

## A Carpet of Flowers.

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY W. N. REID.



NOT many of the butterfly visitors to Teneriffe have had an opportunity of witnessing the great *fiesta*, which is very justly the pride of the natives. It is in the Villa Orotava that the festival of flowers takes place—that beautiful, picturesque, and aristocratic old town which clings to the slope of the valley, right under the protecting wing of the majestic Peak.

It has been the custom for many years, on the feast of Corpus Christi, to bear the

kinds are assiduously collected in baskets from the inexhaustible gardens round about. After these have been sorted, according to colour, they are torn to pieces and converted into opulent heaps of fragrant petals.

At dawn, on the morning of the *fiesta*, moulds of wood and cardboard are placed in position; and, later on, the baskets of petals are brought forward by scores of willing workers. Then, patiently and skilfully, the practised “artists” begin to fill in the designs with glowing petals. The background—the full width of each street excepting the foot-



From a]

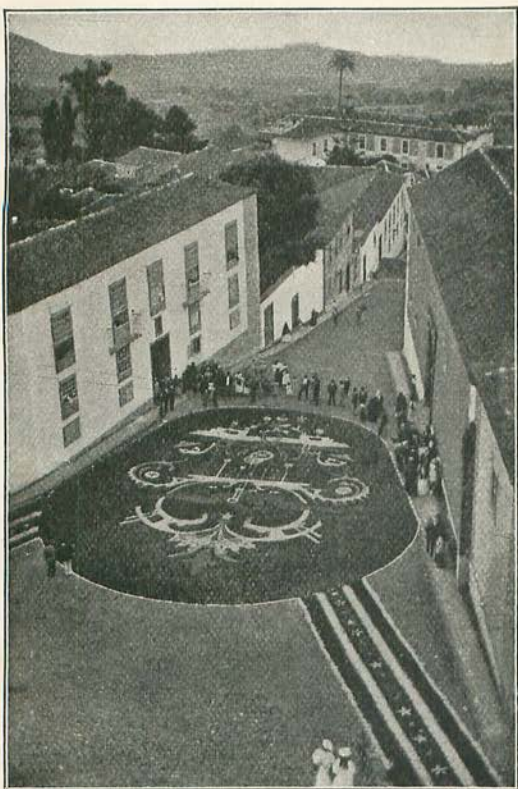
MAKING A PATTERN.

[Photograph.

Sacred Host in procession through the streets, returning to the quaint little church by a slightly different route. The streets traversed by this solemn procession are literally carpeted with flower-petals by the devout natives, whose extraordinary skill in working elegant designs is evidenced by the photographs reproduced in this article. For several weeks before the great day, flowers of all

paths—is usually of an effective dark-green, composed of chopped heather. The carpet-designs differ each year; and, as a rule, one design runs the whole length of a street, carried out in many combinations of colour.

The street corners are adorned with larger and more ambitious pictures, such as that seen in the second photograph. Several houses *en route*, too, are noted for their own



From a] ADMIRING A DESIGN. [Photograph.

individual efforts—notably, the residence of the Monteverde family, before which, on the great day itself, may be seen an admiring crowd, studying the beautiful allegorical and religious devices wrought in flower-petals on the ground. When all the colouring is deftly filled in, the moulds are withdrawn, leaving the always picturesque streets carpeted with many-coloured flowers. The artists' handiwork is then carefully sprinkled with water, so as to keep it fresh until the procession shall come and tread it almost out of existence. Of course, the steepness of the streets adds materially to the unique beauty of the entire spectacle, because many of the floral "carpets" seem to be hung, so to speak, before one's eyes.

For two or three hours or so an invariably well-conducted crowd, in gala dress, streams up and down the pavements, halting here and there to admire the more striking designs. Among these good folk one searches in vain for a single heavy-booted bar-

barian, longing to run amuck among the lovely flower-carpets.

The clever designers never dream of the possibility of such ebullitions among the gentle, pious holiday-makers; nor need they fear inclement weather.

As the hour approaches, most of the spectators betake themselves to the church, while the handful of strange visitors seek points of vantage—flat roofs and balconies—from which to view the procession and consequent immolation of the "carpets." The view of the whole function from above is truly lovely; the streets stretching away on every hand in the guise of gorgeous strips of variegated colour. At the little "broadway" beyond, perhaps, is an irregular square, on which is vividly shown, in flower petals, a white cock, a monstrous cross, a crown of thorns, a golden chalice wonderfully shaded, and many other emblems of the Passion—all standing out against a pure-white background. At last, just as the light begins to fade and the air becomes somewhat cooler, jingling bells announce that the procession has left the little church.



From a] A HALF-COMPLETED STREET. [Photograph.



From a]

A COMPLETED STREET—NEAR VIEW.

[Photograph.

Presently the entire pageant comes into view—white-robed boys, priests in splendid vestments, and serried lines of chanting, crimson-robed “Brothers of the Lord.” At this moment the different effects of colour are very striking, as the procession moves through the flower-carpeted street. Seen from above, the red kerchiefs which cover the women’s heads form a glowing mass, rivalling the widespread petals in variety, if not in beauty, of colouring.

But the procession has faded in the distance now; the band strikes up a march, and the crowd surges into its wake.

Coachmen rush off by side-streets to get their vehicles, and then one realizes, swiftly, the full extent of the floral holocaust. Nothing remains but a scattered, pitiful covering of bruised petals, from which a faint perfume is wafted up appealingly to those who have witnessed the strange scene.

A COMPLETED STREET—SEEN FROM ABOVE.  
From a Photograph.