



The Gibraltar candytuft, *Iberis gibraltarica* (above), has its only European station on the Rock. Its main distribution is on the mountains immediately across the Straits in northern Morocco. The showy heads of pink flowers are at their best in April and good colonies are found on limestone screes on the east side of Gibraltar. The white Alyssum, *Lobularia maritima* (below), is another spring crucifer. Its usual habitat is on the upper levels of the beaches. Both these plants are frequently grown in English gardens.



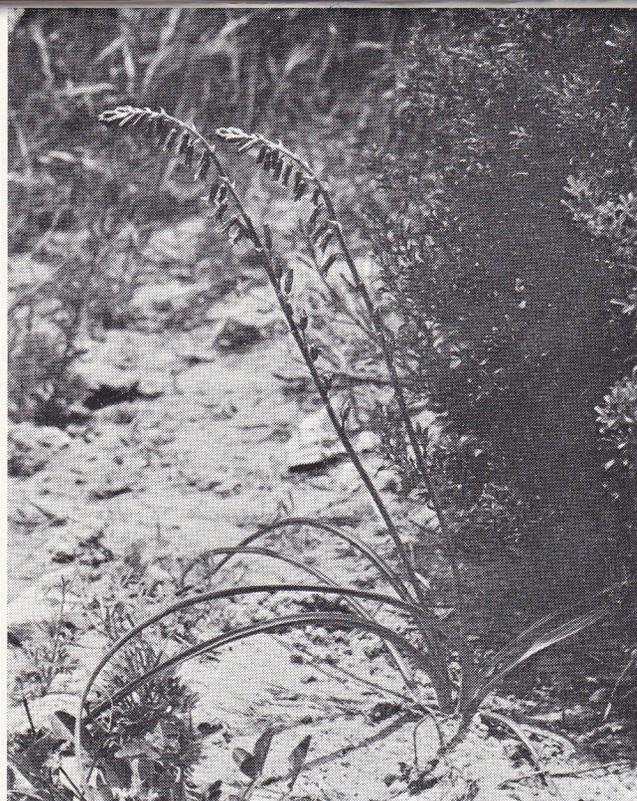
Two of the many aliens that are now well established on Gibraltar. *Albizzia lophantha* (above) is a native of western Australia. Its white mimosa-like flowers are borne in winter and spring on shrubby trees reaching to 45 feet. The Hottentot Fig, *Carpobrotus acinaciformis* (below), comes from Cape Province in South Africa. It is extensively used as a sand stabiliser or for ground cover and is common all over Gibraltar.





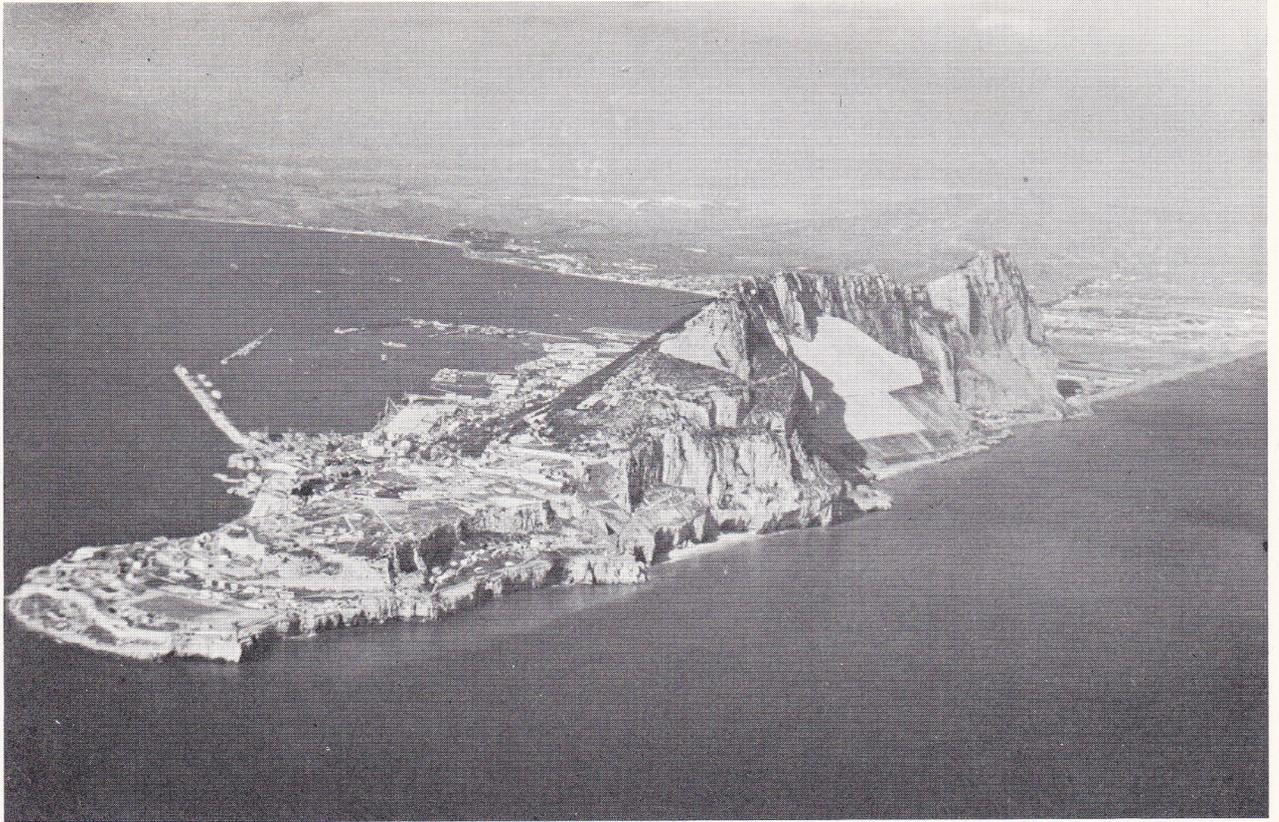
27

The massive royal blue spikes of *Scilla peruviana* (left) are borne over a long flowering season throughout the spring months. This unusual squill is found in moist spots on the Upper Rock. The Giant Fennels are represented on Gibraltar by the North African *Ferula tingitana* (above). The golden yellow umbels are produced through the spring on the Middle and Upper Rock.



26

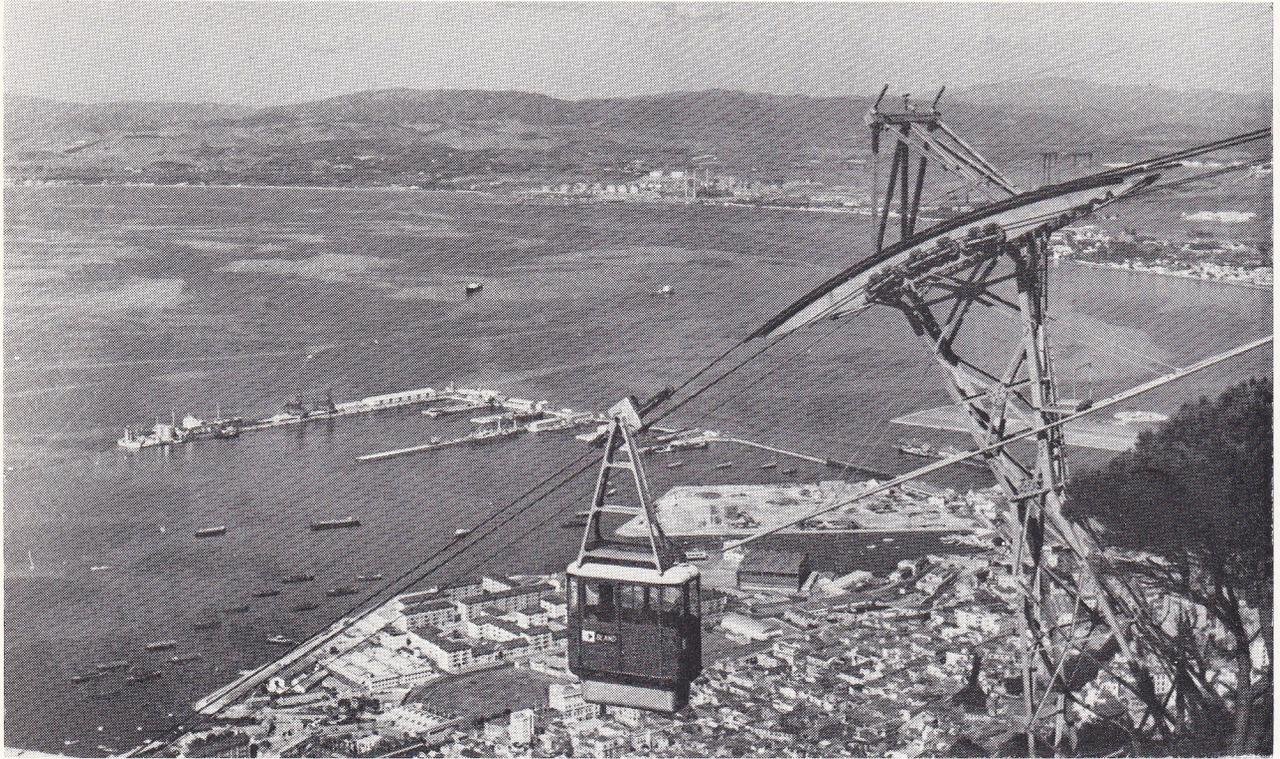
*Antirrhinum majus* (left) is represented on Gibraltar by a very fine form. Its April flowers are a clear pink and are borne on bushy plants reaching 4 feet: usually a plant of limestone debris. The "Brown Bluebell," *Dipcadi serotinum* (above), also April flowering, is found amongst the *Ononis speciosa* scrub of the Great Sand Slope.



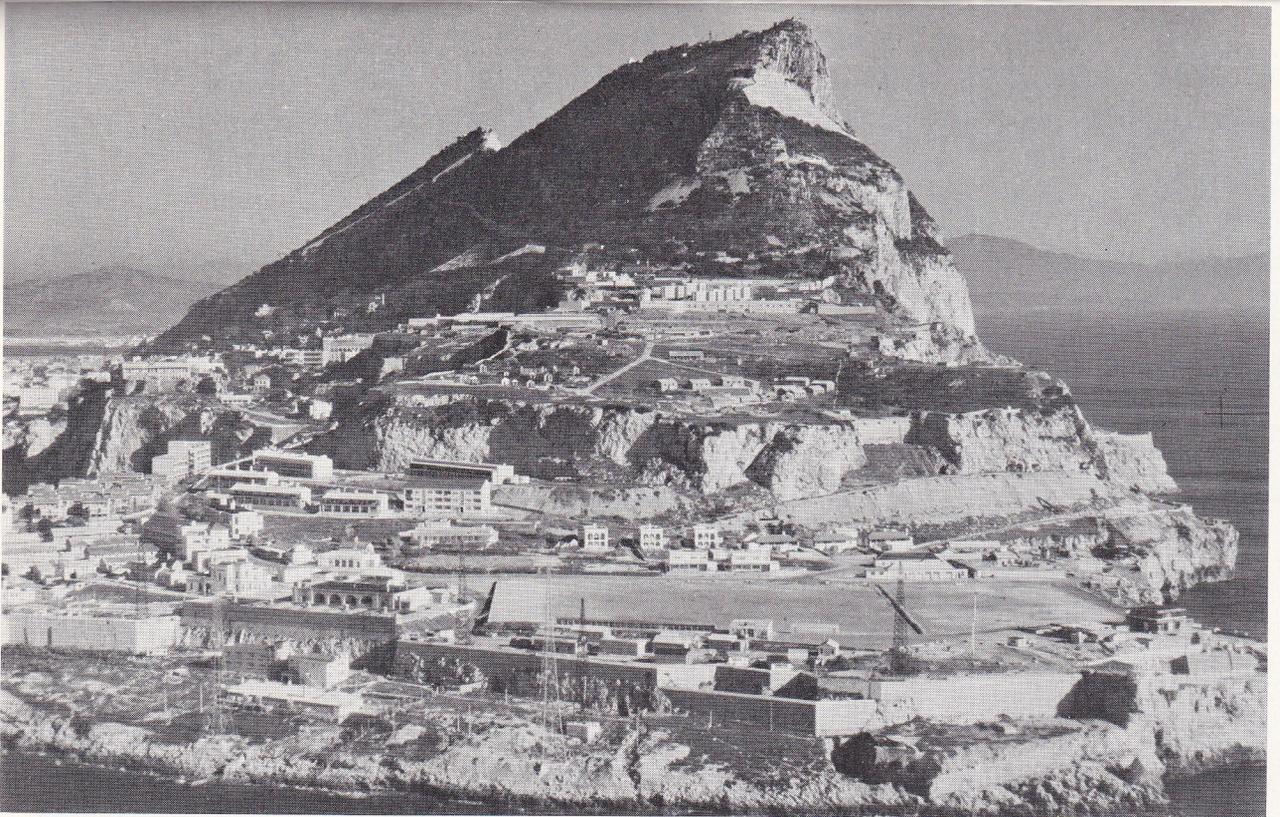
The east side of Gibraltar faces the Mediterranean. In this aerial photograph the enormous cliff that was formed along a fault line, is shown as the dominant feature of this aspect. In the foreground and to the left, the marine eroded terraces of the Punta de Europa can be seen. Centrally placed on the cliff is the Great Sand Slope of aeolian origin, most of which has now been surfaced for water catchment. The flora is generally of an arid maritime type. The narrow sand isthmus which connects the Rock with mainland Spain is on the right and in the background (centre) the village of San Roque can just be seen.



In stark contrast to the east side of Gibraltar (*opposite*), the west side of the Rock that faces the Atlantic is thickly wooded. In this photograph which was taken from the beach at La Línea de la Concepción, other features that can be seen are: the large fault-cliff at North Front which Stocken climbed (see text); an area of wood cleared and concreted for water catchment; several firebreaks running from the ridge to the outskirts of the town.



The view from the upper cable-car pylons on Gibraltar across the Bahia de Algeciras shows much of the surrounding terrain. In the right background is a peak in the Sierra del Arca. On the extreme right (through the cables) is the white line of San Roque. Behind, and even on, the Roman ruins at Carteia is a new oil refinery. Compare this with the photograph on page 29 that was taken earlier. In the left and centre background is the low line of the Sierra de Montecoché.



The prominent marine terraces formed by the changing levels of the sea during the Ice Age are clearly seen in this helicopter photograph of the Punta de Europa. In the left background is the "Queen of Spain's Chair" on the Sierra Carbonera and to the right of Gibraltar, some of the Sierra Almenara may be seen beyond Sotogrande and Guadiaro.

the long shady walks. They are at their best in March and April when there is a fine display of annuals between the hedges of scarlet *Aloe arborescens* and blue *Plumbago capensis*.

A drive round the Rock at sea level gives one a very good idea of its geography. Driving anti-clockwise out of the town the road climbs up above the naval dockyard and starts its descent towards Europa Point by the Military Hospital; beneath may be seen the attractive tiled roofs and building of the Old Naval Hospital, now converted into naval officers quarters. Europa is not quite the most southerly tip of Europe, this honour belonging to Tarifa further westwards, but there are splendid views of the Straits and its ceaseless flow of shipping, the majority being tankers, many of them over 100,000 tons. Then there are liners, tramps, warships and occasionally some fast sleek craft returning from a smuggling run.

The cliffs are heavily undercut by the sea, and on them will be found such halophytes as *Frankenia thymifolia* and our own sea lavender, *Limonium vulgare*. A little further back beneath Buffadero Bluffs there are clumps of *Senecio cineraria* and tangled heaps of the curious squirting cucumber, *Ecballium elaterium*, once used medicinally as an emetic.

Continuing, our road leads through an impressive series of tunnels to bring us out at Sandy Bay on the eastern side of the Rock. Here there is very good swimming until just after mid-day when the beach becomes shaded and above there is a fine view of the main water catchment and its enclosing *cirque* of cliffs. After passing through the small fishing village of Catalan Bay where, incidentally, an excellent meal may be obtained, one reaches the cliffs of the north face and drives back past the airstrip into the town again.

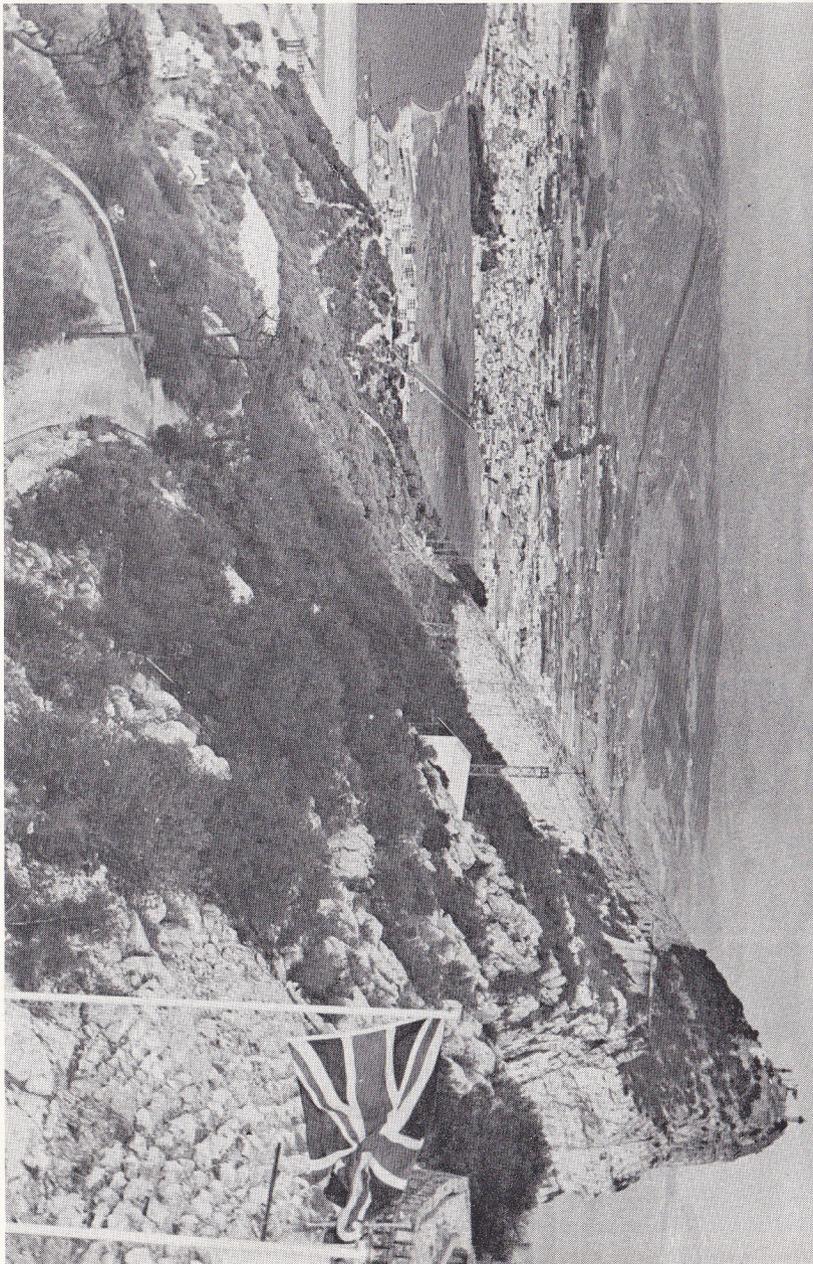
Almost the entire Upper Rock is a military area but, in recent years the restrictions have been largely lifted, and it is possible to drive from one end to the other along the narrow roads hewn out of the rock by successive generations of engineers. Note too, the huge iron rings set in the stone by means of which the old cannon and large calibre seaward defence guns were hauled up to their permanent positions commanding the Straits and land approaches. Some of these big guns may still be seen but they have never spoken in anger although, in 1940 but for a misunderstanding, they would have opened fire on units of the French fleet escaping southwards after the fall of France.

The steep rocky slopes are covered by a typical Mediterranean high *maquis* consisting of such trees as the wild olive, *Olea europaea*, *Phillyrea angustifolia*, a buck-thorn, *Rhamnus alaternus*, often festooned by climbers like *Clematis cirrhosa*, *Smilax aspera* and the strange pitcher plant, *Aristolochia baetica*. At regular intervals there are fire lanes where many of the lowlier plants flourish and there are striking displays of colour during the spring months.

It is in this area that one or two packs of the famous Barbary apes are allowed to roam. Although fed by their official keeper they also live off nature and I have seen them devouring the sticky sweet fruit of the wild palm, *Chamaerops humilis*, the only palm native to Europe. It will be recalled that during a critical period of the last war, Sir Winston Churchill turned his genius away from great matters for a few moments and ordained that the apes were to be kept at full strength, even by import if deemed necessary.

The flora of Gibraltar is a fairly extensive one and there are several useful books on the subject in the excellent Garrison Library which can be perused in the shade of its beautiful garden. Here many fine plants are grown and, of special interest, are a splendid climber, *Stephanotis floribunda*, that covers itself with scented waxy white flowers in May and an ancient wistaria of vast proportions trained overhead which, when it flowers every two or three years, is magnificent beyond description. There is too, a good herbarium in the museum which I have found invaluable for identification purposes. The rarest plant is probably *Crocus salzmannii*, a native of North Africa and it is believed that its only foothold in Europe is Gibraltar. The dainty blue flowers appear briefly in early November and the species is restricted to one small site near Windmill Hill.

Torrential rains usually start at the end of October and a month later spring has arrived. The first plant to flower, and often even before the rains, is



From the top cable car station a closer view of the Rock shows the nature of the vegetation on the west side. The no-man's-land separating Gibraltar from Spain's southern boundary at La Linea de la Concepcion is grazed by cattle but still retains an interesting flora related to its marine sand origins. To the left, in the immediate background, the 'Queen of Spain's Chair', with the shadow of a cloud over it, is clearly visible.

the long shady walks. They are at their best in March and April when there is a fine display of annuals between the hedges of scarlet *Aloe arborescens* and blue *Plumbago capensis*.

A drive round the Rock at sea level gives one a very good idea of its geography. Driving anti-clockwise out of the town the road climbs up above the naval dockyard and starts its descent towards Europa Point by the Military Hospital; beneath may be seen the attractive tiled roofs and building of the Old Naval Hospital, now converted into naval officers quarters. Europa is not quite the most southerly tip of Europe, this honour belonging to Tarifa further westwards, but there are splendid views of the Straits and its ceaseless flow of shipping, the majority being tankers, many of them over 100,000 tons. Then there are liners, tramps, warships and occasionally some fast sleek craft returning from a smuggling run.

The cliffs are heavily undercut by the sea, and on them will be found such halophytes as *Frankenia thymifolia* and our own sea lavender, *Limonium vulgare*. A little further back beneath Buffadero Bluffs there are clumps of *Senecio cineraria* and tangled heaps of the curious squirting cucumber, *Ecballium elaterium*, once used medicinally as an emetic.

Continuing, our road leads through an impressive series of tunnels to bring us out at Sandy Bay on the eastern side of the Rock. Here there is very good swimming until just after mid-day when the beach becomes shaded and above there is a fine view of the main water catchment and its enclosing *cirque* of cliffs. After passing through the small fishing village of Catalan Bay where, incidentally, an excellent meal may be obtained, one reaches the cliffs of the north face and drives back past the airstrip into the town again.

Almost the entire Upper Rock is a military area but, in recent years the restrictions have been largely lifted, and it is possible to drive from one end to the other along the narrow roads hewn out of the rock by successive generations of engineers. Note too, the huge iron rings set in the stone by means of which the old cannon and large calibre seaward defence guns were hauled up to their permanent positions commanding the Straits and land approaches. Some of these big guns may still be seen but they have never spoken in anger although, in 1940 but for a misunderstanding, they would have opened fire on units of the French fleet escaping southwards after the fall of France.

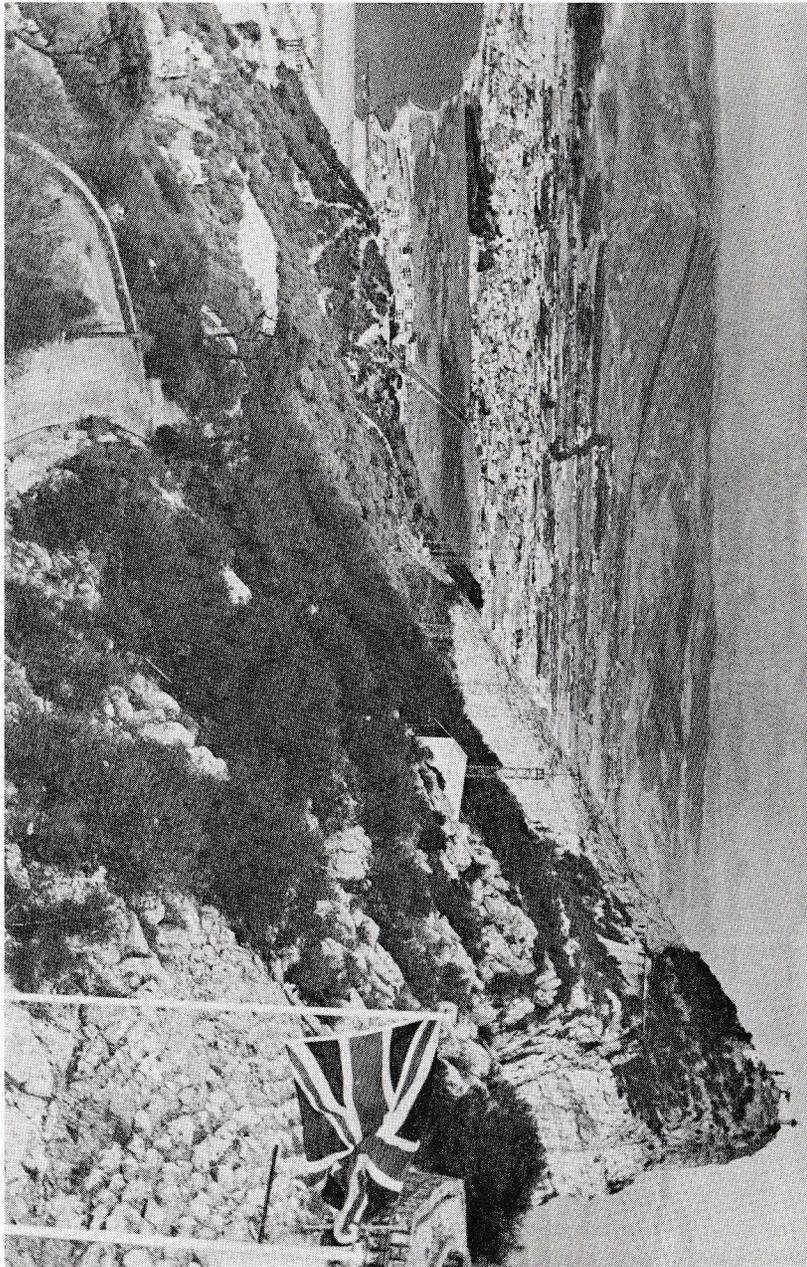
The steep rocky slopes are covered by a typical Mediterranean high *maquis* consisting of such trees as the wild olive, *Olea europaea*, *Phillyrea angustifolia*, a buck-thorn, *Rhamnus alaternus*, often festooned by climbers like *Clematis cirrhosa*, *Smilax aspera* and the strange pitcher plant, *Aristolochia baetica*. At regular intervals there are fire lanes where many of the lowlier plants flourish and there are striking displays of colour during the spring months.

It is in this area that one or two packs of the famous Barbary apes are allowed to roam. Although fed by their official keeper they also live off nature and I have seen them devouring the sticky sweet fruit of the wild palm, *Chamaerops humilis*, the only palm native to Europe. It will be recalled that during a critical period of the last war, Sir Winston Churchill turned his genius away from great matters for a few moments and ordained that the apes were to be kept at full strength, even by import if deemed necessary.

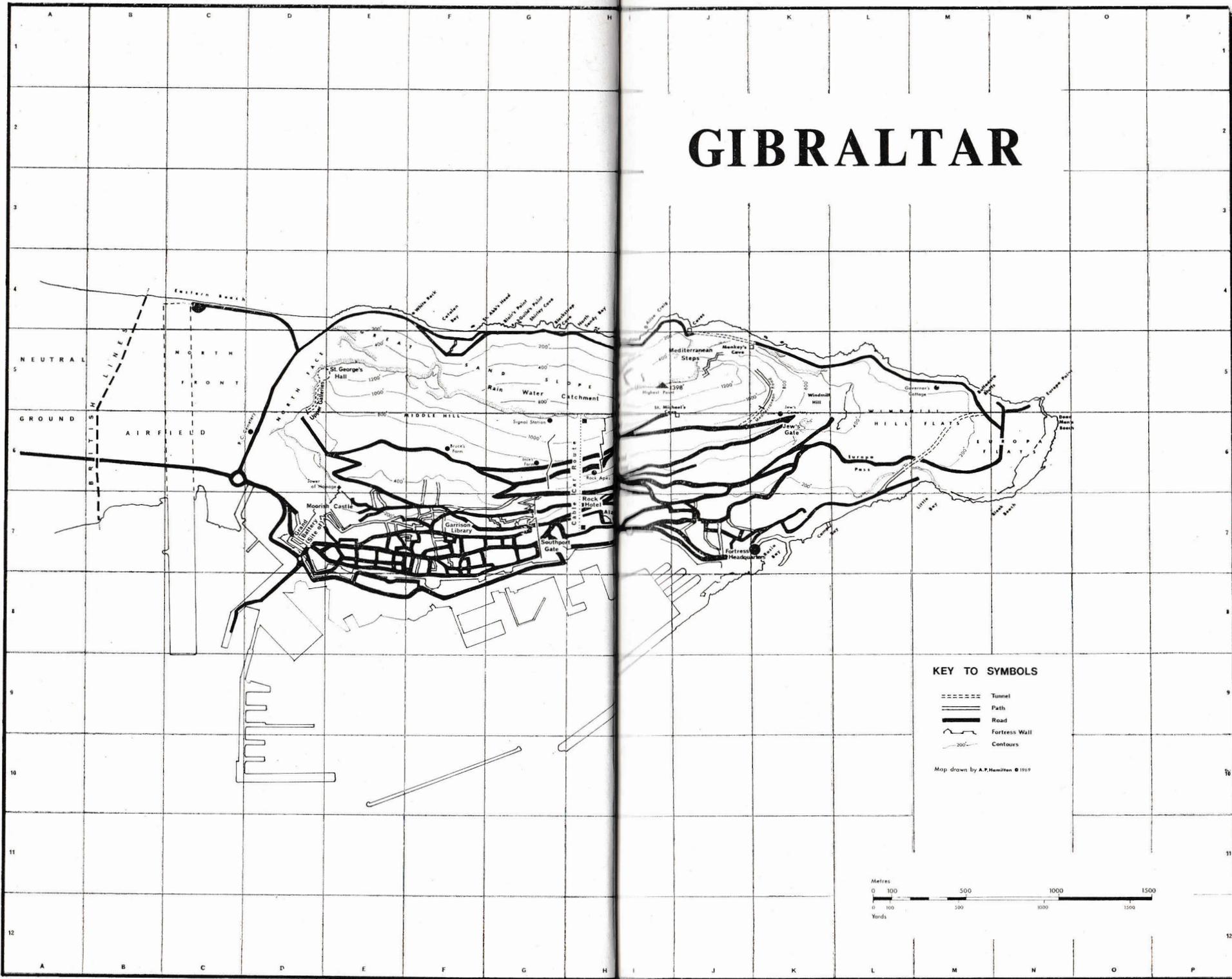
The flora of Gibraltar is a fairly extensive one and there are several useful books on the subject in the excellent Garrison Library which can be perused in the shade of its beautiful garden. Here many fine plants are grown and, of special interest, are a splendid climber, *Stephanotis floribunda*, that covers itself with scented waxy white flowers in May and an ancient wistaria of vast proportions trained overhead which, when it flowers every two or three years, is magnificent beyond description. There is too, a good herbarium in the museum which I have found invaluable for identification purposes. The rarest plant is probably *Crocus salzmannii*, a native of North Africa and it is believed that its only foothold in Europe is Gibraltar. The dainty blue flowers appear briefly in early November and the species is restricted to one small site near Windmill Hill.

Torrential rains usually start at the end of October and a month later spring has arrived. The first plant to flower, and often even before the rains, is

From the top cable car station a closer view of the Rock shows the nature of the vegetation on the west side. The no-man's-land separating Gibraltar from Spain's southern boundary at La Linea de la Concepción is grazed by cattle but still retains an interesting flora related to its marine sand origins. To the left, in the immediate background, the "Queen of Spain's Chair," with the shadow of a cloud over it, is clearly visible.



# GIBRALTAR



### KEY TO SYMBOLS

- Tunnel
- Path
- == Road
- Fortress Wall
- ~ Contours

Map drawn by A.P. Hemilton © 1959



*Colchicum lusitanum*, whose rose chequered chalices push their way up through low undergrowth high up on the western side of the rock. Although the leaves are fleshy it is a lovely species and well worth growing, particularly if one of the deeply coloured forms can be secured.

A walk up the road to St. Michael's Cave can be a rewarding one at Christmas time. Very shortly a blue periwinkle, *Vinca difformis*, will be seen and the first greeny yellow flowers of *Clematis cirrhosa* scrambling up some tree; a purple flowered form was reported fifty years ago, a treasure indeed, but I have never found it. Hereabouts on rocky banks in company with the two witches brooms, *Ruscus hypophyllum* and *R. aculeatus*, grow two lavenders, *Lavandula dentata* and *L. multifida*, which although attractive, are of doubtful hardness. We now come to the Upper Rock, where every cranny is filled with *Narcissus papyraceus*, a floriferous paper-white with a strong scent and most useful as a cut flower. This is a most accommodating plant being found high up in the sierras and also in the marshlands round Algeciras, and it flowers well in Devon during November and December.

By February many more plants are in bloom: near sea level the Bermuda Buttercup, *Oxalis pes-caprae*, is naturalised everywhere, and there are fine splashes of colour where golden masses of *Odontospermum maritimum* and the purplish-pink *Convolvulus althaeoides* run into one another. A little higher, the flats near Windmill Hill are carpeted by *Gynandris sisyrinchium* and *Romulea elusiana*, the latter a most striking species whose violet bells could easily be mistaken for one of the best campanulas.

The finest walk is undoubtedly that up Mediterranean Steps which leads from Jew's Gate round and up the eastern side of the Rock to one of the culminating points named Spyglass. Unfortunately, some sections of the path are steep and a little exposed, so it is definitely no place for the timorous; in addition, a pass from Fortress Headquarters is needed. Near Jew's Gate there are a few plants of the Spanish broom, *Spartium junceum*, and nearby, under shade a pretty blue broomrape, *Orobanche ramosa*, grows in quantity.

A little further on we will see *Cytisus linifolius*, a particularly fine broom with scented yellow flowers and silky pubescent leaves. Here and there are great carpets of the alien mesembryanthemums, *Carpobrotus edule* and *C. acinaciformis*, smothered in pale yellow or crimson flowers. It is not, I believe, generally known that the sticky fruits of these "Hottentot Figs" can be made into an excellent jam.

At one place there is an airy vantage point, where one looks down vertically a thousand feet into the limpid aquamarine depths of the Mediterranean and, upwards, at a great expanse of white water catchment where *Linaria tristis*, an unusual toadflax with dark velvet flowers, grows out of cracks in the concrete. Here one can study at leisure the interesting configuration of the Straits and reflect upon the arcana surrounding them. The two dominating features, once the fabulous pillars of Hercules, are the Rock and on the African side Jebel Musa and it is scarcely surprising that, when clothed in their table cloths of fleecy clouds during a levanter, their appearance gave rise to all sorts of frightening thoughts in the minds of the ancients. There is a legend too, concerning a cave system connecting the continents through which the apes reached Gibraltar but, alas, the structure of the rocks beneath the Straits precludes so delightful a possibility. The disturbed waters show that there are strong currents and, indeed, off Tarifa strengths of four to five knots have been recorded. Average depths are around six hundred fathoms and research has shown that, whilst there is a fast inward flow of surface water to a depth of perhaps a thousand feet, the remainder, more saline and heavier, is slowly flowing out of the Mediterranean. The former is composed of lighter cold water welled up from the Atlantic deeps and explains why the seawater temperature at Gibraltar rarely exceeds 65°F (18°C) even in summer, while forty miles up the coast, at Marbella, it will be in the seventies. The reason for this great influx of water is that it is required to replace the estimated million tons that evaporate every second in the Mediterranean during the summer months.

Maritime control of the Straits has never been so difficult since the advent

of the submarine; the great depths, temperature layers and currents, all aid the submersible in its efforts to sneak through. Only near the end of the last war was any real success obtained and this was only achieved by endless chain patrols and a bevy of American airships, which presented an extraordinary sight with their flashing lights at night.

The geological history of this region is also most intriguing, for it is believed that some forty million years ago, Gibraltar and the Baetic Cordillera (coastal range), to which it belongs, were joined to the Rif mountains of North Africa. There was then a continuous mountain chain from Africa to the Alps, but since those times the slow inexorable flow of subcrustal currents have created the rift that is the Straits and rotated the Corsican and Sardinian massifs eastwards.

After these digressions it is time to resume our walk up the eastern side of the Rock where the flora is especially rich, due to the quantities of black humus beneath the cliffs, and where a few plants of *Dianthus caryophyllus*, and a dainty blue larkspur, *Delphinium pentagynum*, may be seen. Pink tussocks of *Iberis gibraltaria* and the yellow poppy, *Glaucium flavum*, cling to sheer faces and, in other inaccessible places, *Scilla peruviana* and the pink *Gladiolus communis* fight for a foothold. Beneath stony screes the silver *Cistus albidus* combines well with *Coronilla valentina* subsp. *glauca* and common rosemary. Near Spyglass I once found a single bee-orchid and close by the common autumn squill, *Scilla autumnalis*, growing in crevices with a cushion saxifrage, *Saxifraga globulifera* var. *gibraltaria*.

The vista from this eyrie on a fine day is quite remarkable, the whole coast down to Málaga being clear in every detail, and far beyond, at a distance of 150 miles, loom the snowy crests of the Sierra Nevada. At one's feet, like toys, ply the merchant fleets of the world about their business and, southwards, the endless ranges of the North African Rif disappear in a blue haze. A cable railway running up to a restaurant sited near the highest point of Gibraltar, is a great attraction.

The great floral display begins to wane in early May and the season is rounded off by the choice deep purple *Iris filifolia*, found on ledges up a few steep crags, and dark blue *Campanula velutina*, which favours damp cracks on the eastern side.

I have hitherto said nothing about the Gibraltarians themselves, many of whom I am proud to count my friends. They have a keen sense of business and are, therefore, highly successful entrepreneurs with fingers in many a hidden pie. Since the war they must have made a staggering amount of money from the hosts of tourists that alight day after day from visiting cruise liners and, to be fair, they give very good value for money. Their society, as one might expect, is a tight little one. Their future is uncertain but I believe that, ultimately, some form of union with Spain, with adequate safeguards and goodwill on both sides, will bring about a lasting solution.

Enough has been said to show how much the Rock can offer to the visitor and, in the next chapter, I hope to show that it also makes a perfect base from which to explore nearby Spain.

## CHAPTER II

## THE ENVIRONS OF GIBRALTAR

*The Border and La Línea de la Concepción—Sierra Carbonera—Roman Ruins at Carteya—Castellar de la Frontera—Jimena de la Frontera—Hozgarganta Gorge—Los Barrios—Cave Drawings—Sierra del Niño—Sierra Blanquilla—Alcalá de los Gazules—Algeciras—Feria and Bullfights—Tarifa—Punta Paloma and Dune Flora—San Roque Eastwards—Manilva—Casares—Estepona—Benahavis.*

## LA LINEA DE LA CONCEPCION

Spain is reached from Gibraltar by driving past the airport to the frontier post, from which there is a straight road of a quarter of a mile through no-man's-land to the Spanish customs (*Aduana*) and the small town of La Línea de la Concepción. In April a pinky white asphodel, *Asphodelus fistulosus*, will be seen growing in quantity behind the barbed wire along this stretch and there are also a few thorny bushes of the Sodom Apple, *Solanum sodomaeum*.

La Línea, at first sight a rather unattractive town, is the kind of place that grows upon one after repeated acquaintance. There are some excellent shops, a fine bullring and a multiplicity of bars and small eating places which offer a wide variety of liquor and good food. I would particularly recommend Dick's Bar whose owner, a person of great charm, is a real mine of information. Try also such local gastronomic specialities as roast partridge or chicken cooked in garlic. The town flares into life during the annual *feria* week in July, when the whole population gets down to serious jollifications by means of the fair, endless processions and colourful bullfights in which the most famous matadors in the country participate.

From La Línea the road leads along the seashore towards the village of El Campamento, where there are many interesting plants to be found on or around the golf course. In October the blue flowers of the Mandrake, *Mandragora officinarum*, are the first to appear and are closely followed by myriads of the dainty snowflakes, *Leucojum autumnale*. By December the banks of the water courses are brightened by the white stars of a small daffodil, *Narcissus serotinus*, which has a wide distribution through the Mediterranean region. In a few thickets, which even the goats have not penetrated, there are large plants with as many as six flowers on the stem. This species is of considerable botanic interest, since it is believed to be close to the ancestral plant from which all the other species of *Narcissus* have developed. Its own origins are obscure, but it certainly has a close affinity to another amaryllid, *Tapeinanthus humilis*, with which it very occasionally crosses to form the rare hybrid "*Carregnoa dubia*". I have found one specimen and only two other reports of the cross are known.

Growing nearby, almost awash in silt and clay, is another daffodil, *Narcissus viridiflorus*, surely the most extraordinary of its race, whose spidery green flowers, as many as six on a stem, are intensely scented but, due to their colour, difficult to find. The plant is hysteranthous, that is its leaves are very rarely produced at the same time as the flowers. Further, the bulbs frequently remain dormant for several years on end. It hybridises with *N. serotinus*; the offspring bearing yellowy green flowers and showing most of the characteristics of *N. viridiflorus*. Both species are literally baked every summer, so it is scarcely surprising that they flower with difficulty in England.

## SIERRA CARBONERA

Behind the golf course the Sierra Carbonera rises to nearly 1,000 feet, its culminating point being known as the Queen of Spain's chair ever since this lady was ensconced there to view the capture of Gibraltar following an assault by the Franco-Spanish forces; a truly classic instance of counting chickens before they have hatched. It is a fine area for botanising, there being many orchid species and along the summit ridge *Tulipa australis* grows in pockets of gritty acid soil amongst the rocks. This flowers during April and the curved stems and long pointed flower heads are reminiscent of striking snakes. The beautiful coral buds rarely open before midday and, when they do, the effect of the shining yellow stars is most striking. This is a very distinct form of a widely distributed and variable species, and very different from *T. celsiana* found in the Sierra Nevada and Morocco. (*Editor's note—Readers are warned to keep well clear of the missile sites*).

## ROMAN RUINS AT CARTEYA

At the attractive old hilltop village of San Roque our road splits eastwards up to the *Costa del Sol* and Málaga, westwards to Algeciras and Cádiz. A mile along the latter, a left-hand turning leads to the coast at Guadarranque where lie the extensive ruins of the Roman city of Carteya, once a port of historic importance, especially during the Punic Wars. On the way a violet flowered form of *Anemone coronaria* may be found on a few banks; once apparently common in the area, it is now extremely rare. The ruins themselves have scarcely been touched and further excavations would undoubtedly be rewarding, judging by the small display of artifacts from this site in the Madrid Archaeological Museum.

Backtracking to the main road there is a clearly marked sign pointing towards Jimena de la Frontera which is well worth a visit. Many towns and villages in Andalucía carry the appendage *de la Frontera*. This is a legacy from the days when they lay close to, or on the frontiers between Christian and Moorish territory.

This road passes by San Roque railway station and then follows the valley of the Rio Guadarranque up to the village of Almoraima. Here there are corkworks, fields of cotton and citrus, and in marshland hereabouts can be found *Narcissus viridiflorus*, *Astragalus alopecuroides* and a fine tall millfoil, probably a large form of *Achillea millefolium*. From the station it is possible to go on a day's excursion up to Ronda by Diesel car. This is most exciting for, beyond Jimena, the railway enters the upper gorges of the Rio Guadiaro which are spectacular, to say the least. In between dodging in and out of the tunnels through the limestone cliffs, one can see places where the river has cut a passage several hundred feet deep and only thirty wide. These gorges may be explored on foot from Gaucin Station as the road can be dangerous.

Returning to Almoraima one notices numerous storks nests, including one on a tall oak tree at the entrance to the village, the progress of whose occupants we used to follow closely. Being so heavily wooded this is a wonderful area for birds, many of them on their migratory routes. Hoopoes and the occasional rollers abound and at dawn, in early summer, the bird chorus is quite fascinating, especially the strange and lovely song of the golden orioles which, once heard, can never be forgotten. The raptors are well represented too by several species of eagle and both the African and Egyptian vulture.

## CASTELLAR DE LA FRONTERA

In Almoraima a turning leads off to Castellar de la Frontera, which is a perfectly preserved Moorish fortified village close by. On either side must be some of the largest cork trees in the peninsular, some very old judging by the quantities of fern growing in their crutches and hollows. Cork growing is extremely profitable due to the varied uses to which this product is put by modern industry. It is, however, a lengthy business because the trees do not become really productive until they are at least fifty years old. The forests are worked in sections according to a seven-year cycle which is the usual period needed for

regrowth. Stripping takes place in August and it is an absorbing sight watching the *peones* neatly removing the bark from each tree with their special two-bladed knives in a matter of minutes. A walk down through the woods to the river can be delightful in the early months of the year and, in damp ground, tall bushes of a heath, *Erica mediterranea*, are most colourful. This is a most floriferous species, the pink bells each with a violet calyx being very beautiful. In the actual river bed tiny snowflakes poke out of tangled oleander roots. Through the trees there is an impressive first view of Castellar perched high up on a steep isolated hill. To the left the Rio Guadarranque cuts through the sandstone ridge and forms a deep gorge into which one gazes from a hairpin bend on the road above. A dam has been constructed here and the deep reservoir should be of very considerable economic benefit to the district. From this vantage point it is but a short walking distance to the village and there are ideal sites for a picnic, when a small drop of the local *vino* can be of the greatest assistance in helping appreciate the fine scenery. Nearby and of common occurrence throughout the whole district, are a line of isolated sandstone rocks of Jurassic origin. These are the home of a number of different coloured forms of the hoop-petticoat daffodil, *Narcissus bulbocodium*, which grow in the black humus that has collected in the nooks and crannies.

Professional botanists are by no means agreed on their nomenclature. At Castellar the white form is found and, from late December, dainty ice-white blooms may be seen poking out of their well-chosen eyries and it needs nimble legs to get at them. This currently goes under the name of *Narcissus cantabricus* var. *cantabricus*.

It is possible to park one's car in a small yard immediately below the single gateway leading into the village which is entered along a narrow cobbled roadway that passes through a small outer bastion. Worth noting are a worn coat of arms in stone above the lintel and lesser kestrels nesting in the walls above. The original Moorish stronghold which is part of, and built above the gate, should be explored. The construction and lay-out is most interesting and from the roof on a clear day there is a staggering vista through a graceful arch of Gibraltar, the Straits and the North African Rif.

Immediately behind lies the village, enclosed in a perimeter of a quarter of a mile of walls, into which are built three square defensive towers. The neat tiled houses, narrow streets and white-washed walls, convey an atmosphere all of their own and it would be instructive and probably salutary, if one had the leisure to study the daily life of a poor but obviously happy little community.

It is possible to reach Jimena direct, by means of a secondary road, by whose side the tiny yellow stars of *Tapeinanthus humilis* may be espied in December. A little further down the marshes are filled with tall purple spikes of *Orchis laxiflora* in March.

Back again at Almoraima the Jimena road passes through several miles of undulating country covered by extensive corkwoods and at Castellar railway station a rough road leads to the coast at Sotogrande. It is worth remarking on a peculiar feature of this region, namely that all the railway stations are at a considerable distance from the towns and villages that they serve. This must be because these are almost invariably sited in a defensive position on top of some hill or rocky feature. It was along this aforesaid road that I found "Carregnoa dubia", the rare hybrid between *Narcissus serotinus* and *Tapeinanthus humilis*. In the dry gravelly soil there are an astonishing variety of orchids, mostly *Ophrys* and *Serapias* species. Some of the hybrid swarms produced through liaisons between *Ophrys fusca*, *O. scolopax*, *O. apifera* and *O. tenthredinifera* show an amazing range in shape, colour and markings. Also in this area, there is an extremely dense *maquis* compiled of Kermes oak, *Quercus coccifera*, *Pistacia lentiscus* and dreadful yellow prickles, like *Calicotome villosa* and *Genista triacanthos*, both are outstandingly beautiful when in flower. In small clearings there are several species of thyme and *Globularia alypum*, which produces little blue buttonheads for flowers. Geologically too, this area must be of interest, since there are frequent shingle beds of smooth pebbles and fossilised oyster shells, showing that once they were beaches. The forest around Castellar station

is an ideal place for picnics in the spring months and numerous bulbous species are to be found in the grassy glades. Two fine plants are a gromwell, *Lithospermum diffusum* (*L. prostratum* var. *erectum*), with intensely blue flowers and *Cistus libanotis*, which is absolutely covered by canary yellow flowers in March; an invaluable shrub were it hardy in England.

#### JIMENA DE LA FRONTERA

A few miles further along the Rio Hozgarganta is crossed and its wide fertile valley leads to Jimena. This is a truly wonderful area for massed displays of colour throughout the spring. One April, a blue sea of the tall branched Love-in-the-Mist, *Nigella hispanica*, was quite unforgettable, other blue flowers like *Anchusa azurea* and *Borago officinalis* are ubiquitous. At about the same time the cornfields are bedecked with the purple corn-flag, *Gladiolus italicus* (*G. segetum*), and *Iris xiphium*, whose stately blue spikes are almost identical to the florist's Dutch Iris which was raised from it. Unfortunately, they are being overpicked and some sort of legislation will undoubtedly be needed to save them from eventual extinction. During November I often used to come here just to look at the flocks of storks and cattle egrets. Sometimes, too, a fine crop of mushrooms could be gathered from the lush green fields which are dotted everywhere at this time with the crinkly-leaved rosettes of the bluish Mandrake.

After passing through Jimena station with its attractive old monastery, one is confronted by Jimena itself built on the steep slopes of an isolated ridge overlooking the river. On the summit, the old Moorish fort is largely in ruins but there is a fine gateway. Apparently, the fortifications were much damaged and the guns destroyed by the French during the Peninsular War. Due to the narrow streets and sharp corners, it is perhaps wiser not to drive into the town; better rather to park below and walk round in the evening when everything comes to life and the cobbles echo with shouts, song, and the clatter of hooves and heavy boots. At this time everyone is returning from work and a close look at the panniers of their animals will reveal much of their way of life; and a hard one it must be, although I have never seen any signs of discontent.

Jimena indeed is a very typical Andalusian town; spotlessly clean little houses brightened by innumerable pot plants, both inside and out and cheerful, rugged people who, although now completely assimilated by the Spanish are quite clearly descended from the Moriscos, those Moors who after their conquest, chose to remain in Spain and outwardly at least embrace the Christian faith. This connection becomes very obvious after visiting such towns as Chechouan and Tetouan in the Rif, where even their chimneys are identical.

Unfortunately, there is some poverty, though it generally has to be looked for, and in Jimena there is a squalid area immediately below the fort where the stench from accumulated filth is indescribable. At the present rate of progress this will happily soon become a thing of the past, for whatever opinions one may have of General Franco's authoritarian regime, it has brought the country nearly thirty years of peace, and to the point of economic breakthrough when the standard of living will improve materially. It is doubtful whether anybody else could have done this, and anyone who has travelled widely in Spain and seen the dearth of natural resources (those available being often widely scattered) cannot but be impressed by what has already been achieved.

#### HOZGARGANTA GORGE

A little beyond Jimena a side road leads off to the left and over a shoulder of the hill into the gorge of the Rio Hozgarganta. This used to be one of my favourite haunts, for one could be sure of meeting nobody except the occasional swineherd or charcoal burner and local people on their lone tramp to market. It is the wildest country imaginable; dense corkwoods, countless great crags and knife-like ridges extending for miles in all directions and is, needless to say, a wonderful place for wildlife.

In January a perch in the sun on the rocks above the gorge makes a perfect spot for a picnic where numerous clumps of the lovely heath, *Erica australis*,



lend colour to the landscape. This species displays a wide range of colour from pink to red and, despite diligent search, I have never found the white form "Mr. Robert", which was found through chance by the Williams family near Algeciras many years ago. Growing in the rocks is another form of white daffodil. This is dwarfier than any of the others and, in many of the blooms, the mouth of the corona is flared open like a wide ruff, from which the stamens project about a quarter of an inch. It is very similar to a named variety *Narcissus cantabricus* var. *petunioides*. The road improves somewhat as it penetrates deeper into the defile and in April there is fine swimming to be had in the deep pools of the river overhung by pink oleander. In the grass verges we found big groups of the Mirror Orchid, *Ophrys speculum*—unmistakable with its blue centred hair-edged lip—and a strangely beautiful parasite, *Cytinus hypocistis*, growing on the roots of *Cistus salviifolius*. This plant belongs to the *Rafflesia* family, whose namesake has the distinction of possessing the largest known flowers in the world. *Cytinus* has globular fleshy heads of bright lemon flowers encircled by bright red scales.

Pursuing this route one will eventually come to Ubrique which is a sort of Spanish Shangri-la, of which more anon, but this is only recommended to those of an adventuresome mind, who can take the untoward and breakdowns in their stride. However, before this is Alcalá de los Gazules which can be reached by an even more desperate track from a turning beyond Las Cañillas. Along this route there is some magnificent scenery, one December I found the finest Strawberry Trees that I have ever seen—simply laden with their beguiling red fruit. This species, *Arbutus unedo*, has the unusual distinction of carrying its flowers and fruit at the same time. The fruit are often sold in the local markets, but they are a great disappointment and taste insipid and rather gritty.

#### LOS BARRIOS

If one now starts again at San Roque and travels westwards on the main road a few miles short of Algeciras a road branches off inland to Jerez. This can be visited in a day, although rather more time is required if the delights of this pleasant city are to be properly sampled. It is very much a secondary road and the journey takes longer than by travelling along the coast by way of Cádiz. Nevertheless, it should be used, one way or the other, in order not to miss the full gamut of Andalusian countryside through which it passes.

The first and last place for many miles is the small town of Los Barrios which possesses an attractive church. Beyond, the road plunges into a long stretch of mountainous country clothed in corkwoods before reaching Alcalá de los Gazules, some thirty-five miles away. This district is as fine a hunting ground as one could wish for botanising; there is a wide range in the flora, and possibly, even new forms of hoop-petticoat daffodils waiting to be discovered.

During my time at Gibraltar I came to know these hills extremely well through innumerable ramblings, but it was hard work as, once above forest level there is a thick prickly *maquis*—waist high which is very tedious to get through. Certainly there are paths, but here local knowledge is almost essential and there is a grave danger of ending up where one started.

A few miles beyond Los Barrios the Palmones river joins the Rio de las Cañas and this is crossed at the Puente de las Cañas, where there is the start of a grand walk following the river into a series of small gorges. There are some excellent natural swimming pools which are a haunt of kingfishers and terrapins; the latter an aquatic species of tortoise which are amusing to watch splashing about in the shallows. Near to here is a single locality where a lemon coloured form of a hoop-petticoat daffodil dwells. Found thus, only a few miles from the yellow and white forms, there is the strongest suspicion that it is a hybrid between them. The plant favours ledges with a northern aspect where it grows amidst green mosses and silvery lichens and is the daintiest thing imaginable when it flowers in early January. Its chosen fastness is a great flat-topped rock several hundred feet high and there is only one weak link in the defences whereby one can ascend it. Needless to say, the locals have found this and made some fine

hauls of wild honey, judging by the smoke-blistered rocks underneath one or two wild bee nests in the crevices.

Also found here, and nowhere else roundabout that I know of, is *Anthericum liliago*, which sends up graceful racemes of white starry flowers from clumps of rush-like leaves in April. This citadel is a breeding site of eagles and vultures and, on one occasion, I succeeded in reaching a huge twiggy nest of the latter. Seldom have I seen a more revolting sight. Imagine a plucked turkey, or a baby pterodactyl, and this is exactly what this monstrous chick looked like. Cold goggling eyes stared and there was a loathsome odour from the remains of regurgitated food. Meanwhile, the mother circled round uttering shrill cries but otherwise made no attempt to molest me. It appears that only one egg is hatched because, were there more, the stronger chick would inevitably push out its weaker brethren.

From the Puente de las Cañas there is a road striking off to Facinas some twenty miles to the west; the surface is terrible but, in mountaineering parlance, it will just go if taken gently. It is all too easy to say some hard things about the state of the roads in Andalucía, but it must be remembered that it is a poor province, that local traffic is tiny and that the capital cost of maintaining roads over such rugged country, where there is a very rapid drain-off after heavy rainfall, is extremely high. This particular road is of some historical interest because it was the way taken by Wellington's men to the bloody battle of Barrosa in 1811 and one can imagine the labour of hauling cannon over such terrain.

#### CAVE DRAWINGS

A little way along, and just off the road, are some caves with a number of small paintings done in ochre which aroused great scientific interest some years ago. However, I must confess that they seemed to me more like Sherlock Holmes' famous dancing-men code, than anything else. There are, however, some really fine cave drawings at Cueva del Tajo de los Figuras near Benalup de Sidonia between Vejer de la Frontera and Medina-Sidonia, and these are discussed in great detail by a book in the Gibraltar library. The Abbé Breuil, a leading expert in this field, made a close study of these drawings some years ago but was unable to reach any firm conclusion as to who was responsible for them, due mainly to a lack of any affinity in style with others of roughly the same period further north. So we have an intriguing historical puzzle waiting to be solved; of a people probably coming from North Africa who stayed, left their pictures and passed on to nobody knows whither.

In February and March the roadside is a natural garden of yellow flowering leguminous shrubs, featuring various *Cystisus* and *Sarothamnus* species, *Teline* (*Genista*) *linifolia* and *Genista cinerea* of fine shape and gloriously scented, and the lovely citron form of *Calicotome villosa* (*Calycotome infesta*).

#### SIERRA DEL NIÑO

At Cortijo de Ojén there is a path leading up to the top of the Sierra de Niño behind. At first, this winds up through cork woods where one is almost bound to run into a herd of the local breed of chocolate coloured swine whose squeals and grunts can be quite frightening, until one discovers their true origin. Enormous quantities of acorns provide a feast for them in the autumn and the smoked hams produced locally are a great delicacy, surpassed only by those hailing from the Sierra de Vibora further north where the pigs are said to enjoy their diet of vipers. A little further on Strawberry Trees and green oaks, *Quercus fruticosa*, become rather more common and there are breaks in the forest where shrubs like *Erica australis*, *Halimium ocymoides*, *Chamaespartium tridentatum* (*Genistella tridentata*) and Ling form a dense low cover.

Sooner or later too, one will meet charcoal burners or stumble on to one of their smoking pyres.

Throughout the country districts of Andalucía charcoal is the normal fuel used for cooking purposes because coal is either unobtainable or prohibitive in

cost, due to the long haul from the mines in the north. Their method of charcoal manufacture is to dig a large pit which is then filled with green logs—carefully stacked and the whole covered by clay and soil. After firing, the heap smoulders for three or four weeks and is then opened when the huge lumps of charcoal are taken down by donkey to be collected and sold.

There are many fine ferns, such as the graceful Royal fern, *Osmunda regalis*, that grows in the river beds half submerged in silt and clay, and the curious Hare's-Foot fern, *Davallia canariensis*, which is happiest among the mosses on the trunks of the evergreen oaks. At about 1,500 feet the forest thins out into low scrub and if, in February, one looks carefully, one may see the greenish brown bells of *Fritillaria hispanica* carried on foot high stems. The summit consists of a long narrow plateau with a bold line of crags which may only be approached through dense thickets of *Cistus populifolius* whose succession of white flowers in April are not so attractive as the bright red bracts round their buds. Here and there are small grassy clearings where light purple *Crocus clusii* and *Gagea hispanica* with yellow starred sprays, may be found. The crags themselves have been weathered into some weird shapes and in one place there is a wonderful natural bridge with a fifty-foot span. Growing lower down in rock fissures on the sheltered side are fine specimens of the Sweet Bay, *Laurus nobilis* and *Viburnum tinus*. Only here, in their natural setting, can their true beauty be appreciated; there being little resemblance to their grimy and mutilated cousins so often seen in British gardens. In late March every nook and cranny is crammed full of yellow hoop-petticoat daffodils and the dainty blue bells of *Romulea bulbocodium* which to me is just as fine as *R. thodei*—one of the best from South Africa.

It is simpler to return to the car by the same path. Continuing the journey towards the coast, a mile or so short of the military post at Facinas, is a scrub-covered plain where *Iris filifolia* and *Tulipa australis* are a colourful spectacle during April and early May.

If, however, one returns to the Puente de la Cañas and continues north on the main road, our route climbs up the side of the valley through wild olives draped with *Clematis cirrhosa* and *Rosa sempervirens*—a really rather handsome rambler covering itself with corymbs of white flowers in late April. There are then some well watered meadows which are white with tazzeta daffodils early in the new year and, two months later, become a riot of colour when splendid annuals like blue *Echium creticum*, carmine *Hedysarum coronarium* and the dark purple *Cerinth major* var. *purpurascens*, are at their best. In the damper ground is the wild flag, *Iris pseudacorus*, *Delphinium staphisagria* which may reach six feet, and a fine sage, *Salvia bicolor*, whose tall stems carry clammy branching spikes of bluish-violet flowers in May.

#### SIERRA BLANQUILLA

Entering the cork country again one's attention is bound to be diverted by a giant detached rock shaped like a skull, known locally as the Devil's Eye, in the vicinity of which there are many good sites for a picnic. This rock, and many others round about, support colonies of yellow daffodils resembling *Narcissus bulbocodium* subsp. *bulbocodium* var. *conspicuus*, *Gladiolus illyricus* and *Dipcadi serotinum*, an unusual member of the lily family like a bluebell but with buff-coloured flowers. There is a pretty little river valley half a mile down the hill where deep pools are overhung by the pink-flowered form of *Viburnum tinus* and *Rhododendron ponticum* var. *baeticum* which really does look extremely beautiful in this setting. I must confess that I was a little surprised to find this species so far south. However, the rainfall is about right and it is obviously confined to this small area of south-western Spain and certainly does not grow in adjacent North Africa.

Walks into the Sierra Blanquilla from this point are rewarding at any time during the cooler months, and on more than one occasion I have come across red deer amongst the bracken higher up. There is a great deal of the white flowered Tree heath, *Erica arborea*, and frequently one comes across heaps of their hard

club-shaped roots which, though once in demand for pipe making, are probably now only used for making charcoal. Interesting plants and fairly common. Here can be found an unusual blue climbing milkwort, *Polygala microphylla*, *Aristolochia longa*, with greenish brown pitchers and a tuberous root, the insectivorous *Drosophyllum lusitanicum* whose yellow cistaceous looking flowers are very pretty, *Astragalus lusitanicus* and *Tuberaria guttata*, again with yellow flowers.

#### ALCALA DE LOS GAZULES

And so, at last, through some fine country to Alcalá de los Gazules which is built on a hill above a small river valley. There is a nice little square lined with orange trees and it is pleasant to sit in the sun outside one of the bars watching the world go by. The enormous golden fruit on these trees look delicious but do not be taken in, for they are Seville Oranges and extremely bitter. Nobody in Alcalá will be able to enlighten one on *los Gazules* but, after some research, I read in an old book that they were a tribe who were once settled there. It is a quaint place altogether and extremely old. A walk up through the steep narrow alleys to the old Moorish fort and church at the top is pleasant in the evening. A little beyond Alcalá, there are considerable deposits of mica whose scintillations frequently catch the eye and, on a hillside near the *camíneros*—or roadmen's house, one is unlikely to miss the blue flowers of *Iris planifolia* in February. It is still quite a distance to Medina-Sidonia which will be described in the following chapter.

#### ALGECIRAS

Algeciras is the southern railway terminus of Spain. It is also a trans-atlantic port where American liners call regularly and whose passengers are then whisked up overnight in the boat train to Madrid. Many Americans start their grand tour of Europe here and I must confess to a certain feeling of pity after having talked to numbers of them. The ruthless efficiency of the travel agencies transports them from place to place according to a relentless and exhausting schedule, so that impressions gained cannot fail to be blurred and inaccurate; how much better to visit fewer countries more thoroughly. The Spaniards also run an extremely good ferry service across the straits to Tanger and Ceuta (Sebta) and the latter route is by far and away the cheapest and quickest means of reaching North Africa.

Viewed from seaward, Algeciras is a most attractive town; the long spacious sea front, palm trees and white houses merging in perfectly with the dark rugged Sierra de Luna behind. The main square is quite delightful and is laid out in formal Spanish style with symmetrical flower beds, fountains and blue-tiled seats beneath tall Canary palms, *Phoenix canariensis*.

Ensnared here in the cool of a summer evening, one may be assailed by the heavy scent of the *Dama de Noche*, *Cestrum parqui*, and in this vein, one's thoughts are stimulated by the chattering throngs of girls showing off their charms to their many youthful admirers. In this part of Spain the chaperon system is still very much in vogue and, by the time a couple are walking out together, they are almost at the altar.

There are some excellent hotels. My own favourite is the British-owned *Reina Christina* which is run by a charming couple who, amongst their many other achievements, have turned the extensive garden into a small paradise by using a blend of both English and Spanish styles.

There is a good drive along a coastal road to the Punta del Carnero lighthouse by way of a sandy beach—the Playa de Getares. From the lighthouse, with its old Mulberry Tree, there is a lovely view of the Straits and Gibraltar itself looks imposing from this angle.

It is possible to walk along the coast towards Tarifa but the foreshore is rocky. This part of the coast is still a skin diver's paradise and I have, myself, had a go at some of the big groupers in their dark underwater caverns. This is a very dry area and although there is plenty of colour early in the year, it soon fades and there is only the regal blue Cardoon, *Carduncellus caeruleus*, left in May.

These are so spiny that they are best left to the Spaniards who cut them young for the kitchen. Another local culinary favourite is the *Palmetto*, *Chamaerops humilis*, whose young stems are hacked out and the fibrous bark pared off to reveal the white flesh that is cooked and eaten. Two attractive shrubs common here, all along the coast and some way inland, are a pink Jerusalem Sage, *Phlomis purpurea*, and *Daphne gnidium*, which has evergreen leaves and white scented flowers in terminal clusters, followed by orange berries. The Chaste Tree, *Vitex agnus-castus*, is found wild in the vicinity of Algeciras, never far from the sea and, in July, it is difficult to find anything lovelier than the waving violet racemes and grey felt-like leaves.

Several roads lead to the foot of the *sierra* behind Algeciras where there are the remains of an aqueduct, probably Roman in origin. *Iris fontanessii* used to grow here, but I have never found it. However, in the course of one search I saw *Veronica beccabunga* and *Myosotis sylvatica* growing in marshland and *Simethis bicolor*, an unexciting liliaceous species growing in some woods.

From the aqueduct one can see a deep valley before one that leads into the heart of the *sierra* and it is worthwhile walking up to the old mill which is still in working order. Beyond a path follows the stream and, at Christmas, this can be a delightful ramble, though hard work. There will be plenty of crocus and the two species of Lentisc, *Pistacia terebinthus* and *P. lentiscus*, both of some economic value, are most colourful in berry and make a useful substitute for holly. As a matter of fact, a form of holly, but with few berries, grows near the top of this *sierra*, so does *Daphne laureola* var. *latifolia* and both are also found in the Middle Atlas of Morocco.

#### FERIA AND BULLFIGHTS

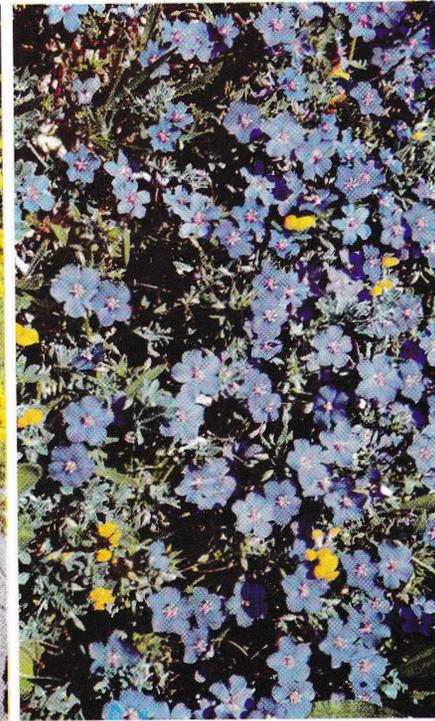
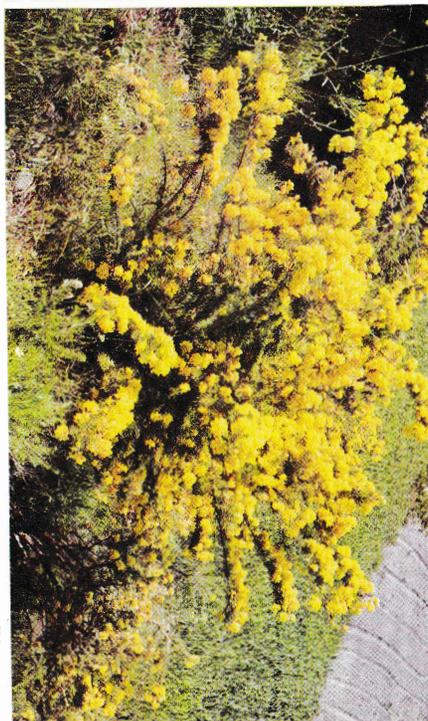
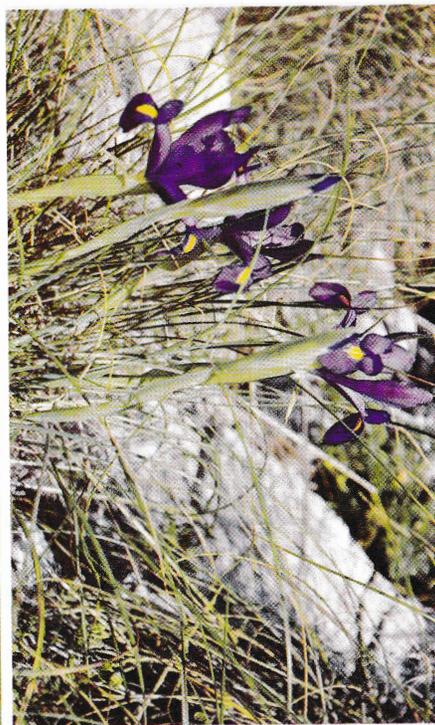
One can scarcely leave Algeciras without a word about the annual *feria* which takes place in early July and is an extremely good one. All the streets are gaily decorated with flags and streamers and, at night, are illuminated by great arches and heraldic designs outlined in coloured lights. Long lines of booths are erected on the sidewalks and these sell everything from sweetmeats to the dreadful type of useless Victoriana, so beloved by Andalusians. The fair itself covers many acres, including the fine public gardens and offers every kind of entertainment from those fearsome mechanical contraptions that upend the stomach, to such old favourites as the tunnel of love where quite the funniest skeletons ever, leer out as one lumbers through it in small trucks. A most endearing feature of the Spanish is their love of children for whom they will cheerfully sacrifice everything, so much so, that one could well imagine them spoiled by so much attention but instead, they are invariably well-behaved and it is rare even to hear a harsh word used against them.

The Spaniards possess a wonderful capacity for enjoying themselves in a very simple and direct manner and the great hubbub from the fair punctuated by the frequent roars from the bullring is ample proof of this. The bullring is a famous one where I have experienced some exciting moments and, whatever one's opinion on this sport, it is an insensitive person indeed, who cannot feel the electric atmosphere inside the ring.

Like horseracing, there are many fine points in bullfighting and the Spanish fans or *aficionados* are second to none in their appreciation of them and of giving vent to their praise, or disapprobation, in no uncertain manner. I do not consider the Spaniards a cruel race—witness their general good treatment of animals, but the Andalusians, in particular, do have a morbid taste for the tragic and sanguinary, as evidenced in their passion for bullfights and the gruesome rites of Holy Week. This surely is a legacy of environment; a moulding shaped by their troubled history and a climate of harsh extremes. Their life too, is still a hard one. Thus, it is scarcely surprising that nobody spares a thought for the bull, whose life, save all but the last twenty minutes, is a great deal pleasanter than their own.

Bullfighting is certainly no worse than any of the bloodsports practised in England and the behaviour of the *aficionados* is a great deal better than that of some English football crowds. Nevertheless, there are certain features that are

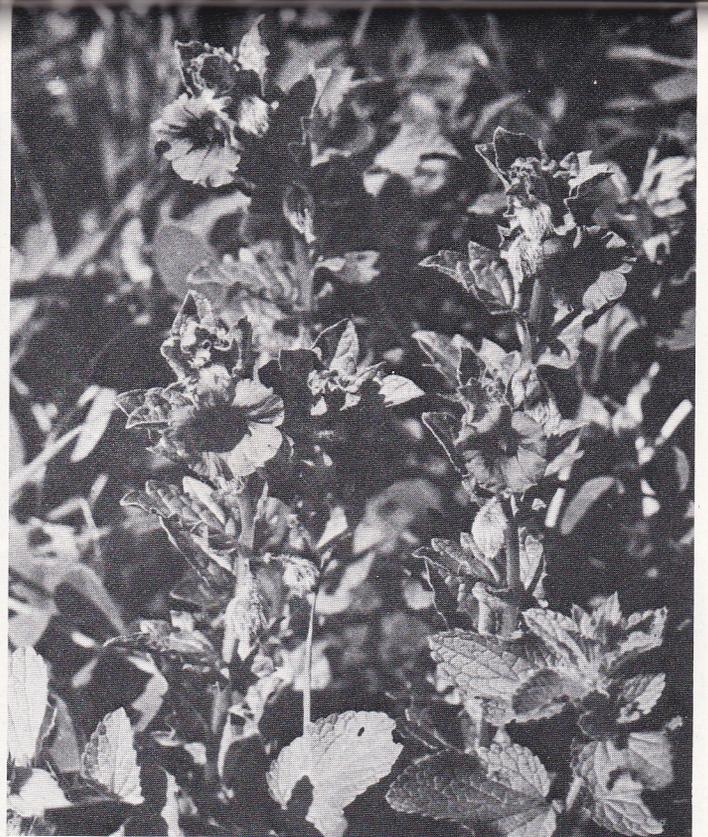
(Top left)—*Iris filifolia*, here growing at the top of Gibraltar, bears its violet flowers in May on several mountains in the Campo area. (Top right)—*Anagallis monelli* subsp. *hifolia* produces its large brilliant blue flowers amongst the dunes at Punta Paloma during April. (Lower left)—*Paeonia brotteri* flowering at Antequerra in April and (Lower right)—*Adenocarpus deserticorns*, near Terevel, produces sweetly scented lemon-coloured flowers in May.





Two plants of moist localities. (Left)—*Arundo donax*, the Giant reed, easily reaches 15 feet. Resembling a bamboo or Sugar Cane, it is common in Andalusia and is here growing near Facinas. (Above)—*Scrophularia sambucifolia* is a particularly handsome figwort. The orange-red bells are produced in April and are variable in the intensity of their colour.

51



(Left)—*Lavandula stoechas*, the French lavender, carries a spectacular "cockscorn" of mauve bracts on each compact head of dark violet-purple flowers. (Above)—A very striking and beautiful solanaceous annual, *Triguera ambrosiaca* produces violet flowers with golden centres in April. Primarily a North African plant, it is found very locally in the extreme south of Andalusia.

50



The Bermuda Buttercup, *Oxalis pes-caprae*, neither comes from Bermuda nor is it a buttercup. Native to Cape Province in South Africa, this very handsome plant with butter-yellow flowers has now become an extremely serious weed throughout the Mediterranean. Its proliferation is due partly to seed but mainly to the large quantity of subterranean bulbils formed on the rootstock. The common form is the single yellow (*above*) but a multi-petalled variant (*below*) is locally frequent. This form is not so prolific since its sterility forces it to rely solely on vegetative reproduction. The multi-petalled form is much more compact in habit than the single and its flowers have a noticeably increased quantity of red pigmentation.

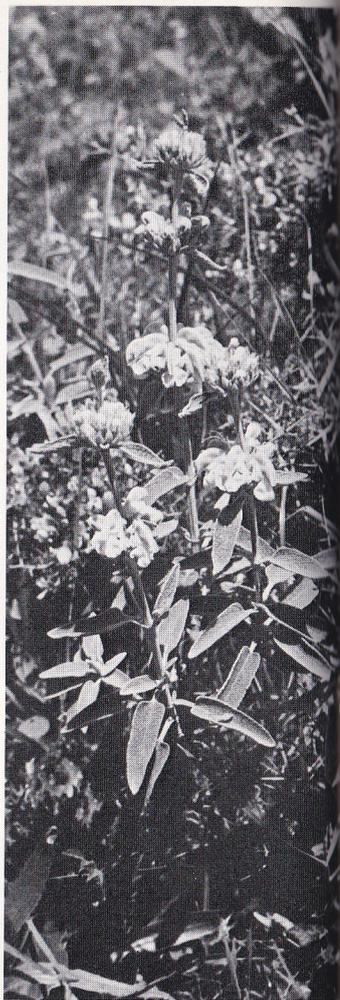


The Rock Roses are particularly well represented in Andalusia. *Cistus albidus* (*above*) is a dense shrub reaching three feet with greyish-white leaves. The large crumpled rose-pink flowers with a golden centre of stamens are borne in small groups at the end of the shoots. *Cistus salviifolius* (*below*) carries sage-like leaves on a low spreading bush. The clear white flowers are borne on long stalks. The buds are drooping and are usually solitary. Both these species, and most of the others that are native to the area, flower in April and May.





A rare plant of the stabilised areas of the Punta Paloma dune system is *Viola arborescens* (above), which is more curious than beautiful. It forms an untidy shrub that grows to two feet and carries pale blue-violet flowers in April. Later in the year cleistogamous flowers are also produced.



*Phlomis purpurea* (above) is a dwarf shrub common in Andalucia. It has soft grey velvety leaves and the whorls of pinkish-purple flowers are borne throughout the spring months. The form of *Tulipa australis* that is found in the Sierra Carbonera (left) is both striking and handsome. The young flower buds grow out of the leaves in a folded down position and resemble a snake about to strike. The pair in this photograph have straightened up prior to opening. The outside of the tepals is a bright red which contrasts dramatically with the golden-yellow of the rest of the flower.



Formerly known to horticulturists as *Retama*, this beautiful white broom (above) is now correctly named *Lygos monosperma*. Here seen on the Punta Paloma dune system, this large shrub which reaches 15 feet, carries racemes of deliciously fragrant white flowers throughout the early spring months. Also a plant of stabilised dunes is the Umbrella pine, *Pinus pinea* (below). This part of a large colony at Barbate de Franco is a good area for orchids and many other spring flowering bulbous plants.





The Spanish Fir, *Abies pinsapo* (above) is now restricted to a few small areas of limestone mountain in the Sierra de las Nieves near Ronda. Though rare in its natural habitat, it is commonly grown either as an ornamental or for timber elsewhere in Europe. Something of a curiosity, *Rhododendron ponticum* (below) has its main distribution in Asia Minor but a small outlier in Andalucía 1,200 miles from its main colonies. The form here, photographed in the Sierra de Luna behind Algeciras, is usually referred to as *R. ponticum* var. *baeticum*.



objectionable, when considered in a calmer atmosphere. Firstly, let us consider the *picador*, whose function is to so damage the neck muscles of the bull that its head drops sufficiently to enable the fatal swordthrust to be made after further play. He is always mounted on a blinkered padded horse, usually an old one whose vocal chords have been cut and it is all too obvious that this must be a terrifying experience for so sensitive an animal. Then there is the *pic*, or lance, itself which is a horrific weapon and of so crude a nature that many fights are ruined, due to the excessive damage and loss of blood caused by its insertions. So much so that the *aficionados*, who realise this, more often than not encourage the President to call the *picador* off.

Finally, there is the kill, which is accomplished by thrusting a sword at an angle into precisely the right place between the shoulder blades and joints of the spine; or with a dagger behind the horns. This is extremely difficult to achieve and many an otherwise thrilling fight is spoilt because the *matador* muffs the *coup de grâce* and ends with the degrading sight of a game beast being slowly skewered to death.

All of this could I feel be avoided and with no loss of skill and spectacle if the bull were despatched in a scientific manner and the *picador* dispensed with. Surely, it should not be difficult these days to select a drug which, introduced by means of the darts of the *banderilleros*, would have a similar effect on the neck muscles. Likewise, a swift poison, or immobiliser, could be used that would be immediately effective after a single sword thrust.

Having watched numerous bullfights I now believe that most bulls are too enraged to feel any pain until the final stages. Such an opinion, and my other proposals, may be provocative to some readers. However, I do ask them not to make the mistake of so many people who criticise bullfighting without ever having seen one.

It is some fifteen miles from Algeciras to Tarifa, the road climbing up a thousand feet to the shoulder of the *sierra* before starting a long winding descent. From the Puerto del Bujeo there is probably the finest of all views over the Straits and there is a pretty walk to some big rocks where masses of the little yellow hoop-petticoat daffodils make a brave show in early February. On the inland side *Narcissus viridiflorus* grows in damp ground between the corks and I found a yellow cupped *Narcissus* one December which I think may have been *Narcissus polyanthos*. Later this area will spring to life and, out of many species, I would select first, *Scrophularia sambucifolia* with orange-red flowers, to which I would award top marks if the flowers were only a little larger and secondly, *Scilla peruviana*. The latter is an interesting plant in that it flourishes in both boggy ground and on the eastern side of the Rock where the blue racemes may be seen poking out of crevices in the sheer rock faces during March. It is also a taxonomic misnomer never having been found in Peru.

*Tapeinanthus humilis* may be found near the big hairpin bend below the Puerto de Cabrito and, in mid-summer, a noble bugloss, *Echium (?) pomponium*, which sends up a tall candelabra like stem with disappointingly insignificant flowers. Amongst the *Palmetto* will be found the pink Gibraltar *Gladiolus communis*.

#### TARIFA

Tarifa, and the beautiful stretch of coastline westwards, is fraught with history and one could happily spend months trying to establish the exact locations of long-lost cities and famous battlefields. I am extremely fond of Tarifa and would place it high on my list of intriguing unspoilt places to visit in Andalucía. Just offshore lies a small island connected to the mainland by a causeway and this is the most southerly point of Europe, although unfortunately, being a fortified area, it cannot be visited. The town has had some desperate moments during a long history, particularly during the Moorish wars, when there were several sieges. In those days it was completely walled with twenty-six turrets, most of which are still standing and it is sad to see them in such a bad state of disrepair. The castle has, however, been renovated and is well worth walking round. It is named after Don Guzman, the famous commander during the great siege (c. 1300), who