaçen on the N. side; there are several quite distinct corries here.

Mulhaçen (3481 m.) has two open shelters on its summit, and a ruinous chapel, which we found to be half filled with snow. Three to four hours should be allowed in each direction for the traverse between it and the Veleta.

#### THE PICOS DE EUROPA.

If John Ormsby exaggerated the charms of the Sierra Nevada, he certainly did not do the same for the Picos, highly as he spoke of them. These mountains lie in the N. of Spain, and are most easily approached from Santander, by rail to

Unquera, and thence by motor-bus. The two chief characteristics of the district are the remarkable narrow gorges through which the rivers flow, and the fine serrated summits of the mountains. The rock is limestone, and if the higher regions are barren and waterless, the river valleys are luxuriant with vegetation.

The highest summit is the Torre de Cerredo (2642 m.), whilst the Llambrion falls short by only a few feet. Ormsby attempted to ascend the latter, but reached a subsidiary point only, comforting himself with the reflection that to spend a night out in the hope of reaching the higher point was 'altogether too much honour for a mountain not 9000 ft.'

There are only two books which give any useful information about these mountains; and the number of ascents they describe is comparatively small. As the district has only recently been explored by climbers, the probability is that a large number of the summits (many of them unnamed in the maps) are as yet unascended; but this we were unable definitely to ascertain.

A hut has been opened in the Canal de Camburero, an hour or two above Bulnes, which is easily reached by way of Arenas de Cabrales. It is situated rather too low down to be really useful as a centre of exploration; but we were able to use it for the ascent of the Cerredo, by way of the Collada de Arenizas alta, and a snow slope which led high up its E. face. This is the only known route for ascending the mountain.

The great attraction of the vicinity, however, is the Naranjo de Bulnes, a mighty rock monolith, standing clear above its surroundings a thousand feet or more. It is not beautiful; it is astounding. Close examination reveals that it is composed of extraordinarily steep and smooth slabs, offering the climber neither satisfactory hold nor resting-place. We attempted to ascend on the N.E., from the top of the gully which runs up on that side of the mountain; but after vainly endeavouring to find a justifiable route across the great slabs, we retired to examine the face from the other side of the gully. Unfortunately, thick mist came on at this precise time, and only cleared at sunset. The examination which we then made did not make the route to be followed at all certain. Obviously a guideless party would require to spend considerable time in investigation before making the ascent. We were sorry that we had not accepted the offer of two local men (one of Arenas, one of Caín) to accompany us to the top; but whether they had themselves been there is by no means sure.

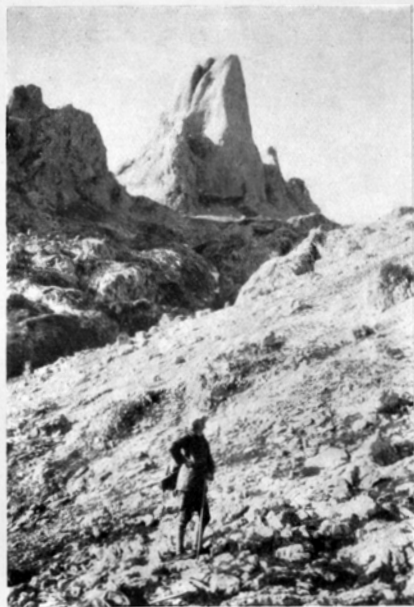


NARANJO DE BULNES  
from S.W.



Phots. G. Manley.

TORRE DE CERREDO  
from E.



Phot. G. Manley.

NARANJO DE BULNES  
from S.W.



Phot. W. T. Elmslie.

VIEW N. FROM CERREDO  
[the Peaks are probably the Tête Labrouche and Pico de  
los Cabrones].

The first ascent was made by a local man, called 'El Cainejo,' with Don Pedro Pidal, Marquis of Villaviciosa de Asturias, in 1904. Gustav Schulze, of the Munich Ak. Alpenverein, made the next ascent, also by the N.E. face, alone—a truly astonishing feat. He descended on the S.E., but gave it as his opinion that this route could not be used for the ascent, as in one place an *abseil* was absolutely necessary. The visitors' book at the hut, however, contains a description of an ascent made by a party which included a woman, led by a local man, Victor Martinez. They ascended from the S.E., and descended by the N.E. Whether there have been any other ascents is doubtful; but on the summit we could see a pole; and there is a picture postcard purporting to show V. Martinez on the top.

The Naranjo is by no means the only difficult peak in the group. De Saint-Saud considers that the Torre Santa, above Cain, is quite as hard; but the Spanish writers consider it perfectly easy! There seems to be a question of national pride involved here, as the Torre Santa was first climbed by Labrousche, a Frenchman. And quite apart from these, there are peaks innumerable, all difficult apparently, and many of them presenting really serious problems.

An expert party would find enough to occupy them in the Picos for several weeks. And they would be ill-advised to make a shorter visit. The topographical difficulties are considerable, partly owing to the large number of rock summits crowded together into a comparatively small area, partly owing to the number of deep gorges with practically impassable sides. De Saint-Saud's maps are good, but not nearly good enough. The mistakes that we discovered were few, but the omissions were many; and no attempt is made to indicate the tracks. Moreover, the continual occurrence of *hoyos*, or large circular depressions, like enormous dry lake-beds, tends to increase the confusion.

The district is quite unspoiled. We found the natives very friendly, though their dialect was hard to comprehend. The question of food supplies was rather difficult; in villages like Cain there are no regular shops, and Señora Maria, in whose house we stayed, had very little with which to provide us.

There are two or three little glaciers, but they are so small as to be almost negligible. In mid-July, however, there were considerable patches of snow, which not only provided us with water to drink, but frequently offered a convenient means of ascent and a rapid glissade on the return journey.

The Picos de Europa, as a climbing ground, may be compared with the High Tatra or with the Dolomites. They differ from the former in the composition of their rock, and in the lack of streams and mountain lakes. They differ from the Dolomites in being much more closely grouped together, in the lack of facilities for climbers, and in the absence (so far as we could observe) of large grassy uplands. To the explorer, and the searcher after new climbs, they present far greater opportunities than either of the other groups. As to the actual difficulty of the climbing, our observation bears out Schulze's words :

'The special difficulties of the ascent' [he is referring to the Naranjo] 'consist not so much in the steepness of the rock, with its inherent dangers, such as are met with in the Dolomites and in the limestone mountains of the Tyrol, as in the extraordinarily smooth condition of the rock, some of the steps being most risky.'

#### *Books and Maps.*

'Picos de Europa,' published by the Club Alpino Español, Madrid, 1918, is unfortunately now out of print. It is a delightful book, enriched with numerous photographs, and edited by Pedro Pidal and Zabala. Descriptions of the principal peaks are given, but the accounts of the ascents are not very clear. The Naranjo, however, is dealt with very fully.

'Monographie des Picos de Europa,' by Le Comte de Saint-Saud, Paris, Henry Barrère, 21 Rue du Bac, 1922. This is another delightful and well-illustrated book, also, unhappily, out of print. The maps, however, which were drawn up by L. Maury on the basis of the author's observations, and which accompany the book, are still obtainable from the publisher. These maps are quite indispensable for anyone visiting this district. The 1 : 100,000, with contours, is fairly accurate so far as it goes ; but there are serious omissions, and only the main paths are marked. The same must be said of the 1 : 50,000 (uncontoured). As in the Spanish book, the principal summits are described, but the information about ascents is not always adequate.

No other books are of any practical value to the mountaineer in this region.

For the Sierra Nevada, the best map is sheet 85 of the 'Mapa Militar Itinerario de España,' 1 : 200,000, revised 1916. It is extremely poor, but there is nothing better available.