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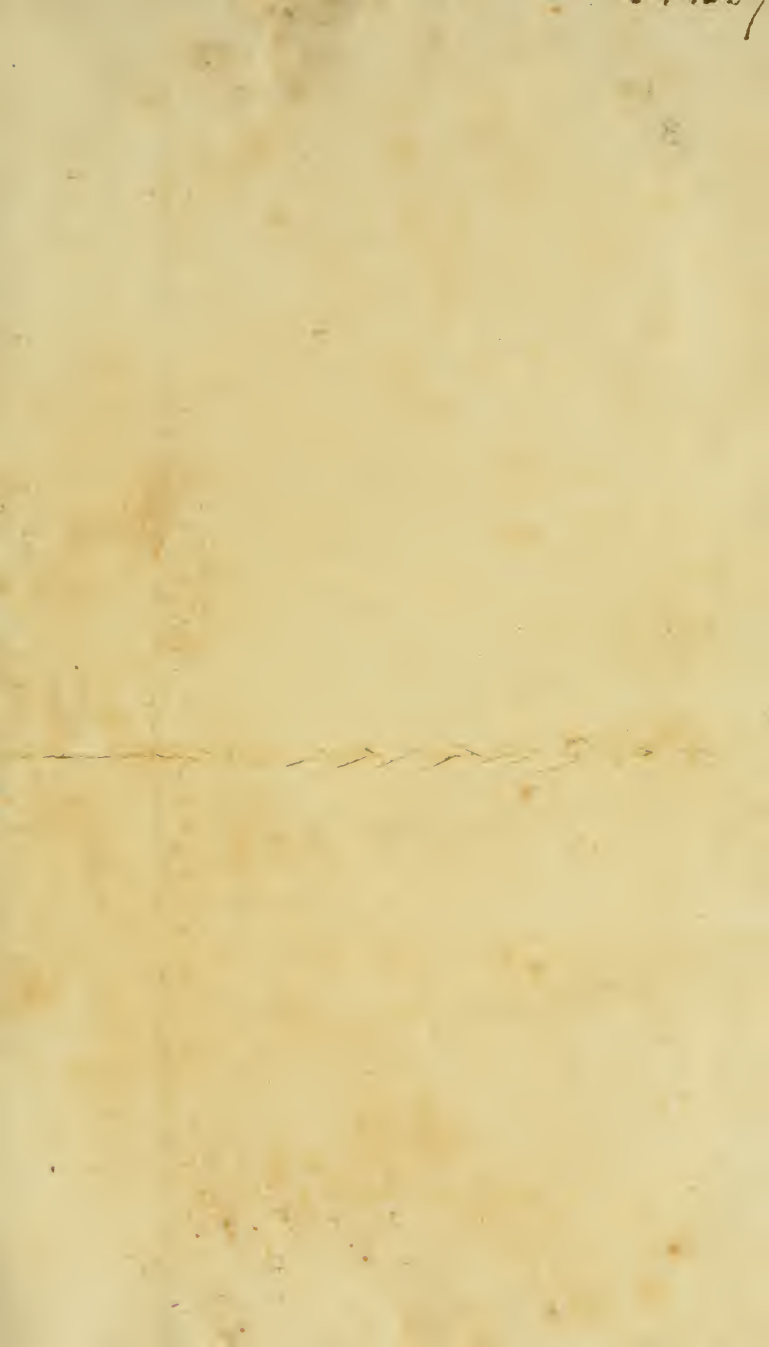
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THE RAMBLER IN NORTH AMERICA.

By CHARLES JOSEPH LATROBE.

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THE RAMBLER

IN MEXICO.

MDCCCXXXIV.

BY CHARLES JOSEPH LATROBE,

AUTHOR OF THE "ALPENSTOCK," ETC.

"Cœlum, non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt."  
HOR. EPIST.

NEW-YORK:

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1836.



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## CONTENTS.

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LETTER I.—The Gulf of Mexico—The Goelette Halcyon—Her Passengers and Crew—The Bravo—Sunday on board—A Calm—The Roadstead of Tampico—Prognostics of coming Evil—Morning before a Storm—The Custom House Boat—The Norte—The Goelette is driven out to Sea—The Halcyon returns to her anchoring Ground—The Bar—The River Panuco—Arrival at Tampico—A second Norte . page 7

LETTER II.—First Hours in New Spain—Description of Tampico—Inhabitants—Character of the Mexican—The European—The Indian—Military—The Fonda de la Bolza—Pastimes of the Inhabitants—Scenery of the Environs—The Bluff and the Rivers—Juliano—Insect hunting—A Cure of Enthusiasm—The Garapatos—A third Norte—Return of the Halcyon—Vexatious Detention—Pueblo Viejo—La Mira—La Fuente—The arriero Ant—We quit the Coast—Tampico Alta 22

LETTER III.—Halt at Tampico Alta—Physical Geography of New Spain—The Tierras calientes, Tierras templadas, and Tierras frias—Description of the Party—The Masters and Servants, Juliano, Miguel, Don Juan Espindola, Don Gaetano—Scenery—La Messa—"Aimable et execrable Tampico"—Osuhuama, an Indian Village—The Rancho—The Indian Cabin—The Inmates—Curious Scene—Indian Guile—Santa Catherina—The Hacienda—Chicontepec—A storm—Miguel, a *borracho*—Vale of the Sierra Madre—The Cura's Seat—The River Cañada—Great Defile of the Cañada; Features of—Splendid Scenery—Tlacolula—The Cura—The Mules—Miguel and Juliano—The Monte Penulco—The Tierras templadas . . . . . 38

LETTER IV.—Scenery of the Monte Penulco—The Tierras templadas—Juliano's Sickness and Defection—Zacualtipan; Description of—The Arriero's Home—A Day's Rest—Ruins—An awkward Adventure—San Bernardo—The Agave Americana—The Cactus—Singular Scenery—Rio Oquicalco—Rio Grande—The Mountain of San Ammonica—Hacienda Zoquital—Circuit to visit Regla—Puebla Grande de Mittan—Hacienda and Barranca of Regla—The Amalgamation Works—Real del Monte Company—The basaltic Rocks—The Cascade—Dangerous nocturnal Ascent to Real del Monte—The Town; Scenery in the Vicinity of—A Visit to the Mines—The various Shafts—Mode of working—An Indian Tale—Route from the Mines to the Capital—San Mateo Grande—The City of Mexico—Features of the neighbouring Plains . . . . . 59

LETTER V.—The City of Mexico—Dispersion of our Train, and Subsequent Arrangements—Pursuits of the Trio—Description of the Valley and City—The Environs of the City—The Calzadas—The Aqueducts—The Route of San Augustin—Optical Deception—Hacienda San Antonio; Description of—The Pedigral—Culture of the Maguey—Buildings of the Hacienda—San Augustin; View from its Environs—The Scenery of the Valley—Volcanoes and volcanic Phenomena, present and past—Routes from the Valley of Mexico—Tacuba—San Cosmo—Apopotla—The Cupressus disticha—Chapultepec—Guadalupe—The Patron Saint of Mexico—Nuestra Senora de los Remedios—The Climate of Mexico—Earthquakes . . . . . 80

LETTER VI.—Civilities to Foreigners in the City of Mexico—The Opinions of Foreigners—The French Barber—The Belgian Host—The German Saddler—The Corps d'Opera—The Palaces—The Canals—The Market—The Alguazil—Shops—The upper Classes, male and female—The Alameda—The Paseo de las Vigas—Military—Mexican Habits—State of the Country and of Parties—The Holy Week—Influx of Strangers of all Classes to Mexico—The Plaza Mayor—The Booths—Holy Thursday—Church visiting—Popular Amusements—The Rattles—Judas Iscariot—Processions on Good Friday—Saturday before Easter—The Termination of the Holy Week—Christianity in Mexico—Public Institutions—The Museum—Antiquities—The ancient Mexican Calendar—Antiquities . . . . . 106

LETTER VII.—Excursion in the Environs—The Calzada—Penon Viejo—Lake Tezcuco—Hacienda, Chapingo, Huejutla—The Baño di Montezuma—Tezcosingo—Tezcuco—The Contador—Remains of the Mastodon—Singular Fact—San Juan Teotihuacan—The Houses of the Sun and Moon; Description of—History of Anahuac—Peopling of the Continent of America—Origin of these pyramidal Monuments—Time and Manner in which Men and Animals reached the American Continent—Entry into the House of the Moon—Terra cotta Heads and obsidian Knives—The Fainting Stone—Tecama—Zumpango—Huehuetoca—The Desague Real—Guautitlan—Tanepantla—Return to the Capital . . . . . 133

LETTER VIII.—The Opera at Mexico—Bullfights—The Desierto—Scenery of the Valley of Mexico—Departure for the Coast—Tlalpam—Route of the Cruz del Marques—Cuernavaca—Visit to the Teocalli of Xochicalco—The House of Flowers—Yantipec—Cuautla Amilpas—Disagreeable Adventure—Zacualpam Amilpas—Base of Popocatepetl—San Mateo—Atlisco—Cholula . . . . . 167

LETTER IX.—Cholula—The Great Pyramid—Quetzalcoatl—La Puebla—The English dray Horses—Route to Vera Cruz—The Pinal—Ojo de Agua—Orizava—Perote—Las Vigas—The Coffre de Perote and its Lavas—The Alps and the Cordillera—Jalapa—The Litter—Puente del Rey—Vera Cruz—The Roadstead—Sail from New Spain—The *Vomito Prieto*—Conclusion . . . . . 203

THE  
RAMBLER IN MEXICO.

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LETTER I.

I RESUME my correspondence with you, and herewith send you a few sheets containing a chronicle of my vernal rambles in New Spain.

The present recital introduces you to the same principal dramatis personæ, and opens, where my last closed—on board the goelette *Halcyon*, in the gulf of Mexico; somewhere about latitude  $28^{\circ}$  north, longitude  $92^{\circ}$  west, or within a hundred miles, more or less, of the tropic of Cancer. It was the fifteenth of January, 1834; wind from the eastward, light but steady; sky serene, and every prospect of a fair and fortunate voyage. The distance from the Balize lighthouse at the entrance of the Mississippi, to the bar of Tampico, towards which the head of our little vessel was directed, is about six hundred miles.

From this date, up to the fourth day at noon—so favourable were the auspices under which our voyage was continued, always excepting the confined position, seasickness, and the bad company on board—we never shifted a sail. They may really be said to have been *halcyon* days. We were then, by computation, a little more than forty miles from our port. Towards evening it fell calm; and during the succeeding night, the stars, and the moon in her second quarter, glistened upon the deck, as it swam with the heavy dews of the tropics.

But that you may better enter into the state of our

feelings, and of our anticipations at this juncture, I offer you the following description of our position.

The *Halcyon* was a small, two-masted vessel, of but trifling burden, though, in fact, of far too great a draught for the trade in which it was engaged, as will be seen hereafter. The peculiar details of the rig I spare you; first, because you would hardly be the wiser for them, and secondly, because I have forgotten them. Our freight below deck consisted of *notions*, or a mixed cargo of European and American manufacture, suited to the Mexican market. The hold was gorged to the hatches; the forward deck encumbered with two large piles of merchandise and lumber, and the cabins, fore and aft, were all filled to a certain extent, much to the discomfort of the live stock on board, under which head our trio, and about forty passengers—inclusive of a woman and child, and exclusive of half a dozen hands attached to the vessel—must be comprised.

The low after-cabin measured about twelve feet by eight. It was furnished with four confined double berths, each containing a dirty mattress, a blanket, and, on an average, five hundred cockroaches and other creepers. Half a dozen passengers might have been accommodated with some decency in this den; nevertheless, as it was, it was devoted to the free use of five-and-twenty. In brief, the manner in which the vessel was crammed to repletion with live and dead stock, to the exclusion of any chance of ease, was discreditable to the owners and officers of the ship. But what could we expect from beings such as we now had to deal with!

The day spent at anchor, within the bar of the Mississippi, had given us some foretaste of our position, and of the character of those among whom we were thrown; and during the succeeding days, we had ample time for closer observation.

As to nations and pursuits, there was distinction enough among the forty souls on board: as to character, one term would suffice; they were rogues all—ourselves excluded. De Vignes, the captain, was a Provençal,

the same who, if report said true, commanded the Calypso slave ship, with three hundred slaves on board, which was captured by an English cruiser off Mantanzas. Within sight of his port, his evil star prevailed; he was observed and chased—was obliged to run his ship aground, and only escaped certain hanging by leaping overboard, and swimming for his life to the shore. Though a slave dealer and excessively choleric, he was not without his good points. When not irritated, he might be termed good natured, and evinced generous and charitable feelings. He was doubtless an excellent seaman. His general manner, however, gave you the impression of his being soured by adversity, and by a constant struggle with misfortune. Among the crew under his command, you might enumerate probably as many nations as individuals; and nothing could be more amusing than to hear the orders, whenever he was in a bustle, given and responded to in English, Spanish, and French.

Among those who were entitled, by right of payment, to the same accommodation as ourselves—with exception of the special enjoyment of the berths and cockroaches, which we had timely secured—there were characters such as would make the fortune of any of the present herd of tale-weavers for the annuals and magazines. I cannot linger, however, with either Don Pablo, a fat old Spaniard, full of conceits and odd scraps of songs, going to Mexico to seek his fortune, with a good chance of being hung as a Guachupin; or Don Garcia, an exiled Mexican officer, of Iturbide's party, repairing secretly thither with reasonable expectation of being discovered and shot; or Cortina, the captain who had lost his ship; or Celestina, the *farceur* of the company. Neither can I give you the history of the conjuror on board; nor describe the boisterous singing and gaming, the impure orgies and impious airs of the *mauvais sujets*, French, Spanish, German, nor give the history of the fair Creole emigrating from New Orleans, with her squalling child, under the protection of a fat and portly school-

master of Tamaulipas, jealous and suspicious of every man on board. One personage, however, was too striking not to be singled out.

A tall athletic figure, with strongly marked features; a countenance roughened with the signs of long addiction to a life of passion and adventure; shabby travel-worn habiliments, and a slouched hat, under which he could, when occasion suited, throw his changeful features into shadows, indicated the bravo, *soi disant* Monsieur le Marquis de Maison Rouge, of the ancient and noble house of Maison Rouge de Perpignan. According to his own account, he had been born and bred in Louisiana, and had been cheated of some hundred thousand million acres of fat and fertile land in that state, his lawful patrimony. He had been compelled by a stern and uncivil guardian to study civil engineering, and, according to his own testimony, with considerable success. Subsequently he had been taken prisoner by the English, when acting as sentinel in the marshes, at the time of the attack upon New Orleans. Whether his brain or his morals had become unsettled by a knock on the head from the butt end of a musket, which he had received on this occasion, and had not yet digested, I cannot say; but it was evident that he had never acted like a man of education, breeding, or noble birth since. He had adopted the creed of Sardanapalus; and at New Orleans, in the Attakapas, at the Havanna, in the islands, and on the main, had led, for years, a shameless life of sin and crime. As he acquired gold, he spent it in brawls and violence. His person bore the marks of the cutting and stabbing frays in which he had often been an actor, and not unfrequently a victim. Now, penniless, he was going to Mexico, to make his fortune in some wild speculation, in reference to which he could point out neither the means by which it was to be set on foot, nor the ultimate ends which were to be gained. When not excited, he was good tempered, and his voice was one of the most musical I ever heard. When conversing, which he did at times most agreeably and well, you could hardly believe that those bland tones were the production of such a stormy



machine; or that the same lips could pour forth that uncontrolled torrent of impure language, in hot vehemence of rage, when the possessor was under the influence of passion. Never did I see before me an example like that here afforded, of the wakefulness of conscience, while the body slept. He never gave himself up to rest like other men. It seemed that his nerves were never unbraced, and his muscles never in complete repose—that the bow was never unstrung. The first impulse of his muscular arm on being disturbed, was to place itself in a position to guard the body; the first expression of his lineaments was that of suspicion. He never seemed to dream of his innocent childhood, but always of the scenes of his misspent and stormy manhood, and they truly were not calculated to lull his slumbers.

Thus crowded together and surrounded, it was a blessing to be favoured by wind and weather, and to have a reasonable hope of a speedy termination to our voyage. The meals, which occurred twice a day, were hasty and rude repasts, of which, hunger compelling, we all partook, standing round the raised roof of the after cabin; below decks, it would have been impossible to assist at them.

Sunday was, of course, in nowise distinguished from ordinary days, by greater propriety of demeanour or calmer temper of mind. We were quite beyond the Sabbath: and the only thing which marked that such a day was entered on the log, was a quarrel, knife in hand, between the supervisor of provisions and the cook, arising from a claim to the honour of mixing the Sunday pudding, upon which each insisted. I forget who gained the victory ultimately, but I remember that the pudding was very badly mixed, and as tough as parchment.

The morning of the fifth day after quitting the Balize, as I have related, it fell calm. A golden mist hovered over the surface of the sea, and the green colour of its waters betokened our having come upon soundings. The weather, as the day advanced, maintained the same character. Portuguese men-of-war floated by hundreds

about the goelette ; and whenever the white vapours, in which the horizon was swathed, broke in our vicinity, and the sunlight burst upon us, the air was delicious. The state of inaction, however, was disagreeable, and the constant jar of what our captain, in his piebald language, called the *pumtackle*, as the bark rolled on the swell, not the less so. We were drifting slowly on the current to the northward. As the sun sank, however, the sea breeze filled our sails ; and the mist dispersing, we proceeded to the westward ; and, coming in full view of the low, sandy hills on the beach, anchored after sunset in about nine fathoms, in the roads of Tampico, directly opposite the bar at the entrance of the river Panuco, distant about three miles.

This was not so much amiss. But our pleasant dreams of a speedy termination to the present state of duration vile were, as yet, far from being realized.

The night was clear and starlight—how bright and brilliant the constellations stood in the heavens, I cannot describe to you. Even after our short voyage, the breath of the land was delicious, and the heavy dull sound of the breakers on the bar that engirdled the land of wonders before us, was music to our ears, as we lay under our blankets stretched upon the roof of the cabin. We hailed our escape from the arms of winter ; from the marshes, quags, mud, and snow of New Orleans, its thick and polluted air, where the worshippers of Mammon can alone find delight, to the mountains, the vegetation, the eternal summer of New Spain.

Still, if I may depict my own feelings, I may confess that there was a weight on my spirits, which, though it could not entirely crush these pleasant hopes and reflections, seemed to prevent their soaring and running riot. I would not shut my eyes to some signs of probable difficulty which all might have noticed ; and I could not prevent certain portents of coming troubles from depressing my mind.

Among the former I may mention the knowledge, that as there was only six or seven feet water on the bar,

while our vessel had full ten feet draught, she must consequently be unloaded before she could enter the river. Further, that where we lay, as well as on the whole shelterless and iron-bound coast to the north and south, no vessel could maintain its ground, should any of the prevailing winds arise. In addition, it was whispered about the vessel, that no inconsiderable quantity of contraband goods were concealed on board, and that a recent change in the custom house of Tampico, combined with the bad name which the *Halcyon* had already acquired, would probably bring the vessel and all on board into difficulty, in this semi-barbarous country, where law was but imperfectly understood, and still more imperfectly administered.

Moreover, the eyes and ears of some of us on board were witnesses of much calculated to throw a yet darker veil over the future.

Lovely as the weather had been for some time, the signs of a coming change had gradually thickened upon us. The deep blue of the southern sky had of late, occasionally, towards evening, been flickered with one or two light vapoury and feathery clouds, like the tail of a wild horse, or of a comet, seemingly balanced over our heads in the upper regions of the atmosphere. The cessation of the steady breeze, the fluctuating calm of the preceding day, the superabundant dews, and more than all, the restless swell now heaving upon the shore from the depths of the gulf, had all betokened to the practised eye and long experience of De Vignes, the near approach of a *norte*, one of the most dreaded of those violent winds which agitate this land-locked and deceitful sea; and while others were dreaming of land, he was evidently thinking of storm and tempest, and was preparing for it accordingly. Our chain cable was fitted with a buoy, and arrangements made to slip it at a moment's warning. Before he went to his repose, the topmasts and yards were lowered, every sail on board double reefed, and the decks cleared as far as it was possible to clear them.

With the approach of morning, driving bodies of cold

mist covered us once more, and veiled the land from our view. Hour went after hour, and the evil omens thickened around us ; the sky became blurred with shapeless masses of reddish clouds, and as the sun rose, a broken and discoloured rainbow was seen in the west. Ill-omened arch ! how different from the bow after summer rain, spanning the eastern sky at eventide, which we have learned to hail as full of promise !

About ten o'clock A.M. the sea breeze dispersed the mists on the smooth but heaving surface of the water, but had no power on the sky, which imperceptibly grew of a deeper dun, especially from the zenith to the southeast.

Our eyes were anxiously turned to the west, where we could again descry the range of coast, the foam-covered line of breakers on the bar, and the tall masts of a number of vessels within it. Six or eight of various burden were seen riding at anchor in the open roadstead ; either watching, like ourselves, for communication with the shore, or outward bound, for the reception of their cargo. Our glasses were constantly directed to the bar for some indication that the signals for a pilot were observed ; but hours came and went, without the slightest sign of recognition. As the day passed the meridian, however, a black spot was seen among the breakers, and then another, and we soon distinguished two custom-house boats pulling north and south, to communicate with other ships. When it became evident that neither seemed to consider us as within their beat, the captain resolved to send the shallop with two men to communicate with them. Two more hours of uncertainty followed, when the boatmen came back, stating that the answer returned by the officers was, that we must come and anchor nearer the shore, before they would board us. Old De Vignes gave a terrific growl on hearing this ; glanced at the thickening sky, and at the eastern horizon ; and, after a moment's hesitation, gave the necessary orders to obey, and to run the goelette in. The anchor was weighed ; and a momentary exultation was felt by all, as we found ourselves at length riding at anchor again within hail.

What then occurred is now like a dream to me ; that

a boat should come aboard of us, and that hardly an individual should leave the goelette, when at this time our fate might have been foreseen by the most heedless on board, seems to me to be perfectly incomprehensible. The crowded state of the vessel was a source of discomfort to all; our water and our biscuit were both known to be running short, and the signs of the impending tempest could no longer be misunderstood. Yet no one stirred—for why, no one could give a reason but the poor one, that the few who went, must go without baggage ashore, and the impulse seemed to be “to stick by the stuff.” The boat was after an instant’s parley pushed off again with its wild, half-savage, pirate-looking crew, who were accompanied by the supercargo of the goelette, after giving the promise, that early next morning all the passengers should be landed, and the discharge of the cargo forthwith commenced. They hoisted the sail—were soon carried to the bar, and disappeared among the huge waves which broke upon it.

The momentary bustle over, we had time to comprehend our position, and it grew more dreary every instant. The wind now blew steadily from the southeast, and the swell rose with it. The sky began to lose its uniform shade, and to jag and rend into shapeless masses of heavy clouds. The man-of-war bird was seen high up in the atmosphere, breasting the breeze, and scudding out to sea; while the bands of white pelicans, which we had watched soaring and diving in the roadstead during the morning, quitted their toils and wheeled their heavy flight over the breakers to the sheltered sands and lagoons of the land. It seemed as if all were leaving us and our ill-starred neighbours to their fate. It was evident that the latter had taken the alarm, and were hastily preparing for the coming struggle with the powers of the air and ocean. One brig partly discharged, which lay about a mile nearer the bar, trusting probably to the weight of water which was now rolling in upon the land, resolved to attempt the passage, and setting her sails, stood in boldly for the shore. The day must have been near its close, for we had

difficulty to descry her motions distinctly in the thickening haze. She was seen to career midway among the breakers, when suddenly her change of position and inclination told us that she had struck. A few minutes of intense anxiety followed. To return was impossible, and if she did not advance, her total loss was unavoidable. We saw her heave and strike heavily three or four times, as the sea rolled in upon her, and had given her up for lost, when providentially a heavier billow than ordinary carried her over the last ridge, and righting, she was in safety. How we envied her!

As evening darkened the deck, the wind increased, and the captain no longer made a secret of his conviction that we should be driven out to sea before morning. There was something like despair painted on the visages of some, when this became known; and a volley of curses, deep, not loud, answered the announcement.

We were not long left in uncertainty. "The ship to the southward is scudding!" said one. "There goes the brig!" exclaimed another. I remember I was in my usual position on deck, near the little tiller; now and then glancing at the dim form of our nearest neighbour; or searching into the gloom to windward, striving to penetrate the dusk out of which one spectral foam-tipped billow was heaving and passing under us after another, urged by the impulse of a strong but steady wind, when all of a sudden the goelette received a shock from the opposite quarter which staggered all upon deck, and steadied her completely for the moment.

"*El norte!*" yelled the mate at my elbow, as a torrent of wind and spray swept over the deck. "*El norte!*" echoed Cortina, the shipless captain, "I lost my ship in the last!" "*El norte!*" shouted the bravo, excited by the coming struggle with the elements, for which he had been preparing himself by stripping almost naked, and tying a ragged handkerchief about his head. "Helm hard down—slip the chain cable!" responded the captain, as he hoisted the jib with his own hands; and instantly the harsh sound of the iron was

heard passing out at the bow. The vessel began to change her direction, when suddenly she was brought to again with a jerk, and a cry forward announced that the last bolt of the chain refused to pass through the hawse hole.

A cold chisel was procured, and while it was employed to cut the iron bolt, all who were aware of the circumstance were inclined to check their breath. Our position was truly one of no ordinary peril, as the strain upon the forward timber threatened to tear it out of the ship, in which case we must instantly have gone down.

At length the bolt was severed, and the vessel, free from all obstacles, whirled round, and began to fly before the wind.

Such a wind I had till then never even imagined. The sea was apparently levelled under its pressure ; and far and near seemed like a carpet of driving snow, from the sleet and foam which were raised and hurried along its surface.

Thus we turned our backs on the shore, and drove hour after hour in storm and darkness into the unknown void before us.

What appearances there were in the sky I do not know, as our vision was limited to a narrow circle of half a furlong around us ; but if the disorder of the clouds answered that of the waves, there must have been awful doings over our heads.

The sea, in spite of the tremendous force of the wind which I have alluded to, was not long to be lulled in this unnatural slumber, but began to rise and toss us about in fearful wise ; and yet it was not till we had run under shortened sail for many hours, in a direction which carried us out of all danger of the coast, and we lay to under three-reefed mainsail and trysail, that we felt all the discomfort of our situation.

By this time the decks, washed by the sea, had been cleared of all lumber. The cocks and hens had been drowned in the coops, the boat had been half staved, the binnacle and compass broken, and all the inhabitants

forced by the wet and the chillness of the atmosphere to herd together below deck.

Meantime, what between the crowded state of the cabins, the violence of the storm, the shocks received from the strife of waters in which we were involved, the fears and terrors of some, the horrid and blasphemous language uttered by others of the desperadoes about us, the dirt and impurity surrounding us, and the quarrelling and caballing of the crew, our position was truly unenviable.

Morning brought no cessation of the tempest. The wind continued to blow with terrific violence, and daylight found us riding and rocking among a tumult of billows, whitened by the driving surf, and enveloped by a gray misty cloud of agitated vapour. The pumps were sounded every half hour. The *Halcyon* was, however, sound, and the captain's arrangements well and knowingly made; and there we rode, while one immense billow after another swelled up like a huge monster out of the mist to windward, advanced topling towards us, with its broad-spread moving slopes marbled by the bands of creamy foam, and after a moment of seeming hesitation whether it should go over or under us, was seen vanishing to leeward.

The history of hours thus spent must be passed over. This first day the *Halcyon's* stomach seemed to be annihilated. Nobody cared for sustenance, and cooking was out of the question. Some hope had been entertained that the storm might lull at sunset, the same hour at which it had arisen; but the evening apparently darkened over us more gloomily than before, and all the livelong night the wild wind and wild waves continued to struggle on the agitated bosom of the gulf. Our cabin was a Pandemonium.

Towards noon the second day the wind began to abate, the vapour to disperse, and the clouds to grow more transparent. An imperfect observation taken at twelve o'clock showed us that we had been driven about one hundred and fifty miles to the southeast of Tampico.



With evening it fell dead calm, while the sea continued to roll mountain high, and the goelette for the following twenty-four hours was tossed about like a cork in a boiling pot.

Both bread and water were becoming scarce, and we were put upon an allowance of the latter. After the cessation of the norte the sky became perfectly clear, and the weather warm, with glorious moonlight nights. The lightness and variableness of the wind, however, had allowed us to make but little way; the more so, as we were, during the calms, at the mercy of the powerful currents in these seas.

To cut a long story short, you may imagine us on the afternoon of the fifth day from the date of our mishap, once more within sight of land; and approaching our anchorage with feelings which you can well conceive, when you recollect the heartburning we had before experienced, and the hopelessness of a speedy communication with the shore, combined with the present state of the vessel, the nausea which we could not but feel at our prolonged forced contact with the most godless and abandoned set of human beings I ever was in company with; and more than all, the fact that the signs of another norte had been thickening around during the day, and now at the approach of night were becoming too evident to admit of misinterpretation. Upon one subject we were all agreed this time, that if we left the *Halcyon* without a rag, we would not let another opportunity slip through our fingers. Well, our signal was once more fluttering in the wind, and we came to our old anchoring ground. One or two of our former neighbours were also seen regaining their port—the greater part were yet missing. With what anxiety we directed our eyes to the bar! An hour went by, evening with its menace narrowed the horizon; the wind which had brought us in blew stiffer and stiffer. I had begun to give up my hope, for, without being able to account for it, I had indulged a little—and had as a duty begun to school myself into resignation to the will of God, whatever that might be—when two specks were seen in the breakers, and shortly we saw

two boats pulling for us with might and main. The one was a revenue barge, and the other a cockle shell of a boat belonging to an American brigantine within the bar, whose captain, out of friendship for De Vignes, risked the passage with two sailors, and came to warn him of the bad odour in which the Halcyon stood at Tampico, and the difficulties which would attend his proceedings.

I saw at once that as far as our captain was concerned he was contented to remain out at sea, till time should permit his agents to make the necessary arrangements with the custom-house officers, which was not as yet terminated ; and that the fate of his passengers was nothing in his eyes. He, however, clamoured for water, and that earnestly, and made no secret of his belief that he must again go out to sea. But we needed no spur to make us wish to escape from the Halcyon. There was no bond between us and our companions but that of dire necessity, and chivalrous deference or devotion was here quite out of place. It was evident that each must shift for himself. Besides, among the many kinds of justice to be done, that kind usually termed "justice to one's self," is not always to be disregarded. A timely application to the captain of the brigantine secured us the use of his skiff, which was in truth a mere toy, so fragile that the weight of my two companions and myself was almost too much for it, and sank it to the water's edge. To this we speedily consigned our persons, leaving our goods and chattels to their fate. De Vignes had quarrelled with his acquaintance the instant he set his foot on deck, so that he had nothing to detain him ; and after three minutes' stay, the little boat was scudding under a thin linen lugsail, over the broad swell, which was now rolling, in increasing volumes at the lapse of every ten seconds, in towards the land.

The feeling of exultation was warm in our bosoms as the distance between us and our late prison momentarily increased. There was, however, a peril in advance, which soon claimed our attention, and that was the passage of the bar, which now exhibited a broad band of breakers. But we felt stout hearted, even in a moment

of indecision, when it was suspected that we were missing the narrow passage and driving to destruction. There was an instant when we seemed on the point of being overwhelmed by the huge masses of foam which rose like columns on either hand, and took the wind out of the sail. In fact, we gave the southern breakers a very perilous shave ; yet all sat steady, and in another minute, the bar and the gulf were behind us, and we were passing with wind and tide up the river Panuco.

How beautiful appeared those green and wooded shores—how delicious the perfume from the scented mimosa bushes on the banks—how welcome the sight of the firm land and its habitations !

A sail of six miles brought us after dark to the new town. I believe the most heedless of us felt his heart swell with emotion of gratitude to God for our deliverance. Before us, the setting sun glistened sweetly on all objects—while behind, it lighted up the white bar, over which we could discern the masts of the Halcyon as she stood in relief, against the dark curtain of clouds thickening in the windward. We met a boat load of water going out to her under the care of the supercargo ; but it never reached her, as by the time they got to the bar, the night and coming storm forbade the attempt ; and I may at once mention, that long before dawn, the ill-fated Halcyon, without bread, water, and with all her passengers, save eight, who contrived, like ourselves, to land, had been compelled once more to spread her wings, and to speed on the breath of a second violent norte out to sea ; and that ten days elapsed before we heard of her third approach to the coast.

This trial was spared De Pourtales, M'Euen, and your humble servant ; and we never forgot to bless God, day by day, for it. At the same time we had our trial, being reduced to one shirt a piece, and to a state of great impatience, which is not to be wondered at when you learn that we were here in a position where we could neither advance nor recede, that the period of three short months was all which our other arrange-

ments could permit us to devote to New Spain, and that from circumstances hereafter to be explained, one third of this time was swallowed up on the very threshold of the country.

My next shall introduce you to the Fonda de la Bolza, as our melancholy place of sojourn at Tampico.

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## LETTER II.

IT was well that our minds, on landing, were really disposed to contentment, and that we were inclined to overlook minor grievances in our escape from far greater, otherwise, there were circumstances attending our first *début* in this land of delights, teeming, as we supposed, with gold and silver, and the richest fruits of the earth, which were certainly far from agreeable, setting aside the causes of trial at which I hinted at the close of my last letter.

The first thing we experienced, which considerably surprised us on placing foot in the town, was the great difficulty of finding a *shelter* : and we were in the end fain to put up, all three, with a small room in the second story of a square, ill-built, open, wood barrack, the ground floor of which served as a billiard room and gambling house to the piebald population of Tampico de las Tamaulipas.

The second thing which quite horrified us, was the difficulty of procuring *food* wherewith to satisfy the appetites of three able-bodied gentlemen just from sea. Eggs we found were rare, meat was rarer, bread the rarest of all ; and, except at certain hours of the day when it was doled forth in most apologetic morsels, could not be had for love and money.

The third thing in my list, which nearly petrified us, was the *cold*. Lying under the tropic of Cancer, we

were absolutely forced to rise in the night, and dress ourselves before we could sleep.

The fourth—but no, I will save a few miseries to qualify some future page of enjoyment.

As late as 1825, the site of the present town of Tampico was solely occupied by a few Indian huts, and the feeble commerce carried on in the port was concentrated at the Pueblo Viejo, or Old Town, situated on the shore of a shallow lagoon a few miles distant, in the state of Vera Cruz. The difficulty of approach, added to the heavy dues exacted for all goods crossing into the state of Tamaulipas on their road to the interior, seems to have directed the attention of the merchants and other speculators to the present site. And truly no possible position could have been better chosen, as it is nearer the bar, situated on the main river, with sufficient depth of water to admit vessels of burden to anchor close to the town, and, moreover, commands an unimpeded interior navigation for one hundred and twenty miles up the country. Were it not for the annual visits of the yellow fever, and the irremediable difficulties which the interposition of the bar imposes upon the merchant, there is no doubt that Tampico would become the most flourishing port in New Spain. As it is, vessels are frequently detained four or five months; being blown off and on by the frequent severe gales, before they can unload and get inside the bar; and held prisoners as long, before they can cross it again.

The new town is built in regular squares, upon the narrow and depressed termination of a rocky peninsula, at the lower extremity of a cluster of lakes which empty their waters into the gulf by the river Panuco. The houses have no pretension to uniformity in their style of architecture. The European merchant builds substantial stone stores and dwelling houses, according to the fashion of his country. The American runs up his flimsy clap board edifices. The Mexican of Spanish descent exhibits his taste and his knowledge of the climate by low thick walls, gayly painted and flat-roofed habitations, with internal courts; and the

Indian raises his bamboo cage, plastered with mud, and thatched with palm leaves, according to the custom of his forefathers.

The population is of course the most mongrel that can be conceived. The commerce of the port is principally in the hands of foreigners; the imports consisting of every imaginable fabric, whether their introduction is consistent with the existing laws of the republic or not. Smuggling is reduced to a system. The exports are confined to specie and fustic alone. Of the former, seven millions of dollars from the upper provinces were shipped at this port alone, during the year 1833.

The sum of the population the preceding year, before the cholera broke out, had been estimated at five thousand. Of these, three thousand are said to have been swept away: and though the town was rapidly recruiting its numbers at the time of our visit, the enormous price paid for every article, whether of foreign or domestic production, as well as for labour, is hardly to be credited. Wages for the poorest mason or carpenter, generally English or German, amounted to three or four dollars a day: indeed I knew one instance of a "turn out" of the workmen employed upon the house of one of the principal merchants, who were not content with four dollars, but laid a claim to six! The most ragged urchin lying all day under the shade in the street, if asked to lend a hand to aid the operations of the merchant for a few hours, will not stir till he has made his bargain for a couple of dollars payment. You cannot cross the river, a row of five minutes, for less. To come up from the bar, a distance of six miles, though you be ten in company—ten dollars per head is the sum demanded. Good law, and good physicking—and one might add, good advice, that cheapest of all articles in an ordinary state of society—cannot be had for love or money. This, among a beggarly, half-naked population, (I cry your pardon for speaking so of a sovereign people,) would be perfectly laughable, if it were not felt to be a serious matter. You may remark that both classes,

native and foreign, have the same lust of gain; they only differ in their mode of following it, the one striving for it by hook and crook, the others waiting till it drops before their noses.

While I am scrawling these general outlines upon paper, I may at once say that the tone of society is neither creditable to the superior education of European residents, nor to the lofty pretensions of the Mexican *employés*, who form the nucleus of native society here. The latter are ignorant and debased, insufferably bigoted and proud: jealous of foreigners, and, I believe, the majority here, as throughout the country, thoroughly unprincipled. Extraordinary indeed must the virtue be, which will make the possessor sensible to stern justice, and insensible to a bribe.

As to religion—name it not: the God of the South is Mammon. There is nothing in the degraded ultra-Catholicism of New Spain which can touch the heart and elevate human nature; and unfortunately the majority of the young European merchants who resort here to drive their gainful commerce, evince by word and deed, that the lessons of their youth, and the God of their fathers, are alike forgotten. Had there been more family men among them, one might perhaps have met with more honourable exceptions. Like many *mauvais sujets* all the world over, they were in general good-tempered, serviceable fellows; and, personally, we had nothing to complain of, as far as our slight intercourse with them went.

I have summarily mentioned the two principal classes of the inhabitants, forming, as it were, the elite of the town. It may be observed of the common people, that, little as can be said in their favour as a mass, individually they are by far the most picturesque in form, manner, and clothing. Their characters and costumes are as various as their blood. The poor Indian is distinguished by his sandalled foot, miserable attire, and subdued air. He, at least, seems to have gained nothing by the change of masters. How should he! He was the slave of the few, now he is the slave of the many. If the Spaniard

did little to raise the character of the conquered vassal, the Mexican does less, if possible, to instruct the darker skin whom he pretends to consider politically as his equal, but whom, in fact, he always treats as his inferior. They are as they ever were—governed by the priests, and kept in utter ignorance. They supply the market with fruits, water, and vegetables.

You have here the modern Mexican of every degree, from the substantial *ranchero*, or proprietor, bespurred, and bedizzened in the full and showy Mexican costume of stamped leather, embroidered vest, and gaudy *serape*, and curbing a wild horse loaded with furniture; or the trusty *arriero*, with his long string of mules, his precious cargo of specie, and his train of assistant *mozos*; down to the poor adventurer whose whole wardrobe consists of a pair of faded velveteen trousers silt halfway up the leg, and a tawdry cloak, haunting the gambling table, and living upon what fortune sends.

The costumes are extremely picturesque from their diversity of colour and pattern, and the brilliant hues in fashion. I have omitted to mention the soldiery, than which a more shabaron, cutthroat set, whether officers or men, I never beheld. It is said that they fight well. I do not dispute the *on dit*, but from all the evidence I could ever collect, I have considerable difficulty in believing it. I think they would run better; and I know that on most occasions, they do so with very slight provocation. As to costume, nothing could be more diverting. There was *an orderly* in attendance on a general officer dwelling in our vicinity, who used to shamle past our quarters every morning at a certain hour, garbed in a short coatee, richly embroidered with worsted, a clumsy sword, a cap and sash, and never a strap or shred upon his lower limbs—saving your presence.

The Fonda de la Bolza, where you have seen us lodged, was, at the time of our visit, in the hands of a Frenchman. He was on the point of retiring with a handsome independence drawn from divers sources: to wit, the gleanings of the billiard tables below stairs—the proceeds of the miserable lodgings above, let to gen-



tllemen who could, unfortunately, not better themselves ; those of a bar for the dispensation of *aqua ardiente*, (strong waters,) lemonade, and liqueurs ; a table d'hote, morning and evening, furnished with a little fish, a little flesh, and a little fowl, and garnished with gizzard, tripe, ox cheek, yams, black beans, and bananas ; and lastly, a gaming table in a retired piazza, over which he acted as presiding genius and banker.

Uncomfortable within, and environed with filth and garbage without, there was little in the Fonda to keep us willing prisoners ; for we happened to be addicted neither to tipping nor gambling ; and our first care after realizing our position, was to contrive the means of passing as much of our time as possible out of doors.

A few days gave us an insight into all the capabilities of the spot where we were cooped up. Society, I have said, was very confined. The young foreigners, when emancipated from their counting houses, passed their evenings in riding in the vicinity ; playing at bowls, or worse, at *monte* ; or made an attempt to get up a waltz by the aid of a poor pianoforte, a fife, and a pair of matrons. Books and literature, or the study of natural history, had no votaries among them. Now and then a tawdry masquerade, in which all classes mingled, was the amusement of the evening ; but they were dull and stupid as might be, and only to be surpassed in stupidity by the fandangoes danced by the lower orders once or twice a week, under an open thatched shed, in the outskirts of the town.

By aid of sundry letters of credit, and the real kindness of the gentleman who acted as English and American consul, to whom we were all along greatly indebted, we soon achieved the purchase of horses. They may always be purchased—as to selling them, that, we found on divers occasions, to be quite another affair. We also hired *an orderly* to wait upon our donships : and set to work to make such preparations for our journey into the interior as were in our power, in the absence of all the accoutrements purchased at New-Orleans for the purpose ; and moreover took occasion, as weather and temper in-

vited, to garb ourselves in our best—in which you will recollect we were not much embarrassed by variety of choice—to sneak out of our den at the Bolza, and ride about the environs.

These rides, however, were principally confined to the evening hours preceding sunset, and to the back of the ridge on the San Luis Potosi road, from many of the banana and sugar plantations on which line, the view over the nearer lakes, and towards the distant Sierra Madre, a spur of which appeared far to the southward, was uncommonly beautiful.

A rocky bluff overhanging the Panuco, at the upper end of the town just above the market, was the scene of almost a daily visit, as it commanded an extended view over the distant country both far and near. A little above this point, the river Tammasee, draining the Lago Chairel, and many other lagoons covering a vast tract of country to the westward, forms its junction with the Panuco or Tula, which comes from afar, flowing in a most graceful sweep among low wooded islands from the south west. Beyond the farther shore lies the lagoon of Pueblo Viego; and farther to the south, far in the distance, the fertile uplands of the Huastec, and the advanced spurs of the eastern Cordillera of Mexico.

There is yet a distant object, which excites the marvel of the traveller at Tampico, and this is the Bernal, an isolated mountain, rising like a huge stack, with smooth perpendicular sides, and a jagged summit, over the level line of the horizon to the westward. It is about thirty leagues distant, if we were rightly informed.

Immediately above Tampico, the peninsula, which is rendered such by the lagoon Carpentaro at the back of the town, continues to rise gradually towards the westward, and appears crowded by the Indian huts. They and their bamboo enclosures are nearly buried in a tangled labyrinth of weed of the Solanum species, overtopped occasionally by a banana, or the tall mutilated trunk of a yellow-wood tree.

At early morning the landing below the bluff might be

observed beset by the market boats and canoes of the Indians, laden with the produce of the farms of the upper district—sugarcane, bamboo, hay, and fruit, or with loads of sweet water brought down the Tammasee. At the same hour the shore was lined by females standing up to their knees in water, patiently labouring at the purification of some article of apparel, in defiance of the alligators swarming on the neighbouring swampy shore, and disporting themselves in the river. Lower down, abreast of the custom house, and busy market place, appeared the various foreign merchant vessels at anchor; and still farther to the left, the range of hills which rise above Pueblo Viejo, and form the right bank of the Panuco to the gulf. Nothing could exceed the picturesque appearance of many of the figures which here continually passed before us, or the classic character of the women, laden with the Etruscan-shaped water jar of the country; and many a time were we allured to maintain our post, till the heat of the sun, and the effluvia of putrid carcasses which line the shore, forced us to retire. The most striking features of the same view were to be commanded from any of the farms situated to the right of the St. Luis Potosi road, which, from the peculiar water-girt position of the town, formed the only evening ride of all the gallants of Tampico; the road to the bar being nearly impassable, on account of the state of the intervening swamps.

Every evening during this period of detention, our tawdry retainer, Juliano, appeared about an hour before sunset, with our horses, at the door of the Bolza, and mounting, we never failed to forget the ennui of our position, and the heat and annoyances of midday, in our two hours' gallop amid scenes of such beauty.

But you will not be tempted to suspect that I could be, with my prying disposition, in a new country, teeming with novelty and wonders in natural history, without a partial resumption of my wonted habit of an occasional stroll on foot, in spite of heat, insects, and the robbers, from whom there was of course some risk as in other highly civilized countries. "What was the heat to me,"

thought I, "I can bear it; and the insects, they are what I have come in search of. What are the robbers to me, they will not find my present wardrobe worth cutting my throat for:" so leaving my two companions to their sedentary philosophy, and their siestas, which were sometimes taken by anticipation in the morning as well as afternoon—as soon as the weather became genial, I might be daily seen, after securing a breakfast, which, considering how doubtful the dinner was, was a very necessary precaution, stealing off up to the bluff, and among the fragile Indian huts. My accoutrement consisted of a good cudgel, a long sharp knife, the same that had operated upon the bisons, a few thousand entomological pins, a bag for seeds, and a broad-eaved palmetto *sombrero*.

That was certainly a species of intoxication! All was new, except the earth I trod upon—trees, shrubs, plants, insects, and birds. I gathered, examined, impaled. No flower courted my admiring gaze in vain. No insect hummed in my ear unattended to. If I skirted the riverside—there was the garrulous jackdaw with his mates quarrelling in their indescribable manner among the glossy leaves and innumerable stems of the mangroves; the white snow crane standing motionless in the shallow water, or a flight of vultures hovering over a dark corner, where my approach had scared them from a bloated carcass—not unfrequently a human one. Farther, the huge slimy log, half buried in the mud, crowded with terrapins; and the loathsome alligator squatting among the reeds on the shore. I would then follow one of those narrow winding paths cut in that thick dense shrubbery which covers a great portion of the surface of the country in the vicinity of Tampico—a wilderness of curious trees and thickets, matted and woven together with ten thousand creepers and parasitical plants, with their graceful hanging flowers, seed vessels—vines, passifloras, and splendid convolvuli rendered quite impervious by the thorny nature of the covert, and the rank growth of prickly aloes which form the undergrowth. These were the paradise of the par-

rot and other gaudy rivals. Here and there, a small enclosure of sugarcane, and a picturesque Indian hut, would rise on the ordinary solitude of my stroll. I always found the pure-blooded native friendly; and a yard of sugarcane, a gourd of water, and perhaps a glass of *aqua ardiente*, were always at my service. For a whole week I found these daily predatory walks perfectly delightful. I rushed into every thicket, I culled every flower, I handled everything within reach, and longed to handle a great deal which was beyond it. I went wheresoever I listed, nothing doubting; and you certainly have no suspicion of the cause which was all this time, silently but surely, operating a total change in my taste, habits, and pursuits.

I have described what I was the first week; I will now tell you what I was the second, and, in fact, as long as I remained in the lower country. My love of locomotion remained the same, but all my eagerness and fire to make collections, and to touch what I saw, were utterly extinguished. I walked abroad it is true, but it was with the *noli-me-tangere* air of a spruce gentleman in a street full of chimney-sweepers. My eyes roamed as they had hitherto done—but as to contact with flower or leaf, however curious or beautiful it might be, that I most scrupulously avoided. I found it was one thing to catch crickets, or gather lilies, daisies, or daffodils in England, and another to make collections under the tropics.

In fact, here the insects and the flowers are in league for mutual defence; every leaf, every spray holds its myriads of *garapatos*, a species of wood bug, from the size of a small pin head to that of a pea; and the slightest touch is sure to bring a host upon your person, where, attaining the skin, they silently and insensibly bury themselves to the neck, with their barbed claws, and are seldom perceived till they are too firmly fixed to extract without danger; and at the best, cause great irritation, and often inflammation. Now in consequence of my love of natural history, I had become a perfect pasture for these omniverous nuisances, with others of

their confraternity, not to be described ; and at the end of the term indicated, what between the attacks of the *garapatos* without, and the nightly wounds inflicted within doors by myriads of moschetoes—which are here very large and sanguinary, not quite as large as a jack-snipe—I was upon the verge of a fever, and solemnly abjured my occupation. It was nearly three weeks before I lost all the consequences of my imprudence, for such it was, and never can I sufficiently appreciate the real merit of those patient, indefatigable, and rhinoceros-skinned men, who have succeeded in enriching our European collections with the wonders of the torrid zone.

Such was the terror which the torment I had been subjected to inspired, that, as long as we were in the *tierras calientes*, to which these pests are fortunately confined, I never ran unnecessary risks ; and after any accidental contact with tree or shrub, instituted the ordinary patient search to which all must submit.

Meantime the season advanced. About the close of the month we had begun to hope that the *Halcyon* might make its appearance, and frequently climbed up to the *mirador*, in one of the tallest houses, to sweep the sea-line beyond the white bar with the telescope ; but alas, on the 1st of February another norte set in, and another week was spent in doubt and uncertainty. At length, on the morning of the 7th, a favourable wind of a couple of days' duration enabled a small fleet of inward-bound vessels to approach the port ; and among these, the English packet, for the arrival of which a heavy cargo of specie had been for some time collecting from the interior at the consul's office ; and, late in the evening, the *Halcyon* was announced without the bar. The following day we learned that she had been buffeted to and fro in the interval by two successive nortes, destitute of water, but what could be gathered from the clouds ; with the loss of their boat, and one of their hands ; and with cabins overrun by most loathsome vermin, from the vile habits of most of those on board. Further, that all communication with the shore was interdicted by the

custom house, till such time as the goelette's papers were pronounced to be in order, in other words, till the parties should be agreed as to the amount of the bribe demanded by the authorities for the introduction of the contraband cargo. So here we were still in as great a dilemma as ever. No expostulation would serve our purpose for some days, and there seemed to be every probability of the vessel's being again blown out to sea, before the disgraceful intrigues should come to a conclusion, till, after much trouble and expense, we were allowed to anticipate her only, to go on board as she lay beyond the bar, and land our effects. Still difficulties beset our path, and what with one thing and another, a further detention of a fortnight was our destiny before we were enabled to complete our arrangements, and set out for the interior. The causes of this detention would have been ludicrous at any other time, but in our position they were serious enough.

Without entering into the detail, I may cull one or two pictures from the time thus spent, as they stand recorded in my memory, or on my journals.

I have casually mentioned the Pueblo Viejo, or old town. It was not unfrequently our wont, on the early mornings of those fervid days which filled up the intervals between the nortes, to hire one of the pleasant little boats, which were always at your command if you would pay for them, and seek under their white awnings on the breezy surface of the river, that comfort which the great heat of the weather denied ashore. My favourite excursion was to descend the Panuco, till we made the opening of the small broken channel which winds between oyster beds and green verdant banks, and forms the communication with the southern lagoon, upon whose shore the old settlement is situated. At such times the morning breeze would generally fill your sail, and bring you without much labour under the little thatched landing place, which, once the scene of so much bustle, is now nearly deserted.

The picturesque situation of Pueblo Viejo, and its old time-worn Spanish-built houses, lying at the foot of a steep

but bushy hill ; with the tranquillity reigning in the streets and environs, forms a pleasant contrast to the busy, half European, and more prosaic features of its more prosperous rival. The peninsular position of Tampico, rendered it of necessity subject to a certain degree of monotony. Here there was none ; the town was low built and flat roofed, the facades of the houses mostly showing in the faded gayety of their colouring, what they had once been. Many had courts and porticoes, and a group of tasty old houses, of Spanish erection, near the humble church and in the vicinity a group of tall cocoa palms, marked the former seat of government.

Were you inclined for an hour's stroll, that hour carried you up the undulating slope of the hills, amid a wilderness of sweet flowers and shrubs, pausing from time to time to catch a glance of that broad and magnificent picture, of those lakes and rivers with their intermediate woods and plains, glowing in the sunshine, till gaining the crest called *La Mira*, you might survey the country spread like a map at your feet on one hand, and on the other the deep blue waters of the gulf unfurled to the eastern horizon. Did you seek repose and shade, a footway, turning abruptly from the main road of the town against the bosom of the hill, brought you unexpectedly to the *Fuente*, a little dell concealing one of the most beautiful and poetic springs in any land. How poetic ! how classic ! I have often exclaimed, when burying myself under the shade of the trees and luxuriant creepers, which, in untrimmed luxuriance, overhung that romantic paradise of birds, butterflies, and *garapatos*, and scanning the groups of females gathered round its basin. The source lay concealed underneath a massive shrine of gray stone, to which convenient access was afforded by a descent of a few stone steps, while a long stone reservoir, extending for a dozen feet along the bank of the dell, richly overshadowed by a splendid line of matted creepers from the trees above, served the purpose of a convenient place for washing. Its margin was generally crowded with females of all ages. The groups employed in filling their large earthen jars and bottles, the grace-



fully draped figures passing to and from, with their burdens poised on their heads, or a sturdy peasant, with his mule laden with two gigantic bottles of baked earth, waiting patiently for his turn in the deep cool shade, formed pictures of the most beautiful description. At the extreme termination of the little dell, a few ancient sibyls were ordinarily employed over a caldron supported by poles, and simmering from the wood fires kindled under it, and the light blue smoke hovered among the branches of the aged trees, which rose from the thicket beyond. The Fuenta was evidently the lounge and trysting place of the town, and many a youthful dark-eyed gallant might be seen at times lolling upon the stone wall which hemmed in the reservoir. Occasionally a mounted cavalier in all his bravery would dash up the little vista at full career, till within a foot of the enclosure, when a check from the powerful bit would bring his horse upon its haunches. He would pass a moment in the cool shade, quaff a gourd of the fresh water from the hand of one of the laughing group, perhaps get a plentiful sprinkle over his gay mantle in return for some saucy speech, and disappear as rapidly as he came.

In short, I shall never forget la Fuenta de Pueblo Viejo, though my enjoyment of its beauties was always qualified by the knowledge, that I never quitted it without carrying off a goodly colony of garapatos, besides sundry ants, with which the whole country about Tampico swarms. There is a species called the *arriero* or carrier, from its peculiar habits, and I have frequently been tempted to observe them minutely. Their nests are formed below the surface, and must be very extensive, judging from the immense length of the trains which may be observed proceeding to and from them upon the surface, and the quantity of vegetable matter introduced into them. The labourers are seen moving in two distinct columns, strictly adhering to the rule of the road, upon pathways of even breadth throughout, as nicely indicated and beaten from the incessant passage, as those of busy men. They lead frequently into the bushes, to some tree or shrub, which has been fixed upon by com-

mon consent, for the scene of their laborious devastation. The weight and size of the loads carried by these minute insects are truly astonishing. They are furnished with a strong pair of serrated forceps, with which they operate upon the leaves and flowers with great force and rapidity; and that must be indeed an unaspiring denizen of the little republic, who does not stagger off with a cargo thrice his own bulk.

There was a small shrub of about a yard in height, with bright green leaves, and pretty white jessamine-shaped flowers, which I soon discovered to be a favourite; and the pathway leading from it to the distant hole, might not inaptly be compared to a gay town promenade on a sunny day, crowded by fine ladies armed with green and white parasols, for it was difficult to distinguish the bearer under the burden which he elevated to keep it out of the way of his neighbour's, or his own toes. The rapidity with which they move, is withal marvellous. I was more than once philosopher enough to oppose a temporary obstruction to the regularity of their proceedings, by placing a pebble upon the aperture of the nest. You must have a lively imagination, if you can fancy the scene which ensued, or conceive the hurry, and bustle, and confusion of the increasing crowd, with their gaudy burdens; the alarm which ran like wild-fire along the lines; the quarrels which ensued among the impatient and short-tempered, and the busy importance of sundry knowing old ants, which would drop their cargo, and, climbing the obstruction, take a survey of the nature and extent of the evil.

Our arrangements advanced slowly, and for at least ten days we had alternately to postpone and refix the day of final start.

We found that the country, all El Dorado as it might be to those about us, was not likely to prove so to us, for the price of the most simple article was so excessive, that our eyebrows and our shoulders threatened to take an habitual elevation, from the constant state of surprise and vexation to which we were reduced.

I have a bad memory, but I recollect that such a thing as *change* for a dollar was never required; indeed, it was as much as you could do to get it for a doubloon. I recollect we paid eight Spanish dollars for a ham; and that to shoe a horse, required three dollars a shoe, and a dollar to a man to hold the animal's nose: though all our steeds were patient as sheep, expostulation was vain—such was the custom.

The heat grew more and more oppressive daily, the moschetoës more bloodthirsty at evening, and more knowing in their attacks upon the faulty corners of our moscheto nets during the watches of the night. The nights were splendid, with a glorious round moon beaming on the river and on the lakes, by the light of which the wild dogs on the opposite shore held most uproarious festivals, to the utter destruction of our rest—the more so, as the numerous dogs of the town never ceased to yell in concert.

The 24th of February the heat was almost unbearable; but in the afternoon a film was drawn over the sky and across the sun, and before midnight we were all shivering in a norte. However, we had sent our horses over the river to Pueblo Viejo the preceding day, and determined to proceed. We left our prison about 10 A.M., crossing the boiling surface of the river with our baggage, not without danger; after a thousand detentions, finally got to horse, and on the approach of the evening, in spite of the lowering sky, advanced two leagues on our route inland to Tampico Alta, once, at the time of the conquest, if historians lie not, a town with seventy thousand inhabitants, now a village of two dozen poor huts, and a small rudely built church. It is situated on a high commanding bluff, within view of the gulf, and rising over an upland and undulating country, carpeted with magnificent shrubberies of low trees and bushes. Over the general level of the vegetation, here and there a gigantic banyan spread its hundred arms, the resort of numberless parrots; or the high white pyramidal cluster of flowers of the Spanish palmetto rose conspicuously above the bushes.

## LETTER III.

THE norte continued to blow strongly the following morning; and contented with having effected our escape, and an advance of two whole leagues into the country, we resolved, by common consent, to remain tranquilly at Tampico Alta till we saw what another day might bring forth.

We were luxuriously lodged in one of the mud cottages, in a windowless apartment, without a stick of furniture but what we brought into it. That, however, was more than sufficient to fill it, as our camp beds, with which we had been fortunately furnished from Europe for this tour, completely occupied three fourths of the floor.

So here we abode, leaving our retainers, whose number had now increased to five in all, to make the most of the halt with the horses and mules under their care. We breakfasted and supped upon *tortillas* or maize cakes, fowls, Chili pepper, rice, coffee, and *frijoles* or black beans; with the addition of an agreeable liquor, made of the fermented juice of the sugarcane. We looked to our accoutrements, cleaned guns and pistols, strolled in the forest, and at night enjoyed the most luxurious rest, in our clean and well-appointed beds; and blessed our stars, that we had turned our backs for ever upon the Halcyon, the Fonda de la Bolza—the heat, the impurities, and the nuisances of Tampico. Dull as it was without doors, I could not help strolling about, for a few hours, among the low woods, and did not fail, in spite of all my care, to gather a plentiful harvest of *garapatoes*, to rid myself from which gave me an hour's employment in the evening.

The following day, however, we were up betimes, and set seriously forward.

The ordinary road from Tampico to the capital is a very circuitous one, passing by the towns of San Luis Potisi, Zacatecas, and Guanaxuato ; and we had decided to leave it far to the right or northwest : pursuing as an alternative the more direct, more difficult, but far more picturesque mule track of the Cañada.

I may here, without offending you, bring to your recollection thus much of the physical geography of the remarkable country which was now the scene of our rambles ; namely, that its peculiar geological structure admits of its surface being divided into three distinct parts—the *tierras calientes*, *tierras templadas*, and *tierras frias*. The first, the *hot districts*, lying on the Pacific and Atlantic border, and in greater or less contiguity to the sea, are fertile in sugar, indigo, bananas, and cotton ; and exhibit all the phenomena of the tropics. The second, the *temperate lands*, forming a zone of mountains and broad plains of four or five thousand feet elevation, are blessed with a climate of rare beauty, and favourable to many of the productions of our milder latitudes, while the third, the *cold regions*, occupying the central table land of the high Cordillera, are exposed to greater vicissitudes of heat and cold, and overlooked by the highest summits of the Mexican chain, rising into the region of eternal snow. Our progress from Tampico to the capital, which lies at an elevation of upward of seven thousand feet above the gulf, would accordingly give us a glance at each in turn.

As our line of route has not been often described, I will give you as much detail as I am able. The incorrectness of the best maps, and the difficulty of getting two people of the country to agree in assigning the same relative position to any given town or remarkable object beyond the bare line of the route, must necessarily throw a degree of indistinctness over my narration.

Imagine us, then, mounted and setting forward from our homely quarters at Tampico Alta, like gentle knights, attended by our string of sumpter mules and serving men. I flatter myself that to a peaceful looker-on we afforded a gallant spectacle, and that our motley contrasted well

with the wild country into which we immediately plunged ; while, in the eye of the predatory spectator, there was that in the glitter of our arms and the resolute look of the party which must have commanded respect, and quelled the desire of plunder. But that you may better judge yourself, I present you with the following extract from our muster roll.

In advance rode Don Alberto, Don Carlos, and Don Carlos Jose, mounted upon three steeds of doubtful pedigree—Blanco, Rosso, and Pinto, which had been kindly pressed upon our purchase by worthy acquaintances in Tampico, as possessing a thousand virtues, fitting them for the peculiar purpose for which we required them, and no faults but such as were to be absolutely of no account to us. When they dozed—which was often—the prick of the enormous Spanish spurs which jingled at our heels incited them to action ; and when once upon a time we found them too lively, the pressure of the powerful Spanish bit soon reduced them to order. For the journey we preferred using the European saddle rather than the Mexican, and had accordingly included them in our purchases in New-Orleans.

We were all armed with holster pistols and sabres, to which Pourtales and myself added our double-barrelled guns. M·Euen had furnished himself in New Orleans with a formidable dragoon sabre of such length that it quite put the light curved cimeters of his companions to the blush. Our costume was a marvellous mixture of European and Mexican ; the scrape, the sombrero with its silver band, the scarlet sash, and jacket of the latter having been adopted, while the residue of the male outfit was European.

Our train was very long, and composed as follows : Two armed and mounted, ill-looking serving men, clad in the costume of their country, by name Juliano and Miguel—rogues both. The former had now been our equerry and valet for a month. He was a smooth-looking varlet, with a soft voice, small and active person and habits. Now that he had money, there was an affectation of spruce trimness in his clothing. He was in all a

perfect contrast to his comrade—a huge-boned, powerful man, with strongly marked features, half shrouded by a mass of tangled black locks; and who, we all agreed, would form the finest study in the world for a bandit. We never liked him or his looks, or his deep churchyard cough; but necessity has no law. They were both armed with rusty sabres; and Juliano had, moreover, stolen an unwieldy carbine from some dear confiding friend of his, and was wont to speak most confidently of his valour, and of the execution he was to perform in case of our being attacked by banditti, which was all along spoken of as a more than probable event. He had thrown us into convulsions of laughter at the very outset, at Pueblo Viejo, by a preliminary discharge of the mighty engine, which he had seen fit to indulge in previous to the real battle which he expected, when we saw his diminutive person fairly overthrown by the recoil.

Next in the train came Don Juan Espindola of Zacualtipan, the *arriero*; whom we had hired with a train of eight mules, to convey us and our baggage to the capital. He was a worthy man; and true, faithful and simple in manners, like most of his class. Our confidence in him was well placed.

The *arriero* is the carrier of New Spain, and the little honesty and uprightness to be found in the country, seem to have fallen exclusively to the share of those of his rank and profession. The most precious commodities are unhesitatingly delivered to his care, merely enclosed in bags for conveyance to the coast, and the *arriero* never fails to perform his contract. Espindola had come down to Tampico, with a *conducta*; and there we engaged him for the return, with as many of his mules as were necessary. The remainder were sent in advance under his domestics or *mozos*, two of whom, however, accompanied us on foot as whippers-in; and fine, active lads they were. In them the Indian blood predominated over the European. The *arriero* had, with our concurrence, invited a certain friend of his, Don Gaetano, to accompany us, and to take advantage of our escort. To this arrangement we acceded with the more readiness,

as, though evidently of a most unwarlike character, he added another to our number ; and had moreover been one of our fellow-prisoners in the Halcyon. I should still mention two saddle mules ; and then sum up our forces, as consisting, in all, of nine souls and seventeen quadrupeds. Whatever may have been the intrinsic value of our pluck, we certainly cut a rather imposing figure.

Till we should arrive at the town of Zacualtipan, within four or five days' journey of the capital, there was nothing to fear from banditti, if common report spoke truly.

Thus, you may imagine us, when once in motion on the morning of our quitting Tampico Alta, proceeding league after league, under any easy pace, through that beautiful undulating country, clothed with its gorgeous flowering thickets, to which I have already alluded. Many an expression of admiration burst from us as a new bird or splendid flower attracted our attention. An occasional shot hazarded at a rabbit or pheasant, alone broke the silence which reigned over this waste but beautiful region. After about seven leagues' ride, we halted for two hours at a rancho, or farm, for our breakfast of cabbage palm, salad, and eggs. Poor fare, you would say ; but, truth compelling, I must admit that sundry additions were supplied from our travelling stores, and to name them would at once let you into the secret, that, however warlike, we were not to be classed with those doughty warriors of old, who had "no stomach but to fight."

From the vicinity of this farm, the undulating country for many miles became perfectly open, totally denuded of bushes, though occasionally studded with bands of thick forest, and altogether reminded us strongly of the great prairies, till about sunset, when we gained a swelling elevation affording a wide view towards the east. In that quarter the vast Laguna Tammiagua, only separated from the gulf by a narrow band of sand hills, extended as far as the eye could reach.

Shortly after, we arrived at a large hacienda, called



La Messa, situated on a commanding eminence, at the edge of prairie country alluded to, and overlooking, to the south, a deep glen full of wood, and a far-stretching expanse of roundish hills covered with luxuriant vegetation.

In the absence of more regular places of entertainment, the custom of the country authorizes the traveller to make his halt with his retinue at the first farm which may suit his convenience; and though the hacienda is in general the country residence of a rich and wealthy proprietor, we felt no scruple in dismounting and asking shelter and provender for ourselves and our party.

And here I have to record one of those strange encounters which the Rambler has sometimes to note upon his tablets in utter amazement how they are brought about.

On riding round the corner of one of the principal buildings, what was my surprise to see my friend Pourtales folded in the embrace of a huge brawny young Mexican—and yet greater to find, on dismounting, that I was to be honoured with a fraternal squeeze from the same arms, before I could see what face there might possibly be appended to them. I was not long, however, in recognising in the athletic, sunburnt young man, who thus welcomed us to his home, a certain smooth-faced, ungainly stripling, who had been our fellow-passenger two years before, in the New York packet, from Havre de Grace to America. He had been sent from Mexico to Paris, to be instructed in the language, literature, and manners of the politest country in Europe; and, at that epoch, having finished his term of education, was returning with his bundle of acquisitions, to enlighten his benighted countrymen. On shipboard, where he was generally known by a singular *sobriquet* bestowed on him by my light-minded companion, namely, "*Amiable et execrable Tampico*," we had of course made acquaintance. We found that he had learned to eat with a knife and fork, to dress like a civilized man, to talk a little bad French; to dance, and to play the monkey, which he did *à merveille*, clumsily aping Pour-

tales in his various changes of costume, and his whimsical contrivances for banishing ennui; and emulating the sailors in their expeditions to the top-gallant-mast head. After landing, we had lost sight of him. We heard, however, that he had been delivered up by the captain with a regular bill of lading to the Mexican consul at New York, and to his utter dismay and disappointment, not being considered accomplished enough, had been sent to a "finishing academy" in Pennsylvania. Many adventures, and the multitude of strange personages with whom we had come in contact during the rambles of the two past years, had driven him out of our remembrance, till most unexpectedly we found his two long, Indian-shaped arms locked round our necks at La Messa, a brown athletic Mexican, utterly forgetful of all the polite education he had undergone, curbing a wild horse, and hunting a wilder leopard. He seemed to be absorbed in his hunting schemes; and, instead of a collection of books, valued himself upon the number of lion, ounce, and wildcat skins which decorated his apartment. His thin and meager French was richly larded with noble sounding Spanish words and phrases; but we contrived to converse about old and new times.

La Messa, the property of his uncle, to whom he seemed to be considered as future heir, was the centre of a vast estate stretching many leagues on every side.

From the specimen before us, however, nothing could exceed the poor homely style and rough living of these wealthy proprietors at a distance from the capital.

Our evening meal, which we were invited to take with the family, was a sleepy entertainment, in which we tasted nothing but the burning *Chile* or red pepper with which every dish was seasoned; and that done, we all packed together with *Aimable et execrable Tampico* into a small apartment, where, fortunately, the cold air of the norte, which was still blowing, prevented us from being at once suffocated by heat, and bitten to madness by the moschetoës.

The following morning, after a loving adieu from our

acquaintance who left the rancho at dawn to join in a tiger hunt in a distant part of the country, we continued our journey to the southward.

Our route led us down into the dell below La Messa, and over the hillside opposite, till we entered a broad, green glade, stretching through the forest for some miles to the foot of the eminences upon which the large Indian village of Osuhuama is situated. We were quite unprepared for the vast panoramic view which unrolled itself to our view from the summit of a high conical mound, perched on the very edge of the declivity, with which this, the first step as it were of the higher country, breaks down to the general level of the country in the vicinity of the coasts.

The village, with its picturesque huts and enclosures of bamboo, and little patches of cultivation, lies scattered over the ridges of a number of broken hills. The church is nearly on the highest point, and directly at the foot of the mound whose form and position, in defiance of its size, would suggest the idea of its being artificial.

Any description of the wide view to the north, west, and east, comprising in the latter direction the Laguna Tammiagua, and fading to the apparently illimitable horizon, would be utterly impossible. The slope of the hills displayed a wilderness of rank vegetation. To the south rose several groups of conical hills, in advance of the more distant chain to which we were gradually approaching.

The afternoon's march brought us some leagues on our road over an undulating country, covered for the most part with forests of palmetto; and we took up our night's quarters at a poor rancho, tenanted by an old woman, and, unfortunately for us, preoccupied by a gambling party, whose drunken and lawless demeanour was sufficiently offensive and menacing to keep us in hot water for some hours; when they were pleased to take their departure: relieving us from the necessity of either blowing out their brains, or being ourselves stabbed; a choice of evils truly, but one which appeared for a while almost inevitable.

The night was gloomy; and the mountains in advance half shrouded by curtains of dark clouds. I have a disagreeable recollection of the whole scene. I remember, however, that both amusement, interest, and surprise, were excited in us by three distinct circumstances: amusement at the extravagant joy and pride of heart evinced by Juliano, when a rabbit was killed with his mighty carbine, by Espindola; interest at the visit of two fine boys, lineal descendants of Montezuma, from a neighbouring rancho; and surprise at the fact being mentioned to us, that the father of an old gallant who was the leader of the debauchees before named, was at that hour in sound health at the next hacienda, at the age of one hundred and twenty years. This rancho lay twenty-four leagues from Pueblo Viejo.

*March the first*, we proceeded through the same broken line of country. Some difficulty was experienced from our being several times entangled in jungles of bamboo, and in muddy swamps, or thick natural groves of lemon and orange trees; till two o'clock in the afternoon, when the country became more open, and finding a poor Indian hut, beautifully situated, we halted to breakfast, and to repose ourselves and our animals. The cabin was constructed of light bamboo frames, thatched with palmetto leaves not only on the roof but the sides, and divided into two or three compartments, with coarse screens of grass matting.

The inhabitants were all of the softer sex; consisting of three young maidens, under the surveillance of two most forbidding crones. We here, if I recollect right, made our first experience of the difficulty to which the traveller is exposed in Mexico, in persuading the Indian to furnish him, even if paid in advance, with the slightest food or provender either for man or beast. Nothing was to be had. *No hai!* was the answer to every query. They had neither maize, nor chocolate, nor fodder, nor eggs, nor fowls; nor bananas, nor *frijoles*, nor *tortillas*, nor dried meat, nor even *Chile*. What did they live upon—for they were all, old and young, as plump as partridges. *No hai!* was the only word you could ex-

tort. However, there was no alternative ; our animals must rest, if they might not eat ; and we consequently unsaddled, and began to amuse ourselves, as we might, in looking at the bone of our costly ham, and the pounded contents of our biscuit bag, more especially as Espindola whispered to us to have a little patience. Five minutes passed by, and not a word was said. A packet of *cigaritas* was produced and passed round. What the old Venuses did not refuse, the young ones thought proper to accept. Espindola got into conversation by degrees with one of the elders, and Pourtales began to play the "*irresistible*," with another of the party. Good humour and confidence began to thaw distrust, and conquer prejudice. By-and-by, old and young began to move listlessly about. The charcoal fire was stirred up. Still there was no hurry. Another moment, and from under a cloth in a dark corner of the hut, the stone used in the preparation of tortillas cakes was produced ; and, as though by accident, a bowlful of maize flour was discovered. As it was there, one of the old squaws fell to work to knead the bread ; while the other, after looking very carefully about her, found a store of *Chile* and a bag of *frijoles*. This was not all. A guttural parley in their own language was followed by one of the girls stepping out with Espindola to a secret storehouse, from which he returned looking very sly with his arms full of rich golden ears of maize, and a bundle of fodder. By accident, a little loophole in the same quarter flew open, and the premises were immediately overrun by a quantity of poultry, rejoicing at their emancipation from the thralldom to which they had evidently been subjected on our approach. More wonderful than all, we found that, apparently, quite unsuspected by the possessors, the hens had employed their time while thus hidden from the light of day in the production of a dozen fine eggs. In short, within an hour after the hut had been at the extremity of famine, we were furnished with an excellent meal, and there were no signs at our departure that we left discontent behind us. This is strange, but nothing but what is very comprehensible ; being a remnant of

old times and old policy, when, in consequence of the Spaniard's taking what he could find, without payment, the poor Indian always contrived to have nothing.

The lesson was not lost upon us; and, ever after, what between civility, affected indifference, and content, a timely use of cigaritas and soft words, we never had to leave an Indian but unsatisfied.

In the course of the evening, after passing through the noblest forests of live oak we had yet seen in the country; or over moist levels, where almost impenetrable thickets of bamboo cane clustered round the huge fantastic trunks of the banian; and ten thousand vegetable strings and ropes wove a canopy overhead, we reached the Indian village of Santa Catharina, whose situation on an elevated plateau vies for beauty with that of its rival just described. We did not halt here, however, but pushing on over a fatiguing line of country by a deep miry track, came to a halt at a large and roomy rancho, where we found the needful accommodation, and the rest which a heavy day's journey of eighteen leagues made very welcome to our draggled train. A few miles to the left, rose a range of mountains covered with foliage to the very summit, and with singularly pointed and insolated rocks rising at intervals from their base.

I pass rapidly over the next day's march, which lay across much the same kind of country, picturesque in the highest degree, from the broken character of the surface and from the rich and redundant character of the vegetation. From the occasional bare ridges which we surmounted, we continued to command most extensive views over the Huastec, as the rich county at the foot of the higher chain is called. This part of the state of Vera Cruz, is, throughout, very thinly inhabited, and cultivation very sparingly applied to its surface. Indeed the cholera of the preceding year had swept away a large proportion of the Indian population; and one extensive Indian village, at which we halted at noon, magnificently situated like all its neighbours, was nearly depopulated by its ravages.

Up to the close of this day, when, after passing over another tract of country covered with palm forest, we halted at a large and rich hacienda, about four leagues from the foot of the branch of the Sierra Madra in whose recesses we were to seek the bed of the Rio de la Cañada, as our future guide—we had seemingly surmounted no very considerable elevation, but had continually ascended and descended the abrupt hills which appear to be heaped in picturesque confusion over a large tract of country between the coast and the foot of the main ranges. Occasionally, higher summits of evident volcanic origin are seen to rise from their bosom, but these are mostly isolated; and though we had certainly been gradually rising ever since we left Tampico, it was not till we had advanced full fifty leagues from the coast that we gained the foot of the foremost spur of the Cordillera. Of course the whole of the country passed through belongs to the *tierras calientes*.

The hacienda where we lodged on the evening of the fourth day's march from Tampico Alta, was situated on a plain very near the foot of the mountain. It has principally notched itself upon my memory, from the magnificent, free-standing banian trees in its vicinity, several of which measured upward of thirty feet in circumference. Here we were, as usual, well treated, paying moderately for whatever necessaries we were furnished with.

Deep clouds resting on all the ridges in advance boded no good for the continuation of our journey the following morning. Indeed, it began to drizzle before our train could be set in motion; nevertheless, we flattered ourselves that we might at least reach Chicontepec, *the City on Seven Hills*, which lay on the mountains rising before us at four leagues' distance.

After two hours' ride, our mule path sank from the open hilly country into a deep glen strewn with rounded blocks of stone, which indicated that in the rainy season it formed the bed of one of those torrents which, fed by the waters filtering through the porous structure of the mountains and table land above them, spring into

existence and roll down on their short but furious course to the gulf.

It was just at this period of our journey, when toiling over the broken ground, amid the green twilight shed into the deep defile through an almost impervious canopy of the most gigantic forest trees, covered from the foot to the topmost twig with lithe creepers and enormous parasites, that the rain, which had now menaced for several days, began to descend upon us in torrents. If there was wind, we were not sensible of it at this depth; but the rain poured perpendicularly down, as from a water spout. At the same time every object became shrouded in mist. We nevertheless dragged ourselves forward, till it appeared as though the vale terminated in a *cul de sac* against the precipitous but forested side of the mountain, when a sudden turn was given to the track, and following it, it began to ascend to the right, by a steep zigzag mule path. Climbing and dragging our spent horses after us, we surmounted one turn after another, till we thought that we should never arrive at the last. There was no sign of our gaining the summit. Whenever the mist rose or shifted for an instant, we caught a glimpse of the steep flanks of the mountain to the left, which seemed but a stone's throw distant. At length, after nearly two hours' climb, we suddenly reached the plateau, and entered the principal street of Chicontepec. At this elevation we were above the region of the rain, and nearly above that of the clouds, for the mist was driving and thin, and an occasional gleam of sunshine gave us a glimpse of the objects around. The houses were much more substantial than any we had seen in the lower country, and a large church with a tower rose above a declivity we had surmounted. At what elevation Chicontepec is situated, I cannot guess, but it must be considerable. It is quite on the barren rocky crest of the mountains, which should be seven in number, according to the interpretation of the name; and must command a view of great extent, but of which we saw nothing. After some trouble we discovered a poor *meson*, where we were allowed to dry and refresh ourselves.



As to the mules, it was long before we saw them all arrive, and became reassured that one or other, with his precious load, had not capsized, or missed his way. Juliano and the two *mozos* had been faithful to their trust; but as to Miguel, we could hear nothing of him; and it was not till a couple of hours had gone by, and long after Espindola, finding there was no fodder here, had gone forward with the mules, leaving Juliano to escort us, that we heard from a passer-by, that he had been seen lying by the roadside many miles back. “*Un borrachio!*” (a drunkard!) said Juliano, with a significant shrug of his shoulders; always willing to throw odium on his fellow, and to contrast his own conduct, whenever it happened to be more correct, with that of his less crafty chum.

After a ride of many hours over difficult and steep ridges, and through close but fertile valleys under partial cultivation—often enveloped in mist, and continually a prey to doubt as to our ever finding our arriero—we at length stumbled upon him at the edge of dusk, tending his mules at an humble rancho, in a pretty valley nestled in the mountains. And here we brought our wet and fatiguing day’s journey to a close, by erecting our camp beds under an open palmetto shed, drying our accoutrements as well as might be, enjoying our frugal meal, and betaking ourselves to repose.

At bedtime there were no signs of our *borrachio*; but in the middle of the night we found he had returned to his duty, as his churchyard cough was heard issuing from a shed on the premises.

The weather seemed now to have done its worst, and a cloudless dawn heralded forth a bright sunny day; how bright—how sunny—and how beautiful—amid such magnificent foliage and flowers, no pen can describe! In brief, you will hear no more of clouds for some days to come.

At noon, after traversing one considerable stream, we at length reached the valley of the Rio de la Cañada, a clear river, occupying at this time of the year but a small

portion of the rock-strewn bed which overspreads a large extent of the low grounds. It is a tributary of the Tula, if my surmise is right. At the point where our pathway came upon it, the vale was comparatively open and spacious, though surrounded by mountains of considerable elevation, and there was much in the whole landscape which brought the scenery of the Italian Alpine valleys to my recollection; but four or five leagues higher up, shortly after the traveller has passed a large hacienda belonging to a wealthy *cura* on the left bank, it contracts; and, for the succeeding thirty or forty miles, takes that peculiar character which has given a name to the river.

The fifth and sixth of March were occupied in advancing from the priest's country seat, slowly up the magnificent ravine, on a rough mule path, worn by the numerous *conducta*, with which this is one way of descent from the table land above; threading thickets which struggled with the limpid mountain stream for possession of the chasm, and often riding along the bed of the river, which I believe had to be crossed considerably above a hundred times.

We considered the scenery of the Cañada superior to any we had ever seen, comparable to it—and we were, as you know, no novices in mountain defiles. I nowhere met with the sublimity of an Alpine mountain gorge on a great scale, clothed with such beauty. A varied vegetation, stimulated by the alternate vehemence of a tropical sun, and the gentle dews and moist showers from the mountains above, into an inconceivable rankness and richness of growth—all that is beautiful and gorgeous in colouring and curious in detail—birds, butterflies, insects, fruits, and flowers—are here presented to the eyes of the traveller, in the midst of a chaos of rent and riven rock and dizzy precipice, which would be worthy of the most savage defile of the most savage Alpine districts of Europe. No one who has not beheld with his own eyes, can imagine the vigour with which nature puts forth her strength under this incitement from alternate heat and moisture.

League after league we moved forward in ecstasy. Every turn disclosed another matchless picture. It was here a grove of old and shattered trees of enormous growth bent over the surface of the river under the load of moss and flowering parasites which drew nourishment and life from their fibres; their outstretched arms, struggling, as it were, in the interminable folds of the vines and creepers, whose festoons and garlands of flowers, fruit, or pods, entwined every bough to the highest twig. There again rose a thicket of flowering shrubs of all hues, glistening in morning dew, over which the insects and butterflies were gloating in the bright sun; and such butterflies—the rainbow is dull and colourless in comparison!

Farther, the high gray precipice swept down perpendicularly, with its red, purple, and gray hues, innumerable weather stains, and lichens, reflected in the still surface of the stream; while its sheets of bare rock unveiled to the gaze of the passer-by, in the hundreds of thin strata, twisted, broken, entwined, and distorted into a thousand shapes, a page of nature's secret doings, which could not be contemplated without a feeling of awe. The upper portions of the precipices, where they broke down from the forested slope of the mountains above, were frequently overgrown with long strings of strong wiry grass, or by a peculiar species of cactus which rose like a whitish green column perpendicularly from the ledges.

Then came the little opening at the entrance of some lateral valley, with its Indian hamlet, strips of cultivation fully exposed to the broad sun, and groups of rich and sunny bananas, half shrouding the simple cabins of the poor natives: or, as a contrast, one of those dens of rubbish, situated under the shade of a beetling crag, in which everything seemed devoted to putrid destruction; where you moved in twilight through a mass of decaying vegetation; where no living thing sported, and the passenger breathed the chill and humid damp of death, rottenness, and decay.

Four or five leagues from the entrance of the gorge, the signs of that tremendous convulsion, which has burst this channel through the heart of the mountains, are perfectly bewildering. The thin, laminated strata are broken and twisted in every possible manner; and the river, which had never failed us in the earlier part of our journey, but had formed an abundant stream flowing in a chain of alternate rapids or lucid pools, was found to have totally disappeared, pursuing for some distance a subterraneous course below the surface. Soon after, however, we found ourselves again on its banks, and early on the afternoon of the first day emerged from the ravine which I have attempted to describe, and approached the great opening, wherein the Indian village of Tlacolula lies surrounded by its orange groves and pretty cultivated enclosures.

This was by far the most important Indian village we had seen, though perhaps not the largest, and we found that the population was partly engaged in the manufacture of the cotton cloth which serves as a *reboso*, or veil for the upper part of the person, of the common people throughout Mexico. They are woven in a rudely constructed loom.

We here passed a long evening, bathing in the river, examining whatever was curious—among which we may mention a pretty crystal cascade directly opposite our quarters in one of the palmetto-thatched huts of the village—and in arguing whether it was lawful or unlawful to shoot a monkey. Several of these animals, of the long-tailed yellow and black species, had been descried in the ravine at their avocations, much to our amusement. Pourtales, however, who remembered the delights of strange meats—such as skunk, racoon, and prairie dogs on the great prairies, and whose philosophy was anything but Pythagorean or Braminical, had been in a perfect fever for a taste of the long-armed gentry, and I believed had actually fired a shot or two, which the objects of his aim had contrived to dodge. M'Euen and myself took him to task, for to us it appeared that

he was guilty of having meditated the most culpable homicide. For my part they looked to me far too much like distant family connections, to allow me for an instant to harbour the wish of taking away their lives.

The church of Tlacolula, a dingy stone structure, stands prominently in the middle of the valley.

These Indian villages, though they have ostensibly the power of self-government in matters relating to themselves, as the alcades and other petty functionaries are appointed from the inhabitants, are in fact governed by the priest, who here, as elsewhere, is of the mixed race; and a fiery, fagot-bearing, heretic-hating, determined, beetle-browed clerk, we found the Cura of Tlacolula to be. I thought him very much inclined to act the inquisitor with us, till he discovered that we were extremely inoffensive and civilly inclined, and able to furnish him with a bonus of percussion caps, which he greedily coveted and obtained, after which he gave us his blessing, and left us to pass the night in peace.\*

So far we had come without any great degree of trouble, or any more serious *contretens* than such as we might well have expected. Our preconceived good opinion of Espindola had never been shaken for an instant; and our respect for and our confidence in him grew day by day. His mules, though of various tempers, were strong and good, and did their work well. He generally led the youngest and giddiest by the lasso, and the rest followed in their order. The art of packing a mule is quite a science; and it was singular to see, how, after the first day's trial—when the trial was made, which of the heterogeneous and multiform objects composing our baggage would ride best in company, or were

\* There exists more than one mode of reaching the village of Tlacolula from Tampico; and I am inclined to think a yet shorter than that described, viz., by Los Huevas, the village of Tantayanca and La Pesca, which, by the calculation of the author of "Notes on Mexico," brings you here in seven days, and after a journey of fifty-three leagues.

We had been up to this evening also seven days on the road from Tampico Alta, and had come, by our arriero's computation, fifty-nine leagues. But our object was to go the most picturesque road, and that we undoubtedly did.

suiting to the strength of the individual—how everything went by rule and square, and how seldom anything went wrong. The Mexican pack saddle would seem in itself to be a burden. A considerable variety is shown in the leather furniture, which is often embossed and embroidered in red and yellow, in addition to a name such as *Bamonos*, *Abobo*, *Mejico*. These names, however, may be said to belong more to the suit of harness than, as might be supposed, to the animal wearing it.

Once packed, and in motion, off the mules marched in Indian file; one pacing under the mountainous load of the camp beds, another laden with two portmanteaus, a third with carpet bags and canteen, and so forth, while the last scampered after his fellows with the odds and ends belonging to our travelling kitchen, often to the great danger of the pans which dangled from his sides.

On arrival at our place of repose they were unladen, and every set of furniture carefully arranged by itself in the most precise and exact order, while the emancipated animals made use of the first moment of liberty to indulge in a hearty shake, or rolls in the dust, followed up by that brief sententious bray, by which the mule expresses his feelings, in contradistinction to the full, round, sonorous, and protracted descant of his mother ass.

Old *Bamonos*, or "Let-us-be-jogging," was the most trusted, the most sapient, and the most morose of the train; and occasionally bestowed a brace of resounding kicks upon the hollow sides of *Abobo*, or another of his brethren, when he saw them in possession of a bush or pasture of particular succulence. He was the leader of the unled, and ordinarily followed his master.

We were fortunate in finding maize fodder in most of our halting places; but in default of this our providers were seldom at loss, but stripping particular trees of their nutritious foliage, supplied the necessities of their mules with what the thickets furnished.

As to our two varlets, when you have said of Miguel that he was a *borrhachio*, you have recorded all the positive evil in his character that come within our notice; as to negative faults he had plenty, but what could be expect-

ed of such a wild, unshaven, and uncouth being? As to Juliano, with his smooth face, and smoother language; arrogance of superior breeding, and superior authority, we had long known that his honesty was very suspicious, that his valour was more than doubtful and that his general morals were as worn and discoloured, as the faded, green leather breeches in which he delighted to swagger among the Indians.

We found that like other fashionable servants he had his private gleanings whenever employed by us. One thing I must say for him, that if he was lavish of our credit and dollars, he was no less so of his own; for what with one thing or another, he had contrived to draw from us, by the time we reached Tlacolula, nearly the whole of his pay, for the entire tour and the return.

Here, having more leisure to look about us, we were not slow in discovering other dusky shades in his character. Having taken into his head that his valour was hired as our body guard, and being moreover jealous of the respect and confidence which we bestowed upon Don Juan Espindola, he thought proper, all of a sudden, to relinquish all care of our baggage. After leading forward our horses of a morning, ready caparisoned for departure, without further ado, he girded on his trusty—no, rusty blade; grasped his mighty carbine, clambered on his own steed, and awaited the signal of marching. This conduct was the more disagreeable, as our skill in the Spanish tongue as yet hardly comprised terms of objur-gation and menace; and this the rogue knew. Nevertheless we gave him a regular “blowing up,” which I flatter myself was comprehensible enough, in spite of bad grammar, Gallicisms, and Anglicisms; though indeed I must in fairness state, that, whether in anger or deep-seated grief no one could say, he forthwith departed from our presence, bought himself a bottle of *agua ardiente*, and got tipsy. Miguel was too good a comrade not to bear him company; so that on the morning of our departure from Tlacolula, they were both found to be so far gone, that it was with trouble they could sit in the saddle.

But, however great our annoyance, nothing was able to damp the spirit of enthusiasm with which we found ourselves inspired. Soon after leaving the village, the huge precipices which towered on both sides, closed in upon the stream, and threw the road into deep shadow; and we were not long in discovering, that beautiful as the scenery had been, we were to see it on a yet grander scale, and clothed with yet greater magnificence. The most sublime part of the defile of the Cañada is that which extends two or three leagues above Tlacolula. A mountain of very great elevation appears literally cloven in twain from the very summit to the foundation; displaying immense perpendicular sheets of white rock, the innumerable lamina of which are twisted and gnarled like the roots of a tree. A wilderness of the richest tropical vegetation clothes the partial slopes, and chokes up the depths of the defile. The gorge varies from five hundred to one hundred feet in breadth.

The continuation of the road where the great defile terminates, presents fine, but in general more open scenery. The mule path for several leagues follows a tortuous track, now on the sides of the steep acclivities, and then to and fro on the side of the river, which has now decreased greatly in size, till it leads you insensibly to the foot of the Monte Penulco.

The road at this season was rendered lively by the strings of mules, laden with the produce of the table land, which take advantage of the dry season to reach the coast by the Cañada, though I cannot say that they add to the safety of the narrow pathway, as it is not always easy to pass without running a certain degree of risk. In the wet season, of course the road in the defile is impracticable, and the *cuchillo*, or ridge of the mountain, is then followed.

Early in the afternoon we now began to descry patches of pine forest, and the river forking, we followed the branch to the right, till we reached the foot of the broad and well-constructed road, which, leaving the defiles, leads the traveller up the precipitous sides of the mountain. A series of turns and zigzags, conducted upon



the narrow edge of ridges which are occasionally bounded by abrupt and horrible declivities, sweeping many hundred feet downward to the edge of the river, must then be surmounted. Here accidents are of frequent occurrence; and our caution was increased by the sight of a dying mule which had just before fallen from a higher turn of the road to a lower.

As we continued to climb for nearly two hours, gradually rising one hundred feet after another, we became conscious of a change both in the atmosphere and in the surrounding vegetation. Our view began to expand, and to range over a long chain of gracefully moulded mountains, hemming in the valley of the Cañada towards its source; and when, at length, we emerged upon the summit among scattered groups of evergreen oaks and other forest trees, rising from a fresh greensward, we were conscious that we had quitted the *tierras calientes*, and had gained the level *tierras templadas*.

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#### LETTER IV.

It is an advantage to have a mind disposed to enjoyment, and to feel yourself participating in that temper, which extracts pleasing sensations out of every situation. I may without arrogance say, in different degrees, perhaps, and from very different impulses, such was the character of each individual of the trio whose footsteps you have good-humouredly, I doubt not, followed thus far.

We had all, while in the *tierras calientes*, been struck with the peculiar beauties of that region and its wonderful productions; and revelled, with all due temperance I hope, in the many sources of rational enjoyment there laid before us; philosophically enduring, if not scorning those annoyances, to which the climate, country, and the rude state of society, unavoidably exposed the traveller.

The suffocating heat, the insect plagues, the unwonted food—what in fact had they been to us, compared to the sum of our enjoyments? We almost felt regret, while mounting the lofty mountain ladder which was to raise us to another and more temperate zone, that we were turning our backs upon such unparalleled beauty.

Nevertheless, if I would signalize one evening and one scene, during our ramble in New Spain, which touched our hearts more than another, I should name the Monte Penulco and the setting sun which we there beheld.

A desolate-looking stone building, in the vicinity of a poor rancho, divided by party walls into a number of comfortless lodgings, here furnished us with accommodation; and after seeing that all our retinue had followed us without accident, we left our horses to their repose, and sallied forth for a stroll.

The swelling crest of the Monte Penulco is said to have been at the time of the Spanish conquest, the site of a large town containing many thousand inhabitants. You look now in vain for the traces, either in the remnants of buildings, or inequalities of surface. A solitary stone ruin, of considerable strength, standing in the middle of the wide pastures, is the only vestige of old times; and that, I have no doubt, like many ruins in this part of the country, which are shown as Indian antiquities, is of Spanish origin. It may either have been a chapel erected for the edification of the new converts, or a fort constructed to overawe the Indian inhabitants.

In other respects, nature has reclaimed her own, and resumed her quiet sway over the Monte Penulco and its brethren, which exhibit throughout all their varied undulations of surface, an unbroken carpet of delicious verdure nurtured by the moist mists of the mountains, and beds of gentle flowers, fanned by the pure and elastic air of an eternal spring.

How sweet we felt the repose of that long still evening upon those green Alpine pastures! Well might we, as we lay at ease upon the fresh sod, and watched the sun sink among the mountains girdling the horizon, while his

slanting beams glistened upon the pretty white ænothera which spotted the turf, congratulate each other upon our escape from the persecutions of *garapatoes* and their insect allies.

The view on all sides was fine, but chiefly so towards the deep defiles of the Cañada at our feet. The Monte Penulco occupies the angle between the forks. Across the opening which marked the great defile above Tlacolula, an even line of blue, melting into the mist of the utmost visible horizon, marked the open country of the Huastec, through which we had passed many days previous. Many little solitary Indian huts, and patches of sugarcane, and numerous herds of cattle, were scattered over the precipitous slopes far and wide, and altogether, we agreed, that nowhere in America had we seen mountain scenery whose general features and colouring bore so great a resemblance to the lower green Alps of Switzerland, with their wide pastures, transparent atmosphere and glistening chalets.

The Monte Penulco lies probably at the height of between four and five thousand feet above the gulf. The limit at which the sugarcane and banana come to perfection, has been given as the boundary between *tierras calientes* and *tierras templadas*; but I am doubtful whether that is a just criterion, as so much depends upon the geological formation of a locality, and its position with regard to the surrounding country, and in some parts of Mexico sugar is cultivated at a much greater height than that which otherwise would exhibit the phenomena of the *tierras templadas*.

We supped in our den, during the brief twilight of the tropics, and welcomed the temperate zone of New Spain in a horn of its own vintage, which I here introduce to your notice under the name of *pulque*—a liquor drawn from the great Mexican aloe, or maguey.

I forgot to mention that, on arrival here, we yielded to the desire of Espindola, that we should dispense with his services for the night and following morning, and al-

low him to go forward to his home in the town of Za-cualtipan, between three and four leagues distant, to prepare his wife for the reception of our party : and I have now further to narrate the defection of our scapegrace Juliano, who, after going about his work in the evening like a man in a maze, was reported early the next morning by his comrade to be dead—or dying—or drunk ; at all events incapable, or unwilling to move another step. We therefore visited him, and inquired into the particulars of his case. We examined his tongue—well-coloured and healthy ; felt his pulse—free and regular ; and punched him affectionately in the stomach, that being, according to the mute indication of the sufferer, the main seat of the unknown disease. He bore this professional treatment with great meekness. We ascertained that he had, in conformity to his invariable habits, made a very hearty supper : to wit, a dozen and a half of *tortillas* smeared with *Chile* ; a dish of rice ; a dish of *frigoles*, forbye an egg or two ; a huge pot of pulque, and a couple of yards of sugarcane ; and we had great suspicion, from what we learned, that he intended, as soon as the coast was clear, to make an equally hearty breakfast. But what were we poor, innocent, helpless travellers to do ? There he lay under a group of Palma Christi, on his *armas d'agua*, or goatskin knee wrappers, like a man who has completely lost his hold upon the world—made his last testament—left to others the consolations to be derived from the possession of his goods and chattels—his battered green velvet pantaloons, and short jacket ; his mighty sword, and mightier carbine ; and was only waiting for the priest to give him his viaticum.

It is true, we had all good reasons to believe him “playing possum,” as the Anglo Americans express it, otherwise shamming ; indeed, we had proof positive showing this to be the case, and that, moreover, he had excellent reasons for doing it, and for quitting us here. He was deeply in our debt. He was tired of his masters, as he found that his villanies, small and great, were detected. He knew that from this day forward, the

gallant bearing of a warrior which he had assumed was no longer to be a sinecure, but that there was a possibility of his having actually to fight—all urgent reasons for breaking his chain. And break it he did—no doubt finding his health wonderfully restored, as soon as our diminished train disappeared; and I could almost sympathize with the laugh which he must have indulged in, as he saw the three dons in the distance, reduced to the necessity of turning muleteers—the more so, as our hyper-charity had left him a bonus for his ill conduct.

Abobo and his fellows were all mad that morning—whether from the intoxicating effects of mountain air, or from their feeling that Espindola was absent, and that we were in a dilemma, I know not. However you might be tempted, *you* cannot follow Juliano's example and go back; but *nolens volens* must keep us company over one swelling height after another, up and down—but always attaining a greater and greater altitude, till after about three hours' march through an elevated line of country, partly under cultivation, the view suddenly opened to the south, and we saw the main chain of the Sierra Madre, heaped over the horizon in that direction, the wide stretch of varied table land at its feet, and the pretty town of Zacualtipan before us.

It was certainly a pity that Juliano did not keep up his courage so far as to advance to Zacualtipan, for he would have gloried in the eclat with which our party entered it; wheeling round by the great church, and across the Plaza, with ringing spurs and jingling arms, at a hard trot after our intoxicated mules, which, led by old Abobo, as soon as they recollected the locality and the near proximity of their own stable, set off at a canter to the great risk of the various piles of which their lading was composed. Great was the astonishment of the peaceful inhabitants; and even a sleepy *corps de garde* of half-clad soldiery, lounging under the piazza of the municipal palace in the square, were evidently taken by surprise. However, they had no time to collect their forces; for following hard in the wake of our baggage, we descended a narrow street, on the opposite side of

the space, and rushed pellmell into the hospitable courtyard, much to the delight of our honest *arriero*, who, with his young wife and two children, was upon the lookout for us. He gave us a hearty welcome to his home, where, both for his sake and our own, we had determined to take an entire day's rest.

A salvo of hearty kicks was meantime fired by old Bamanos upon every set of ribs and haunches within reach, either as a salutary correction for their general want of discipline, or a publication of his resumption of authority as "*lord of the walk*," now that they were at home.

Zacualtipan was the largest town we had yet seen in Mexico, though far overrated, it being reported to contain ten thousand inhabitants. Its situation, at the broken ground towards the head of a vast rocky ravine of great depth, descending for several leagues towards the valley of Rio Oquilcalco, is very picturesque. Many of the houses are constructed of limestone, with balconies and galleries somewhat in the Spanish taste. The principal church is more curious in parts, than beautiful in proportion: and it is singular to trace here and there many of the Moorish and Arabesque details which are to be found in the splendid churches of the mother country, transplanted hither on the soil of the New World. The church is furnished with its quota of bells, priests, and tinsel; as we had an opportunity of discovering an hour after our arrival, when a large, but dirty and tawdry funeral procession, with hymns and crucifix, perambulated most of the narrow streets of the place, of which the deceased seemed to have been a wealthy inhabitant. There is little or no trade or manufacture here, as far as we could learn.

The house of our *arriero* was comfortably, but simply furnished with settees round the walls, and was by far the most pleasant lodging we had occupied since our arrival in the country; and though far from wealthy, it was easy to see that the master was respected by his townsmen. He devoted the following morning to a ramble with us in the adjacent country, in which he

pointed out various remnants of old times. We remarked the site of more than one Indian town, now only indicated by swelling heaps of rubbish or sunken wells, and some singularly shaped rocks, which tradition points out as objects of idolatrous worship in ancient times.

What we were most eager to visit, were certain Indian temples, of which we had heard much, and we were accordingly conducted to a massive ruined church of moderate size, situated a little below Zacualtipan, just at the commencement of the great defile. Its erection is referred to times prior to the conquest, but I have no hesitation in saying, falsely so, like others which we inspected in this valley, in continuing our route. It is strongly built of hewn stone, cemented by lime, and adorned with a species of carved frieze, the very form and drawing of which convinced me that *that* at least was of Spanish workmanship. And a little further inspection and acquaintance with the undoubted erections of the Aztec and Toltec nations, certified me that the whole structure was of the same origin, though probably built upon the site of a temple or *teocallis* of the aborigines. In the course of the evening, we inspected another of similar form and character, strikingly situated on a knoll below the elevated village of San Bernardo, two leagues below Zacualtipan, and overlooking the great defile; and to this the same observation applies.

I had an awkward kind of adventure just before our departure from the town. While all unarmed, peaceably sketching alone, in a secluded spot in the vicinity of the church, I was attacked at disadvantage by a savage patriot, either mad or drunk, or both, who from the circumstance of my having been seen more than once in that precise position, in the purlieus of his solitary dwelling, with paper and pencil, was pleased to consider me as a spy, and accordingly followed and accosted me with his naked sabre at my throat. That the fellow was capable of doing me some grievous bodily injury, all for the love of *Mejico y libertad*, if not for plunder, in spite of my honest face and intentions, I am convinced; and that I felt very foolish, at being thus taken unaware, without

the means of self-defence, you will believe. As it was, I had to put on all my address, and more bold effrontery than I generally affect, to decoy him to accompany me towards a more public thoroughfare, where he was pleased to leave me; and to tell the truth, I was pleased to leave him. This was the second warning I had had, what kind of trouble I was likely to get into by doing that which in this land even honest people could not comprehend, besides throwing myself in the way of danger from the vicious; and as I could not resolve to give up my pursuits, I, from this time henceforward, never stirred abroad without being well armed.

In the vicinity of San Bernardo, we met with the first regular plantations of the *Agave Americana*, or maguey, which I have alluded to as the source from which the present inhabitants of the table land of New Spain, as well as the Aztec aborigines, draw their ordinary beverage. It is a noble plant, and I will not forget some future day to give you a more detailed account of its appearance, culture, and uses.

The *ninth of March* is noted on my memoranda as having afforded us a singularly amusing day's travel.

The whole tract of country over which it lay was perfectly distinct in its features from any we had yet seen. The swelling forms, thick rank luxuriance of the lower country, and the sweet pastures and evergreen oaks of the first and lower steps of the *tierras templadas*, had alike disappeared; and as we held our course over the elevated hills west of the great defile, we saw around us tracts of most astonishing extent, partly level table land, and partly hill country, with rocky and precipitous sides, and furrowed with barrancas and ravines of astounding depth. The whole landscape, up to the foot of the distant Sierra Madre, appeared garbed in the most uninviting russet hue—the scanty grass covering the plain being now of a uniform brown, and in perfect harmony with the burnt, arid soil, or bare rock. Fertile spots there were, but they were hidden in the deep valleys. The scene was not lovely, but it was sublime. Its details



were highly curious. This region, barren as it was, had its vegetable as well as its geological wonders, and they were such as to strike us with astonishment. The whole of the stony surface of the mountains on both sides of the valley of the Rio Oquilcalco, into which we descended, is covered with a profusion of maguey, mimosa, cactus, and gigantic nopal or prickly pear, many of the segments of whose curious lobe-formed growth were from three to four feet in circumference, and the oldest near the ground, which served for stem, as many feet in girth, rising one above another, till they formed a curious but ungraceful tree of fifteen or eighteen feet in height.

Among the cacti, of which I counted eight distinct species, from the little prickly ball no larger than a wall-nut, to the great white multangular column which rose gracefully in a single shaft, to the height of fifteen feet, two of the larger species might also arrogate the name of trees, and were extremely curious in appearance.

A rough and tortuous track led us into the arid and stony bed of the Rio Oquilcalco, where, sending the mules forward, we made a diversion to the left, to visit another so-called Indian temple, of much the same character as those I have already mentioned. A ragged passage of a mountain four leagues across, exhibiting the same phenomena, brought us to our midday halting place, at the pretty Hacienda Guadalupe, situated in the middle of shady trees, and smiling fields of maize, sugarcane, beans, and so forth, on a clear mountain stream called Rio Grande, which in the rainy season forms a considerable river. The system of irrigation carried on in this vale is productive of great fertility, and many of the fruits and productions of the *tierras calientes* are brought to perfection. After an hour's halt, we began the long and rocky ascent of the broad mountain of San Ammonica, by which you finally attain the level of the expanse of table land which forms the pedestal of the Sierra Madre. Near the summit, the traveller passes the crater of an extinguished volcano, having long perceived, throughout the whole district, the

marks of volcanic eruption, and after a difficult climb of the extreme and precipitous ridge, gains the level of the plain above mentioned. Though partly under careful cultivation, its surface also bears many signs of the volcanic origin of the country, in the beds of scoria, the deep and perpendicular rifts and barrancas which mark the path of the earthquake, or the combined effects of alternate heat and torrents, and the fearful-looking pits, half full of black water, which are dispersed over it. There was much to remind me of the country about Civita Castellana.

The day came to an end by our arrival at the great Hacienda Zoquital, where we took possession of one of a great range of unfurnished rooms, which, according to the custom of the country, are let at a fixed price for the occupation of travellers, while stabling is furnished for their horses and mules. It is seldom that these night quarters are furnished with windows.

This was one of the most considerable haciendas we had seen; and in truth, its massive walls might have almost stood a siege, and maintained a considerable garrison within their circuit.

Many parties of *arrieros* were here passing to and from the capital. The attention of all seemed to be a little excited by the fact, that a troop of banditti had been plundering a party that very day on the road between the Hacienda and Real del Monte; and it was quite amusing to see the determination with which loading and priming were carried on the next morning at daybreak in our party in particular, as we were destined to be the first to advance in the direction of the supposed danger. What with guns, horse pistols, and pocket pistols, we calculated the three dons could fire ten shots without reloading for their own share, which was not so much amiss, supposing every shot told. We could not count upon Miguel's blunderbuss, which was quite as likely to hit one of the party as an enemy. As to Espindola, he was perfectly unarmed, and made no secret of his Quaker principles and steady determination not to fight; as he said very coolly, "Why should I, even if I had any-

thing to lose, for if I defended myself, and even beat off or killed my assailants, I am known to every robber in the country, and I should be stabbed secretly, if not shot openly! It is different with *los señores extranjeros*, if they choose to run the chance; but *los señores ladrones Mejicanos* seldom attack when they are not sure to overpower."

During the morning's ride over the wide plains, in the bright and cloudless sunshine towards Real del Monte, we were led to reconsider our plans for the day, on finding that, as we were desirous of seeing the hacienda and barranca of Regla, we might attain that object in the course of the day, by going a few leagues out of the direct road to the silver mines, without falling short of our arrangement to arrive that night at Real del Monte. Accordingly we resolved to leave the mules to their fate: and, sending them forward on the main road, under the conduct of Miguel, and a little valet of Espindola's, our small party turned aside, under the escort of the latter. We soon reached the town of Puebla Grande de Mittan, the situation of which, more to the east, had long been indicated by the huge church which rises over its motley collection of habitations. We allowed ourselves no breathing time here, further than a hasty glance at the church and a draught of pulque required; but continued our route over an elevated district of singular sterility, commanding, however, noble views of the surrounding chains. After two hours' ride, we descended into a valley, with occasional haciendas scattered over its surface, and shortly after found ourselves at the brink of the Barranca of Regla. A well-constructed road, upon which we had been pacing for some time, conducted us by a rapid descent into the recesses of this celebrated ravine, when we suddenly came in sight of the immense pile of the hacienda and its Moorish church tower overtopped by the lofty colonnades of columnas basalt which form the sides of the barranca. In the abundant supply of water which rushes down it, you find the reason which has led to the choice of this singular locality for the erection of those colossal works for the smelting and

amalgamation of the silver ores, which the enterprise and unlimited means of a former Count of Regla have constructed within this horrible gulf, at the cost of nine millions of dollars. At the present time, this property, together with an almost boundless extent of country on the neighbouring cordillera and in the plain, including the silver mines of Real del Monte, has been, since 1824, rented in perpetuity of the noble possessor, by a British mining company, for the paltry sum of sixteen thousand dollars per annum.

We were hospitably received and entertained for some hours by Mr. M., the company's superintendent at the hacienda; and through his kindness were furnished with every facility for a detailed inspection of the various works, which of course have been brought to far greater perfection by the present proprietors. Not the least remarkable feature of these immense works, are the ponderous bulwarks of hewn stone, built to protect the works from the impetuous torrents of *debris* brought down by the river in the rainy season. We did not of course fail to ascend the barranca to the celebrated cascade, which you reach by tracing the course of the stream between two walls of basaltic columns, upward of a hundred feet in height. It is to be found at some distance above the hacienda, where a screen of the same singular geological structure, composed of perpendicular columns of twenty-five or thirty feet in elevation, stretches across the ravine, and bars the course of the river which pours over it from the upper part of the barranca; disjointed sections of rock half covered with moss, and shaded by trees, lie at the foot of either precipice. In the rainy season, the whole scene must be very grand. The colour and texture of the basalt differ in some respects from any I have seen in Europe, if I except that on Ben More, in the north of Ireland. The form of the columns, however, is very complete, and in most cases hexagonal or pentagonal. The barranca of Regla lies about seven thousand feet above the gulf.

The kindness of our entertainer made us prolong our

stay far longer than prudence should have permitted, the more so, as a thunder storm was evidently in preparation. We had four leagues of road before us; and the latter part of this, after entering the mountains, was acknowledged to be extremely perilous for a nocturnal ride. A melancholy proof had been given only a few evenings before, when one of the gentlemen connected with the mines, descending from Real del Monte, with Mr. M., was precipitated in the darkness into a profound barranca, and was then lying at the point of death.

But whether in the shape of thunder storm, darkness, barranca, or banditti, we seemed to have made up our minds to dare the danger, and to sleep at an elevation of two thousand feet higher up the country. In fine, just as the thunder began to echo among the mountains of the Rio del Chico, we might be seen issuing from the deep ravine, and urging our horses across the plain in the direction of the nearest chain, like men who knew that no time was to be lost.

Evening fell in early, under the lugubrious and premature shade cast over the brown plain and blue mountains by the thunder clouds; and by the time we reached a small village at the foot of the latter, night had fairly set in. The storm, however, seemed to spread itself more to the northward, as the glare of lightning became less frequent; and it was now that such a darkness fell upon us as baffles all description. I had been riding forty yards in advance as a kind of scout, feeling the way, but now I was compelled to come to a dead stop, and give up the task of leader to Espindola. A momentary flash from time to time showed us that we were at the entrance of a mountain defile overhung with rocks, and at the brink of a dashing torrent, rolling down a barranca to the left; but in our progress forward, our ears alone gave token of the character of the locality. The danger I have no scruple in saying was imminent, and increased in a terrific degree, as we crawled forward step by step, at the edge of a gulf, which increased momentarily in depth, upon a road of no great breadth, undefended on the side of the precipice, and conducted in several in-

stances over the abyss, by bridges equally without parapet.

We kept, as well as the ear and touch would permit, one exactly behind the other, momentarily passing the word to halt, or advance, rapidly from one to another. Now and then we came to a full halt, from the utter doubt whether the next step would not be over the precipice. The passage of each bridge in turn, was a moment of great interest, yet through God's mercy, we met with no accident, but gradually ascended, till the freshening air and the expansion of the valley, as we might see by an occasional flash, indicated our approach to the town. In fine, there we arrived, and after some little search, found our valets, and a room prepared for our reception in a *meson* or inn.

The mules and their cargoes had fortunately escaped pillage; some thought, from the fact that there were no robbers to attack them, and others, from the intimidation produced by the formidable and suspicious appearance of the leather case of my gun, which, in its empty state, was always carried in advance upon the leading mule, in the hands of little Raphael. Pointed forward between the ears of the animal, it certainly might pass for a bow gun of extraordinary construction.

We made a halt of two days at Real del Monte, which we found to be a singularly picturesque town, containing, among others, one large decorated church, and many substantial buildings. It is surrounded by forests of oak and pine, and mountain slopes carpeted by white, red, and yellow flowering shrubs. It is situated at the height of upward of nine thousand feet above the sea. We found our time fully taken up by the overground and underground excursions which we were enabled to make with much interest to ourselves, through the polite attention of the gentlemen connected with the mining company. Among the former I distinguished a climb to the summit of a singular rock rising, at the distance of some miles, about one thousand feet higher than the town, and commanding a view of extraordinary interest and extent

on both sides of the great chain in which the mines are situated. This you will easily conceive, when I enumerate among the points visible within the vast horizon, the plains and lakes of the great valley of Mexico, about twenty leagues distant; the volcanoes of Mexico and Puebla on one hand, and the vale of Regla, and even the great cone of Orizava itself, on the other.

I feel that my description of the mines must of necessity be very brief and insufficient, and that for many details you must be referred to the writings of more sober and laborious writers.

A portion of the first day was devoted to a survey of the superficial operations and works; and on the morning of the second, M'Euen and myself spent six hours under ground, while Pourtales, eschewing fatigue, luxuriated in his grass hammock, smoked five dozen cigaritas, and sipped pulque.

A brief account you have, however, the right to demand.

The great vein of silver ore called the Biscaina, lying in the porphyric rock of this chain, was one of the earliest and most productive of those opened by the Spaniards. It was worked by them with great advantage nearly two hundred years, but circumstances at the beginning of the last century gave rise to its temporary abandonment. It was, however, reopened, and other shafts commenced towards the close of the same century by the Count of Regla, who, in the excavation of an adit, or subterraneous canal, to carry off the waters from the mines, is said to have realized eleven millions of dollars; such being the richness of ore with which he accidentally came in contact. Subsequently difficulties have constrained his descendant to cede his right, as before mentioned; and the Real del Monte Company, after the complete repair of the old works, and the construction of new—the cost and labour of which have been enormous—has at length so far attained its object, that at present the actual proceeds of the mines exceed the expenditure, which here and at Regla is estimated at thirty thousand

dollars monthly. The energy and skill of our countrymen in the construction of new shafts, and the substitution of steam for animal power—the great roads constructed to Regla and to Vera Cruz, whence all their heavy machinery has been transported on its arrival from England; and the order and wisdom evident in all the operations, are not unworthy of the British name.

At the same time, there is something about mining speculations in any country, and more than all in a country like New Spain, where justice and reason have so little sway, which would make me advise any friend of mine to take a slower but surer mode of seeking his fortune.

In consequence of the number of artificers and miners transported hither, an English colony has sprung up in Real del Monte, and it was moving for me to see the flaxen hair and blue eyes, and hear the prattle of many English children, gambolling in close vicinity to the swarthy offspring of the mixed races of the country.

From the eminence to the south of Real del Monte, an excellent bird's eye view is attained of the general disposition of the works.

The great vein runs through this elevated mountain mass, nearly in a direction of east and west underlying south, with a variation of 24 degrees. All the works are to the south of the town, and are seen disposed up the slope of the main ridge.

The lowest shaft is the Dolores, 330 varas\* deep. then follow San Cyetano, 347 varas; Santa Teresa, 335; Terrero, 370; Guadaloupe, 210. Santa Agatha and San Francisco are the highest shafts in the series. The great adit, to the level of which the water is brought up by powerful steam engines from the bottom of the mines, lies 242 varas below the mouth of the Terrero shaft. It is throughout  $2\frac{1}{2}$  varas high, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  wide, and runs for two miles and a half with a very gentle fall, to its opening in the vale of Moran below. Hitherto, steam power has only been applied to the purpose here stated,

\* Vara, or Mexican yard, is two feet nine inches English.



the ore and rubbish being raised to the surface by horse power applied to a windlass.

But now, if you choose, you may accompany us to the mouth of the Dolores shaft, when, having garbed in miners' dresses, with heads well defended with a kind of felt helmet, we began our descent by ladders, accompanied by two of the English captains or overseers, and went down, down, down into the bowels of the earth. We passed the mouth of the adit; and, reaching the bottom of the mine, in our progress from one shaft to another, visited every part of the "workings." To gain and examine some of these required a certain degree of strength and resolution, from the defective and dangerous means of descent and exit. They were various in appearance, sometimes a shapeless excavation, and at other times wrought into the form of a gallery, according as the rock had been rich or poor in the ore, which is found in a quartz matrix, imbedded in the porphyry rock, of which the whole chain consists.

The system of mining struck me as peculiar. The common miners are, for the most part, of the Indian race. A few of them band together, to work in company, and take their equal shares of the proceeds. They are paid four rials a day by the company, and take, as their further perquisite, one eighth of the ore extracted.

On issuing from the mouth of the mine, the confederates themselves divide the lumps of ore, rich and poor, into eight heaps in the presence of one of the overseers, and that overseer determines which of the eight shall be given up to them. There are subterranean offices where the tools and candles are kept, and regularly served out and reclaimed, by an officer charged with that particular duty. Blasting and other operations are carried on as in other mines.

There are upon an average about three hundred Indians constantly thus engaged in the different parts of the mine; and the scenes presented in those gloomy caves, where they work by the red light of their tapers, with scarcely any covering, are far beyond my describing.

The ascent of the great shaft of the Terreros, from the depth of nearly a thousand feet below the surface, by means of a series of perpendicular ladders, thirty-two in number, was one of the most fatiguing exploits which I ever undertook. We were, nevertheless, highly gratified by our adventure. It may yet be mentioned that the ore is transported to Regla, where it goes through the necessary processes for being converted into bullion, after which it is carried to the city of Mexico, and coined into dollars at the government mint. In this form it is exported.

The lust for gold which possessed the souls of the conquerors, condemned the aborigines of these central portions of America, to a system of oppression and tyranny in times past, which is almost inconceivable. As there was no personal danger to which the quest after the precious metals might expose the Spaniard that he would not dare; so there was no depth of cruelty to which he would not descend to further his debasing passion. Of this the traditions of the Indians preserve many striking illustrations.

I give you one anecdote—whether told before or not, I do not know—which was related to me, with others of the kind, in the mining district where such tales abound.

In an Indian village, farther to the north, say the Indians, there lived in the old Spanish times a padre: a man of simple and retired habits, who laboured to convert and maintain the inhabitants in the Catholic faith.

He was beloved by the simple tribe among whom he was domesticated, and they did not fail to prove their good will by frequent presents of such trifles as they found were agreeable to him. They say that he was a great writer; and occasionally received from the Indians of his parish a small quantity of finely coloured dust, which he made use of to dry his sermons and letters. Knowing how much the padre loved writing, they seldom returned from the mountains without bringing him some. It happened that once upon a time, he had occasion to write to a friend of his, living in the capital, who

was a jeweller, and did not fail to use his sand box. In returning an answer, his knowing friend, to his great surprise, bantered him with his great riches, seeing that he dried the very ink on his paper with gold dust! This opened the simple padre's eyes. He sent for his Indian friends, and without divulging his newly acquired knowledge, begged them to get him more of the fine bright sand. They, nothing doubting, did so. The demon of avarice began to whisper into the old man's ear, and warm the blood of his heart. He begged for more, and received it—and then more—till they had furnished him with several pounds weight. All entreaty that they would show him the locality where this bright dust was gathered, was resisted with calmness and steadiness for a long time. Alternate cajoling and menace were employed with equally bad success. At length, wearied out, they told him that, as they loved him, and saw he was disturbed in mind, they would yield to his desire and show him the spot, on the condition that he would submit to be led to and from the place blindfold. To this he greedily consented, and was in course of time taken upon their shoulders and carried, whither he knew not, by many devious ways, up and down mountain and barranca, for many hours, into the recesses of the cordillera, and there, in a cave through which a stream issued from the breast of the mountain, they set him down and unbound him. They there showed him quantities of the gold dust intermingled with large lumps of virgin ore, while their spokesman addressed him, saying: "Father, we have brought you here at your urgent request, because you so much desired it, and because we loved you; take now what you want to carry away with you—let it be as much as you can carry, for here you must never hope to come again; you will never persuade us more!" The padre seemingly acquiesced, and after disposing as much of the precious metal about his person as he could contrive to carry, he submitted to be blindfolded, and was again taken in the arms of the Indians to be transported home. The tradition goes on to relate how the good curé, upon whom the cursed lust of gold had now seized, thought to

outwit his conductors by untying his rosary, and occasionally dropping a bead on the earth. If he flattered himself that any hope existed of his being thus able to thread the blind maze through which he passed, and find the locality, one may imagine his chagrin, when once more arrived and set down at his own door, the first sight which met his uncovered eyes was the contented face of one of his Indian guides, and an outstretched hand, containing in its hollow the greater part of the grains of his rosary; while the guileless tongue of the finder expressed his simple joy at having been enabled to restore such a sacred treasure to the discomfited padre.

Entreaties and threats were now employed in vain. Gentle as the Indians were, they were not to be bent. Government was apprized of the circumstances, and commissioners were sent down to investigate the affair. The principal inhabitants were seized, and menace being powerless, torture, that last argument of the tyrant, was resorted to—all in vain, not a word could be wrung from them! Many were put to death; still their brethren remained mute; and the village became deserted under the systematic persecution of the oppressors. The most careful researches, repeatedly made from time to time by adventurers in search of the rich deposite, have all resulted in disappointment; and, to this day all that is known is, that somewhere in the recesses of those mountains lies the gold mine of La Navidad.

The following day, despite the temptation we felt to make various excursions in this interesting neighbourhood, we found ourselves necessitated to resume our route to the capital, twenty-three leagues distant. From the summit of the sierra, above the town of Real del Monte, a steep and rugged descent brings you to the level of the great plains which form the central land of Mexico; and over these we now proceeded slowly, in a suffocating heat. The first evening we reached a collection of mud huts and of plantations of nopal and maguey, disposed around a fine large picturesque church, called the San Matteo Grande.

The second day's ride of seven leagues, over a hilly country, increasing in interest at every step, brought us over the great dike of San Cristobal, to a village within three leagues of Mexico : and, at last, on the morning of the 18th, passing by the celebrated collegiate church of Guadalupe, we quitted terra firma by the causeway from the north and half an hour afterward entered the gate of Mexico.

I would not here anticipate many observations upon the features and phenomena of the district now traversed, which may find a more suitable place in a future letter, but I cannot avoid observing, how, from the very moment of his descent from the mountains, the unusual scenes which open themselves before the traveller, prepare him as it were for that extraordinary and fascinating picture, which is presented to him on attaining the object of his toils.

The arid, glazed, and silent surface of those interminable levels, over which the whirling column of sand is seen stalking with its stately motion in the midst of a hot and stagnant atmosphere ; and upon whose surface he continually sees painted the magic and illusory pictures of the mirage, with their transparent waters and reflected scenes : the huge dark piles of distant mountains, range behind range—the strange character of the colouring of the landscape far and near—the isolated volcanic cones springing up suddenly from the dead flats, and the lofty peaks of the great volcanoes far in the distance, gleaming in the blue sky with their snowy summits ; the numerous churches, each with its dome and towers, mocking the deserted waste around, and the wretched groups of mud cottages in its vicinity, by its stately architecture ; all this—seen through an atmosphere of such transcendent purity, that, vast as the expanded landscape seems, no just idea of its immensity can be formed from the calculations of the eye—imbodies forth, not perhaps the picturesque, nor perhaps the beautiful, but most assuredly the sublime.

And when approaching the main valley, the villages

thicken around him, with their streets cheered and beautified, amid the general sterility, by groups of the graceful Peruvian pepper tree; and the roads are seen crowded by long strings of laden mules, and gay cavaliers—and the stupendous works of human design, harmonize with those of nature, and prepare him for the sight of the most extraordinary scenes in the world, whether we regard the works of men, or those of God, the artificer of all. And such is the valley and city of Mexico.

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## LETTER V.

MY last letter closed with the entry of our travel-soiled and battered train into the city of Mexico. Such epithets may be well applied to us, for we were covered with white dust from head to foot; our faces were excoriated by the reflection of the sun's rays from the heated plains; and, contrasted with the splendour around us, it was impossible not to feel that there was something humiliating in our undisguisable shabbiness.

All things considered, we were not sorry to find ourselves speedily in possession of quarters in a species of lodging, gaming, eating, and club house, called the *Gran Sociedad*, at the corner of the two great streets, *Espiritu Santo* and *del Refugio*, and near the centre of the city. Here we hired badly furnished apartments, and eventually settled down for a month's residence.

A few days, and you may imagine us fairly inured to our new position.

Espindola having loyally performed his contract, and given up his charge, had clattered out of the gateway with his mules and bag of dollars; and, in high good humour with his late employers and himself, had set off to seek another engagement among the merchants of the

city. He was of course followed by the valorous little Raphael. Our horses, and a fat saddle mule pertaining to our stud, were safely housed at a livery stable in the vicinity, yclept the "Washington;" where a tall, raw-boned Kentuckian, from the backwoods, presided, under the dignified and dulcet title of Don Floresco!

Garcia, a new equery and valet, knowing in the streets and resources of the capital, and in the most approved ways of emptying the purses of *los señores extranjeros*, had been hired to be our attendant.

Against honest Miguel we had no complaint to make, except that he was ill looking, and a *borrachio*, a title which may be applied without offence to many respectable gentlemen in the western hemisphere, as well as to a poor Mexican mestizzo. He had now exacted from us a precise document, bearing witness to his qualifications and character, and mounting his active pad, had turned his face towards the coast.

A fresh skin, the brush, and an English tailor, had done something towards making us presentable—in our own opinion. Letters of credence and introduction had been delivered; the proper visits made; and we were now at liberty, each to follow his own devices.

De Pourtales being somewhat indisposed, took it into his head to consult Dr. C——, to take exceeding care of his health, and to remain a great deal within doors, philosophizing and discussing unknown fruits—the *sapote prieto*, the *sapote chico*, the *sapote borrachio*, and the *sapote blanco*—the lucious *avocate* and *mamei*, the vaunted *chirimoya*, and the sweet *grandita*. He took siestas both before and after dinner, and he received visits. M'Euen also got a most unaccountable fit of the fine gentleman; reclined a great deal, and read considerably; and, for some days, except on extraordinary occasions, a lounge on the Alameda, or under the Portales de las Flores, was very hard to put in motion.

As for your humble servant, he was never in better health and spirits in his life; and knowing that the time was circumscribed, thought to make the best use of the opportunity. Being in a great degree left to chalk out

and follow my own devices, I was abroad early and late. Thanks to active habits, the disregard of heat and dust, the occasional assistance of my steed Pinto, and a philosophic contempt of the chances of being lassoed and robbed—before half the period of our halt was at an end, I had contrived to see a great deal both within and without the city, and to learn something in spite of our disadvantages—and such there were. So far I am satisfied; at the same time that I have continually to keep in mind the latter, and the brevity of our visit, when I recollect how many and how interesting are the subjects and objects to which I have paid little or no attention.

But my preface is finished; and now, that I have actually glanced at Mexico, what kind of dish must I cook and serve up to you? Must I give you the literal and homely hodgepodge of my own hasty diary; daily notices of personal occurrences, personal observations, and personal reflections; with cuttings from the conversation and information of those with whom we came in contact? or shall I dress you a dish of historical and statistical information, served up with a garnish of apt quotations from Bullock and Poinsett, or still better, from Humboldt—the first, the best, and the only really philosophic modern traveller who ever visited New Spain, whose researches, written thirty years ago, still form the text book of every succeeding visiter!

Will you have a *trifle*, half indigestible solid, and half evanescent froth, prepared from the shadowy history and traditions of the aboriginal people; shrouded in the mist of hieroglyphic, emblematical, and enigmatical devices, rendered yet more dim by the misconception, the misinterpretation, and the bigotry of the conquerors; and still more by the stupidity of modern conjurers and expounders of enigmas: or a sober, well-seasoned regale from the tale of the conquest, marvellous, even when those large deductions which must be demanded, both by unimagi-native common sense and evident truth, have been made? The choice is an embarrassing one; and allowing you to take full time for decision, I invite you to partake in the



mean time of the *pot pourri*, which I forthwith serve up to you.

The general position and remarkable features of the valley and capital of New Spain, have been too often described not to have become familiar to you.

You have seen, how, in our ascent from the coast, after we had passed through the teeming and fertile uplands of the torrid region at the base of the mountains, we had mounted from one broad and varied step of this gigantic mountain mass to another, till we had gained the interior plateau, where, at the height of 7470 feet, girdled by the severed chain of the southern cordillera, the valley of Mexico, with its lakes, marshes, towns, villages, and noble city, opened upon our view.

The general figure of the valley is a broken oval of about sixty miles in length, by thirty-five in breadth. At the present day, even when divested of much that must have added to its beauty in the eyes of the great captain, and his eager followers, when, descending from the mountains in the direction of Vera Cruz, after overcoming so many difficulties, the view of the ancient city and its valley at length burst upon them like a beautiful dream—I never saw, and I think I never shall see on earth, a scene comparable to it. I often made this reflection, whenever my excursions over the neighbouring mountains led me to a point which commanded a general view.

I could not look upon it as did the Spanish invaders, as the term of indescribable fatigues, and of dangers, known and unknown; the rich mine which should repay them for their nights of alarm and their days of toil, and compensate for their seemingly utter abandonment of home; the prize that should satisfy the cravings of the most inordinate, and fill their laps with that dear gold for which they had ventured all! I could not enter into the ecstasy of the moment, when, after pursuing their blind way to this paradise from the plains of Tlascala and Cholula, into the recesses of pine-clad and barren rocks, higher and higher towards the cold sky, till untrodden

snow-covered peaks arose on either hand, and they marched within sight and hearing of the great volcano which menaced their path, they gained, in fine, the western slope, and saw the green and cultivated fields and gardens spreading like a carpet at their feet, round the bright and inland sea which then encircled the "VENICE of the AZTECS!" With what ravishment must they have marked the thousand specks which moved upon the waters round that broad city spread below, with its white roofs, streets, temples, and edifices? what must have been their amazement at descrying the long and solid causeways dividing the waters; the innumerable towns and villages scattered over the surface of the fertile plain; and the huge circle of mountains which appeared to form like a bulwark on every side? No! I could not realize all they felt—but, amid the desolation of most of the ancient fields and gardens; the aridity and utter barrenness of much of the broad plain which now girdles the city in every direction; the diminished extent of the lake; the solitude reigning on its waters; the destruction of the forests on the mountain slopes; I still felt that the round world can hardly match the beauty and interest of that landscape. Even if man had destroyed, without in some degree repairing the wrongs he had committed to that lovely scene, by the fruits of his industry and genius, there is that about the whole scenery which is above him, and beyond being affected by him. But let us do the stern old conquerors justice. Their minds appear to have been imbued with the pervading spirit of the land which they conquered. All around them was strange, and wonderful, and colossal—and their conceptions and their labours took the same stamp. Look at their works: the moles, aqueducts, churches, roads—and the luxurious City of Palaces which has risen from the clay-built ruins of Tenochtitlan, at a height above the ocean, at which, in the Old World, the monk of St. Bernard alone drags through a shivering and joyless existence!

If the general features of the valley of Mexico are

thus striking, those presented by the capital are not less so. In both its general plan and position, and the solidity and grandeur of its details, it has impressed me with a greater idea of splendour than any city I have seen in either hemisphere.

It covers with its suburbs an area of probably upward of three miles square, occupying the central portion of that extended oval which was covered by Tenochtitlan at the time of the conquest.

The Plaza Major, or principal square of the new city, corresponds with that of the old. The cathedral is based on the ruins of the great temple or *Teocallis*; the palace of Cortez, the Casa del Estado, rises on the very spot on which Montezuma held his court; and many of the principal streets at the present day are conducted precisely over the same ground as the more noted of the ancient thoroughfares.

You see the broad and well-paved way sweep through the long vista of palaces and public and private edifices, from one end of the city to the other; and the contrast between the bright blue sky above, and the screen of mountains which form the background far in the distance, enveloped in the clear aerial tints of this transparent atmosphere, combined with the variety of colouring and graceful proportions of the architecture, is more magnificent and beautiful than I can describe.

At the time of our visit, the city may be said to have exhibited an aspect of extraordinary splendour, from the circumstance, that in consequence of the ravages of the cholera the preceding year, the inhabitants throughout its limits had been compelled by public ordinance to paint and clean their houses.

The general style of building is regular and symmetrical in its outlines. The better houses are nearly of the same height; strongly built of porphyry or porous amygdaloid; rising to the third story, with flat roofs, and having lofty apartments disposed round an interior quadrangle. At the same time, in the ornaments and details of the facades, the style of the elaborate carving, the form of

the windows and balconies, and the colouring, the eye recognises an endless variety at every turn. Whether the style of embellishment is always in good taste or not, it is often very curious and always striking. Most of the facades are painted in distemper, white, orange, crimson, blue, and green or red; and many are overlaid with glazed and stained porcelain tiles of extremely beautiful design.

Such is the number of the churches, convents, and public buildings in the central part of the city, that you can hardly move without commanding a view of one or more edifices of this character, rising above the general line, and rearing a pile of stately architecture, with painted dome and towers in brilliant relief against the sky.

For the accommodation of a population estimated at one hundred and sixty thousand, you enumerate fifty-six churches within the bounds of the city, in addition to the cathedral. The convents and monasteries are thirty-eight in number. Some of these are of very great extent. That of the San Francisco contains five churches within its walls.

Many of the ecclesiastical edifices are of very great size, and all more or less highly wrought and embellished interiorly, though the number of those which are distinguished for really good design and good taste is comparatively small. Santa Teresa, the Antigua, the Professa, San Augustin, the Incarnation, and one or two others, might be named as having some claim to be exempt from the general stricture of bad taste, false and gaudy ornament, tinsel and glitter, which applies to the majority, and which in many becomes absolutely offensive. Statuary, painting, and carving, are lavished upon all, but rarely of a character over mediocrity. In actual riches, display of gold, silver, and embroidery, Mexico far surpasses every city in Europe; and the value of precious metals which you have sometimes before you, in the shape of candelabras, vases, balustrades, shrines, and consecrated vessels, is incalculable.

The signs of the domination of the papal religion are

to be seen everywhere in the streets, where pictures, shrines, and processions abound. Few are the palaces, on one part or another of the facades of which you do not descry a patron saint, "sanctified in stone;" and most of the houses which form the angle of the intersecting streets, are surmounted by little arabesque shrines rising above the level of the *azotea* or terraced roof.

I have hastily penned these brief outlines of the interior aspect of the city, intending, as I may feel tempted, to relate the events of the Holy Week which we are approaching, and fill you up the outlines here or there, and to people it, which you see I have omitted to do. Meanwhile, I would lead you without the walls, if a breastwork of hardened mud, stretching across the entrance of the causeways, deserves the name.

Round that nucleus of splendid streets and buildings which I have alluded to, in traversing the outskirts of the city, you find a large space occupied by buildings of a very inferior design, interspersed, however, by large and spacious churches. Beyond these, at least on the east and north sides, an exterior circle of scattered cabins is observable, constructed of the *adaubi*, or unburnt brick, prepared from the clay of the surface, and inhabited by the refuse of the populace. They are posted on the very limits of that plot of ground which, by an elevation of two or three feet over the surface of the lake, had been dignified by the erection of this great city. The whole of this space was probably thickly covered by the ancient capital.

Over these marshes in the times of Montezuma, covered as they then were by water, three causeways led to the firm land; namely, that of Tacuba to the west, Tepeaca on the northwest, and Cuoyacan towards the south. It was upon the latter that Cortez made his first entry into the capital. At that time the majority of the streets were intersected by canals; and the city being surrounded by water on every side, the principal communication with the surrounding districts, and between

the different quarters, was carried on by light canoes. These canals are now almost all filled up; and except that of Chalco, there is no considerable canal in the city. On the other hand, the causeways are now above double their original number. The three ancient *calzadas* are still maintained; the first being still that of Tacuba, the second of Guadalupe, and the third of San Augustin. There are then in addition, the great *calzada* running to the southeast over the flats, to the southern extremity of Lake Tezeuco, and thence to the new Vera Cruz road; that to Chapultepec, southwest: and lastly, one in the direction of the northwest, towards Guautitlan. Several of these causeways are planted with avenues of poplars and other trees, and along two of them, those of Chapultepec and Tacuba, the supply of fresh water is brought from the mountains to the capital by the aqueducts of Chapultepec and Santa Fe.\*

Let us turn together for our first excursion to the southward, upon the great *calzada*, leading to Chalco and San Augustin, by a continuation of which, the traveller attains the eastern declivity of the Sierra Madre, and the Pacific at Acapulco. It was in this direction that two of our number made our first sortie, a few days after our arrival, early on a glorious morning, in whose brilliant sunshine the facades of the palaces shone like silver and enamel.

A light caleche with a couple of well-bitted horses soon bore us over the pavement of the long street: and passing the Garita, we entered upon the raised causeway, with the sterile tracts of the marshy flat surrounding the city on either hand—a vast tract of country with groups of volcanic hills in the middle ground—and in the distance a splendid semicircular range of mountains, comprising the highest summits of the great porphyritic chain. The Monte Ajusco, towards whose base we were bending our course, was comparatively at no great

\* The aqueduct of Chapultepec counts 904 arches, and is 10,826 feet in length; that of Santa Fe, 33,464 feet.

distance, while the two great volcanoes of Puebla towered, with their snowy caps, from a distance of sixty miles to the south. Beyond the flats in your immediate vicinity—over which the various causeways with their avenues of elm and poplar, and the aqueducts, are seen stretching for miles towards the base of the hills—the eye catches a glimpse of a lovely region of verdure and cultivation, studded with innumerable orchards, villas, and tasteful country houses; and many a village, indicated by the dome and tower of its church. In that direction the country appears like one vast garden, and the contrast between its verdure and gray tints, and the varied hue of both the intermediate plains and the slopes of the mountains beyond, is extremely beautiful.

A few miles from the mud barrier of the city, you have the ancient road to the lake of Chalco, stretching towards the village of Mejicalzingo, and the foot of the Cerro di l'Estrella, to the left. The latter strangely moulded ridge, heaving up from the surrounding plain, is noted as the spot from which Cortez enjoyed his first near view of Tenochtitlan. Such are the extreme dryness and transparency of the atmosphere on the table land of Mexico, that the traveller soon discovers that he is quite unable to form a just idea of the relative position and distance of the objects scattered over this great plateau. Indeed this deception surpasses anything which I have observed in any other country, and is heightened by the brilliancy of the colouring observable in the general tints of the landscape. Thus, in looking towards the hill I have just named, it appears to be but little in advance of a huge mass more to the eastward, whose steep purple sides, truncated summit, and yawning crater bespeak its volcanic origin. Yet as you proceed on your road, you see them remove from each other, leagues apart. On farther advance you see first one distinct cone disentangle itself from the bulk of the more remote, then another, and in the end discover a range of distinct cones increasing in height, and admit the complete fallacy of your first impressions.

For many miles after he has gained what might be

called terra firma, the traveller is appalled by the sterility of the surrounding plain ; at the same time that the signs of a past system of careful drainage, and the ruins of huts and haciendas, show you that this curse of barrenness has not been always the dowry of the soil. In truth, owing to causes which it is difficult to explain, some of the finest estates in the immediate vicinity of the capital have become absolutely desert, from the rapid spread of saline efflorescence formed upon the surface, which is more or less a main feature of all these great elevated plains.

About six miles from the city, we traversed the dry bed of the Chorubusco, passing along a ridge raised several feet above the general surface of the country, and formed by the *debris* brought down by the river from the mountains in the rainy season.

We now approached the noble estate and hacienda of San Antonio, covering a large tract of fertile country in advance, and admirably cultivated and governed by its noble proprietor, to whose family we had the advantage of being known ; and I shall take occasion at once to make use of the knowledge gained by subsequent visits here, to allude to a few points of interest connected with agriculture in this part of Mexico.

The Hacienda San Antonio is situated at the distance of eight miles from the city, in the centre of a body of land of great fertility, extending from the line of the road far into the plain to the east and south, while exactly opposite a small picturesque church, surrounded by trees, marks the limit of a vast field of hard black lava of revolting sterility, deforming the country in the vicinity of San Augustin, and along the base of the neighbouring mountain of the Ajusco. It is known by the name of the Pedrigal.

The road and a rivulet in front of the hacienda are shaded by fine silver poplars, and other well-known trees ; in addition to the *schinus* or Peruvian pepper tree, of which the bright green foliage, and pendant clusters of red berries, form such a graceful ornament of the upper regions of the country.



A deep archway on the left-hand side of the road introduces you to the courtyard. In common with all the haciendas we had seen on the table land, the mass of buildings here are imposing from their great size and solidity of structure. Besides the dwelling house of the proprietors, built like the town houses in a quadrangle round an interior open court, they comprise a church, dwellings for the dependants, stables, and other offices on a large scale, and a granary, which, for massive architecture and dimensions, might serve for a state prison. This granary is calculated to hold twelve thousand cargass of maize, each carga weighing one hundred and eighty English pounds.

The principal products of the estate are maize and pulque. Of the former the annual produce alone is estimated at eight thousand cargass. The whole domain is under excellent cultivation and management, and both from the excellent system of irrigation and drainage pursued, and its vicinity to the capital, is accounted one of the most lucrative in the whole valley.

The mode of culture of the maguey,\* from which, as I have before mentioned, the pulque is derived, may demand a little further elucidation.

In appearance the great agave is a stately aloe of a dark green hue with leaves of great size and thickness. I have not unfrequently seen it rise higher than my head when seated on horseback.

Its culture is a very productive one. The prime cost and the whole expense of labour demanded by the plant from first to last, may be estimated at three dollars and a half, and the ultimate produce at ten. In the sale of land, the well grown maguey plants are computed at the average value of five dollars. They are set in regular rows, about three yards apart, and come to perfection in from eight to ten years; when, if left to themselves, they would flower.

This is the interesting moment for the cultivator. He watches the plant, till by well-known signs he sees that

\* *Agave Americana.*

nature has completed her time, and that the maguey is upon the point of throwing up the high flowering stem. He then cuts deeply and systematically into the very heart of the plant, depriving it of the tight scroll of leaves which envelopes the embryo flower stalk, and scoops out a regular hollow of nearly a foot in diameter in the centre.

The sap vessels of the mutilated plant still perform their allotted duty, and pour into this artificial bowl such an abundant supply of juice, that it requires emptying two or three times a day for eight or ten successive weeks. It is computed that a single maguey will yield six hundred pounds of sap in the course of the season. This is the pulque. It is commodiously drawn from the reservoir by means of suction into a long gourd, and thence transferred to goatskin sacks, where it ferments slightly, and is then drinkable and pleasant enough, if not too old. When long bottled in these primeval receptacles, it takes a very peculiar *schmaack*, as a Dutchman would say, disagreeable to many foreigners, but I cannot say we found it sufficiently so to prevent our partaking of it with great satisfaction as long as we were in the country.

A brandy is distilled from the maguey, which is perniciously intoxicating when taken in too freely. The ordinary pulque is slightly so, and the Indians frequently render it highly deleterious by steeping the berries of the *schinus* in it.

It is hardly necessary to say that no maguey plant which has been mutilated lives; its uses are, however, still various and important. The dried fibres are of universal substitution for hemp, in the manufacture of cordage and packing-cloths.

There are estates in the valley of Mexico which return as much as thirty-six thousand dollars annually from the culture of the maguey alone.

This most useful plant comes to perfection on the various *plateaux* of the table land, from the height of five thousand feet to that of nearly nine thousand feet, but beyond a certain elevation it ceases to be so productive.

Besides the two principal products, the estates about Mexico furnish a large quantity of European grain, Mexican and European wheat, and abundance of beans, peas, Chili pepper, and vegetables, in addition to most of our European fruits.

Surely there is not on the face of the earth a country more highly favoured by nature than New Spain. You can hardly name a mineral product which it does not hide within its bosom, or a vegetable one; of whatever zone, which it might not, under proper management, be made to bring to perfection in one part or another of its varied surface. Yet how little has man hitherto done to improve these advantages !

But to return for an instant to the hacienda. It may be remarked, that in common with all its neighbours of the same class, there are signs of interior decay observable, consequent upon the altered circumstances of the country : and the general magnificence of the plan and the dimensions of the apartments, contrast disagreeably with the scanty character of the furniture. These country seats were once palaces, but they are no longer so ; still there was a feudal air about the great hall of San Antonio, which for size and noble proportions might almost rival the ritter-saal of a German castle. The church had been completely despoiled of its ornaments, and now seemed to be utterly deserted.

From the hacienda of San Antonio, the route continues to run, in nearly a straight line, to Tlalpam or San Augustin de las Cuevas, a town with a large church and plaza, most delightfully situated among gardens and groves, at the very foot of the hills in advance of the Ajusco. It is a favourite resort of the citizens of all classes from the capital, many of the wealthier of whom have country seats here, to which they repair to enjoy fine air and verdure, in exchange for the heat and glare of the city.

Among these, the country seat and gardens of the exiled General Moran are particularly beautiful. The

whole country in the neighbourhood is under high cultivation. At Whitsuntide a great fair is held at the town, when thousands assemble hither from Mexico and the adjoining district. The lengths to which gambling is carried on at the monte tables of St. Augustin, at that season of festivity, are almost incredible. Many of the once wealthy families of this country have been beggared by giving themselves up to a taste for this witless game of headlong chance.

No language of mine can give you a just idea of the scene from the neighbouring heights. They command a view of vast extent over the southern portion of the valley, with the broad plain, the distant lakes Xochimilco and Chalco, various groups of volcanic hills in the middle ground, and the wall of mountains surmounted by the snowy summits of Iztaccihuatl and Popocatepetl on the horizon.

The Ajusco, a compact mass of porphyritic rock, soaring to the height of thirteen thousand feet above the Pacific, rises directly in the rear. It is the highest point of the eastern wall of the cordillera which girdles the valley.

In the view from this point, which I had more than once the opportunity of examining in detail, nothing struck me more than the great number of truncated cones and volcanic summits within sight.

Though there exists throughout this portion of the continent positive proofs of the agency of internal fire, in upheaving the whole of the table land of the Mexican cordillera to its present extraordinary level, an examination of the continent would seem to indicate that the forces set in action by igneous agency, have been more active in one particular direction than another; that is, along a nearly right line of no great breadth, enclosed between  $18^{\circ}$  and  $20^{\circ}$  of north latitude. Commencing with the volcano of San Martin de Tuxtla, on the shore of the gulf, thirty-six leagues south of Vera Cruz, and moving across the surface of the country, a little to the north-west you find in succession—the gigantic cone of Orizaba,

and its neighbour the Coffre de Perote, the volcano of Tlascalala, the great volcano of Puebla or Popocatepetl, the valley of Mexico with its innumerable cones, the Ajusco, the Nevada of Toluca, and the active volcanoes of Jorullo and Colima; while report would incline you to pursue the same general direction over the Pacific ocean, for upward of three hundred miles, to the islands of Revillagigedo, which are said to be attributable to the same cause. Of the central group, Popocatepetl, the Ajusco, and the volcano of Toluca, are exactly upon the same line. I do not name Iztaccihuatl, "*the Indian with snowy breasts*;" because, though supposed to be, and generally called a volcano, I have heard the fact of its possessing a crater repeatedly denied on such respectable authority, that I almost doubt whether it has been justly named such.

Of these volcanoes, that of Tuxtla was in eruption about the commencement of the century. Orizaba, or Citlat tepetl—"the star mountain," was in violent eruption, according to Humboldt, between 1545—1566. Of the eruptions of the Coffre de Perote, and of the volcano of Tlascalala, no tradition exists to my knowledge. Popocatepetl, "*the mountain casting out smoke*," has shown signs of slight combustion at times during the present century, and was in active eruption at the time of the Spanish invasion, when Diego Ordaz, a Spanish officer, attempted to ascend it. The Nevada of Toluca has been long extinct. The crater, if report says true, contains a lake abounding in fish.

The eruptions of the Ajusco, and the long chain of volcanic heights to the southward, are without record: though tradition says that the Chieli, signifying, in the Indian language, "*the hill that casts up sparks*," an inferior cone at its base, from which the huge stream of the Pedrigal probably proceeded, was in partial eruption at the emigration of the Aztecs into Anahuac, in the beginning of the fourteenth century.

The two last upon my list, those of Colima and Jorullo, are still active, and were, in fact, the only active volcanoes in Mexico at the time of our visit.

Though, therefore, there exists but little outward sign of the present activity of the internal fires which are still surely smouldering beneath the surface of the earth in this part of the world, and occasionally shake the mountain-piled continent from its foundation; the signs of their past power are such as to strike the observer with great wonder and awe.

To me the whole of the hollow valley of Mexico, with its ramparts of porphyric rocks, gave the idea of a vast crater, which had been, in ages of which no human tradition remains, the grand and principal vent through which the pent-up element, after, by repeated efforts, heaving up the continent step by step from its primeval level, finally escaped through the crust of the earth.

Would you accuse me of yielding too freely to the play of imagination, when I thought that I could read in the sublime features of the vast scene before me, the unrecorded history of past centuries; and faintly picture to myself the convulsions of which the valley around me must assuredly have been the theatre? At the time when the earthquake was bursting those innumerable fissures and barrancas which are observable in the surface of the lower districts; raising one sheet of level country after another to its ordained elevation; and sending up one long, towering range of porphyritic mountains after another from the abyss to the sky: how little can the fancy paint the scenes of awful desolation which must have existed here—the great combustion which may have given birth to the valley, with its basins of saline waters—and the successive formation and appearance of the numberless cones before me. The world has grown old, but the records of that age are fresh around us. What must have been the signs in the earth and sky, as the ungovernable and subtle element destroyed the unseen obstacles to its escape into the upper air, and the surface began to yield to the tremendous force exerted by the internal fires underneath. Here rose the huge pyramid, based upon the wall of the surrounding mountains; growing, day by day and year by year, by the accumulation of its own refuse, amid the showers of its own

ashes, the flow of its lavas, and amid the sound of its own fearful thunders, till it soared to where its summit now glistens, in the cold region of ice and snow. There an abrupt cone, bursting through the level plain, or from the bosom of the waters; disgorging its load of lava and cinder: and then another, and yet a third—a cluster of smoking mountains! Here a shapeless mass of molten rock and lava, bubbling above the surface, then cooling, and as it cooled, so remaining for ages, a black and steril monument, amid the landscape, of the forgotten reign of fire: and there again, a sudden throe at the base of some labouring mountain, opening a yawning abyss, from which, amid fire and smoke, the seething lava would run down like oil upon the plain, or to the far distant sea.

This is no overwrought fancy; there can be no doubt but these things were, though perhaps no eye, but His who “looketh on the earth, and it trembleth,” and “toucheth the hills, and they smoke,” bore witness to them!

The road which ascends the steep pile of hills and mountains behind San Augustin, is that of the Cruz del Marques, one of the six great routes which traverse the cordillera, and form the connection between the city, and the vast extent of country on every side, of which it is the metropolis. The others are, the two routes to Puebla, and Vera Cruz—the more ancient of which passes over the elevated ridge, between the two great volcanoes; and the other, which is the new and ordinary line, to the north of Iztaccihuatl. Fourthly, the route of the interior, keeping the general level of the table land, to Queretaro, Guanaxuato, and Durango. Fifthly, that of Real del Monte, by which we approached; and, sixthly, that of Toluca to the west.

In recollecting the localities worthy of attention, in the more immediate vicinity of Mexico, which we repeatedly visited, I feel quite at a loss which to bring into the greater prominence.

I cannot forget the great interest which hangs over the

vicinity of Tacuba, and the road leading to it: the scene of the disastrous flight of Cortez, with his handful of troops and allies, on the night of the first of July, 1520, long known and deplored as *La Noche Triste*.

It was not unusual among the European residents in Mexico, to ride at an early hour out to the village of San Cosmo, to an olive garden attached to a *meson*, situated two miles from the west gate, and probably on the very verge of what was once the lake, and the termination of the ancient causeway, on which the roused vengeance of the Mexican cost the invader half his comrades. Within the bounds of the city, and close to the foreign cemetery, you are shown the dike over which Alvarado made his celebrated leap in his extremity. It is now a ditch of about three yards across, and is still called the Salto de Alvarado.

The views along this route towards Chapultepec on the left, and Guadalupe on the right, are exquisitely beautiful.

Another hamlet, Apopotla, which you pass half a mile before you reach Tacuba, contains, within the enclosure of its churchyard, one of those noble cypresses of the country, which you still find scattered here and there, of a size which warrants their being considered monuments of an age anterior to the earliest traditions of the continent. That at Apopotla is a mighty wreck, with a bole fifty feet in diameter at the height of a man, and of much greater girth above.

The size to which this noble species, the *cupressus disticha*, attains in some parts of New Spain, is almost incredible. There is one at Atlixco, in the intendency of Puebla, measuring seventy-six feet in circumference; and the largest known, is to be seen at Mitla, in Oaxaca; which, still in its prime, is no less than ninety-two feet round the trunk. The largest in the vicinity of Mexico, are those in the ancient garden, at the foot of Chapultepec, of which the most remarkable may be sixty feet in circumference.

Tacuba lies near the foot of the hills, and is at the



present day chiefly noted for the large and noble church which was erected there by Cortez. A little in the rear, the ruins of an ancient Mexican pyramid are discernible, constructed of regular courses of unburnt bricks, six inches in thickness; and hard by, you trace the lines of a Spanish encampment. I do not hazard the opinion, but it might appear by the coincidence, that this was the very position chosen by Cortez for his intrenchment, after the retreat just mentioned, and before he commenced his painful route towards Otumba.

Immediately behind Tacuba and San Joachim, you reach a range of high grounds, which, like the lower portions of the mountains surrounding the valley, are perfectly denuded of the wood which once covered them, and even of soil. They exhibit no vegetation, but scattered bushes of cactus and *schinus*, except in the vicinity of the great Hacienda Morales, and other farms scattered at intervals on the rising ground. From the extremity of the Alameda, you may easily fall into the causeway to Tacuba, by turning to the left; or yet better, to Chapultepec, by following the Paseo Nuevo, an open road raised a few feet above the level of the surrounding meadows, and used as a public evening drive, in rotation with the Paseo de las Vigas, at the southeastern extremity of the city. But I soon got tired of the stately recreation of the Promenade; and after a few experiments at playing "*l'aimable*" among its stiff walks and stiffer statues, I constantly turned my horse's head in one or the other direction.

No traveller, ancient or modern, has failed to notice the beauty and singularity of position of Chapultepec—the *hill of the grasshopper*—at three miles distance from the city. It is an insulated rock of porphyry, springing up upon what was the margin of the lake, and now surrounded on all sides by fields and meadows over-spread by luxuriant vegetation. That it was a favourite place of resort of the Aztec monarchs, there is no doubt; and its foot is still clothed with an ancient garden in which

they sought repose and solace from the heats of their shadeless city. And though, at the present day, neglect and ruin are evident on every hand; and their pleasant palaces are all destroyed, their fish ponds and baths broken down, and scarcely discernible—though their aviaries, and thickets of sweet-smelling flowers and medicinal herbs, have disappeared, and their shady groves are despoiled of many a noble tree; yet there is still a majesty in these shades, all tangled and neglected, and overgrown as they are, which is exciting to the fancy, and dear to the imagination; and no one will enter these thickets, shaded by the graceful pepper tree, and linger at the foot of those giant cypresses, without recollecting the strange and sad fate of him who was here accustomed to pass his hours of retirement.

Of all the royal gardens in the immediate vicinity, which were maintained by Montezuma, this at Chapultepec is the only one which retains its original form and destination. It girdles the rock, which may be about a mile in circuit, and is truly a delicious locality for one who, like myself, is fond of shade and quiet. The rock above is now crowned by a large and palacious building of noble design, erected by the Viceroy Galvez; half country seat, half castle; and made to suit either the purposes of war or peace, as might happen. It is now rapidly falling to decay. The view from its platform is undoubtedly one of the most delicious and complete among the numberless beautiful points of view in the basin of Mexico, partly from the isolated position of the hill, and the near vicinity of the numberless domes and towers of the city, with the aqueducts and causeways, and the blue lake beyond—and partly from the extreme fertility and loveliness of the region stretching from hence along the base of the mountains towards the Pedregal. In this direction, the town of Tacubaya, with its churches, villas, and the former archiepiscopal palace, is the most conspicuous object. The great church there is a large and splendid edifice; and the palace, even in the state of utter decay and neglect which has overtaken its courts, galleries, and lovely gardens, is well worth visiting. The

gardens present a sad but beautiful scene, with their tangled labyrinths of myrtle, jessamine, and sweet pease, and their stained and voiceless fountains ; and the view from them is such as none can picture to themselves who have not gazed upon it.

I had a partiality for my early rides in the direction which I have just been describing, both from the extreme beauty of the views, and because they were the most accessible from the centre of the city where we had our quarters. But as I desire to give you some idea of the country on every side, I may mention that on several occasions I did not fail to return upon my steps through the tedious length of suburb to the north, and regaining the calzada in that direction, proceed to visit the shrine and rock of the patron saint of Mexico, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

There are three churches here ; that on the rock ; the splendid and spacious Collegiate Church, at the foot of the mountain, one of the most costly in New Spain, teeming with massive silver ornaments—and the Capella del Pozo, a richly decorated chapel covered by a dome, built over a mineral spring.

The more ancient church is erected upon the barren rock of Tepeyayac, which forms the most southerly spur of a range of high mountains, which rise, as it were, in the very midst of the valley of Mexico, and may be called insulated, since they are only united to the sierra on the west, by an inconsiderable ridge lying between Guautitlan and Tanepantla.

I here picked up acquaintance with a dapper little priest, one of the canons of the great church, celebrated among the Europeans for keeping the best *pulque* in the whole country, a bottle of which he never failed to produce on receiving the compliment of a visit. Under shadow of his favour, I had several opportunities of seeing the shrine and its riches at my leisure. Neustra Señora of Guadalupe, whose worship on this rock has succeeded to that of the goddess Tonantzin—the Mexican Ceres—is the patron saint of the city of Mexico. The

clumsy imposture to which she owes her elevation to this dignity is not worth recounting. There is only one rival to her dominion in the affections of the common people in the valley of Mexico, and that is Nuestra Señora de los Remedios, whose shrine is to be seen in a village near the base of the mountains to the west of the city. The *leperos* and *poblanitas* of the city pin their faith, in case of any impending danger, upon her wonder-working image; and in cases of great emergency—as during the prevalence of the cholera, last year—she is brought with great pomp into the metropolis. On one occasion it was settled that she should pass the night in town, as the weather was unfriendly, and a suitable lodging was provided: but when morning dawned she had vanished. The fact was, that nothing could keep her away from her own flock at los Remedios, where accordingly she was found at dawn in her usual place; covered with mud, however, with having walked a number of leagues in a dark and rainy night. And this miracle is believed! Alas! poor human nature!

Wherever I go, I carry about with me an Englishman's weakness, and am particularly observant of climate and weather. This may be pardonable in a locality so peculiar as that of Mexico, where you are raised far above the ordinary region of mists and vapours, into that of frost and snow, and yet, from local and extraordinary causes, enjoy a climate of peculiar beauty and salubrity.\*

The thermometer in the city of Mexico very seldom falls to the freezing point, and as rarely rises to a degree of oppressive heat; the usual range throughout the year being from 50 to 80° of Fahrenheit.

\* The city of Mexico was nevertheless visited by the cholera in the course of the preceding year 1833. Out of a population of 160,000, 15,000 are stated to have fallen victims to its virulence. At the height, as many as 1400 deaths occurred in the course of twenty-four hours. Very few cases were spasmodic. Laudanum was found to be the most effectual remedy. Of the English residents all escaped with one single exception, while a considerable number of the French were carried off.

During our month's residence, the weather was extremely unsettled; and twice during a few rainy days, when the temperature was remarkably chill, we saw the snow-line descend several thousand feet upon the great volcanoes.

For the remainder of the short period alluded to, the weather was warm, and occasionally hot; with partial thunder showers, during the passage of which the streets of the city were deluged by water to that degree that the crossings would have been impracticable for fine gentlemen and ladies with shoes and stockings, were it not for the *cargadores* and Indians, upon whose backs we were taught to mount without scruple, in order to save ourselves a wetting.

As to the rest, we could not be insensible to the peculiar rarity and dryness in the atmosphere, for which the table land is remarkable. The sensation of the heat on the skin is far greater than the degree of warmth indicated by the thermometer would appear to warrant, owing to the astonishing degree of reflection of the sun's rays, which is produced by the vast and naked spread of the plains, the masses of mountains by which they are surmounted, and the diminished pressure which the rarified air exerts upon the moisture given forth by the body. The most violent exercise never produces the slightest sign of perspiration; at the same time that you can ascend no elevation, not even the steps of houses, without being sensible of an unusual shortness of breath.

But while I have dipped my pen in my inkstand to allude to natural phenomena, I must not forget to mention the earthquakes, from which the city is rarely exempt at this season of the year.

I omitted to mention at the close of the preceding letter, that when we arrived at our last halting place before entering the city, we heard that the first earthquake of the season had been felt at ten the preceding night; and that more than usual alarm had been excited, on account of the duration, force, and the character of the shock. This I am convinced I felt at San Mateo, where we slept on the night in question; though it was shrouded in the

dreaming fancy of finding myself suddenly trotting among broken rocks on the back of our fat mule.

When we arrived at the city we heard that another had occurred at six o'clock that very morning; though we, who, at that very time, were getting to horse in the courtyard of the *meson* at three leagues' distance, had been totally unconscious of it. These were the first; and glancing over my diary I see notices of daily shocks occurring, at different intervals, for about ten days after our arrival.

According to many who had the means of making the observations, for several entire days the earth was found to exhibit a tremulous motion, with very short intervals of complete repose.

The strongest shock of which I was myself aware, was felt about eleven A. M. on the 22d, when I was roused from the perusal of a newspaper in the apartments of the American *charge d'affaires*, by a sensation of confusion and giddiness; and, on raising my eyes, saw the curtains and candelabras in motion. On going to the elevated balcony, the scene presented by the broad and spacious thoroughfare below was one of the most striking I ever saw. There was no terror and no confusion in the street. Each individual of the passing multitude, as far as we could see, was on his knees—each in the spot where he had become sensible of the terrible phenomenon—the half-naked Indian beside the veiled *dama*, and the loathsome leper beside the gaudily dressed official. The rider kneeled beside his horse, and the *arriero* among his mules; the carriages had halted, and their gay contents bent in clusters in the centre of the pavement. The bustle of the crowded thoroughfare had become hushed, and nothing was heard but a low murmur of pattered prayers; while, with a slow, lateral motion from north to south, the whole city swung like a ship at anchor, for about the space of a minute and a half. When the shock was over, the multitude rose; and each went about his business with a nonchalance which proved how the frequent recurrences of this phenomenon had nerved the public mind. In fact, it is seldom that they are of a

violence to injure the massive structure of the city ; and the alluvial and elastic soil upon which it is based is much in its favour.

Nevertheless, many of the churches show how much repeated shocks have injured them ; and though the appalling inclination from the perpendicular, noticeable in many towers and facades, is rather attributable to the badness of the foundations, yet during these days there was enough to make a brave man pause for an instant before passing under certain churches—such as the *Profesa* for instance, which looks as if it would fall upon the slightest provocation.

Most of these shocks were very trivial, and scarcely perceptible. The first I have noticed was by far the most serious, and considerably damaged several of the churches and the aqueducts. It began with the usual lateral swing from east to west, and then suddenly took the perpendicular movement, which is always the most dreaded. We found ultimately that it was experienced about the same time at *Guadalaxara* ; and very severely at *Vera Cruz*, and at *Acapulco*, having thus upheaved and agitated the whole continent, with its enormous pile of mountains, from sea to sea—a fact which may give you an idea of the great depth at which the seat of this tremendous power must be situated.

There is, however, a caprice in the effects produced which it is difficult to explain. The same earthquake which I have thus noticed as so sensibly felt at *Mexico*, was not observable at *Guadaloupe*, within a mile of the city ; while at *Tacuba* it was yet more severe. It was felt neither at *Real del Monte*, nor at *Regla*, while a hacienda situated between those two places was shaken to its foundation. It was rumoured that the hot baths situated on the *Peñon*, an isolated mass of lava between the city and the lake, had increased in heat since the commencement of the shocks ; and further, that *Popocatepetl* had shown slight signs of combustion ; but the most careful observation and attention could detect nothing of the kind from the terraces of the city. Morn-

ing after morning I directed my glass to him, but no perceptible vapour dimmed the clear silver outline of his snowy summit. He was at rest, and he may perhaps sleep for ages.

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## LETTER VI.

WE had not been many days in the city of Mexico, when we made the discovery, that notwithstanding the excellent letters of introduction with which we had been furnished in Europe and the United States—as far as the *natives* of the country were concerned, we should have to be the contrivers of our own amusements.

It is true, our calls were returned and our cards acknowledged. We exchanged compliments; bartered bows, polite speeches, and grateful acknowledgments, for the boiling-hot, rapturous expressions of ecstasy of our Mexican acquaintances, at the unlooked-for happiness of seeing us in this world. We smiled in delight, in the very extremity of gratitude, at the devotion with which the palaces, the horses, the very lives of our noble male friends, were seemingly placed at our command without any reserve.

It appeared as if every other duty or pleasure was to be relinquished for the felicity of cultivating our friendship. We received a thousand compliments, which the gayest of our European admirers never had the wit to conceive, or the effrontery to utter. On one or two occasions, we had the ecstasy of presenting a comely black-eyed *dama* or *signorita* with a balmy *cigarita*; and of receiving it again from her delicate hand, after it had been consecrated by a preliminary whiff.

And how then?—why, after the first interview some of the most impassioned of our acquaintances were never again heard of. Others evidently kept out of our way. Two or three who had travelled in Europe were again



met with in society, at the houses of the European residents, where of course they behaved with the proper reserve, staid decorum, and cool nonchalance of civilized and well-bred men: and the greatest attention which we met with during our stay, from any individual—with the exception of one single family connected by marriage with Europeans—was an occasional impromptu invitation to come and sit for an hour in an evening, “quite in a family way.” This was laughable; and the more so, as we found that it was the general experience among foreigners of all grades.

There were those among the diplomatic corps, whose object it has been from the commencement of their residence in this city, to cultivate a friendly and social spirit with the families of natives of so-called education, attached to whatever party they might be; but a series of the most ludicrous vexations and disappointments showed them the total impossibility—the chimerical nature of the scheme; and we found the society at their houses literally reduced to the superior class of Europeans, and half a dozen Mexicans, whose visits to Europe had rendered them a little more susceptible of the advantages of a different state of society, from that afforded by their own country.

The European merchants were equally unfortunate, and found in the constant display of jealousy, and in the low intrigues of their rivals among the natives, no opening for a more liberal state of feeling and conversation. Consequently, they kept aloof from each other.

Then came the lower orders of foreign speculators. All found themselves the subject of jealous hatred in Mexico. “*How does monsieur like Mexico?*” said a garrulous French barber to me, the very morning of my arrival. “*Fine streets, fine houses, fine churches, fine clothes!—but the people—they are all, all, all, from the president to the leper, what we in France call canaille, monsieur.*” “*Ma foi, qu’ils sont bêtes ces Mexicains,*” said the Belgian host of a meson at Tacubaya: “*all, from the highest to the lowest, are as ignorant as that*

*bottle !*”—and he pointed to an empty one. “*You ask a question, ‘ Quien sabe !’\* is all you get for answer. You show them something they never saw before, ‘ Santa Maria, que bonito !’ is their only exclamation.*”

But the most eloquent was a little German saddler, who wound up a long High-Dutch tirade against the miserable inhabitants of the country, their mode of living, their ignorance, dishonesty, and the hard lot which compelled him to cast his life away among such wretches, by saying, “*There is not von man here so honest as my tog Spitz—Carampa !*”

But in our case, besides this known feeling of jealousy of the Mexicans towards the foreigner, something was to be laid to the charge of the season of Lent, during which it seemed that there were neither bullfights nor tertullia.

In addition, the veteran Galli, the faded Pelligrini, in short, the whole *corps d'opera Italienne* was out of humour. And they might well be. They had been invited to charm the eyes and ears of the Mexicans for the season, under certain conditions. The government had bound itself to ensure them a certain amount of remuneration ; that is, whatever sum their professional receipts might fall short of it, it had pledged itself to make good. Now, as it happened, the people were in poor spirits, and had neither time nor ears for them. Their receipts fell far short of their hopes, and in utter distress they applied to the liberal government. Government responded to their application in rather a cavalier manner ; for instead of hard dollars, it sent a file of passports regularly made out, from the prima donna to the scene shifter and candle snuffer, and the advice to take their departure forthwith. This was poor satisfaction ; but singers are proverbially unfortunate in Mexico. There was, for example, Garcia, who, travelling, was set upon by banditti and pillaged, even to his snuffbox, diamond ring, and pantaloons : after which, the robbers

\* Who knows ?

insisted that he should sing for them. He did so—and was hissed most obstreperously by his lawless auditory! It is said that he had borne the pillaging with becoming temper, but the hissing he never forgot or forgave.

Thus situated, we made the best of our position, and determined to enjoy ourselves in our own way: riding out every morning, frequently dining and spending the afternoon at the house of one or other of our European acquaintances, and passing the evening at the *paséo*, or on the elevated *azotea* of one of the fine palaces, which, now half warehouse and half dwelling house, are, many of them, in the occupation of foreigners. The scale of the interior arrangement of these princely structures corresponds with the stately exterior. They contain suites of elevated apartments, now despoiled of their rich furniture, and melancholy from their vast extent and want of inhabitants; but evincing in their fresh gay gilding, carved work, panelling, and painted ceilings, both the past glories of which they have been the scene, and the extreme purity of the atmosphere which circulates within their lofty walls. The views from the more elevated, over the flat roofs and the numerous domes of the city, and the complete panorama of mountains, were of a beauty which is indescribable.

There are certain thoroughfares and places of resort, in Mexico, which seem to pour one incessant stream of human beings, from sunrise to sunset. Such are the main streets leading to the causeways; the vicinity of *Parian* and *Plaza Mayor*, where the bulk of the business of the capital is concentrated; the various markets; and the quarters where the canals from the lakes terminate.

Numberless light canoes laden with fruits, flowers, vegetables, maize, and straw, meat, wild ducks, and game of various description, approach the centre of the city by the latter channels; frequently accompanied by

the Indian speculators, and their families young and old. Thence the cargoes are transported on the back, through the press of rival mules, trooping in from the *calzadas*; and are deposited in the spacious market place near the university.

The spectacle afforded by this crowded area was a never-failing source of interest—whether our observation was directed to the habits of the Indian, the varied picturesque costumes, the nature of the commodities exposed for sale, or the peculiarities of individual character.

The Mexican and Ottomie Indian possesses very distinct features from his North American brethren. He has a shorter face and thicker lips, and the cheek bone is much more protuberant.

During the early hours, good humour evidently pervaded the press; and the public spirit seemed to harmonize with the freshness of the flowers—of which, as in the days of Cortez, there is here always an inexhaustible profusion; with the bright colours of the fresh-culled fruits and vegetables; and the orderly arrangement of the various piles of calico, hides, earthenware, baskets, ropes, and matting. The toil of their journey, and that of subsequent arrangement being over, the Indian and his family might be seen seated at their morning meal of *tortillas* and *Chile*, in peace; and in satisfied expectation of the approach of a customer.

I never failed to remark, however, an exception to this tranquillity, in the person and demeanour of an old, grotesque alguazil, who appeared to have the duty of maintaining order—or rather, of stirring up disorder, in that part of the market which lay opposite to the university. He usually lost his temper at sunrise; and, as far as I could discover, never found it till after sunset—swearing most grievously the livelong day; thumping the cruppers of the mules, and the heads and shoulders of the Indians; overturning hampers, kicking over the baskets, knocking down the piles of merchandise, and putting everything in confusion, in dogged determination to see all go according to rule and square. He seemed

perfectly careless of consequences: and he met the ob-  
jurgation and vociferous upbraidings of the dark-eyed  
and dark-haired female whose arrangements he had in-  
vaded, with the same recklessness with which he braved  
the sullen scowl of hatred from her swarthy mate.

The heat of noon brought comparative silence. Mul-  
titudes had departed; and those who maintained their  
stand were dozing: but a little later, the old alguazil, with  
uplifted staff and voice, might be seen at his unwelcome  
labours: goading bipeds and quadrupeds; twitching the  
hair of the one, and the tails of the other; and dispensing  
execrations upon both. Unfortunately, I must allow,  
that at this hour, there was some reason for his inter-  
ference; as the numberless *pulquerias* in the vicinity of  
the market, to which many of the males had retired in  
the morning, while their wives carried on the business,  
now poured forth their inebriated occupants; and many  
a family group which had entered the city in harmony,  
was seen retiring to their canoe amid violence and lam-  
entations.

The shops in Mexico do not make any great figure;  
they are in general open, and of small dimensions. Cer-  
tain quarters are devoted to distinct lines of business.  
Thus the jewellers have their street; the sellers of *man-  
gas* theirs; and so forth. Coachmaking is among the  
most important mechanical trades of the capital; and,  
perhaps, the most lucrative after that of the gold and  
silver smiths; but no trade can be very bad, if we con-  
sider the price asked for almost every article. Saddlery,  
confectionary, millinery, and tailoring flourish. The  
vender of medicines seems to have a stirring business.  
The Parian, which I have before named, forms a deposi-  
tory of a great proportion of the home-manufactured  
goods; and the hire of the stalls brings in a large revenue  
to government. This alone can be pleaded in defence  
of its maintenance, to the destruction of the beauty of  
the Plaza Mayor. It is also the principal resort of the  
*evangelistas*, writers of letters, memorials, and billets-  
doux, for the unlearned of the city. Many foreign arti-

sans have of late years settled in Mexico, but are always regarded with jealous dislike by the natives.

The works in wax are celebrated; and there is an artist, Hidalgo by name, whose models of national character and costumes are of rare beauty and fidelity. There is evidently much native talent of an imitative kind; but the disadvantages under which the country labours, are sufficient to crush and extinguish it.

Owing to the causes before alluded to, I am totally unable to give you the smallest insight into the manner in which the best classes of the natives employ themselves during the early part of the day. Soon after sunrise, the churches held their proportions of worshippers of all ranks. The hour of prayer over and gone, while we suppose that the males repaired to their ordinary occupations, private or official, the higher class of females disappeared altogether. Among the crowds in the great thoroughfares, at the market, under the great arcades, or on the promenades—it was a rare occurrence to descry the *mantilla* of a lady of condition.

Now and then, it is true, a solitary maiden, followed by her watchful duenna, might cross your path, saluting your nostrils by a gentle whiff from the lighted cigarita, which, like the glance of her black eye, was but half shrouded by the ample *mantilla*; but this was not a usual apparition.

It was evident that they neither went out shopping, nor visiting, nor gallivanting, but staid within doors—which, on the charitable supposition that they were properly employed, was well enough; but hereof deponent saith not.

It was far otherwise in the evening. Then all, young and old, came out of their hiding places, and the Alameda and paséos before sunset, and the portales after dark, swarmed with the damas and signoritas of the city.

The number of carriages which repair to the evening promenade is very great; and there is certainly considerable taste and luxury displayed among them.

They are in general capacious vehicles, with bodies

well and substantially built, if not exactly after the present European taste ; gayly decorated and painted in the old sumptuous style in vogue two centuries ago ; but the huge scaffolding on which they are pendant defies description. This, from one extremity to another, cannot frequently be less than fourteen or sixteen feet—I like to keep within bounds. I should esteem it impossible to overturn one of them by any lawful means. They are drawn by two or four steeds, or mules, heavily caparisoned ; and, when once in motion, may be seen soberly trotting round the Alameda, or over the paséo, for a brief space ; when they draw up in solemn stateliness side by side, in one of the open spaces, to allow the occupants a full opportunity to see and to be seen. The gentlemen on horseback, meanwhile, course up and down, with much the same objects in view ; halting and chatting with their acquaintances, or rapidly exchanging, in passing, that friendly little gesture with the fingers, which passes current among familiars in this country. I will not deny that you see some fine horses, and some striking costumes ; and further, some handsome faces ; and that there is a kind of excitement produced by the bustle of these evening promenades, particularly when they take place on the Paséo de las Vigas : but whether it was that I love not crowds, and am given to seek more quiet pleasures, and to prefer scenes of less glare and dust ; or was apt to be too strongly reminded by them of the vanity of the world ; or, lastly, that I was conscious that *Pinto* was one of the shabbiest steeds in the city to look at, in spite of the daily care of Don Floresco, and that my cutting a dash was out of the question—I soon grew tired of attending the promenade, and used to gird on my weapon and slink off in another direction. Several times a week, about sunset, the band of the artillery regiment quartered in the city, played for half an hour in the vicinity of their barracks ; and many of the loungers, both mounted and on foot, were accustomed to repair thither : and, to do them justice, I have heard far worse military bands in Europe. It was whispered that the music was by far the best feature of the regi-

ment, and I think with every probability of truth. Like all other portions of the Mexican army which came in our way, the officers were gaudily dressed in very bad taste, and the men looked more like footpads than soldiers.

And now the scene of the fashionable promenade changes to the portales, where some hundreds of dames and gallants form into two dense lines, from which, when once entangled, you can hardly extricate yourself; and continue defiling up and down with monotonous regularity and at a funeral pace, for half an hour or more; while the dirty steps at the doorways of the shops opening under the arcades, upon which the beggars and lepers have been reclining during the day, are now, to your astonishment, crowded by luxuriously dressed females, chatting and smoking with their beaux. This is perfect Mexican—just as an acquaintance described to me his morning visit to a noble lady to whom the preceding evening he had been presented at the opera, where she shone in lace and diamonds—when he found her in the most complete dishabille; all her French finery thrown aside; without stockings, and eating *tortillas* and *Chile*, out of the common earthenware plate of the country. I must do the Mexican gallants the credit to say that some time ago a proposal was started to provide chairs. The offer, however, was indignantly refused by the belles; and there they squat to this very day, according to the custom of their mothers and grandmothers.

At this hour the *mantilla* was almost universally laid aside. The females of this country cannot be said to be distinguished for personal beauty. They are short in person, and seldom the possessors of elegant form or features. The eyes are commonly fine, and the majesty of their gait, which is remarkable, is characteristic of the admixture of Spanish and Indian blood. In their style of dress, they have now adopted the French fashion; always preserving the *mantilla*, however, as before mentioned, in the earlier part of the day.

I regret to see national costumes on the wane, here and elsewhere; most following the vile fashions of France



and England : and this fancy extends itself in many cases to the trappings of the horses, as well as to those of the rider ; and not a few of the young Mexicans now use the English saddle, instead of the high Mameluke saddle and furniture of their fathers.

It is evident that the lamentable effects of the political state of the country, and the constant struggle between parties for mastery, are felt throughout the whole structure of society. There is no frankness and no forgiveness between those who are for the moment in power, and those who have in any way shown favour to another modification of the constitution, or abetted other rulers. The instant that the struggle is at an end by the defeat of one party the other takes advantage of its victory to crush its humble adversary by confiscation, exile, and domestic oppression.

Unhappy Mexico ! No sooner has a government seemed to be fairly seated, and felt itself called to exercise authority, and to enforce the laws, than some discontented partisan runs off to a distance from the capital, gets a band of malecontents together, sets up a "*grito*" or bark, to give warning that something is brewing ; follows it up in due time by a *pronunciamiento* against the existing rulers ; proposes a modification of the constitution ; and, collecting an army, makes a dash at the metropolis. Perhaps, as was the fate of Canalizza's party, while we were in the country, he gets beaten on his way, and running abroad to escape the vengeance of his conqueror, leaves his adherents to make their peace as well as they may : perhaps, like the hero of the day, Santa Anna, he succeeds, and gets possession of the presidential chair, to be kicked out in his turn, without a shadow of doubt, sooner or later. It would fill a volume, and be a perfect jest-book, to give a history of all the changes experienced by this country since the expulsion of the Spaniards ; and the real intentions, ends, and characters of those by whom they have been brought about.

The most serious evil is, that in this state of affairs nothing can be accounted stable. The sound principles

of government, perchance professed by a party most frequently perish with those who upheld them. You have read the wise intentions published to the world by this or that ephemeral president and his government, with regard to general tolerance, and the introduction of those principles of popular education and of internal policy, which can alone render the Mexicans capable of self-government. You have heard of the excellence of the police: the energy with which order was restored upon the public roads: of summary justice being inflicted upon those who transgressed the law. I should lay it down as a rule, that you never need believe more than a quarter of that which you might be led to infer from the inflated style and mendacious language of whatever is published here; but yet there may have been some foundation for what was asserted at such a date—at the same time that I would assure you, that the greatest probability exists of there not being a single word of truth in the statement, when applied to the real position of affairs, six months after. How was it when we were in Mexico? Santa Anna, a man of but little genius or talent, but cleverer than those about him in the low arts of intrigue, and into whose well-laid traps more than one old associate had fallen, was at the head of the *reform government* as president. The preceding year, General Duran had attempted to get up a revolution in favour of the so-called “privileged classes.” This year Canalizza had run off to the eastward in the manner I have described; and, under what patriotic cry I forget, had issued a *pronunciamento*, proposing to set up a counter government, according to the custom of the country. If I mistake not, General Bravo was down in the southwest, with the same intentions. The vice president, Gomez Ferias, was at *couteau tiré* with the president; and the latter had, under the veil of leave of absence from the capital, for the restoration of his health, gone off in a very bad humour, to pout at his estate near Jalapa; where the general belief was, that he was brewing some mischief of his own, in favour of the army and the church, both of which were decidedly under a cloud in the actual state

of things. The latter especially began to tremble for its wealth, which the necessitous *federacion* considered in the light of a lawful prize.

The surmise was right, as the event showed; for not long after, the wily president himself was pleased to set up his "bark," and abjuring the reform party, on whose shoulders he had climbed to power, made a run for the capital, beat his old friends, and throwing himself into the arms of the "privileged classes," was again elected president.

Since that time another "*grito*" has been given by the Zacatecanos, who revolted again, under favour of that pet cry of the giddy multitude in the age in which we live—reform! and getting together six thousand *civicos* or militia, and thirty-two pieces of artillery, defended their city. Santa Anna's star again prevailed; and he beat them also. Durango then gave him a little more trouble; and now Texas, with its unruly colonists, has called him to the north. He may chance to hear some other dog "barking" in the capital before he gets back. Is not this laughable? But to return to the time of our visit.

The more enlightened party, consisting of those who were averse to the ignorant bigotry of their fellow-citizens, and desirous of introducing the more enlightened policy of the United States or Europe, were quite in disgrace; their chiefs exiled, and themselves under the surveillance of the party in power. Their schemes had perished with them: education was discouraged; jealousy and hatred of foreigners carried to a ridiculous pitch, and the administration of justice most infamously abused.

The popular party, having the upper hand, was, as elsewhere, tender of the lives of its near relatives and associates in prison. Seven hundred and thirty criminals crowded the Acordari, the principal jail of Mexico. There had not been an execution for three years. The promptitude with which eight out of ten miscreants, who had robbed the house of a European merchant in the city, were seized and executed some years before, owing to the firmness of one or two magistrates, and the author-

ity of the English consul general, had neither been forgotten nor forgiven by the people and present government.

The transportation of criminals to the presidios of Sonora and California, was known to be a perfect farce ; as, however they might set out, they were never known to arrive there—unless they chose. Assassinations were frequent in the city ; and to meet a bleeding body carried dangling from a litter, was no unusual event. A murder took place in the very house where we lodged. Thousands of drunken and gambling *leperos* lay about the churches and piazzas of the city.

Safety to person or property on the public roads—that was most doubtful. Many were robbed within a stone-cast of the gates ; and the diligence from Vera Cruz was, for a number of weeks successively, pillaged, as a matter of course, in the Piñal between Pueblo and Mexico, or near Perote.

After the defeat of Canalizza, the villages were hardly safe, such was the number of lawless ruffians dispersed about the country to the eastward : and all this was winked at by the government. What a blessing a Bonaparte would be for Mexico !

In matters of religion, nothing could be more bigoted and intolerant than the reform government of the country. The Roman Catholic religion in its blindest and most revolting form, was the only one tolerated by law ; and whatever there may be in other Roman Catholic countries, here there would seem to be no medium between the grossest and most debasing superstition and idolatry, and skepticism and infidelity.\* The few Protestant residents are not permitted to have a place of worship ; and were it not stipulated by the treaty with Great Britain, they would not be allowed a place of sepulture for their dead.

\* It is said that there are five hundred and fifty secular, and sixteen hundred and forty-six regular clergy in the capital ; that in twenty-three monasteries there are twelve hundred individuals : and in fifteen convents, about two thousand souls, of which nine hundred are professed nuns. See "Notes on Mexico."

It was now the Holy Week. For several days previous to Palm Sunday, many preparations had been made for the coming solemnities.

The surface of the canals of Chalco and Izstacalco, which enter the city from the Paséo de las Vigas, was daily crowded with canoes, laden with the most beautiful flowers, the produce of the *chinampas*, or floating gardens of the Indians, on the border of the lakes. The great market was filled with palm branches, and all the altars and shrines of the city were perfumed with the sweet fragrance of the bouquets with which they were tastefully adorned.

The fruit stalls under the arcades, and in the different plazas, and the innumerable *pulquerias*, were decorated in the same manner. The love of flowers is as marked among the Indians at this day, as at the time of the conquest.

On the earlier days of the week, the interest of the scene thickened hour by hour. A large proportion of the population of the valley repaired to the city; and the streets were crowded with all classes, from the poor half-naked Indian of the pure Ottomie or the Mexican race, whose sole covering was a dingy wollen or goatskin blanket, and straw hat, jacket, and calico pantaloons reaching to the knee, to the wealthy *paysano*, or country gentleman, whose costly apparel might be valued at upward of five hundred dollars. About the evening of Wednesday, the scene on the Plaza Mayor, in front of the cathedral, baffles all description. It forms at present one of the finest squares in the world; and were it not for the intrusion of the Parian, the large ungainly pile of building in one angle, it would be perhaps without rival.

The cathedral, a noble and stately structure with two ornamented towers, rises to the east; the splendid palace of the viceroy on the north; the house of Cortez, and a number of equally palatial buildings to the south; and a range of fine edifices, with a basement of lofty arcades, to the west. The removal of the circular balustrade,

the amphitheatre, and the equestrian statue of Charles the Fourth, has left the range of the eye over the broad tessellated pavement of the spacious area without obstruction.

At the close of the day in question, a portion of the area in front of the portales or arcades, and before the palace, appeared covered by slight erections of bamboo framework thatched by matting, and shut in by a profusion of green branches and palm leaves. The more spacious were devoted to the sale of refreshments, and liquors of various kinds—lemonade, pinade, a liquor called *chea*, and pulque; or for that of *dulces*, for which the city is celebrated. They not unfrequently formed a booth of twelve or fourteen feet in length, with seats and tables for the use of the customers. The smaller served as temporary shops for the retail of trifles of every description—confectionary and fruits, ornaments, or articles of apparel. The whole were most tastefully adorned with bouquets of flowers, and at night illuminated with lamps, tapers, and torches. The trade of the fair—for fair it was—seemed to be chiefly in the hands of Indians, or those in whom the Indian blood predominated.

The crowd thickened, and the bustle in the plaza increased every hour. The incessant sound of the innumerable bells, and the rolling of carriages, were really fatiguing to the ear. But, when the cathedral clock tolled the hour of ten, on Holy Thursday, a change came over the scene. The regular shops were shut, not a bell was to be heard. The carriages of every description disappeared from the streets; not a horse or mule was to be descried; but innumerable crowds of both sexes, and of all classes, rich and poor, were seen intermingling on the same level, and pouring, morning and evening, in one unbroken stream through the thoroughfares, and under the portales. They clustered by hundreds about the doors of the churches; and by thousands—yes, tens of thousands—on the Plaza Mayor.

All the damas of the city, dressed in black, and shrouded in their *mantillas*, repaired on foot from church

to church, according to the fashion which enjoins them to visit as many as possible, within the prescribed time of humiliation.

This state of things lasted for forty-eight hours. In the principal churches, the high altars were despoiled of their rich load of ornaments, or completely veiled by dark-coloured drapery ; and the organs were as mute as the bells : while in all others, constant illumination, and the display of gold, silver, and tawdry ornaments, was fatiguingly splendid.

But do not deceive yourself: though there was an absence of many of the ordinary sounds, the city was not silent. The trample of thousands of feet—the march of stately and interminable processions—and the hum and clamour of innumerable voices filled the ear ; both in the ordinary tones of conversation, and exerted to their utmost pitch, as they energetically, yet lovingly called the attention of the passing to their commodities. “*Aqui hay juiles!*” “Here’s your sorts ! white fish !” bellowed one. “*Pato grande, mi alma! pato grande, venga usted!*” “A great duck ! oh my soul, a great duck—come and buy !” responded another.

You may further understand that the interiors of the churches were no more the theatre of silence than the streets without, when I tell you that in addition to the incessant stream of worshippers which poured along their pavement from one door to another the livelong day—in many of them, waltzes, boleros, and polonaises, from harpsichord or organ—were the accompaniment of the hasty devotion of the passing multitudes.

All these sounds you may conceive, for they were after all but ordinary ; but it is a moral impossibility for you to imagine the extraordinary hubbub produced by the sound of thousands of rattles, which filled the air from morning to night. They were to be seen in the hands of every individual of the lower classes, and of many of the upper ; of every form and material, bone, wood, and even silver ; from the size of a child’s plaything, to one which would outgrind half a dozen of our watchmen’s

rattles, and required both hands to wield. Many of the stalls in the Plaza Mayor were devoted to their sale alone ; while others dealt in nothing but effigies of Judas Iscariot, varying in size and monstrosity, from a doll of a foot long, to the size of the human figure. Hundreds of them were seen tied together by the neck, and dangling from long poles by twenty and thirty in a cluster, over the heads of the mob.

At the corner of the market, nearest the plaza, where it happened that the principal rattle venders had ensconced themselves, if you shut your eyes, you might imagine yourself after sunset in the depth of a forest in the Floridas, where a few million grasshoppers, cicada, and wood bugs were at their serenade.

And so it continued from sunrise to sunset. I believe myself within bounds when I assert that we saw fifty thousand people collected in the great square morning and evening. Sometimes the mass was so dense that the booths were threatened with an overturn ; and you were glad to gain the step of one of the palaces, from which you might look over the sea of heads at your ease, and descry the bunches of Judases hideously besmeared with red and blue paint, bobbing about over the level of the multitude. Then would come a stir at the other end of the square : and, with a long-drawn train of crucifixes, decorated banners and tapers, the clergy of one of the great churches to the westward would defile into the crowded area ; clearing their uninterrupted way, as though by magic, to the great entrance of the cathedral, through a press where, a moment before, a dog could hardly have wormed his way. Some of these processions on the afternoon of Good Friday were more gorgeous and splendid in their aspect than any I had seen in Italy itself, and apparently interminable. They were revolting from the hideous and disgusting representations which they comprised, of the sacred scenes of the Passion. During the passage, the whole mass of human beings collected on the Plaza Mayor remained kneeling in silence. To what divinity ? My brain swims with the recollection of the press and glare, and the confused and



intermingling pictures presented before us during these two days ; and I am totally unable to disentangle from the mass any connected event or spectacle worth detailing. The whole city seemed to reel under the influence of phrensy, and we were obliged to reel with it. To see as much as we could, and to give no offence, were, I own, our principal objects. I remember an old woman who happened to be my neighbour during the passage of one of the processions, who perhaps observed that I was not as ready with a genuflection as the bystanders, shaking a Judas, the size of a child of two years old, at me, by the scuff of the neck, and muttering to me with a scowl of hatred, " See ! here is a countryman of yours ! "

It was a rebuke which I felt I merited—for what did I there ?

During this season every church and monastery had its peculiar services from morning to night. In the cathedral I heard several ; and the music, accompanied by a small orchestra, was good as to composition, though indifferently performed. Within that noble structure I remarked nothing in the general style of the rites and services of a particularly undignified or revolting character : but to describe the orgies enacted in the generality of the other churches could but be disgusting to you. The scenes of the Passion were played and turned into comedy ; while waltzes and contradances were played over the bier, on which the effigy of our Saviour was laid out in state. On the evening of that day, after making the round of eighteen or twenty churches, we returned to our quarters, thoroughly fatigued and out of spirits.

At an early hour on the Saturday, preparations were made to terminate the season of humiliation. What humiliation ! On going into the streets we saw the Judases—which I omitted to tell you, were, in fact, fireworks so disguised—hanging by thousands over the centre of the streets, and to the fronts of the houses. In the Plaza Mayor, the booths had entirely disappeared ; troops

were drawn up before the palace, with the artillery in advance ; and it was with the utmost difficulty I could make my way into the cathedral. Every part of its pavement was crowded.

I had hardly made my way to the high altar, when the deep bell of the church tolled half past nine, and the lofty roof and the impending dome resounded with the burst of sounds which instantly pervaded the great city from one end to another ! Within—the trumpet and full organ mingled their burst with the clang of the great bells ; the dark veil which had shrouded the high altar parted and rolled back, displaying the gorgeous pile of ornament which it had concealed. Without—the artillery thundered in the square—the bells of every church and convent through the city clanged incessantly, and were answered by those in the towns and villages far and wide—the Judases exploded by thousands, and the multitude hailed the conclusion of the Holy Week !

Before an hour was at end, the streets resounded to the roll of the carriages, and the sounds of innumerable hoofs ; the calzadas and canals were crowded with Indians returning to their homes ; the buyer and the dealer repaired to their traffic ; the idler to his vices, and the gambler to the monte table. The robber, exulting under his lightened conscience, betook himself to his stand in the pine forest, to commence a fresh career of rapine ; and the assassin to the resumption of his cherished schemes of blood and vengeance. The reopening of the opera was publicly announced, and the citizens joyfully anticipated the recommencement of bullfights.

And this is Christianity ! and the worship of the only true God ! to introduce which, in place of existing superstitions, the blood of millions of the blind heathen of this vast region was shed by its Spanish conquerors ! The plea for all the cruelties exercised against the aborigines was their idolatry, and their inhuman sacrifices ; and the most exaggerated statements, suited to excite the horror and extinguish the compassion of the bigoted Catholics of Europe, were found necessary, and were made, to pal-

liate, in some degree, the undeniable enormities perpetrated upon the Indians.

The detestable character of the ignorant idolatry in exercise among the ancient race needs no demonstration ; yet, at the present day, with the exception of the single item of human sacrifice as a part of the religious system, it may well be asked, by what has it been supplanted—fewer and more dignified divinities ? purer rites ? a less degrading superstition ? less disgusting ignorance ? a better system of morality ? Who will dare assert it ?

As to the charge of the inhuman rites, and the bloody festivals of the later generations of the Aztecs—the magnitude of which, as asserted by the Roman Catholic historians, is almost incredible—no one offers to palliate them.

You are shown with obsequious eagerness the huge round Stone of Sacrifices ; you are told to mark the hollow for the head of the victim, and the groove which carried off his blood ; your ears tingle when they are filled with the number of those who are supposed to have been immolated upon its carved surface. You turn and see the huge and detestable figure of the idol goddess Teoyamiqui, before whom, as Spanish historians relate, the hearts of the victims were torn out : yes ! but officious cicerone leads you to the court of the Dominican convent, and points to the broad perforated stone, where the hundreds and thousands of poor benighted, ignorant heathen, expired at the stake amid smoke and flame. No one reminds you that about the time when the idolatrous worship of the Aztecs was extirpated in Mexico, the same Inquisition, then in its first flush of power, burned eighteen thousand victims at the stake, in the Old World ; and consigned two hundred and eight thousand to infamy and punishment scarcely better than death itself. The simple fact is, that at the present day, dark as we consider it, the Roman Catholicism of Europe is light, when compared to that established in this country, and practised by its inhabitants.

A change of names—a change of form and garb for the idols—new symbols—altered ceremonials—another

race of priests—so much and no more has been effected for the Indians.

The change was easily made. The ancient superstition abounded with fasts, feasts, and penances; so did the new. The whole system of the aboriginal religious hierarchy bears a singular resemblance to that which took its place under the domination of Spain. Even the monk found his vocation excite no surprise; the existence of regular orders of celibates of both sexes, whose lives were devoted to the service of certain among their gods, seems indisputable.

With the Indians, Teotl, the unknown God—“*he by whom we live,*” as he was termed—he whom they never represented in idol form—is still the Supreme Being under the name of Dios. They continue to adore the god Quetzalcoatl—the Feathered Serpent, under the name of San Thomas. It is indifferent to them, whether the evil spirit is called Diablo, or Tlacatecolotl. They retain their superstition, their talismans, their charms; and as they were priest led under the old system, so they are kept in adherence to the church of Rome, by the continual bustle of the festivals, and ceremonials, and processions of the church. But as to change of heart and purpose—a knowledge of the true God as “a Spirit, who is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth;” a sense of their degraded and fallen state as men, and an acquaintance with the truths of the true gospel; its application to their individual state, and its influence upon their lives and characters, they are as blind and ignorant as their forefathers.

I should not think I was hazarding much, were I to say that all classes, high and low, participate in this darkness, to a degree which is truly almost incredible; and the proofs are the countenance and support given to the degrading system, with its revolting, childish, and superstitious ceremonies; the low state of public and private morals; and the supine and contented ignorance, which they cherish with a jealousy that would be ludicrous, were it not lamentable.

Among other signs of the weakness of the existing government, the neglect and decay of many of the public institutions are not to be overlooked.

The importance of the mint to the revenues of the country, renders its maintenance an object of state policy; but the university, the museum, the public library, the splendid mineria, or schools of the mines; many of the noble hospitals of Spanish foundation, and the academy of arts, were, at the time of our visit, in a state of general neglect shameful to the government and people. The botanic garden, which occupies an interior court of the palace, is also but indifferently maintained under the care of an old badger of a functionary, who will make you up a packet of the most vulgar and ordinary garden seeds, and charge you fifty dollars for it with the best assurance of conscience in the world.

But to go into the details of these matters would be to write a book instead of a letter.

Though in the last degree of confusion, the museum, which is in the palace, presents a scene of great interest; as, besides a multitude of rare and unique works illustrative of the history of the country, and a great quantity of the most curious antiquities, it contains many of the most remarkable records of the conquest. But all are in the most appalling disorder—a disorder which has, by-the-by, favoured numerous thefts. The same observation applies to the state of the more massive antiquities which have been, from time to time, brought to light; such as the Stone of Sacrifice, the Feathered Serpent, the idol Goddess of War, and many others, all of which have been described at large a hundred times. There they lie, half covered with dust, dirt, and rubbish, in a corner of the court of the university; to whose area the fine bronze equestrian statue of Charles the Fourth has also been exiled, by the levelling, king-hating republicans.

The great Toltec Calendar is seen to more advantage, from its being inserted in a conspicuous position into the wall of the cathedral, which, I have elsewhere mentioned,

is built on the site of the principal *teocalli* of the Mexicans, dedicated to the god Mexitli.\*

Wonder has often been expressed, why so few remnants of the ancient city are to be found, and how completely the vestiges of its existence have been swept from the large area which it once occupied. The site of a few of the principal buildings is known; and here and there, fragments have been unearthed, and this is all. That the greater proportion of the dwellings should have disappeared, no one need marvel, when it is recollected that they were merely built of layers of unburnt clay; that the numerous canals were filled up with the ruins; and, moreover, that the mode resorted to by Cortez, according to his own account, in gaining possession of the city, was literally to level every house and street as soon as it was won. But still I am satisfied that these causes, however plausible, are not sufficient to account for the fact altogether; but that a most sedulously jealous and concerted system of destruction and inhumation must have been pursued by the conquerors with reference to all relics of the ancient race.

It may be supposed, that a people that proves itself so little disposed to appreciate treasures of this nature, would show but little ardour in their being brought to light and preserved; and whatever is discovered, is discovered by chance. Foreigners have occasionally instituted a search in suitable localities, and have made valuable discoveries; but the existing law, which prohibits the exportation of antiquities under any pretence, has put a stop even to their labours.

Indeed, at all times, the inhabitants of this city, even when most civilized, and numbering many men of educa-

\* The first great temple named in the history of the kings, is that in the reign of the sixth monarch, Axayacatl, in 1470, who erected a tower of nine floors in honour of *the Creator*. The seventh king, Tizoc, collected materials for a very great temple, which his son, the eighth monarch, finished; when, Clavigero states, 8,000,000 of people came to the dedication; and all the prisoners made during four years, in number 72,344, were ranged in two files, a mile and a half long, and were sacrificed. This was probably the great one which formed the main citadel of the Mexicans at the taking of the city.

tion, have been singularly apathetic with regard to the vestiges of the ancient people upon whose seat of empire they had established themselves by the right of conquest. For two entire centuries the same insane and bigoted spirit of wanton destruction, which the Spanish historians show to have influenced the conquerors, and to have caused the annihilation of much that was curious and valuable, seems to have possessed their descendants to a very late epoch, if not to the present day.

There is ample proof of this, in a pamphlet\* now becoming rare, published by De Gama, a Spanish savant, in 1792, to give a description of the two most remarkable of the Toltec antiquities, the Goddess of War, and the Sacrificial Stone, both of which were discovered accidentally two years previous.

The goddess Teoyamiqui, or Cohuatlicue, † as De Gama calls her, is a colossal figure about nine feet high, hewn out of a solid block of basalt. The breadth is about five feet, and it is three feet in thickness. It is sculptured on all sides, and even underneath the feet, having evidently been suspended at a height from the ground, by two projections at the sides. The whole configuration is the most hideous and deformed that the fancy can paint, being a mass of serpents of all sizes, with claws and tusks of ravenous beasts ornamented with human hearts and skulls.

The Stone of Sacrifices is a cylindrical mass of porphyry, of twenty-five feet in circumference, covered both on the surface and sides with sculpture in relief. It is strongly urged that this was not the altar implied by the popular name, but one of the stones termed *temalacatl*, on which gladiatorial combats between prisoners of rank and the Mexican warriors took place on

\* *Descripcion y cronologica de los piedras con ocasion del nuevo, empedrado que se esta formando en la plaza principal de Mejico se hallaron en alla. Ano de 1790, &c.—por Don Antonio de Leon y Gama.*

† Two different personages, by-the-by. Teoyamiqui was the wife of Huitzipoetli, the god of war; while Cohuatlicue was the goddess of flowers.—*Humboldt's Researches*, vol. i., p. 266.

solemn occasions. I have but little hesitation in asserting that the groove in the upper surface formed no part of the original design.

It has been surmised that this is the "exceedingly great stone" which was discovered by the Mexicans as late as the reign of Montezuma, when it is recorded that it was brought to the capital with great labour and pomp for the sacrifices: on which occasion 12,210 victims were immolated.

It may fairly be credited that many of these antiquities were the work of a people anterior to the Aztecs.

No doubt can be entertained but that their systems for the computation of time were transmitted to them from the Toltecs.

The great Calendar Stone is a vast mass of basaltic porphyry, twenty-four tons weight, covered with the most symmetrical and admirable hieroglyphics.

Two several calendars were in use among the aborigines, namely: the *Reckoning of the Sun*, used for civil purposes, and the *Calendar of the Moon*, employed to regulate their religious festivals.\*

The *Reckoning of the Sun* was briefly as follows.† The civil year consisted of three hundred and sixty four days, divided into eighteen months of twenty days each, with exception of the last, to which the five odd days were added. But evidently knowing that the tropical year exceeded their year by six hours, they, after the termination of each cycle of fifty-two years, added thirteen days before they recommenced the first month of the following cycle, and thus adjusted their time. Each of the eighteen months has a certain name from some natural object characteristic of the particular season which it indicated, or from some particular festival or employment in which they were engaged at

\* Their numerals were indicated as far as nineteen by round dots; the number twenty had a particular sign, as well as 400 and 8000, and this is all that is known of their system of notation.

† See Humboldt, M'Culloh, &c., &c.



such times. The twenty days were also named, and like the months, had their hieroglyphic sign. Every fifth day throughout the month was a market day. In recording the events of their history, the precise cycle of fifty-two years in which a given circumstance occurred, was first indicated, and not the century, as with us, and consequently the cycles were numbered from a certain epoch.

The year of the cycle in which an event happened was not indicated by its number, but by a more complex mode, which I will briefly explain. The cycle of fifty-two years was subdivided into four equal parts of thirteen years each, called *tlalpilli*; one of four hieroglyphic signs—*Tochli*, a rabbit—*Acatl*, a reed—*Tecpatl*, a flint—and *Calli*, a house, were applied to each year in succession, throughout the fifty-two; and thus in every cycle there would be thirteen years designated by each sign. The number of each of the thirteen years composing each of the four *tlalpilli* was designated by dots; and the Mexican in pointing out the year of any event, would first name the number of the cycle, say *two*—then the number of the *tlalpilli* in such a cycle, say *four*—then the number of the year in such a *tlalpilli*, say *three*, and then the hieroglyphic sign of the year. So cycle . . . ,—*tlalpilli* . . . . ,—year . . . ,—and the sign *Acatl*, will indicate the forty-second year, in the second cycle of their history. Each succeeding fourth year, coming under the sign of *the rabbit*, was called a “divine year;” and, at the termination of the cycle of fifty-two years, a solemn astronomical festival was held.

The Reckoning of the Moon was yet more complex, and I will only allude to its main features. Their “religious year” was composed of a series of periods of thirteen days, alternating with the hieroglyphics of the twenty days of the month in the civil year, by which a cycle of two hundred and sixty days is formed.

Seventy-three cycles of two hundred and sixty days amounted exactly to fifty-two years, so that their great

religious cycle terminated and began with the civil cycle described above. A larger cycle of 2340 days was further produced by the introduction of a series of hieroglyphics, nine in number, and called the Lords of the Night; eight of which, with the addition of one of the smaller cycles of two hundred and sixty, would amount to the civil cycle of fifty-two years.

From whatever source the ancient people of these countries derived their correct knowledge of the revolutions of the sun and moon, and their peculiar astronomical system, the analogies which have been detected between them and with those of Asia are most conclusive as to the fact of their having had one common origin.

The week of five days, the subdivision of the larger cycles, the nomenclature of the years, the regulation of festivals according to half lunations, the method of intercalation, the proportion between the number of years of the cycle and the intercalary period—all lead one to believe that the Mexican astronomical system, as well as those of the Chaldeans, Persians, and Hindoos, was based upon the principles of antediluvian science, the knowledge of which was common to the descendants of Noah, in the centuries preceding the confusion of tongues and general dispersion of the human race.

But to return for an instant to De Gama. We learn from him that the monstrous goddess was discovered in consequence of an excavation made in the Plaza Mayor, on the 13th of August, 1790, exactly, to a day, two hundred and sixty-nine years after the capture of the city by Cortez. The head lay at the depth of only one vara and a third below the surface, and the foot but one single vara or less. It was the 25th of September before it was finally extricated. On the 17th of December following, the Sacrificial Stone was found, at the depth of but a foot and a half below the pavement. Other relics were discovered subsequently. Some of the largest were instantly buried again, and among the number, those named. Others were destroyed; and no doubt seems to exist, but that at this very hour, at a very small

depth in this central part of the city, a vast quantity of these colossal and curious remains of a forgotten people lie hidden from the day.

So little was De Gama's admirable treatise upon these monuments understood or appreciated, that he had but one hundred and seventy-two subscribers for his pamphlet of one hundred and sixteen pages; and it is doubtful whether he found sufficient encouragement to publish a second treatise upon the Calendar and other monuments subsequently found, as he hints his intention of doing, in case that the sale of his first adventure covered the expense of the impression and the plates.

He gives (page 110) a description of a cluster of most curiously sculptured rocks, discovered in the Cerro of Chapultepec, in the year 1775, while labourers were carrying on certain excavations. After a most careful examination, he conceived them to form part of an astronomical contrivance, by which the ancient Mexicans were enabled to determine the meridian, the exact time of sunrise and sunset at the equinoxes, and thus the true time throughout the year. In recording, on his next return to Chapultepec, the utter annihilation of these valuable relics of an extraordinary people, he feelingly exclaims, "How many precious monuments of antiquity have thus perished through ignorance!"\*

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## LETTER VII.

OUR allotted period of sojourn in the country, which we now felt to be lamentably brief, passed swiftly away amid the excitement of our position; and, urged by the feeling that necessity would compel us to leave Mexico at the commencement of May, we prepared, early in

\* *Quantos preciosos monumentos de la antiqüedad per falta de inteligencia, habran parecido an esta manera!*

April, to make an excursion of a few days in the environs of the capital.

Accordingly, on the 8th of that month, for the especial solace and service of the invalid of the party, a huge unwieldy Mexican stage carriage, swinging to and fro upon its scaffolding, drove majestically up to the door of the Gran Sociedad, at the heels of ten mules, furnished with faded trappings and harness, and with tail pieces of brass-studded leather, shaped exactly like a beaver's trowel. M'Euen and myself on horseback, backed by our two equeries Garcias and Mariano, (the latter a new acquisition,) acted as escort. All were, of course, armed to the teeth, and felt very valiant. Two *mozos* presided over the mules.

The coach was, by-the-by, not so much amiss; for it was of a strength of construction, which might have made it available as a temporary citadel, on a pinch—and once put in motion, it went lumbering over the pavement, and out of the gate of San Lazaro, to the new calzada, leading towards the mountains beyond the southern limits of the Lake Tezcuco.

The morning was splendidly bright, and the air of matchless purity.

The causeway runs straight towards the volcanic mass, called the Peñon Viejo, situated on the ancient shore of the lake to the south, and which is to be distinguished from the other peñon of similar origin, containing the hot baths, and lying between the city and the lake.

For many miles we continued by its aid to traverse a range of wide-spread flats, from which the waters of the lake have long retired, leaving a surface but indifferently calculated for cultivation, from the spongy character of the soil, and the carbonate of soda forming upon its surface. The higher portions are subjected to a rude system of drainage and agriculture; and numerous herds of cattle were scattered over it.

We found Peñon Viejo to be a huge discoloured mass of fused matter, abounding in caverns; and displaying throughout the play of the fierce element, to whose action it owes its elevation from the abyss.

As we proceeded, one pile of volcanic hills after the other started into isolated prominence on our left, disentangling themselves from their neighbours, and from the more distant ranges, with which they had hitherto appeared to be connected. Cones, which from the roofs of the city had appeared to rise from one common ridge, we now discovered to be separated by broad strips of level marsh. I believe I forgot to mention among our excursions, one which we had made some time before, from the Hacienda San Antonio to the great group of volcanic hills beyond Mejicalzingo, which consists, as far as I could determine, of three truncated cones, rising progressively in bulk and height, one over the other, from the surface of the plain. On this occasion we had contrived to scramble up the steep sides of the lowest, consisting of abrupt slopes covered with rotten scoria, and gained the brink of the crater, which in its present state forms a smooth, grass-covered bowl, of about a mile in circumference.

After passing the Peñon Viejo, we approached the foot of the volcanic cone of the Ajotla; but then quitting the great calzada at Santa Martha, followed a track over the half-dried marshes at the southernmost extremity of Lake Tezcuco to the village of Santa Madalenda, on terra firma.

As we rode in front of the old church and dark group of Italian cypress of the village, and, turning northward, advanced over a hilly tract of country, spotted by herds of cattle and haciendas, towards Chapingo, the views increased in beauty and interest at every step. Popocatepetl, and its neighbour, now rose to the southward over the summits of the innumerable cones in the middle ground. Both were covered with snow to a far greater extent than on our arrival three weeks before; and even the Ajusco appeared sprinkled to a considerable extent. The whole breadth of the lake was now interposed between us and the city, and a most singular optical illusion was displayed from the effect of the mirage: the white edifices and coloured domes of the capital appearing afloat, like a fleet of snowy sails, upon the blue surface

of the water, which seemingly extended far on the other side, up to the very base of the rock of Chapultepec, and of the mountains behind. The Peñon de los Baños appeared once more as an island ; and this, which was now a deceptive and unreal picture, was the fact three hundred years ago.

The phenomena exhibited by the lakes of Mexico are extremely interesting.

Though indisputably the hand of man has done much towards the altered state of things as far as regards the diminution of water in the lakes, yet it is probable that natural causes, tending to the same results, have been in operation for ages ; perhaps, ever since the day when the cessation of violent volcanic convulsions left the basin and table land of Mexico, with all its chaotic parts, fluid or solid, to the sway of the ordinary and more gentle operations of nature.

It is improbable that there was ever a regular influx of water, from whatever source it may have proceeded, at all commensurate with the great evaporation which, under the influence of the climate, and the physical construction of the country, must always have taken place.

Of the five lakes of Mexico—Tezcuco, Xochimilco, Chalco, Cristobal, and Zumpango—that of Tezcuco is the largest, the most central, the most impregnated with saline particles, and lies at the lowest level.\* Not one of them possesses a natural outlet from the valley of Mexico ; and in case of the overflow of any of the four lakes, Tezcuco is the only reservoir into which they can disembogue themselves. The streams falling into Tezcuco, Xochimilco, and Cristobal, are so inconsiderable as to be of little or no account ; but both Chalco at the southern, and Zumpango at the northern extremity of the chain, receive streams of a considerable volume, calculated, under a combination of causes, to throw so large a body of water into their respective reservoirs, as to produce a most extraordinary overflow, and a consequent rise of the waters in Lake Tezcuco. Such, tra-

\* At the height of 7,468 feet above the sea.

dition states to have been the case on various occasions prior to the conquest; and even since the seventeenth century, the waters of Tezcuco have risen to such a height, that the city has been greatly endangered by it, most of the streets on one occasion remaining many feet under water for between four and five years consecutively.\* The pavement of the Plaza Major itself, the highest ground in the city of Mexico, is several feet lower than the surface of Lake Chalco.

Nevertheless, such is the combined effect of the extraordinary evaporation from the dry and naked surface of the table land, raised above the clouds, and fully exposed to the sun's rays; the diminished power of replenishment; the decreasing infiltration, from the destruction of woods and forests both on the plains and the surrounding mountains, laying the unprotected soil bare to the action of the ardent sun and rarified air; and lastly, the effect of the artificial means employed by the Spaniards two centuries ago, to carry off the superabundant waters of the lake to the northward, that all the lakes have retired on every side into narrower limits, and the surface of Tezcuco in particular has become circumscribed far within its original bounds.

The present shore is already 14,763 feet from the centre of the city, which it once surrounded; and on every side, as I have described, wide flats and marshy meadows mark its ancient bed.

The great Hacienda of Chapingo, which we reached shortly after noon, lies some miles distant from the shore of the lake, directly opposite Mexico. By the circuitous route we had taken, that city lay about nine leagues distant, but as the bird flies, it could not have been more than eleven or twelve miles. The intendant of the hacienda, to whom we had brought a letter of introduction, was from home; but we were courteously received and entertained by one of the upper domestics of this spa-

\* A.D. 1553, 1580, 1605-1607 were years of inundation; and on June 20, 1627, the capital was laid under water from such a combination of causes, and remained so till the year 1634.

cious establishment; breakfasting with uncommon zest after our preparatory ride of seven hours.

The estate attached to the hacienda is one of the most princely and productive in the valley of Mexico. In old times it had belonged, with much valuable land on the same side of the lake, to the Jesuits. Later it came into possession of the Marquis Vibanco, and now appertains to the exiled General Moran. The dwelling house, though spacious, is hardly worthy of the size and construction of the adjoining offices; among which the two troges, or barns, are distinguished for their vast size and massive architecture. The largest, which we rudely measured, forms one immense apartment of seventy yards in length, by twenty-two in breadth. They are calculated to hold the whole of the ample produce of maize and wheat yielded by the estate. The land is rendered extremely productive, by the excellent system of irrigation to which it is subjected. The water is conveyed hither from the mountains to the east, by means of stone conduits. Ward computes the annual income derived from this property at 60,000 dollars.

Leaving the carriage and the mules to find their way to the town of Tezcucu, at the distance of a short league, we got on horseback in the course of the afternoon, to visit some of the objects of interest in the neighbourhood. The frequent occurrence of deep fissures in the surface of the plain, compelled us to make a circuitous route, to gain the ancient but decayed town of Huejutla, now reduced to a mere Indian hamlet, while the large church erected by the Spaniards soon after the conquest, and its singular Aztec ruins, mark it to have been a place of considerable consequence both before and after that period.

The church stands upon a raised platform, from which you descend to a second walled enclosure by a broad flight of steps. This enclosure is covered with sward, and overshadowed by seventeen noble olive trees, which tradition states to have been the first planted by the conquerors in New Spain. Their venerable appearance attests their great age.



The Indian remains are various in their character ; but for the most part heaps of rubbish. The wall of the palace is, however, one of the greatest curiosities in the country. It is still of considerable extent ; and, where uninjured, seems to have been between twenty and thirty feet in height, and of six to eight feet in thickness. It is not built in a uniform manner, but varies in the form and distribution of the masonry at different points of elevation. About the mid height there is a layer of compact stonework, composed of long cylindrical masses, disposed with the circular ends outward. In following this wall for some distance to the eastward, it is found to abut suddenly upon a deep fissure or barranca, running east and west, and forming a natural defence on that side. The road crosses it by the celebrated arched bridge, concerning which antiquaries are divided in opinion ; the sanguine and hot headed insisting that, however improbable, it is of genuine Indian construction, and formed a part of the original erections in its vicinity ; at the same time that the cool and plodding deny the probability, and even assert the impossibility. It certainly would be a singular anomaly, to find in this single instance, the principle of the arch so well developed, while in every part of the continent to the northward, and on the plateau of Mexico, you evidently see that the ancient architects were ignorant of the science and principle : but for all that, my impression after I had studied it in every part was, that there was as much to be said on one side as upon the other. It is of the rudest construction, far too much so to be Spanish in its origin ; and precisely of that acute form which, as it appears to me, would be the most natural for a timid architect, upon whose mind the truth of the principle had just dawned, to adopt in his first trials. The height above the bed of the barranca is about forty feet. A hunt after portable antiquities among the Indian huts was rewarded by the acquisition of an ugly monster of an idol in a sitting posture, delftly carved in a hard volcanic substance. He was perfect, with the exception of a corner of his mouth, into which the Indian who unearthed him had

driven the nose of his ploughshare, demolishing a few of his teeth ; and as he was pronounced worth carriage, he was henceforth, under the high-sounding name of Huitzilipoctli, accommodated with a seat in the coach, by the side of his purchaser.

We now turned our attention towards the conical mountain of Tezcozingo, an inferior spur of the great chain to the east ; and skirting the town of Tezcuco, bore off in that direction. The country exhibited many plantations of maguey, and the villages were interspersed with hedges of tall organ cactus. Long before we got to the church of La Navidad, which at a distance seemed close under the steep and pointed hill upon which the object of our search, the Baño de Montezuma, was situated, it became apparent that night would overtake us in the midst of our excursion. But nothing daunted, we galloped forward over the great plain ; and under the direction of an Indian guide, whose assistance was secured at the last village, and crossing a deep barranca, we began to ascend the mountain through the scattered plantations of nopal and maguey. Fragments of pottery, and broken pieces of obsidian knives and arrows ; pieces of stucco, shattered terraces, and old walls, were thickly dispersed over its whole surface. We soon found farther advance on horseback impracticable ; and attaching our patient steeds to the nopal bushes, we followed our Indian guide on foot ; scrambling upward, over rock and through tangled brushwood. On gaining the narrow ridge which connects the conical hill with one at the rear, we found the remains of a wall and causeway ; and a little higher, reached a recess, where, at the foot of a small precipice, overhung with Indian fig and grass, the rock had been wrought by hand into a flat surface of large dimensions. In this perpendicular wall of rock, a carved Toltec Calendar existed formerly ; but the Indians finding the place visited occasionally by foreigners from the capital, took it into their heads that there must be a silver vein there ; and straightway set to work to find it, obliterating the sculpture, and driving a level beyond it into the hard rock for several yards.

From this recess, a few minutes' climb brought us to the summit of the hill. The sun was on the point of setting over the mountains on the other side of the valley, and the view spread beneath our feet was most glorious. The whole of the lake of Tezcucó, with the country and mountains on both sides, lay stretched before us.

But, however disposed, we dared not stop long to gaze and admire, but descending a little obliquely, soon came to the so-called bath, two singular basins, of perhaps two feet and a half diameter, cut into a bastionlike, solid rock, projecting from the general outline of the hill, and surrounded by smooth carved seats and grooves, as we supposed; for I own the whole appearance of the locality was perfectly inexplicable to me. I have a suspicion, that many of these horizontal planes and grooves were contrivances to aid their astronomical observations, like that I have mentioned having been discovered by De Gama at Chapultepec.

As to Montezuma's Bath—it might be his foot bath if you will, but it would be an impossibility for any monarch of larger dimensions than Oberon to take a duck in it.

This mountain bears the marks of human industry to its very apex, many of the blocks of porphyry of which it is composed being quarried into smooth horizontal planes. It is impossible to say at present what portion of the surface is artificial or not, such is the state of confusion observable in every part.

By what means nations unacquainted with the use of iron constructed works of such a smooth polish, in rocks of such hardness, it is extremely difficult to say. Many think tools of mixed tin and copper were employed; others, that patient friction was one of the main means resorted to. Whatever may have been the real appropriation of these inexplicable ruins, or the epoch of their construction, there can be no doubt but the whole of this hill, which I should suppose rises five or six hundred feet above the level of the plain, was covered with artificial works of one kind or another. They are, doubtless, rather of Toltec than of Aztec origin, and perhaps with

still yet more probability attributable to a people of an age yet more remote.

Our descent was rapid. It was night by the time we crept forth from the deep barranca which separates the base of the hill of Tezcozingo from the plains, and gained La Navidad. The wind blew cold, but we galloped swiftly onward, and in less than one hour's time reached the *meson* at Tezcucó, where our servants and carriage had long before preceded us. The arrival of four armed horsemen at that time of the evening seemed to excite some sensation in the little town, and the rumour soon reached the commandant, who thought proper to pay us an official but very shy visit: and after being satisfied that we were good men and true, apologized, by saying that times were bad, and it had been suspected we were some of Canalizza's insurgents. Next came, also officially announced, the secretary of the *alcalde*, with a similar polite request, that we would say who we were; also backed by an humble apology, with this variation, that it had been rumoured that we were a party of *Ladrones* or *banditti*! By means of the information gained by these several functionaries, however, the good people of Tezcucó were now enabled to sleep in peace and quiet, leaving the strangers within their walls to their repose also.

There are but few remains exposed to the observation of a superficial and hasty observer, to vindicate the ancient claim of Tezcucó to be considered as the second city of the Mexican empire. Yet so it incontestibly was, according to the Spanish historians, and I have no doubt but a careful survey might bring to light much of a most interesting character to the antiquary.

The ruins of tumuli, and other constructions of unbaked bricks, intermingled with platforms and terraces of considerable extent, are still to be traced; and it is asserted that many of the Spanish edifices are constructed out of the ruins of the *teocallis*, or of the palaces, which existed here at the time the Spaniards built the present town.

I feel more regret than I can describe, at the hasty manner in which we were obliged, by a sort of necessity, to slur over our survey of this interesting site, which is one of those to which I should more particularly direct the attention of any friend of mine who may turn his steps towards New Spain.

Here Cortez made his preparations for his last successful attempt upon the capital of the empire; and the spot where he launched his brigantines is still indicated by a bridge called the *Puente des Brigantinas*, almost close to the town. At that time, the lake must have been in near proximity; but, as at Mexico itself, a long level of nearly two leagues in breadth is to be traversed before you gain its shallow waters.

There was one remarkable object upon this broad extent of plain, to which our attention had been particularly directed by the virtuosi of the capital; and that was the *Contador*, a grove of cypress vulgarly called "*Montezuma's Garden*."

Accordingly, the following morning we mounted our horses early, and left the carriage to be packed during our absence. We had no sooner escaped from the gardens and enclosures in the immediate vicinity of the town, than we saw the *Contador* before us, breaking the uniformity of the great level in advance, by its mass of dark foliage.

Not a tree or a hillock is to be found in the vicinity of this remarkable grove; which formerly must have been completely surrounded by the lake.

The trees composing it may be between three and four hundred in number, disposed to a square of considerable size, partly open to the east. A smaller parallelogram, higher than the surrounding soil, is to be observed at the northeast corner, with a deep ditch round it. I found, upon examination, that this was a porphyritic rock.

The interior of the great square, even at this day, is very slightly elevated above the present level of the lake to the west, and so spongy that we nearly buried our

horses in attempting to cross it. The ground is firm, however, at the base of the trees, which are planted very close; many of them are of great size—fifteen or sixteen yards in circumference. They are all of the noble species of cypress mentioned in a former letter, as the *cupressus disticha*. A raised causeway running from the northeast angle, evidently connected this island garden with the main land.

There exists no reason why this should not have been one of the numerous gardens of Montezuma; but, in all probability, the hands which planted those aged trees belonged to men of an age greatly anterior to that monarch: *quien sabe?*—who knows? I have seen few remnants of antiquity in the valley of Mexico which interested me more than this solitary grove.

Before we quit the shore of Lake Tezcucó, I may mention a circumstance which has struck me greatly, as I have every reason to credit the source of my information.

I have made you attentive to the gradual change which has been operated on the surface of the valley of Mexico, from the retirement of its waters within narrower bounds. At what time, or under what circumstances, those waters first overflowed the country, it was to be expected that even tradition would be silent, when it is recollected that the people through whose medium the few traditions we possess were transmitted to our knowledge, had only occupied the valley for a few brief generations. But that there was a time, however remote, at which the waters, if they existed at all, occupied a much lower level than even at the present day, at the same time that the continent was in the occupation of people considerably advanced in the rude arts of semi-civilization, would seem to be an incontrovertible fact.

Some time before our visit, a number of workmen were employed on the neighbouring estate of Chapingo, to excavate a canal over that part of the plain, from which the waters have gradually retired during the last three centuries. At four feet below the surface, they reached

an ancient causeway, of the existence of which there was of course not the most remote suspicion. The cedar piles, by which the sides were supported, were still sound at heart. Three feet below the edge of this ancient work, in what may have been the very ditch, they struck upon the entire skeleton of a mastodon, imbedded in the blue clay. Many of the most valuable bones were lost by the careless manner in which they were extricated; others were ground to powder on their conveyance to the capital, but sufficient remained to prove that the animal had been of great size. My informant measured the diameter of the tusk, and found it to be eighteen inches.

The number of the remains of this huge animal found on the table land of Mexico, and in the valley itself, is astonishing. Indeed, wherever extensive excavations have been made of late years, they have been almost always met with.

In digging the foundations of the present great church at Guadaloupe, many were brought to the surface. Mr. W. of the Hacienda of San Nicholas, four leagues to the south, in forming an excavation for an engine house, found others. A friend of mine in the capital received, while we were there, portions of a skeleton from Guadaluaxara; and I was informed, that in a neighbouring state, there exists a barranca, which, from the quantity of these colossal remains which are there found, the Indians have named the Barranca de los Gigantes.

Though I should be very glad to take shelter under the convenient *Quien sabe?*—the use of which I have suggested to you—I could not avoid, at the time I was in Mexico, putting many isolated facts together, and feeling inclined to believe that this country had not only been inhabited in extremely remote times, when the valley bore a different aspect from that which it now exhibits, or which tradition gives it, but that the extinct race of enormous animals, whose remains would seem, in the instance I have cited, to be coeval with the undated works of man, may have been subjected to his will, and made instrumen-

tal by the application of their gigantic force, to the transport of those vast masses of sculptured and chiselled rock, which we marvel to see lying in positions so far removed from their natural site.

The existence of these ancient paved causeways also, not only from their solid construction over the flat and low plains of the valley, but as they may be traced running for miles over the dry table land and the mountains, appears to me to lend plausibility to the supposition; as one might inquire—to what end the labour of such works, in a country where beasts of burden were unknown?

But I leave this subject to wiser heads and bolder theorists. Had the mammoth of Chapingo been discovered with a ring in his nose, or a bit in his mouth; a yoke on his head, or a crupper under his tail, the question would have been set at rest. As it is, there is plenty of room for conjecture and dispute.\*

On leaving Tezcucuo, in the course of the morning, we took the road conducting to the northeast.

An advance of five leagues over dusty roads, and through picturesque villages, whose cottages were almost hidden from view by the close hedge of the organ cactus, brought us to a slope of a hill commanding a view of the valley of San Juan Teotihuacan.

The two huge pyramidal masses rising in the centre of the plain, anciently called Micoatl, or the Path of the Dead, immediately arrest the attention. They lie two miles east of the town, which, imbosomed in shady groves, and irrigated throughout by plenteous streams of clear water, seemed to us a very paradise, after our shelterless ride in the hot sun.

My companions betaking themselves to a state of tor-

\* The remains of five distinct species of mastodon have been determined; and of these, four have been found on the continent of America, spread over a surface, extending from the districts south of the St. Lawrence, to Lake Titicaca.



pidity, as usual in the afternoon, I began my survey in solitude. Close to the town, there are a number of heaps of rubbish, evidently ancient; and I found them, upon examination, to be chiefly composed of antique pottery, fragments of obsidian knives, and arrow heads; and the same description applies to a great portion of the surface of the plain between the town and the pyramids, which lie in close proximity to the road leading to Otumba.

As usual in this portion of the table land, the breathless heat of the morning had been succeeded in the afternoon by partial whirlwinds; and many moving pillars of dust, some of more than a hundred feet in height, were travelling over the country in every direction. One passed close to me, and I was surprised by the rapidity of the spiral movement, and the violence of the rushing sound accompanying it.

On nearing the vicinity of the pyramids, a mule path, which leaves the smaller of the two more to the northward, leads you in ten minutes' walk to the base of the House of the Sun.\*

The distance between the two may be, perhaps, something short of half a mile.

Time—and who shall determine how many revolutions of the sun?—the alternate heat and rain of tropical summer and winter, the breath of the whirlwind, and the feet and hands of innumerable generations, have conspired to diminish the size of the huge mass of earth and stone, and to destroy the symmetry of its form. The angles have long ago lost their sharpness; and the different platforms or terraces much of their breadth; still, three of the four stories of which the great pyramid consisted are perfectly distinguishable, even at the distance of many miles. In the smaller, they are more difficult to recognise.

\* The dimensions ordinarily given of the pyramids of San Juan Teotihuacan are the following. Tonatiuh Ytzagual—the House of the Sun: base line, 682 feet; perpendicular height, 180 feet. Mitzli Ytzagual—the House of the Moon: height, 144 feet; base, —.

I have some suspicion that the real base lies below the level of the present soil, concealed by the wrecks cast down upon it, and by the gradual elevation of the plateau on which it stands. Almost the entire coating of lime, which, doubtless, cased the slopes as well as the terraces, has crumbled and disappeared, and in ascending, you climb over a rough and uneven surface, composed of porous scoria and amygdaloid, mixed with clay—jagged with spiny tufts and nopal trees, and strewed with fragments of pottery and obsidian.

The terraces, in many parts, still retain their exterior covering of salmon-coloured stucco.

Unlike the sharply pointed pyramids of Egypt,\* these erections, in common with most of the teocallis of Mexico, were constructed in distinct stories, and terminated by a platform, upon which, probably, a small structure was erected.

On the summit of the House of the Moon, the ruins of such a building are to be seen; but all vestige, if such there were, has long ago disappeared from the platform of the larger pyramid.

In awaiting the arrival of my companions I had abundant time to take a minute survey of the remarkable scene around me.

The House of the Moon appeared, as I have already stated, about half a mile to the north, with two tumuli disposed at the two southern angles, and two intermediate ones on the southern base. A raised platform, or apron, forming a parallelogram of considerable size, extended in advance; with three small pyramids symmetrically ranged on one side, and seven or eight on the other. From the step at the termination of this apron, a broad, well-marked road, or vista, proceeded directly to the south, passing before the House of the Sun, which, like the lesser erection, squares exactly with the cardinal points, but stands rather more to the eastward.

\* According to Pocock, one Egyptian pyramid, that of Sakhara, was precisely of this plan and construction.

Innumerable groups or "systems" of small pyramidal tumuli are disposed, at a greater or less distance, on either side of this great road, which may be distinguished bearing away for miles across the broad plain, towards the mountains in the direction of the remarkable hill of Tezcozingo. Is not this properly the Micoatl, or Path of the Dead?

Look where you will on the great level at your feet, you see innumerable shapeless heaps and swells which mark the accumulation of artificial rubbish. Who shall say but this wide field affords a grave to millions?

To the eastward, at the distance of some miles, rises the inconsiderable ridge which divides the valley of San Juan Teotihuacan from the plains of Otumba; and westward, the eye rests upon the pretty groves and churches of the town, and the neighbouring villages, backed by the expanding vista, where the valley opens upon the blue waters of Lake Tezcuco, and the main valley of Mexico, with the double range of noble mountains in the background. A glorious view, truly, both for extent, colouring, and interest!

In a locality like this, the features of which I have been attempting to describe; surrounded by monuments whose history has eluded the most patient researches hitherto, the mind is naturally disposed to speculation. It matters little that the origin of the objects around you is hidden in the impenetrable mist of past ages; that their design and appropriation has alternately occupied and baffled the wits of far wiser than yourself; that the most laborious collation of evidence has only brought to light isolated and uncertain items of intelligence with respect to them—speculate you must.

You need not be reminded that our range of knowledge as Europeans, with regard to the history of this vast continent, and this portion of it in particular, only extends over a space of a little more than three centuries. From this period, tracing time towards its beginning, the vague chronicles of the aborigines at the date

of the conquest, only carry you backward to an epoch, a hundred and fifty years, or thereabout, anterior to that event ; or to the foundation of the Mexican empire.

The weak and uncertain glimmer of their traditional history, respecting the period of the Aztec emigration, and that of the various nations whom they succeeded, if followed till it vanishes in utter darkness, hardly points back to times more remote than the middle of the seventh century, an age of comparatively modern history in the Old World. At that epoch, it is stated that the Toltecs, a powerful nation, emigrating from their original country somewhere to the northeast, made an irruption upon Anahuac, or the great table land and valley of Mexico. Their pilgrimage southward seems to have been slow, and to have lasted an entire century ; and several sites are indicated as places of temporary sojourn before they finally settled, but their principal seat of government, which was monarchical, was at Tula, a few leagues to the north of the valley of Mexico.

They were, by the testimony of all succeeding tribes, the most civilized of all the nations which held possession of Anahuac ; living in cities, submitting to a regular form of government, and possessing a knowledge of hieroglyphic writing, the casting of metals, and the cultivation of maize and cotton ; evincing great skill in the mechanic arts, and chiefly remarkable for the ingenious astronomical arrangement of time in use among them.\* They held their sway over the central portion of the country for four centuries, when they would appear to have been cut off by a famine and pestilence, and most of their cities deserted. Part of the remnant emigrated to the southward, towards the isthmus ; a few remained in the sacred city of Cholula.

A hundred years' desolation followed, when, about 1170, a second people, emigrating also from the north, sat down upon the deserted territory. They were also subject to a monarchical government ; but were far less civilized than their predecessors : and in advance in the

\* See page 130, &c.

arts of life, as well as their simple worship of the sun, they seem to be assimilated to the Natchez of Louisiana.

Other tribes, the principal of which was the Acolhuans, followed. Under all their distinct appellations, yet speaking at most dialects of the same language, it seems probable that all these tribes were offsets from that teeming hive of human beings of which the unknown seat lay somewhere to the northward, in the unexplored country to the north and east of California, between the western slope of the Rocky Mountains, and the great Pacific Ocean.\*

The Alcolhuan monarchy lasted for several centuries, till the rise of the Mexicans or Aztecs, the last of seven tribes of the Nahuatlacs, the people who had emigrated to Anahuac before the Acolhuans, put an end to it.

It appears that these seven tribes had departed from their northern home in company; but that after three considerable halts, disagreement produced a separation of the Aztec tribe from their brethren. The six proceeded to the south, and formed their settlements; while many years elapsed before the seventh, oracle led, came to a final pause in the valley of Mexico, where they founded their principal city on the site of the present capital, amid the waters of the lake Tezcuco. Like most of the nations whose entry into the country I have thus briefly noticed, the Mexicans adopted as much of the agriculture, arts, and demi-civilization of the Toltecs as was extant, and conformed to their astronomical division of time, mythology, and probably to many of their religious observances and customs.

During their period of a hundred years' wandering in Anahuac, before making their final settlement, the Mexicans are stated to have succumbed to the power of the

	A. D.
* Emigration of the Toltecs into Anahuac - - - -	607
Termination of the Toltec monarchy - - - -	1051
Emigration of the Chechimecas - - - -	1170
Emigration of the six tribes of the Nahuatlacs - -	1178
Then followed the Alcolhuans, with whom the Chechimecas coalesce. The Mexicans, the seventh tribe of the Nahuatlacs, build Tenochtitlan in - - - -	1325

See Humboldt's Researches.

Acolhuans. They finally adopted the monarchical form of government, and gaining the ascendancy, maintained it till the arrival of the Spaniards. At that time remnants of the most of the tribes here mentioned were to be found, here or there in the country, mingled with small primitive tribes of quite a distinct race, some of which are supposed, with apparent reason, to have inhabited New Spain before the arrival of the Toltecs.

And now, who built the pyramids of San Juan Teotihuacan? who laid the foundations of the colossal teocalli of Cholula? Some say the Toltecs—others the Olmecas or the Xicalancas, people of an equally remote origin; and all agree in attributing them to the earliest times of which traditional record exists.

There is no saying by what people, or at what epoch they were raised, nor to what forms of idol worship they were in succession consecrated; but from the tangled thread of tradition, sufficient may be unravelled to show the original design of these monuments, and what were the facts of which they were to be the remembrance to future ages: and tradition, while perhaps it does the wise and skilful Toltecs but justice, when it ascribes to them the elaborate sculpture strewed over the face of New Spain and Central America, might do them no wrong in attributing these vast erections, and many of the great works extant on the table land, to a far higher antiquity. At what epoch of the world's history the vast western continent became peopled by the human race, is a question which has given rise to many discussions and different hypotheses.

The idea of its early occupation would appear to be perfectly consistent both with analagous reasoning, and with the testimony to be gathered from the traditions and customs, civil and religious, of the aborigines themselves, throughout the continent. Is it not to be supposed, that, however brought about, the same Almighty hand which scattered the congregated descendants of Noah abroad upon the face of all the earth, would fulfil its design with regard to this portion of the habitable surface of the globe also, and that speedily? And if the coun-

tries of the north, and the south, and the west, then received these allotted portions of the human family—and the vast face of Asia became straightway peopled by the scattered multitude—why should it be doubted, that the varied countries of the extreme east also lay open to the millions emigrating from the common cradle of the second race of man on the plains of Shinar? It has been strongly contested, that the deeper we pry into the history and habits, languages and institutions of the American people, the less reason we discover to believe that they are descended from any particular people of the Old World: at the same time that a search into their early traditions and religious superstitions appears to prove, with undoubted certainty, that a connection once existed between them and the mass of mankind, and that, whenever and however isolated, there can be no doubt, from the great analogies existing between them, of their having a common origin and early history.

The various hypotheses started again and again, attempting to trace the origin of the American aborigines to any particular people of the old continent,\* whether Jew or gentile, have all hitherto failed in carrying conviction to the minds of the world in general; and it must be admitted that many of the arguments made use of to bolster up these theories, have only proved the ignorance of their advocates to the true sources of the institutions of pagan idolatry throughout the globe. Wherever you direct your attention, to the barbarous tribes of the north and south, or the demi-civilized people of the central portions of the continent on both sides of the isthmus, you

\* How far those may be in the right who would prove that the kingdoms of Mexico and Peru were founded by the troops sent by the Khan of Tartary, towards the close of the thirteenth century, to subdue Japan; that Mango Capac, the first inca of Peru, was the son of Kublai, the grandson of the Mogul conqueror, Genghis Khan; and that the ancestor of Montezuma was a Mogul grandee in his train, I am in nowise able to determine: but it is certainly a most singular circumstance, that suddenly, about that epoch, these two great powers sprung up simultaneously in different parts of the continent, and grew and increased, and were in the end annihilated by the Spaniards, without having had any connection, or being known of one another, as far as can be ascertained.

find, under all modifications of tradition, proofs of their being of a common stock with other nations of the globe, and of a long and complete separation—intermingled with great and striking analogies in their dogmas, customs, and mythological systems; which it is now admitted that all the great nations of antiquity—Egypt, Chaldea, China, and Hindoostan—all drew from one common source, and probably learned in one common school, between the epoch of the deluge and the time of the dispersion. Beyond these it has been asserted by many, that no affinity whatsoever with any particular people can be traced, except such as might be supposed to be the natural fruit of the human mind, its passions, and its necessities in its fallen state, devoid of the light of revelation, however isolated, and wherever placed.

The most benighted of the American tribes have retained the impression of the existence of a Supreme Being, who was the “Master of Life,” and the absolute governor of the world. This is indisputable, at the same time that among most of them, the principal adoration or worship was reserved for a host of minor deities and idols.

All concurred in asserting the existence of an evil spirit or principle, whose works and suggestions were calculated to injure them, although the depravity and blindness of their nature led them to seek to propitiate him.

All seem to have forebodings of the immortality of the ~~soul~~ <sup>soul</sup>, admitting or implying that after the death of the body, their ~~thinking~~ <sup>thinking</sup> ~~parts~~ <sup>parts</sup> ~~would~~ <sup>would</sup> ~~exist~~ <sup>exist</sup>. They have generally professed belief in future rewards and punishments; each people picturing their heaven and hell, according to the notions of felicity and misery imbibed from their early education and habits.

But this is not all. Among whatever division of these aborigines tradition is found to exist, you discover wrapped up in allegory, or distorted by perverted fancy, distinct testimony of the origin of all from common parents; the idea that mankind had forfeited their original state of happiness; coupled with faint glimpses of the coming of One, who should work a regeneration, and



should restore the golden age ; and a distinct record of the destruction of the world by water, and of the preservation of one family, from whom, of course, each, in his own fashion, derived its own progeniture. In all, in a greater or less degree, you detect that craving after something beyond human reason, which may serve as a guide ; a craving which, at the same time that it is the most fertile source of credulous and superstitious belief, is sufficient to prove the absolute necessity of a Divine revelation, and the impracticability of man's dwelling in content upon earth without one. Further, by the traditional histories of the people inhabiting Central America, you are carried forward, in a most extraordinary manner, to the events attending the building of the tower of Babel, and the subsequent scattering of the human race.\*

But here, it has generally been considered, that all consistent analogies cease ; and it would certainly appear that as, after the deluge, the human race lived together for five hundred years as one great family, subject to the same practices and superstitions, cultivating the same arts and sciences, and having one common tradition and history, so, after the dispersion, they spread in different bands over the face of the globe, carrying with them the knowledge, science, and so forth, which, till then, had been common to all, and which was certainly the base upon which the founders of nations in the Old World afterward built their several systems, civil and religious.

It is perfectly comprehensible for the rest, that the principal features in the traditions of the Americans, whether barbarous or demi-civilized, should be continual

\* "The people of Mechoachan preserved a tradition, that Coxcox, whom they call *Tezpi*, embarked in a spacious vessel with his wife, children, various animals and vegetables, whose use was important to man. After the waters began to decrease, *Tezpi* sent out from his ark a vulture, to ascertain the state of the waters, but this bird, which feeds on carrion, did not return to him, in consequence of the number of dead bodies which were to be found everywhere strewed on the earth. *Tezpi* sent out other birds, of which the humming bird alone returned, holding in its beak a branch covered with leaves. *Tezpi* seeing that the earth had begun to produce vegetation, left his vessel near the mountain of Colhuacan."—Humboldt, Res. ii. 65.

emigration and removal from place to place ; and also that the dim record of the great events I have alluded to should be intertwined with others, referring to events of a far more recent date ; that the personages and characters of the earliest time should be strangely mingled with the history of such as may have existed ages after ; and, that the seat which a people actually occupied, should be in their records, the very theatre upon which the great events pictured by their traditions should have taken place.

The origin of the huge pyramidal monuments of Asia, in the traditional record remaining among the nations of antiquity, of the building of the tower of Babel, which was itself but a symbolic representation of the mountain on which the ark rested after the deluge, has been fully established by the pens of many able writers, and the resemblance between the latter, as described by the ancients, and the teocallis or temples of the ancient people of Anahuac, is too glaring to be overlooked or denied, by the most skeptically disposed.

There can be no reasonable doubt as to the strict analogy ; and if there were, the traditions attached to the great pyramid of Cholula, among the rest, would remove it.

It is too interesting not to merit transcription.

“Before the great inundation,” runs the tradition, “which took place four thousand eight hundred years after the creation of the world, the country of Anahuac was inhabited by giants ; all of whom either perished in the inundation, or were transformed into fishes, save seven, who fled into caverns. When the waters subsided, one of the giants, called Xelhua, surnamed the Architect, went to Cholula, where, as a memorial of the mountain Tlaloc, which had served for an asylum to himself and his six brethren, he built an artificial hill in form of a pyramid. He ordered bricks to be made in the province of Tlanamalco, at the foot of the Sierra of Cocotl : and to convey them to Cholula, he placed a file of men who passed them from hand to hand. The gods beheld with wrath this edifice, the top of which was to

reach the clouds. Irritated at the daring attempt of Xelhua, they hurled fire on the pyramid. Numbers of the workmen perished ; the work was discontinued, and the monument was dedicated to Quetzalcoatl, the god of the air.”\*

I have said, that up to the present time none of the arguments employed to prove the descent of the American aborigines, or of any part and distinct portion of them, from particular people of the ancient world, have seemingly gained universal belief. Nevertheless, it must be admitted, that the light thrown by late researches, and the collection of evidence from various quarters in favour of the plausibility of the theory that the nations of Central America at least are of Hebrew origin, is of a character calculated to make the unprejudiced pause, in hazarding too positive an opinion. As to myself, all I can say is, that when I knew less of the subject, I felt inclined to throw more ridicule upon the idea than I dare do now ; at the same time that I would not deem the question decided, despite the opinion of many laborious and enthusiastic writers, from the time of Las Casas, Sahagun, Boturini, and their cotemporaries and successors, down to those of Ethan Smith, Mrs. Simon, and Lord Kingsbury, till it be clearly demonstrated that those most remarkable analogies which are ably set forth in these works, are not traceable to the times which immediately succeeded the deluge, and preceded the dispersion.

Well may the opinion of the world hang in suspense with regard to every doubtful question in which any part of the chosen people of God is implicated. The separate existence of the Jews as a distinct people, even to this day, is a miracle which none can question ; and wherever the descendants of the lost Ten Tribes are banished—to the east, or to the west—we may firmly believe, that, being partakers of the same striking promises with the Jews, the same God who has promised to

\* See Humboldt's Res., i., 97.

recall to his fold the "dispersed of Judah," will not forget "the outcasts of Israel."

I feel tempted still to remark, that if the *exact time* in which the American continent became peopled is a matter of uncertainty, the *manner* is not the less so, and as long as we confine our speculations to the narrow limits which the generality of theorists have adopted in their hypotheses, the result must be unsatisfactory.

That a vast continent, extending from the icy pole to the 56th degree of south latitude, should have been peopled either by the chance introduction of individuals by rafts or canoes, from the shores of Asia, or some of the islands at present found in the intermediate ocean—or even by the passage of a strait almost within the limits of the frigid zone, would appear preposterous, and improbable in the highest degree; and these ideas become ludicrous when applied to the introduction of animals of every description; many of which are incapacitated, from their structure, for existing in such high latitude.

The Mosaic account of the deluge, and of the manner in which it pleased God to preserve the race of men and of animals, puerile and incredible as the latter may appear to the freethinkers and neologists of the present day, is, however, not the less worthy of credit by the philosopher, as well as the simple-minded Christian; and other testimony to its truth than that of the Bible, if such be necessary, may be culled from the belief and traditions, of both the pagan nations of the eastern hemisphere, and the central nations of America.

In whatever locality it suited the designs of Providence to bring together the various animals for their introduction into the ark, it must not be overlooked, that that part of the globe on which the ark rested after the deluge, was one which of all others was the most calculated to facilitate the replenishing of the surface of the earth with animals, to whatever climate they were attached, or whatever were their habits.

To the north of the mountains between the Black and Caspian seas, a cool and elevated plateau led to the lim-

its of the Frozen Sea, when immediately to the south the hot and arid plains of Arabia and Armenia afforded an easy passage to the equatorial latitudes; and as far as the Old World was concerned, it may be said, that no animal, in leaving the ark, had to pass through a zone incongenial to its nature. Neither is it to be assumed that this evidently wise scheme of Providence was violated with regard to America.

The probability is, that there once existed easy modes of communication, which have since disappeared in some mighty physical convulsion: and the opinion that this is the case, gains additional strength, both from the configuration of this portion of the globe, and the vague but certain traditions, which are entertained by many nations, of such a second great catastrophe having taken place posterior to the deluge.

The concurrent testimony of many scientific observers as to the appearance of the eastern coasts of Asia, and the groups of islands scattered over the Indian and Pacific oceans, and the proofs of large bodies of land having disappeared, need not be dwelt upon; nor the almost universal tradition current among those islands, of such a great physical convulsion, or disruption of the continents perfectly distinct from those of the great deluge. He who is disposed to glean, may glean from the history of the nations of the Old World, testimony to the same purport. The Egyptians, the Chinese, the Hindoos, have all similar records, concerning this second great revolution, which seemingly produced these great changes on the surface of the globe, and in the disposition of its parts.

It may be further mentioned, that the signification of the name of the patriarch Peleg (that is *division* ;\* “for in his days the earth was *divided*”) corroborates this idea in a singular manner. The word rendered “division,” signifying, according to good authorities, a physical, and not a political division or separation; for proofs of which you may be referred to the ingenious work of Dr. M'Cul-

\* See Genesis x. 25.

loh\*—where it is shown that both the Chinese and the Hindoo records chronicle a certain terrible geological convulsion as occurring in the years 2357 and 2456 before Christ, both of which dates fall within the life of Peleg. Moreover, the signification of the name of the patriarch Salah, who was his cotemporary, again favours the same hypothesis, and it must be conceded that many favourite and received theories rest on far worse grounds.

According to this, the series of convulsions which broke up the surface of the globe will have occurred eight or nine hundred years after the dispersion of mankind, and consequently after that every part of the surface may have become occupied by both men and animals.

This is not the place for repeating what others have established with regard to the analogies of the Mexican mythology with that of the Old World. The subject is a tempting one, but I have already stepped over my proper bounds, and in referring you to Humboldt, Faber, Bryant, and other well-known writers, I crave your pardon for my digression, and resume my narrative.

On repairing to the House of the Moon, I found my two companions busily employed in verifying the truth of the information we had received in Mexico, of an entrance having been discovered. The opening in question lies in the southern face of the pyramid, at two thirds of the elevation, and possibly about the level of the third terrace from the bottom. It is difficult to determine exactly, for the whole form of this the lesser pyramid is much more indistinct than that of its rival. A number of Indian women and children beset the entrance, which was little larger than that into a fox earth, and after undergoing a partial stripping, I proceeded to share in the glory or danger of the enterprise, whichever it might be. As it happened, there was neither to be gained. I laid myself flat upon my face, and ducking into the aperture, squeezed myself blindly forward with my candle, through

\* *Researches Philosophical and Antiquarian, concerning the Aboriginal History of America*, by J. H. M'Culloh, M.D. Baltimore, 1829.

a passage inclining downward for about ten yards, when I found myself in a more open gallery, at the termination of which, not many paces distant, I found De Pourtales and M'Euen at the brink of two wells, which, considering the height at which we entered, might perhaps be in the centre of the pyramid. The latter valorously allowed himself to be lowered by a rope into the aperture on the left hand, to the depth of perhaps fifteen feet, without making any further discovery. The other pit was still shallower, and no signs of any other passage could be discovered. Both the walls of the passage and the sides of the wells, as far as we could see, were constructed of unburnt bricks; and a plentiful mouthful of dust was our only recompense. Other and more important cavities there may be, if they could be hit upon. No entrance has been discovered in the House of the Sun.

Of the Indians, to whom our adventure was a subject of both curiosity and awe, we purchased a hundred or more of those singular terra cotta heads, which, intermingled with fragments of obsidian knives and arrows, are discovered in such inexhaustible quantity in many parts of Mexico, but principally in the vicinity of these pyramids, and on the neighbouring plain of Otumba. I am not aware of any light having been thrown as yet, either upon the uses to which these models of the human countenance were put by the people with whose customs and ceremonies their fabric and use in such quantities were seemingly connected. By far the greater majority of those which came under my observation bore an extraordinary resemblance to one another, both in the strongly marked features of the face, the facial angle, and the height and formation of the forehead.

I should explain, that the hinder part of the head is never given in its full proportions, so that the phrenologist is quite at fault. The physiognomy has nothing in common with the present tribes of Indian descended from the Aztec race. Several of the heads were crowned with a broad and ornamented tiara or head dress; but in general there was no ornament about them; and with

the exception of a few, which had evidently served as ornaments upon some earthen vessels, all seemed to have been found in the state in which they were modelled. The composition is a fine clay, well tempered and slightly baked.

Fragments of pottery of divers colours, and a small baked mass of clay with two perforations side by side, which, whatever were its original uses, would not make a bad candlestick for those who had no better, are also picked up in great numbers ; as well as an inconceivable quantity of fragments of obsidian or rather jade arrows and quadrangular knife blades, from one to two inches long. I was greatly struck in observing the uniformity of the angles presented by the majority of the latter, and several circumstances combine to make me believe that the people who fabricated them had some method of working them into shape, by taking advantage of the conchoidal fracture.

In the vicinity of Real del Monte there are ancient obsidian mines which must have been worked in very ancient times. The mineral is disposed in thin beds alternately, with fine sand, and was reached by means of numberless small shafts or pits. It is said to lie there in inexhaustible quantities, and from thence, doubtless, the Toltecs drew much of the material for their weapons, and for the beautiful masks with which they covered the faces of their illustrious dead. But there is no lack of it elsewhere in New Spain, both above and under ground.

By some unaccountable forgetfulness we left the teocallis without visiting the so-called "Fainting Stone," which lies in the hollow between two of the smaller pyramids at the foot of the House of the Moon. It is a large square mass with a sculptured face, and the popular belief with regard to it is, that any one sitting down on it faints dead away. We heard one anecdote, singularly confirmatory of this incredible tradition, from some of our European acquaintances in Mexico, and therefore regretted the more having been so neglectful, as to have omitted to set the matter at rest by our own experience.



The following morning we addressed ourselves early to the duty of escorting our ponderous vehicle to the north towards Lake Zumpango, over a line of country on which we were led to believe that the banditti were as plentiful as the nopal bushes. But here again our perverse good fortune brought us through without adventure, or any chance of trying our mettle ; and to tell the truth, had it not been for the coach and its ten mules, a more banditti-looking party than our own could hardly have been met with.

The range of secondary hills over which our track lay on our early morning ride to Tecama, an old halting place on the Real del Monte road, gave us frequent glimpses of the lakes in the plain below, and particularly of that of San Cristobal, between which and the marshes of Lake Tezcuco, the old Spaniards have left one of the noblest monuments of their skill and magnificence, in the construction of the celebrated dike and causeway, by which they prevented the surplus waters of the higher from entering the lower. Its length is fifteen hundred veras, its breadth ten, and height from three to four ; the whole structure being a mass of solid masonry.

A short pause at Tecama was followed by our descent into the great level, which, once doubtless covered with waters, extends from the present shores of the lake, round the base of a group of volcanic hills, towards the foot of the great chain, which hems in the valley of Mexico to the north and northeast.

Zumpango is about five leagues distant from Tecama, or eight from San Juan Teotihuacan.

It may give you some idea of the utter ignorance which reigns in the capital among the better classes, both natives and Europeans, as to the topography of the country, when I assure you that we had set out on this excursion, as upon a journey of discovery ; without being able to gather the slightest information of a positive character with regard to the practicability of what we proposed

achieving, though we sought it for a week in advance on every hand. The possibility of rounding the southern end of Lake Tezcuco to the town of that name, was again and again positively denied. Distances were tripled ; and as to the scheme of proceeding directly with our train from San Juan Teotihuacan to Huehuetoca, that was laughed at as quite chimerical. We found not only no great difficulty, as you read, but discovered that all the information we had received with regard to distances had been greatly overrated.

The town of Zumpango, where we made our main halt, presents nothing worthy of note so far as we could discover. The northern shore of the lake of that name, which we skirted in the course of the afternoon, is, however, very pretty.

Passing one or two picturesque villages, we gained the plains beyond. Our road led us close to the walls of the great Hacienda of Jalpa ; and, in fine, at an early hour of the evening, to the village of Huehuetoca, whose massive church had long served us as our landmark in approaching from the eastward.

There is little either in the miserable town itself, or in the surrounding country, as far as its general features are considered, to allure the traveller to a halt ; or to tempt me to put a tail to this long letter ; but, in the Desague Real, this otherwise uninteresting corner of the valley of Mexico contains one of the most gigantic monuments of human design to be found in any country ; and to visit it was the motive of our excursion thus far to the northward.

You may have gathered from what I have already communicated, that nature has provided no natural outlet for the waters of the five lakes of the valley ; and that in times of extraordinary and sudden flood, the surplus of waters of all the more elevated lakes to the north and south must be discharged into Lake Tezcuco, which forms the lowest level of the valley of Mexico.

I have also remarked that both the ancient capital and the present city, have been exposed from this cause to

great inundations, in spite of the gradual decrease of the waters of Lake Tezcuco, from causes which I have hinted at in the first page of this letter.

The attention of the Spanish viceroys being thus imperatively drawn to the subject, about the commencement of the seventeenth century, a scheme was formed by a Spanish engineer, Enrico Martinez, by the execution of which, the surplus waters from the two upper lakes to the northward—San Cristobal and Zumpango—were to be drawn off in another direction; their basins being the most liable to overflow, from the character and size of their tributaries.

The comparative depression and narrowness of the mountain rampart, hemming in the valley to the northward, in the vicinity of Lake Zumpango, favoured the project of constructing a tunnel by which this should be affected, forming a duct through which all the waters rising above a certain level should be conveyed into the bed of the river Tula, the main branch of the Panuco, whose source lay on the other side of the ridge, and which you will recognise as entering the gulf at Tampico.

This great work was commenced in 1607, and in the course of its prosecution by the hand of the native Indians, hundreds are said to have perished by the caving in of the earth and other casualties. But what was that? the work was to be done, and if Indians were wanted, a party of horsemen armed with the lasso was sent out to the distant villages, and the poor natives were secured and brought to the scene of toil like so many wild horses.

The memory of what their ancestors endured at Huehuetoca, both at this epoch and in after times, is not forgotten by the present race.

A tunnel or subterranean gallery was at length finished, 20,000 feet in length: but, in 1629, the stoppage of the passage by the fall of the roof, or other casualty, combined with a season of unusual flood, caused such a rise in the waters of Lake Tezcuco, that the whole of the ancient bed, and the streets of the capital itself, with the exception of the very highest levels, were covered with

water to the height of three feet, and remained submerged till 1634.

Many projects were set afloat in the interval, and even the propriety of abandoning the present site, and rebuilding the metropolis on the rising ground beyond Tacuba agitated; but at length it was determined to convert the tunnel through the hill of Nochistongo into an open cut. This was effected, after years of labour, and infinite delay, expense, and loss of Indian life; and the completion of the work dates from the year 1789. The cost of this prodigious canal, and of the various dikes raised in furtherance of the same design, among which that of San Cristobal is to be included, amounted to far above the sum of six millions of dollars.

The morning after our arrival, a visit to the Desague Real was our only business, and we accordingly rode along its whole line, to the summit of the hill through whose bowels it has been carried.

At the summit it presents an enormous excavation, cut to the depth of one hundred and ninety-six feet perpendicular, through alternate beds of clay, and loose gravel and sand, with a breadth of upward of three hundred feet at the top. Northward the eye loses it in the distance, as it runs towards the fall of the Tula: and southward, it appears like a deep groove, stretching straight across the plain, towards the northeastern angle of Lake Zumpango; beyond which you descry the Cerro de Cristobal; and, far in the distance, the snowy summits of Iztaccihuatl and Popocatepetl. From one extremity to the other the length of the desague exceeds 67,000 feet, or upward of twelve miles.

At the time we visited it, a most insignificant stream was passing to the northward; and it appeared to us probable that the quantity of rubbish brought down into the cavity by the crumbling beds of gravel above, and the washing of the clayey strata, might become a serious impediment in course of time, if not attended to. There is no doubt that this costly enterprise has so far answered the purpose for which it was undertaken; yet should an extraordinary but yet possible chain of circumstances

conspire to raise the southern lakes to an unusual level, the danger to the capital would not be lessened.

After thus spending the morning in the survey of this great work, we prepared to return by the direct road to Mexico, eleven leagues distant. Guautitlan is a considerable town, with a fine church, and curious old colonnaded buildings, lying in a valley at the northern side of that spur of hills which connects the Cerro de Cristobal with the main eastern branch of the Sierra Madre. The river of that name is properly a tributary of Lake Zumpango, though I believe its waters now pass at once into the desagüe. It is the most powerful stream in the valley of Mexico.

The passage of the ridge to the town of Tanepantla presented nothing very worthy of note; but, when in continuing our route through the cultivated fields in its vicinity, the view upon the opening plain, lake, and wide panorama of mountains, with the domes of the city illuminated by the declining sun, again unfolded itself to us, we were at a loss for language to express our sense of its indescribable beauty.

Our amusing excursion had been but of four days' duration.

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## LETTER VIII.

WE found, on our return to the city, after the excursion in the environs as detailed in my last, that the good humour of the inhabitants, which I have described as a little frozen during Lent, was undergoing a gradual thaw.

The government of the country had repented its stern conduct to the votaries of Terpsichore, Euterpe, and Thalia, and the long train of petty artists attached to the *corps d'opera*. It had graciously revoked the edict of banishment—had advanced a part of the money justly claimed by the contract—and had agreed to favour with

its countenance a certain number of further representations. Moreover, personified by a boxful of gaudily dressed officials and *employés*, it consented to wag its long ears in approbation, while Pellegrini agitated her larynx in the character of Semiramis; and to clap its hands at the sight of the sexagenarian Galli, tightly braced up to perform the role of the lithe and active scoundrel Figaro. All the world went to the opera!

And all the world went to the bullfights—and we went too; and, the butchery apart, the scene presented in the great amphitheatre, not far from the Alameda de las Vigas, was an animating and beautiful one.

The form and arrangement of the wooden structure need not be very minutely described. It contains the usual gradations of covered galleries and uncovered ranges of seats, to afford fitting accommodation to both rich and poor. There are four great tiers of lodges with subdivisions, capable of containing thirty thousand people. We may have seen ten thousand collected there of all degrees, from the presiding alcalde and his fellows, to the half-naked *guachinango*; *damas*, *payсанos*, *poblanitas*—individuals of every hue and breed, for the diversity of which Mexico is pre-eminent.\* The brilliancy of colouring and great variety of costumes visible throughout the assemblage; and the intense blue of the cloudless sky above; the masses of light and shadow resting upon the domes and broad walls of a large church—which is the only object without visible from the interior of the amphitheatre—produced a picture of great beauty; without even taking into account

\* The population of New Spain consists of seven distinct classes, besides people of recent Asiatic origin.

1. The Gachupin—the full-blood European, or more properly the Spaniard, whose numbers are now very inconsiderable, having dwindled down since the revolution from 80,000 to probably not more than 10,000.

2. Creoles of European extraction, 1,000,000.

3. Mestizoes, the offspring of the European and Indian, 2,000,000.

4. Mulattoes, the offspring of Europeans and Negroes, 400,000.

5. Aboriginal Indians, numbering from three to four millions.

6. African Negroes and their descendants, 100,000.

7. Zamboes, the offspring of Negro and Indian, 2,000,000.

To these, about 15,000 European foreigners are to be added.

the scenes enacted upon the spacious arena at your feet.

A very detailed account of a bullfight would be no novelty to you, the ceremony having been described and sung, in prose and verse, *usque ad nauseam*. If it is a brutal and heartless exhibition in Spain, where, after all, it is attended with some risk to the parties engaged from the strength and vigour of the noble animal that is the object of the sport—it is so here in a tenfold degree; as of all bulls I ever saw, the Mexican is the weakest and the most spiritless. Instead of the compact concentration of animal strength visible in the massive form, nervous limbs, short neck, and majestic port of a European bull—English, Spanish, or Swiss—you see animals turned into the arena, with a demeanour unworthy of even a decent cow—hollow-backed, long-legged, long-horned, nerveless animals, whose first impulse is to get out of the way, and whose courage is the courage of desperation.

The pomp and circumstances of the spectacle—the costumes of the different orders of actors—the picadores, bandarillos, and matadores, are precisely the same as are seen in the mother country.

The first trumpet call from the alcalde's box gives a token to the soldiers—who, with a military band, are always in attendance—to clear the arena of the sovereign people, some hundreds of whom always take care to remain strolling over its surface till the very last moment, all for the honour, apparently, of receiving an energetic application of the butt end of a musket. This we saw dispensed right and left, *sans cérémonie*.

The second signal brings in the whole of the dramatis personæ, horse and foot, led onward in procession by the mounted lancemen or picadores, and terminated by the butcher, garbed decently in white, and an humble but gallant youth trundling a wheelbarrow. After saluting the alcalde, and making the circuit, they separate

into groups. The picadores place themselves about the mouth of the passage which leads to the den; the bandarillos and matadores recline against the breastwork which separates the arena from the circular passage at the foot of the lower seats; while the train of six mules, gayly caparisoned, three abreast, vanish through one of the gateways; and are followed by the spotless butcher and the wheelbarrow man—and all await the given signal.

It sounds! and out comes the bull! Perhaps he gives a push, *en passant*, at one of the picadores, but most probably not. If he does so, neither horse nor man are the worse for it, for the former is fully protected from the horns of the animal by the strong leather caparison, which are, moreover, considerably tipped to prevent bloodshed: and the latter takes good care to run no risk. The generality of the bulls, of which eight are despatched on each representation, did their best to avoid the contest; and in several instances proved their nimbleness by jumping the breastwork. When teased beyond endurance, they would fight feebly, and perhaps overthrow a horse and rider, but it was evidently mere play to their opponents. When the picadores could extract no more courage from the exhausted animal, the footmen plied their childish and inglorious game of petty annoyance and torture, with barbed darts and fireworks, till, thoroughly spent and jaded, the poor brute was given over to the matador, whose clumsy but pompous attempt at giving a death wound, had almost in every instance to be seconded by the butcher. The clever professional *coup de grace* of the latter was really administered in mercy. The mules then galloped in—were attached to the dead animal, and scoured as quickly out, again followed, as before, by the nimble wheelbarrow man whose spadeful of sand had meantime obliterated all signs of the tragedy. In short, there is nothing in a Mexican bullfight to tempt a second visit, and nothing distinguishing it from those in Spain, if I except one custom, which I should judge to be peculiar to this country, though I may be mistaken.



Whenever it happens that a bull is so averse to afford sport that he can neither be coaxed nor irritated to fight, but shuns all encounters, a cry of *caula! caula!* (tail! tail!) is raised by the populace.

On a note of approval issuing from the alcalde's trumpet, two or more horsemen, better mounted than the ordinary picadores, and distinguished from them by being without weapons, are seen to rush forward, at full speed, in pursuit of the recreant bull, who very naturally runs for his life with fresh vigour, round and round the arena.

The most adroit of his pursuers, on coming up to his left flank, catches hold of the tail with the right hand, and passing it under his own right leg, gives it a turn round the raised pommel of the saddle, at the same time that he suddenly wheels his horse round at right angles by the pressure of the powerful bit, a manœuvre which rarely fails to throw the bull on his back. This may appear very surprising; but a moment's reflection will show you, if you put yourself in the bull's place, that the feat can hardly fail of being successful, provided you run very fast, and your pursuer contrives to get a very firm hold of your tail.

It was now verging towards the middle of April, and the advance of the season combined with other considerations to make us fix our departure from Vera Cruz by the New-York packet of the first of May.

To effect this in the most prudential manner, now that the yellow fever was rife on the coast, was incumbent upon men who, after all done and said, valued their lives, and were looking towards home after an absence of upward of two years.

For many days it was impossible to see our way clearly, on account of the conflicting opinions in the capital, as to the precise time of sailing. There was a variation of eight or ten days in these rumours; at the same time that we were counselled on all hands not to descend

into the infected region one hour before it was imperatively necessary.

At length all seemed arranged. We despatched the bulk of our baggage to the coast, by the arrieros; the precise hour of sailing seemed fixed, and determining to take a circuitous road to Puebla de los Angeles, we counted upon arriving at Jalapa some days before the time specified, and on remaining there till the very last moment before we should be obliged to go on board.

In defiance of the businesslike duties which occupied us the latter days of our stay, however, I contrived to extend my knowledge of the vicinity of the capital by various excursions of a greater or lesser range from the barriers. And from these, you may pardon my singling out one, which I made to the Desierto, a ruined and forsaken Carmelite monastery, perched on the sierra to the westward, about seven leagues distant from the capital. My companion for the day was an English resident of the city; and two mounted domestics completed our company.

We left the city at sunrise, and passing along the line of the aqueduct to Chapultepec, followed the road to the left towards Tacubaya. We skirted that beautiful village, and began the ascent of the sterile, upland tract immediately behind, by the main road leading across the mountains to the elevated plateau of Toluca.\*

The bareness of the first part of the ascent is extreme; and cultivation is confined to a few plantations of maguey in the vicinity of the scattered villages, or on the immediate border of the rivulets flowing down the barrancas, with which the flanks of the mountains are seen to be everywhere furrowed. All these slopes were once covered with forests, but the heedless destruction of the

\* The table land of Toluca lies 8,530 feet over the Pacific, and nearly eleven hundred over the valley of Mexico. It is the most elevated of the four principal plateaux of Mexico, but produces fine crops of maguey and maize.

timber by the conquerors has entailed the loss of the soil, which they nourished and protected from the dry air of the climate and the effects of the abundant rains of the wet season.

Shortly after passing the village of Santa Fe, we quitted the beaten track to Toluca, and descended into a deep barranca to the left; continuing to follow it for some miles, till the broad ravine dwindled to a green upland glen. We now reached the wooded region of the mountain; and, in fine, struck into the ancient paved road leading to the Desierto. In former times this route afforded a comparatively easy access to the inhabitants of the capital, with whom, at certain seasons, a visit to this monastery was an object of great importance. The calzada, though in perfect preservation, and confined between low walls, is solitary enough now. It winds upward through woods, which, in their character and productions, reminded me more of England than those of any part of New Spain I had seen. Thickets of roses and wild brier occupied the ground under the lofty deciduous trees; while the occurrence of little patches of greensward, covered with a species of daisy, and many other flowers which are characteristic of our own climate, added no little to the resemblance.

- On attaining the elevation of the little shelf, upon which the monastery is situated, towards the head of a steep gully in the breast of the sierra, the pine begins to predominate, and probably in former times it was the principal forest tree of the whole chain. We found the Desierto situated amid a wilderness of flowering shrubs, which, since the hand of time has unroofed a great portion of the structure, have shed their seeds into the courts, till they were positively choked with bushes. Nor was the elder here wanting—that never-failing parasite of the gray ruined abbeys and castles of England.

The architecture of the building, which was erected soon after the conquest, is by no means distinguished for

elegance ; strength having been evidently much more valuable in the eyes of the builders.

The distribution of the different parts was that usual in monastic erections, and the whole style heavy in the extreme. The cloisters and many of the cells still retained their strong-arched roof, and the stucco on their walls.

Here, sheltered in the wooded hills, far away from the great roads ; perched a thousand feet above the broad plain, and its glistening lakes and splendid city, with many a league of rough hill and deep barranca between, it might have been supposed that the barefooted brethren would surely have been permitted to lead their life of retirement and reflection in undisturbed quiet ; and that their bells would continue to wake the echoes of the hills, as long as their faith was the faith of the thousands in the plain below : but no ! they were richly endowed ; and throughout their former seat it was evident that the hand of violence, more than that of time, had produced the utter ruin visible on every side. The view from the Desierto, owing to the peculiarity of the situation between two hills, is confined almost altogether to the surrounding woods.

A solitary family of Indian woodcutters occupied one of the out buildings ; and here upon the grass, under the shade of a group of ancient trees, we luxuriated for several hours in the delicious air of the mountains, till the heat of the day being on the wane, we awoke our sleeping *mozos*, and mounting our horses, began our descent towards the city.

The view which burst upon us, as, escaping from the ravine of the Desierto, we gained a projecting woody knoll on the side of the mountain, impending over the great barranca before mentioned, was of matchless magnificence. The day had been altogether cloudless ; but during our ascent, the sun shone too brightly ; and a rich purple haze had thrown a kind of veil over the more

distant parts of the plain, and the great chain to the eastward.

Now the whole scene before us was bathed in a flood of clear light, and the forms and colouring of the most distant objects were distinctly visible through an atmosphere of the greatest transparency and purity.

Beyond the broken country at our feet, and the fertile region, we saw the broad expanse of plain, stretching from the mountains behind Guadalupe, far towards the south, with its groups of volcanic hills breaking the monotony of the surface. Directly in advance—the centre of the vast picture—lay the miniature domes and towers of the capital, distinct, from their number and colouring; beyond, the blue and broad surface of Lake Tezcuco, from end to end, with the Peñon de los Baños upon the shore, and the great mole of San Cristobal at the northern extremity. Exactly over the city, at the base of the eastern chain, great as was the distance, we could distinctly recognise the towns of Tezcuco and Huejutla, and the Hacienda of Chapingo—the dark line of the Contador, and even still farther removed, the form of the great pyramids of San Juan Teotihuacan. The latter could not be less than forty miles distant in a straight line.

How many times in descending, at every fresh turn, did we draw our bridles to gaze upon this noble and remarkable landscape, which increased in beauty hour by hour! I shall never forget the view presented as we gained the last step of the descent before entering Tacubaya, when that beautiful verdant region of gardens and orchards in which it and the neighbouring villages lay opened at our feet, and the Archbishop's Palace, the noble church, and the hill and palace of Chapultepec, formed the middle ground to the more distant prospect, the main features of which, though diminished in extent, remained the same: nor, as sunset approached, can I forget the gorgeous and inimitable colouring of the great vista to the southeast, where the receding mountains rose one above the other, in purple, violet, and gold, till

crowned by the towering snow-clad summit of the Great Volcano, gleaming in the evening sky.

To the last hour of our stay in the city of Mexico, we made ample experience of the instability and fickleness of the people with whom we had to do. On the very morning of our proposed departure, after endless troubles in getting together the bipeds and quadrupeds deemed necessary for our journey, Mariano's defection was announced with many signs of sorrow by Garcia; and in despair, we had to hire the first rogue who offered himself, on his own terms.

However, set out we did, on the evening of April the 19th, our party consisting of our three selves, Mr. E., an English artist, and his domestic—our two *mozos*, Garcia and Jose Maria—and lastly, an arriero with three beasts of burden. Our fat mule *Macho*, who had never stirred out of Don Floresco's stable during our month's stay in the city, issued forth as fat and sleek as a dormouse, and testified his joy at his escape by kicking every one who approached him.

A little after dusk we entered San Augustin de los Cuestos, and found a tolerable *posada*, where we hired our apartments, and spent the night. I have surely not omitted to describe what the traveller's accommodation in these Mexican inns consists of—four walls, a roof, and a mud floor—a table sometimes, but not often—a bench perchance, but very seldom—and very frequently nothing to eat but what you bring with you, and nothing to drink but bad water—with a convenient answer to every observation or question, "*Quien sabe?*" and to every civil requisition, "*No hai; nada, signor!*"

I say nothing of our array and mode of equipment, as they were precisely the same as on our upward journey from the coast, with the exception, as you will remark, of a diminished train of baggage and baggage mules. Our present arriero reminded us of Espindola, by his dogged honesty and general desire to oblige; though in other respects very inferior to him. Garcia was not a

bad representative of the valiant Julian, as he was just as much inclined to act the rapacious villain, to get fuddled, and to vapour about his deeds of arms. I believe, however, that he was not quite so cowardly; and would have fought very heroically if he found it absolutely impossible to run away, or save his life by any other means. Jose Maria took the place of Miguel.

All accounts coincided in affording us the perspective of being mercilessly robbed in the course of the following day, either in ascending the mountain, by the bands of Tlalpam, which of course keep a sharp eye upon the parties arriving from the capital—or in the neighbourhood of the Cruz del Marques on the summit, by the band of Toluca, which there finds a convenient lurking-place in the pine forest; or by the band of Cuernavaca, which plies its profession in the broken ground on the steep western slope of the sierra. This was worse than being between hawk and buzzard.

To give you an idea what sort of bargains are made in this country, I may mention that each of our valets had been hired at the rate of eighteen dollars a month, plus four reals a day for their food. Further, we were bound by our contract to allow them at their dismissal at Jalapa, twelve dollars each for their return to the capital, and a horse; or, if they should prefer it, a seat in the stage to Mexico, value thirty dollars. To our arriero we gave eight dollars a day as long as he was in our service.

You might suppose that ordinary cupidity might have been satisfied by such favourable terms; but no, by the assistance of Mr. E., who was an old traveller in this strange country, we detected, at the very outset, a sly contrivance to make us pay for a huge account of tortillas, pulque, Chile, agua ardiente, and so forth, which they demolished daily. This defeat, and our determination to set off before sunrise, soured the temper of our retainers for the first hours of the day; but they seemed subsequently to have made up their minds to smile at

grief and disappointment, and return to their ordinary gayety and good humour.

But, en avant !

The day had hardly dawned, when riding past the picturesque church of San Augustin, we were to be seen commencing the ascent of the mountains in the rear, by the great route of the Cruz del Marques, by which communication is kept up between the valley of Mexico and the states towards the Pacific to the west and southwest. It is impassable for carriages; and the whole trade is carried on by means of vast trains of mules. As we ascended, the morning broke over the summits of the mountains of Tlaloc, brightening the snows of the volcanoes, and gradually lighting up the barren tract of the *pedrigal* to the left, and the vast extent of plain, and the lakes of Xochimilco and Chalco, which lay behind us. The huge flanks of the Ajusco soon hid the part of the valley in which the capital is situated from our view.

Again and again, as we ascended, we turned to look back upon this scene, and it was with something like grief I saw it vanish for ever from my eyes. It seemed to me as if a splendid volume had been laid before me, and that I had been permitted to glance at its title and decorations, but had seen it shut in my face just as I had addressed myself to read.

Some hours elapsed before we reached the summit of the pass.

The road winds over the unequal surface of the mountain for many leagues before it passes the shoulder of the Ajusco. That noble mountain rises to the right, with sides clothed with dark pine forests, and furrowed by deep barrancas. From its highest summit, the height of which I have elsewhere indicated, it is said that the Western Ocean in the vicinity of Acapulco can be distinguished. On the most elevated ridge of the sierra, many short truncated cones mark the different craters by which the floods of lava, and beds of pumice, pebbles,



and sand which cover a great portion of the porphyritic trap and basalt composing the cordillera issued forth.

From my passing observations I should suppose that some of these craters have ejected water as well as fire ; and particularly the cone which the traveller leaves to the right in traversing the ridge. It has evidently thrown its lavas on both directions ; and report says, that one immense stream proceeding from it, or from a neighbouring cone of the Ajusco chain, may be traced down the successive steps of the table land to the very shore of the Pacific.

In process of time we reached the Cruz del Marques,\* a solid stone cross erected by Cortez, to indicate the bounds of the territory assigned to him by Montezuma.

The shade of the pine forest, which still clothes a great part of the upper region of the mountain, was grateful to us ; at the same time that it was the most perilous part of our voyage, so far as the probability of our being robbed went. We passed, however, without molestation, retaining possession of our watches and purses, and the cherished opinion of our being invincible.

If, in quitting the valley of Mexico at daybreak, we had to complain of the cold, noon brought with it a degree of heat for which we were quite unprepared, and it grew in intensity as we descended the steep face of the mountain to the southward. The western slopes of the cordillera of Mexico are far more sudden and inclined than those on the side of the gulf, and the consequence is, that by the route we were now following, after a journey of a few hours' travel, you descend to a level, to reach which, on the opposite side, you must travel for several days.

We had not descended far upon the southwestern slope, before we descried the sea of broad and yellow plain, which here formed the second step of the table

\* About 9,500 feet above the sea.

land, stretching into the bright haze as far as the eye could penetrate.

As we proceeded, the heat increased; and, as we wound along the edge of the ravines, the road became almost impassable for the horses, from the quantity of rock and stone with which they were strewed: and right glad were we, after passing through a picturesque village, at the foot of the mountain, to find ourselves and our train housed in a comfortable *posada*, in the town of Cuernavaca, after an uninterrupted ride of sixteen leagues, without halt or refreshment.

I think we treated both ourselves and our quadrupeds with unusual severity on the occasion. But there seemed to be no alternative.

In resolving to take the circuitous route upon which we had now set out, we had a further end in view than that of merely extending our observations a little, by seeing a part of the country which was less known and less hackneyed, than the direct and ordinary one from the capital to Puebla. Ever since we had entered New Spain, it had been a pet scheme to visit certain remarkable remains, existing in the vicinity of Cuernavaca. I refer to the fortified hill and palace of Xochicalco, or the "House of Flowers," of which little was known, but what was to be culled from a small pamphlet in Spanish, written many years ago, from which Humboldt probably gives the few facts mentioned in his Researches. He was unable to visit Xochicalco himself.

Our inquiries in Mexico with regard to the precise position and character of these ruins, were productive of no kind of certain information. Among all our acquaintances, European and native, we could not find more than two or three who had ever heard of their existence; and further, "*Quien sabe?*" was the answer to everything.

However, hurried as we found we should be, if we intended to leave Vera Cruz on the first of May, we kept steadily to our purpose; and, no sooner had we refreshed ourselves by ablutions and a hearty meal, followed by a basin of excellent lemon ice, and had seen

the termination of a savage affray in the opposite house, in which braining with clubs and stones was the fashion, than we set about our inquiries in considerable confidence, as there could be no question but the ruins, after all, were to be found in this neighbourhood. Our host and his neighbours were first applied to. *Quien sabe? quien sabe?* was all we got for our pains. We went to a young merchant, the only European resident of any standing here: he had never heard of the existence of such a place. At length we determined to make use of a note of introduction to the principal cura of the town; and here we were more successful. He knew that Xochicalco existed, but he had never visited it. According to him, it lay among a group of hills which he pointed out to us from his window, across the great plain, called the Cerro de Xochicalco; and he promised to furnish us with a guide for the following day, and perhaps to accompany us himself. He stated the distance was perhaps three, or at most four leagues.

Jaded as we were, we set about our preparations with alacrity. As our speedy advance to the coast was now a matter of absolute necessity, we determined to spare our horses as far as practicable: and, with infinite pains, borrowed two others, in order to leave them to their repose for the time of our absence. We decided to set off at daybreak, leaving Garcia and the arriero to proceed with the mules to the town of Yautepec, six leagues distant: with the intention, on our parts, after our anticipated return from our excursion in the course of the afternoon, to take our fresh horses and follow them thither. Wise and good projects, but, like many human ones, vain nevertheless!

That a restless night should follow a day of excitement and exposure like the last, was not to be wondered at. The doubt which hung over our whole projects of advance to Vera Cruz, and our fate there, did not perhaps mend the matter; and for my part I own, that at dawn, I arose from the floor of the chamber where we

were all stowed together with bags and baggage, feverish and unrefreshed.

Just as we rode out of the gateway of our posada, the first sunbeams were shining upon the white summit of Popocatepetl, which now appeared exactly in the east.

Cuernavaca is most nobly situated, on a tongue of land, girdled on three sides by tremendous barrancas; in which, matchless sterility, and the exuberant and broad-leaved vegetation of the tropics, are blended together in an extraordinary manner. It possesses a large church and prison, and many other buildings, the architectural details of which are uncommonly picturesque. I never saw a country where there were richer subjects for the artist, than that in which our rambles were placed for some days to come.

The mule path which we followed, led us for some time along the edge of the great barranca to the west of the town, in a direction nearly due south. But after traversing it by a long descent, and longer ascent, and gaining a village where we took a second guide—the first, furnished by the cura, not being acquainted with the road—we crossed a band of sugar and cotton plantations; and, entering upon the uncultivated stony plains, bent our course a little more to the westward, towards the cerro in advance. Our borrowed horses were wretched animals; and I well remember the hard trot of the emaciated beast which I had the misfortune to bestride; and the galling position in which I was pinioned by a badly constructed Mexican saddle.

By some arrangement of the cura's, which we did not then comprehend, our party had been increased as we left Cuernavaca, by a fine, hardy, bold-looking, armed horseman, who kept us company the whole day, whether as guide or as companion we scarcely knew; though on our return we had a hint given us to pay him a few dollars in quality of the first. He was not talkative; at the same time there was nothing uncourteous in his reserve, or general bearing, which I can best liken to that of a stalwart and stark moss trooper. We had our suspicions

at the time that he was a known bandit, whose fidelity and safeguard the good cura had thus thought proper to secure ; and we have since had them verified, and found that this was really the case.

The plains over which we now moved, were more barren and inhospitable in their character than I can describe. The surface, strewed with loose scoria and rock, and brown as the sands of Arabia, produced not a blade of grass ; but reflected the hot rays of the sun with a glare which blistered and excoriated the face and hands. And the fervid, glowing, furnacelike heat of the sun I shall never forget ! There it hung in the heavens like a blazing ball of copper, shedding its beams through a yellow haze, which, at an early hour of the day, spread a thin transparent veil over the vast plains and their towering mountain boundary ; and as it rose to the zenith, throwing our shadows under our feet, it scorched the skin like fire. In vain the eye was cast abroad in search of relief ; every object far and near glared with the reflected brilliance—not a tree, not a rock, not an overhanging bank in the shadowless and thirsty land ! The yawning barranca, deep as it might be, formed but a focus, where the sun's rays were concentrated. The very hills in advance seemed to cast no shade. Opinions as to our distance from them, were hazarded and recanted again and again. They loomed in thin haze, till they appeared near at hand, while their lowest swell lay at the distance of many miles. And then the barrancas ! Though our previous travelling in this singular country had prepared us for this feature of the plains as well as of the mountain slopes, we had nowhere seen them upon the same scale. One of those we traversed this morning, of which no indication had been observed till we arrived at the very brink, took us an entire hour to traverse. Though water has undoubtedly been an agent in their formation, the origin of the greater number of those tremendous furrows in the surface of the table land is to be traced to the earthquake, and the sudden disruption of the strata by volcanic agency. You see many, in which the two sides, though furlongs apart,

exhibit incontestable signs, that their jagged perpendicular walls were once in junction. Every Mexican traveller must have remarked the insidious manner in which many of these gulfs commence. In riding along the plains, you perhaps find yourself separated from the companion with whom you are conversing, by a crack or fissure of a few inches in breadth: you proceed carelessly; the rent gapes imperceptibly wider and wider; and increases in depth, till it imperatively demands your attention. Perhaps a very natural dislike to retrace your steps, and ignorance of the real nature and extent of the obstacle, induces you to keep your direction in search of its termination; when, before you are aware, you find a hideous and impassable gulf yawning between you, delving deep for many miles into the face of the landscape, and no alternative left you but to return to its very source. I sketch from experience. Some of the largest barrancas I have described form beds for the scanty streams descending from the forested slopes of the neighbouring cordillera, and at one of these, about ten in the morning, we quenched for a moment the burning thirst of our party, men and horses.

An hour after, we reached the base of the hills which apparently form a detached group in the table land. For many miles previously we had observed and repeatedly crossed an ancient paved causeway, about eight feet in breadth, composed of large stones tightly wedged together, and running directly over plain and barranca, towards the hill of Xochicalco.

The strange mould of the summit of the steep hill on our left, as we entered the group by a small valley, had long drawn our attention, as it appeared to be surrounded by a regular rampart; but I incline to think that it may be the natural formation.

At the termination of the little valley above mentioned, we arrived at length at the foot of the eminence which was the principal object of our excursion.

The circuit of the hill of Xochicalco, or the House of Flowers, may perhaps measure three miles, and its per-

pendicular height about three hundred feet. The opinion has been hazarded, that the whole mass is artificial; but it is one I cannot entertain for a moment, as its whole position and general configuration shows it to be one of the group, though there is no doubt but its entire surface, great as it is, has been subjected to a general design, and cased from its summit to its base with artificial work. The decay of centuries, at the same time that it has injured many of the details, yet allows the general plan to be detected. - Even the broad moat, which encircled the whole, remains perfectly distinct.

Alighting from our horses at the foot of the hill, which is partially covered with dry brushwood and leafless trees, we scrambled upward from one stage to another, over the crumbling stonework, which, from its steepness occasionally, rendered advance difficult. Four terraces apparently, made the entire circuit at regular intervals of elevation, though occasionally they were not easy to detect, from the accumulation of rubbish.

The intermediate slopes are covered with platforms, bastions, pyramidal and rectangular elevations and stages, one above the other, and other erections of which I can neither describe the exact forms nor guess their appropriation. It is evident that all were faced with the same uncemented stonework, and were accommodated to the natural moulding of the hill, which, however far from regular, was conical in its general outlines. Upon a platform in connection with the highest terrace, we were obliged to leave our horses, before we climbed up a steep, stone-faced declivity, evidently pyramidal in its structure, to the summit.

Thence we commanded a wide view over the neighbouring hills and plains—a scene of matchless sterility, glaring in the noonday sun; and we now saw, that in addition to the paved road from the north which I have mentioned, there were others of precisely the same construction, running towards the “House of Flowers,” as to a common centre, from other points of the compass.

From the summit we proceeded to the northward into a hollow square, situated at a somewhat lower elevation,

in the centre of which we found the ruins of the remarkable altar, or *teocalli*, which has been the principal object of speculation or attention.

Though evidently formed upon the same general principles with the other ancient pyramidal structures of New Spain, it differs from every other erection of the class hitherto discovered in Mexico—the pyramid of Papantla excepted—by being wholly constructed of large regularly hewn and symmetrically laid masses of hard and richly sculptured rock, instead of layers of unburnt bricks, or piles of earth and stone.

In its perfect state, which it preserved till a comparatively recent date, it is said to have consisted of seven distinct stories, diminishing of course in size, but of precisely similar construction. Of these we now only found the lower story, and portions of the second, remaining in their original position; the hewn stones composing the remainder having been wantonly moved and carried off, little more than a century ago, by the proprietors of the sugar plantations in the neighbourhood, for the foundation of their haciendas.

The base lines of the lowest square, which correspond to the cardinal points, may be fifty feet in length; and the height of the first story from the present level of the hollow square in which it stands, eight or nine feet.

One remarkable fact is, that instead of the wall rising at right angles from the base, it inclines inward, to the height of six feet, with a variation of perhaps fifteen degrees from the perpendicular, when the completion of the story is effected by perpendicular masses, sculptured in like manner, being placed so as to project out several inches from the line of those immediately below; a rude analogy of outline with the Egyptian architecture, that must immediately strike you. It is to be supposed that every story was constructed in a similar manner.

The chief characteristics of the sculpture, are its decision of outline and boldness of relief. The hardness of the dark basaltic stone in which they are cut, has preserved its freshness without the slightest appearance of decay.

To describe the character of the isolated figures, is



out of my power. The majority of the hieroglyphic signs—for such they doubtless are—resembled nothing in heaven or earth; but in many parts I detected the clothed human figures, seemingly reposing in the Asiatic manner.

Whether each face of the structure bore throughout similar devices, placed in exactly similar positions, I do not recollect positively: I think not; at the same time it was certainly the case at the angles, where some of the richest and most singular figures were to be found. The ornament which has been described as “a crocodile spouting water,” is of very large size, and must have been repeated eight times in each story, by being symmetrically placed at either extremity of the inclined basement of the structure.

As to its bearing resemblance to “a crocodile spouting water,” that is a mere fancy; it may as well portray the head of a griffin, or of any other fanciful monster; and what the ancient observer interpreted as a jet of water, was, in my eyes, intended to represent a double tongue.

We were now nearly blinded by the heat and glare; and after half an hour's survey, and reiterated but abortive attempts at a detailed sketch, I was glad to join my companions in beating a retreat; for the vertical sun's rays left no side of the building in shade, and the trees and shrubs which grew on the borders of the enclosure, and upon the ruins, were leafless and desolate.

Masses of hewn stone were strewed about the base, and lay in disorder on the building itself. In the centre of the teocalli was an excavation, but evidently made in modern times, probably in a search after hidden treasure; and yet, that the second story of the pyramid, at least, had contained a chamber, I satisfied myself, by discovering on one of the western faces, among the base stones of that story, which had not been moved from their original position, one mass, which, both by its situation and the fact of its being sculptured on two of its adjoining faces, plainly indicated its having served as a doorpost. Its fellow was not in its place, but I have not the slightest doubt of the fact.

After leaving this interesting locality, we made a wide circuit of the mount to visit certain subterraneous excavations, entering deep into a shoulder of the hill, which, to judge by appearances, has been almost entirely cased over by the hand of man.

How far these caverns run under ground, none can pretend to say; our circumstances compelled us to rest satisfied with ascertaining the fact of their existence, and that there was every sign of their being wholly artificial.

The hill of Xochicalco may still be considered unbroken ground for the antiquarian; and there is every probability of its rewarding a really careful and attentive survey. The details of the group of hills and the surrounding country should not be neglected. Our experience may be so far useful to our successors, whoever they may be, as to show, that here, plenty of time, and the means of shelter and refreshment, are absolutely requisite for the excursion. Situated as we were, and little as we positively effected, I wonder that we did so much. By the route we had come, we agreed that it must be seven leagues from Cuernavaca.

I need not tell you that there is neither the shadow of a tradition as to the people whose hands reared this singular monument, nor of the purposes to which it was devoted. I hazard no opinion either as to one or the other.

The general traveller will of course point to the Toltecs; the more learned or pedantic may suggest that it is referable to the Zapotecs, and the probability is that they are the work of neither one nor the other.

Whether the "House of Flowers" was made subservient to self-defence, and formed a stronghold; or was a hill of delight set apart for the habitation of a monarch; or a high place, where the religious mysteries of a people were performed; or a spot chosen for a union of all these objects, it is still one of the most extraordinary localities in New Spain, and deserves much more attention than it has hitherto received.

Not a drop of water was to be found on the hill, or in the vicinity; and when we mounted our horses in the ditch, and began our retreat across the plain, we were all panting with thirst and fatigue—none more than myself, whose feverish night had badly fitted for the fatigue of a day like that I am describing. The nearest Indian village lay at a considerable distance out of the direct road, but we were all decided to repair thither. As to our going forward that evening to Yautepec from Cuernavaca, that was at once acknowledged to be impracticable. How shall I paint that arid stony plain, or that blazing sun—the blood seemed to boil in my veins.

The moment we reached the village, we threw ourselves off our horses, and rushed with one accord into the first palmetto-thatched hut, much to the terror of the female occupants, who had hardly time to hide their bag of maize, and get assurance to tell the customary lies. "Water—water, give us some water!" *No hai!* "Is there none in the village?" *No hai!* "Any pulque?" *No hai!* "Any fruit?" *No hai!—no hai!—no hai!—nada! nada! signores!* None of us asked for a Chile pepper! We were almost in despair.

But shade was a luxury, even though it brought no coolness; and we lay down upon the floor. Good words and cigaritas, however, soon had their effect: and water was found—first in thimblefuls, then in sufficient quantity to bring some degree of comfort both to ourselves and our horses; and at last we got some frijoles, tortillas, lemons, and a small lump of sugar. The poor beasts, who, bad as they were, had suffered with much patience, equally with ourselves, were invigorated by a few bundles of maize stalks.

We staid here three hours, and then resumed our return. In the neighbourhood of the village there was some slight cultivation, and the direction which we took over the plains in returning, at the same time that we avoided two of the most extensive barrancas, brought us to more than one small stream, where the scattered trees afforded some solace to the eye, and a moment's shelter from the sun. On the banks of one of them, we saw

with indignation a number of the sculptured blocks, from the Teocalli of Xochicalco, lying half buried in the soil.

The haze which I had remarked in the earlier hours of the day continued to clothe all objects, without absolutely hiding them; but the outlines of the more distant ranges were so indistinct, that we could scarcely trace them. Such was the difficult character of the surface, and the continual checks we met with from barrancas, that the day was far spent before we arrived at the brink of the magnificent gorge which forms the intrenchment of Cuernavaca on the west. In the morning we had crossed it many miles farther down. It is splendidly varied in its character, and in the light of the sun, setting in gold and purple over the plain behind us, formed a magnificent picture.

The twilight fell upon us before we had extricated ourselves from the depth of the abyss, and when we did so by gaining the farther edge, the moon was shining without rival in the heaven.

I cannot describe to you the delicious feelings which came over us, as we felt the cooling night air fanning our temples, while riding through the rich and luxuriant groves and gardens in the outskirts of Cuernavaca, which we reached a quarter of an hour after.

What a strange machine the human body is. All this positive suffering seemed to be forgotten as soon as it was past! We supped as usual, drank inordinate quantities of ice—a luxury rendered a common one to the inhabitants of this torrid clime, by the vicinity of the volcanoes—threw ourselves upon our serapis on the floor, and the next morning rose, with both bodies and minds refreshed and invigorated, to enter upon another day's adventure.

The plains of Cuernavaca lie at an elevation of nearly five thousand five hundred feet above the Pacific, and four thousand four hundred below the Cruz del Marques; those of Yautepec and Cuautla Amilpas, to which we were now about to repair, at a general level of eight

hundred feet lower. Great as this degree of elevation may appear, the peculiar conformation of the surface—its exposure to the south, while it is protected to the north and east by the great wall of the Sierra Madre—the extraordinary heat generated by the reflection of the sun's rays from those vast naked plains, all conspire to give them a climate more approaching to the *tierras calientes* than that of the *tierras templadas*. Wherever mould of any description is found in a position which admits of either natural or artificial irrigation, there the fruits of the tropics are produced in the greatest perfection, and with a strength of vegetation which none can imagine but those who have observed it. The barrancas of these plains form the hothouses of the capital above, and from them the market is daily supplied with abundance of the richest fruits. These are chiefly reared by the Indian population, whose little bamboo enclosures, overshadowed by the broad leaves of the banana and papaya, form many a beautiful picture in the vicinity of Cuernavaca.

We quitted the town by a mule track, traversing a barranca to the east; and shaped our course towards the mountains bounding the plain in that direction. Our arriero and his mules had, according to his orders, left the town the preceding day. This was so far a disadvantage to us, as we were without a proper guide, and we soon experienced the inconveniences consequent upon this circumstance.

The plains of Cuernavaca are separated from those of Yautepec, lying more to the southeast, by a range of secondary mountains, clothed with wood, and exhibiting in their grotesque and broken outline more of the characteristics of the Dolomite ridges of the Tyrol, than any other to which I can compare them: I believe that they are principally composed of breccia. The view opens full upon them immediately below Cuernavaca, while above them tower the long elevated ridge of the sierra, and at their termination the huge forms of the great volcanoes rise into the sky.

But I want words to describe the sublimity and beauty

of the scenes which we now saw unfolded to us, hour after hour, for the following three days, while approaching and rounding the base of Popocatepetl.

Though, according to the information we had received, the town of Yautepec was but six leagues distant, and our pace was this morning far from slow, six hours' hard riding scarcely sufficed to bring us within sight of it.

This was partly owing, it is true, to the character of the soil, and certain *detours* which we unfortunately made, in bending too much to the eastward. After passing a large Indian village, about six miles from Cuernavaca, we came upon a malpaís, or a thick bed of hard black basaltic lava, covering a large extent of country towards the base of the mountains in advance. The faint mule track wandered to and fro over the iron surface in a most provoking manner; now to the south, then to the north, till we were perfectly bewildered: the more so, as the whole was covered, in spite of its sterility, with trees and gigantic cacti of divers species.

This obstacle overcome, we entered a valley in the hills—ascended a ravine, and, from the summit of the pass, looked down upon the broad plains of Yautepec and Cuautla, stretching far to the eastward along the foot of the great chain; with numberless towns, villages, and haciendas, situated in the midst of tracts of fertile and highly cultivated land; while broad bands of steril country, at intervals, marked the path of the ancient lavas.

In Yautepec, we found a town of considerable size, situated upon a stream of pure water, enjoying a very salubrious climate. It is imbosomed in groves of lemon and orange, and has claims to great picturesque beauty, both in general situation and details. It was a fair-day, and the principal plaza was crowded to suffocation with one of the most entertaining assemblages you can conceive—chaffering with might and main under the glowing beams of the noonday sun.

By the arriero's faithfulness and Garcia's good management—for though a knave, he was not a fool—we found our mules and their cargoes safe, and our quarters

prepared in the house of the *alcalde*, who received and entertained us hospitably, during the hours of our stay. That functionary is obliged, by the laws of the land, to provide a lodging for strangers applying to him for accommodation, in case that there is no regular inn. Excellent watermelons and ice were to be had in abundance.

As time was not to be trifled with, we were constrained, however, after the greatest heat of the day was spent, to remount our horses, and pursue our route to the town of Cuautla Amilpas, at four leagues distance. The road, for the greater part, runs over the fertile portions of the plain, and passes many noble sugar haciendas, each with its dwelling house, refinery, crushing mill, and other offices, built in the most substantial style, and almost always adorned by a church, with dome and tower. They rank, in value, fertility, and good cultivation by free labour, among the first in New Spain.

About sunset, when within a league of Cuautla Amilpas, our line being a very straggling one, three of us, attended by Garcia, made a wrong turn, and went off across a huge unbroken level, towards the base of Popocatepetl; doubling our distance, and adding greatly to the fatigues of the day. We however agreed that the view we had hereby gained of the great volcano, rising, without any neighbour or rival, to the height of fourteen thousand feet perpendicular above the plateau on which we stood, with the red glow of the sunset upon his snowy summit, amply repaid us for the fatigue and vexation.

It was dark before we entered the *posada*, in which we found that M'Euen and the mules had with difficulty effected a lodgment. Indeed, it was not till our arrival that a misunderstanding with the revenue officers was satisfactorily explained, and our party felt at liberty to prepare for rest and refreshment. How far that which followed merited that character you shall judge.

Cuautla Amilpas, like the town of Yautepec, is situated upon one of the more considerable branches of either the Rio de las Balsas or the river Mescala, whose channels carry off to the Pacific all the waters flowing from the southern slopes of the table land of Mexico.

We were disappointed in the general appearance of the town, which may, nevertheless, be termed the Saragossa of New Spain, from the circumstances attending its pertinacious defence in the war of the revolution, when the famishing inhabitants, under the command of Morelos, withstood the concentrated forces of the Spanish general, Calleja, for the space of several months.\*

Though upward of twenty years had since gone by, the hatred of the inhabitants to the Gachupin and the foreigner seemed scarcely abated; and we had not long been in the town before we discovered that we, in our general character of Europeans, were to be given to feel it; and to make experience of the kind of danger which still impends over the foreign traveller in the more unfrequented parts of the country.

A wordy squabble in a civilized country is a matter of no great moment; but here, where human life is considered of but little value, and where the *cuchillo* or knife is instantly produced as the solver of all difficulties, the case is far otherwise.

\* It was after the death of Hidalgo in 1811, that Morelos took the lead, and early in February shut himself up in Cuautla Amilpas, with a body of the insurgents. Calleja advanced from the capital, and made his first attack with great impetuosity on the 17th instant. Properly the town is indefensible, and had no other fortification than barricades and intrenchments thrown up in haste. However, the Spaniards were driven back by the fury with which they were confronted by the Mexicans, aided by the slings of the Indians from the roofs of the houses. The town was now regularly invested; and on the 4th of March, the bombardment commenced—but the defenders remained firm. An attempt to cut off the supply of water from the town failed; while a guerilla warfare was carried on by other parties of the insurgents upon the roads in the vicinity, and many of the reinforcements and detachments of the besiegers were cut off. But no succour could be brought to Morelos and his comrades, who soon began to suffer the extremity of famine, to such a degree, that at the end of April, a cat sold for six dollars, a lizard for two, and rats, and such vermin, for one. The object of Morelos was to protract the siege till the rainy season should commence, when it was to be supposed that sickness would force the besiegers to abandon the blockade.

The extremity to which he was reduced obliged him ultimately to abandon the defence; and this he did by departing secretly in the night of the 2d or 3d of May, without detection: and in two days he reached the town of Izucar, with the loss of but seventeen of his men.—See Ward's Mexico.



Like the generality of *posadas*, that in which we had hired our two chambers was disposed in the form of a hollow square, of which three sides were occupied by the lodging rooms and stables, and the fourth opened into a kind of paddock. The whole was surrounded by a wall; and a large gate formed the only mode of communication with the street.

Don Juan, the master, was soon discovered to be a churl, who, for some reason or other, had determined not to give a civil answer to any question or any request we made of him. Indeed insult and abuse were not spared. Doña Dolores, his wife, and her female assistants, were also evidently disposed, as far as was in their power, to fall in with his humour; and, far from performing the customary offices for the traveller, in the hope of good payment, answered our request for food by jeering us, and pointing to the door. They would give us nothing, not even a glass of water.

Our arriero and valets did not disguise their opinion that we had fallen into bad hands; but the mules were unloaded—it was already dark—and altogether too late to seek another lodging.

After an hour of patient endurance, two of us sallied forth on the scout; and purchasing a pile of tortillas, and a basin of frijoles, with sundry other nondescript eatables, from the poor Indian women who occupied a corner of the market place, returned with them to our companions. The necessary information with reference to our route for the morrow, towards Zacualpam Amilpas, and Cholula, was with difficulty picked up in the shops which we entered to make trifling purchases.

Shortly after our return to our inhospitable quarters, Don Juan, who seemed to be really possessed by a diabolical spirit, and unable either to rest or to leave others in repose, hit upon a method to provoke us to take a more active part than hitherto in the quarrels which had been incessant between his family and our servants, from the hour of our arrival. At eight o'clock he locked the gate of the posada, and refused the liberty of exit to any of the party, stating that such was the order of the

alcalde. To the alcalde, then, we insisted upon going, to ascertain if such an order existed, and if so, to procure a dispensation; as, unless our preparations of departure were completed now, we should be liable to detention on the morrow, when we ought to be travelling. This could not be refused, the door was opened, and three of us sallied forth, under the threat that we should sleep in the streets, for that none of us should re-enter. Accordingly the door was slammed at our backs, and locked, amid a volley of abuse and ribaldry from the household.

I must say, that we felt justly irritated; as, far from provoking this treatment, we had borne the previous churlishness with equanimity, both of temper and manner; and had given good words in exchange for bad.

We soon found the house of the alcalde. After much knocking, the door was opened, and we demanded to see his honour. After five minutes' delay, we were cautiously admitted into a small apartment. Five minutes again elapsed; when the magistrate, a sleepy, heavily built, good-natured man, made his appearance, half dressed, having already been in bed. We told our case, and satisfied him as to our being honest and responsible personages. He immediately denied that he had given the order complained of; but said that the number of banditti in the country had given rise to one, according to which, no armed parties should be let into the town after nine o'clock, without an order from him, but which, of course, was in nowise applicable to us. He offered to send a verbal message to Don Juan, our ungracious host, to desire that he would put no impediments in our way, but let us have free ingress and egress night and day: but this would not serve our purpose; and, in fine, after much talk, we persuaded him to give us a written document to the same purport. He was extremely civil, and at parting complained grievously of the responsibilities and toils of his post.

Thus furnished, we returned to the posada. The door was of course fast; and upon knocking, we were challenged by Don Juan: "*Who we were?*" "*What we were making a noise at the door for?*" "*Did we not*

*know the order?"* and so forth, mingled with threats to call the town guard, and give us lodgings in the town prison. To all this we could only reply by a fresh summons, enforced by a general thump of our sabre hilts at the gate, and a chorus of "*Will your grace open the door?—an order from the alcalde!*" There was really something extremely dramatic in the whole scene. Open the door he would not, pretending to believe that we were a party of thieves freshly arrived, instead of honest old acquaintances. At length he told us to thrust the letter under the planks, which we did. It took him a long time to spell, which, by-the-by, I do not wonder at, as his honour, the sleepy alcalde, had contrived to write it in a most illegible hand. Every now and then Don Juan called to us, "*Don't be in a hurry! a little patience, a little patience, señores!*" which of course did not add to our store. At length the door opened, and one by one in we marched; when, foaming with passion, he instantly relocked it, and swore stoutly that not a soul should leave the posada again that night.

A quarrel was now unavoidable, and it soon arose to a storm. Two or three drunken travellers joined in it, most inopportunately; and threats of violence against us, as Europeans, began to be heard. Doña Dolores rushed into the fray, confronting Garcia, who was unfortunately not valiant, with the most opprobrious language and gestures. Her apparition threw oil upon the fire, and Don Juan, without more ado, ran into the house, and came back armed with a long cut and thrust sword called a *machete*, while we, as a matter of necessity—for I may say that all along we acted on the defensive—had now to produce our pistols. The gate was thrown open by the women; the town guards and some of the neighbours rushed in, and without inquiry into the merits of the case, or the origin of the hubbub, immediately ranged themselves on the side of our opponents, with a violence which showed us we had no justice to hope from their intervention. Sabres were drawn, and pistols were cocked, and there was a moment when a bloody fray seemed inevitable.

The probable consequences flashed upon my mind, and doubtless upon those of my companions. Having done what we could to avoid the quarrel, we were now, as men will be when urged to desperation, one and all, fully determined to sell our lives dear; for—though I cannot doubt, even outnumbered as we were, that the superiority of our weapons would have enabled us to clear the courtyard of our adversaries in the first instance—we could not fail to have been ultimately overpowered and massacred, such was the spirit of detestation to our persons which now blazed forth without disguise, in the menaces of our opponents. As to law and justice, name them not! I have since shuddered to think how many lives hung upon the lifting of a single arm, and the striking of a single blow; and we all owned, the following morning, when riding out of the town, that to God's providence alone we could ascribe the fact that we were enabled to do so in peace and safety.

The flight of Doña Dolores, which followed the entry of the guard, and the preparations for fight, was by no means a disadvantage, for she was the main cause of the affray having taken this serious aspect; and as neither party seemed inclined to strike the first blow, a little time was gained for reflection, which terminated with the gradual retirement of our principal foes; their example was followed by the guard, after a rude denial of our right to bear arms, and an attempt to compel their being given up, which I need not say was unsuccessful. As to the order of the poor old alcalde, they laughed it to scorn!

When the intruders had retired, the gates were again shut, and each party slunk to their quarters. We had for some time abundant proofs that the quarrel was neither forgotten nor forgiven; and though we slept as usual, we may be excused for having made arrangements for instant self-defence, should it have been necessary; and we neither undressed nor disarmed. To have shut the door, and thus to have made a citadel of our quarter, would, as there was no window, have been to turn it into "a black hole."

Our preparations for an early start were seconded with such good will by our people, that soon after day-break the whole party was ready to march. Neither Don Juan nor Doña Dolores made their appearance; but using a valet as a cat's paw, they received their payment, and graciously wishing us "Bueno Viaggio!" opened the gate for our welcome departure.

Such is the souvenir which we have brought away from our visit to the patriotic Cuautla Amilpas.

Our next halting place was the town of Zacualpam Amilpas, which we reached after seven hours' ride to the eastward, over a very rough line of open country, sweeping up towards the base of Popocatepetl, which we were gradually approaching and rounding.

Zacualpam Amilpas vies with Cuernacava and Yau-tepec, in beauty of situation, and in the luxuriance of the cultivation in the immediate vicinity. The plain in which it lies has a general level of about five thousand feet above the sea. Immense perpendicular masses of trachite rise from its bosom, and form isolated hills of very considerable elevation. The Great Volcano bore now almost due north of us, at the distance of perhaps ten leagues.

Here we had previously the intention of spending a few days with two of the gentlemen of the diplomatic corps from Mexico, who had preceded us hither, with the ultimate intention of attempting the ascent of Popocatepetl; but under the present uncertainty when the packet would sail, we had no alternative but to proceed without delay—and therefore, in the course of the evening, after parting from Mr. E., who had proved himself a useful and agreeable companion, and a good man and true, in the hour of peril, we hired a guide to direct us on our road to Cholula, and resumed our pilgrimage. Four leagues of very rugged upland road, over hill and barrancas, brought us after dusk to the Indian village of San Mateo, situated among the mountains directly under Popocatepetl.

The whole ride, that immense cone, rising in unclouded majesty directly over against us, had been the principal

object of our attention. It appeared based upon a confused chaos of hills and mountains, composed in a great measure of volcanic substances, which had either been ejected from the principal crater, when in violent eruption, or which had found a vent on its flank, or at its feet.

On this side, the limit of the snow was considerably higher than on the other, as seen from Mexico. Heavy forests of pine clothed the lower division, and a straggling vegetation might be detected, perhaps to the height of thirteen thousand feet or upward. Above that, a zone of dark barrancas and rocks, intermixed with slopes of black volcanic sand, rises far towards the region of perpetual snow. A high and remarkable rock called the Pico del Frayle, or the Monk, breaks the general outline of the cone upon the southwestern slope. The great fatigue attendant upon the ascent of the superior part of the volcano, where the adventurer has not only to struggle with the faithless nature of the footing, but with the serious inconveniences attendant upon the extreme rarity of the atmosphere, may be conceived; and to these, the failure of many attempts made by Europeans of late years, to reach the crater, has to be ascribed. I have seen those who boast of their success, but unfortunately, have not met with one who was sufficiently alive on his gaining the summit to enable him to convey to others the slightest idea of what he had beheld.

Since the earlier years of this century, the signs of combustion in this volcano have been so slight, as to be scarcely noticed. It was, however, said at Zacualpam Amilpas, that smoke had been seen to rise from it occasionally during the past month.

In spite of the most careful observation bestowed upon every part of the snowy summit this evening, and during the morning of the 24th, when we continued to round the base, I could not with any certainty detect anything of the kind. The utmost that I could possibly assert, was, that I observed that the outline of certain rocks lining a deep crevice, a little below the summit, was uniformly extremely faint, indistinct, and vaporous,

while every other part of the outline was perfectly clear and well defined.

I have mentioned elsewhere, that Diego Ordaz, one of the officers of Cortez, made an attempt to reach the crater, on their first advance to the capital. He was, however, forced to leave his hardy project unachieved, the mountain being in a state of actual combustion. He must have been a bold adventurer, for in those days, a volcano in eruption was not considered a thing to play with, by crowds of well-dressed gentlemen and ladies, as in the present age.

I have elsewhere given the height of Popocatepetl, as determined by Humboldt and Bonpland, at 17,884 feet.\*

At San Mateo, we were courteously received and entertained by the simple Indian inhabitants, under the authority of their alcalde, an old man, speaking no language but that of his race. We were lodged in a

\* It may interest the reader to know that four days after our visit the ascent to the volcano was effected by the gentlemen above named.

On the morning of the 27th of April, Baron Gros, M. de Gerolt, and Mr Egerton, set out from Zacualpam Amilpas, and reached Ozumba on the afternoon of that day. Here they procured guides from the village of Alautia, and commenced the ascent the following morning, reaching the Vaqueria, a chalet which is the highest point inhabited, at one P.M. At three P.M., after passing through a zone of noble oaks, firs, and larch, they attained the limit of vegetation. Here, at about one third of the ascent, commence tracts of deep purple sand, strewed with blocks of porphyry. They spent the night just within the shelter of the dwarf forest, Fahrenheit's thermometer standing at fifty degrees.

On the 29th, at three A.M., they resumed the climb in the moonlight, with three guides and Mr. E's servant, proceeding in a zigzag up the sand. At nine they reached the Pico del Frayle, a pile of red rocks, of about a hundred feet in perpendicular elevation. Here the Indian guides abandoned the enterprise. Thus far the way had been fatiguing, but not dangerous. After one hour's rest they proceeded, finding the ascent much more difficult, till they reached the snow line. At this time all suffered severely from the rarity of the air. M. de G. finally reached the highest point at half past two, and his companions soon followed. They describe the crater to form an abyss of a circular form, and three miles in circumference, with perhaps a depth of a thousand feet. There is a break towards the east. The side walls are perpendicular. Vapours rise from several orifices, but rarely reach the edge of the crater. Here the adventurers staid one hour, and then, at five P.M., descending, reached their halting place in the wood. The following day, the 30th of April, they returned to the foot of the mountain. They state distinctly that Iztaccihuatl exhibits no signs of a crater.

shed, which served at once for chapel and courthouse, and were extremely amused by a visit of ceremony which the chief magistrate paid us in the course of the evening, bearing a silver stick as badge of office, and attended by a posse of half-naked subalterns. After five minutes spent in nodding and smoking with his guests like the best friends in the world, he departed and left us to our repose; with the bright moonlight glistening upon the snow of the volcano, and the clarinet and banjo of the Indians sounding in our ears. But what sight or sounds can keep the weary traveller from his rest?

The following morning we continued our rapid journey to the east and northeast, over an open country, to Atlisco, a large town situated at the foot of an acute conical hill of considerable elevation, which rises from the level bosom of the surrounding country. Besides the chapel on its summit, Atlisco boasts no fewer than seven or eight churches. Here we halted only two hours; and then trotted onward, hoping to reach Cholula, five leagues distant, at an early hour. The country over which we passed was in very bad repute for the robberies upon it—but here, as elsewhere, we experienced no interruption, though the numerous crosses by the roadside proved the truth of the report.

Long before sunset, we came in sight of the plains of Cholula, and of La Puebla de los Angeles. Their surface is broken by many mounds, natural and artificial; and among these, the celebrated Teocalli of Cholula, with the white church upon its platform, soon became distinguished, and gave a spur to our movements. But our animals were jaded with the heat and stony roads; and the last sunbeams were shining on the facade of the Church of Neustra Señora de los Remedios above us, as we entered the town.

Night speedily followed; and as my paper is full, I will begin another letter with the history of another day.



## LETTER IX.

THE ancient city of Cholula lies on a broad plain, extending to the base of the chains in advance of the Great Nevadas, and at an elevation of six thousand five hundred feet above the sea.

Situated some miles to the south of the great road between the large Spanish-built city of Puebla de los Angeles and the capital, it is comparatively seldom visited. To the north, beyond the barren but beautifully formed Sierra Malinche, lies the territory of Tlascala, whose republican inhabitants, spurred on by their hatred to the Mexican yoke, acted such an important part in the history of the conquest, as the allies of Cortez.

Cholula was the sacred city of the Mexican empire, and at the time of the Spanish invasion numbered a population within its precincts, to which the few thousands who now occupy a small portion of its ancient site are but a fraction. If we are rightly informed, its decay is far from having reached its term, and this may be easily accounted for by the vicinity of the city of Puebla, which has sprung up within a few leagues to the eastward. The principal square is very spacious, and there are many large churches; but we found little in the city worthy of withholding our attention, during the brief hours of our halt from the main object of our visit, which it is hardly necessary to tell you was the celebrated pyramid.

This vast mound, in spite of the waste of centuries, which has destroyed the regularity of its form, rounded and broken down its angles, confounded its terraces, and given it the air of a shapeless mass of earth, is still a marvel and a wonder in the land, and will probably remain so to the end of time.

It stands to the east of the present city, upon a base of one thousand four hundred and twenty-five feet square ; and originally consisted of four stages, terminating in a platform, one hundred and seventy-seven feet above the plain.

It is now very difficult to trace the several proportions among the slopes and brushwood, and the heaps of crumbling brickwork with which its acclivity is covered.

As soon as the sun was up we passed through the outskirts of the city, and round the foot of several elevated mounds, evidently artificial in their origin, towards the base of the teocalli. A little in advance are two enormous masses of earth, displaying in their perpendicular sides the regular courses of unburnt brick and clay, of which they, as well as the principal pyramid, are wholly constructed. A sloping road of modern formation leads over the three lower divisions of the great pyramid to the level of the third terrace, when you are conducted by a flight of stone steps to the principal platform, upon which the church with two towers and a dome has replaced the ancient erection raised here by the Aztecs or their predecessors, to the worship of their principal divinity, Quetzalcoatl.

The area of the platform, according to a former traveller, measures three thousand four hundred square yards. Its sides are well faced with stone, and thus preserved ; yet the waste of the soil has been so considerable on the eastern side, that the building is there wholly supported upon arches.

Two large evergreen cypresses and a massive cross stand before the principal entrance of the church. Many groups of trees, principally "*schinus*," are scattered over the surface of the pyramid, and the view from the platform, though not to be compared with those in the vicinity of the capital for beauty, is of vast extent and great interest, and includes the three great Nevadas of Mexico—Popocatepetl, Iztaccihuatl, and Orizava, with their advanced chains.

How far the vulgar tradition that the great pyramid of Cholula is hollow may be borne out by the fact, it is

impossible to say. One chamber was discovered some years ago in the lower story, in consequence of the road to Puebla having been cut through it ; and two human skeletons, with a number of idols in basalt, and some painted vases, were brought to light. This chamber, which was faced with stone and supported with cypress beams, proved to have no connection with the exterior ; and the main mass of the teocalli has, as yet, remained untouched. In the same manner as I have described at San Juan Teotihuacan, the great pyramid of Cholula was surrounded by many inferior erections of the same character, though I am not aware what was their precise arrangements. The ruins of many are seen from the summit ; and doubtless divers of those isolated mounds which break the uniformity of the great level in the vicinity for many miles round have a similar origin.

The pyramid of Cholula, with those of San Juan Teotihuacan and Papantla, were found by the Aztecs in Anahuac, upon their first arrival in that country. Indeed the city of Cholula, the "holy city," was still peopled by such of the Toltec race as had maintained their position on the Mexican table land after the dispersion of their tribe, as related in a former letter ; and its pyramid is supposed to be more ancient than any other in New Spain.

After the model of these, the Aztecs built their great temples in their capital and elsewhere.

I have elsewhere hinted at the probable identity between Quetzalcoatl, who was here worshipped as the "god of the air," with the patriarch Noah ; and also the supposition that the original purpose with which this pyramidal structure was raised, was one and the same with that which is known to have given rise to those of Asia. To Quetzalcoatl, all the ancient tribes of Anahuac attributed their knowledge of melting metals—their rites and ceremonies of religion—and their arrangement of time.

But He, who was at once king, priest, and lawgiver—"born of a virgin"—the "precious stone of suffering and

sacrifice"—whose disappearance is recorded, and return to earth so clearly expected by the Mexicans, has well been termed the "most mysterious and inexplicable personage in the Mexican mythology;" and the mind becomes perfectly bewildered in attempting to glean probabilities from the scattered traditions concerning his history, or to reconcile his various attributes.

La Puebla, to which we repaired in the course of the morning, has been called the City of Angels, from the legend which records the assistance given by those beings in the construction of the cathedral. It may with much more reason be termed the "City of Bigots," for in no part of Mexico is hatred against those of another faith so undisguised, as the stones hurled against many a European traveller testify. And, if an anecdote which was related me in the capital was true, it would seem that even the irresponsible hide of a brute beast might not shield it from lapidation, if the owner was known to have been bred and nurtured without the pale of the church.

Some time since two English dray horses were procured by a European resident in Mexico, and unshipped at Vera Cruz; colossal, big-boned, muscular animals, compared with which the Mexican breed were but shelties. They may have found their long voyage disagreeable, but they were doomed to find their land journey to the capital yet more so. Wherever they passed, there was a perfect ferment among the populace. The heretical horses!—there was no possibility of smuggling them through the country, or of concealing their unfortunate lineage. They were everywhere regarded with detestation. They and their grooms were loaded with maledictions at Vera Cruz—pelted at Jalapa—execrated and pelted at Perote—execrated, pelted, and stoned, with might and main, at La Puebla de los Angeles—and hardly escaped with their lives, to be repelted and restoned on their arrival at their journey's end. There, however, they arrived; but for any use they were to the possessor, they might as well have been peaceably employed in starting casks in London among their fellow heretics, biped and quadruped; for they had to be con-

fined to their stable morning, noon, and night—such was the tumult excited by their appearance and character. At length the possessor was fairly driven to bow to popular opinion.

There is a certain church in Mexico, of which I have omitted to note down the patron saint, but I know that you leave it a little to the left hand as you approach the garita on the road to San Augustin. To this church, from time immemorial, it has been the custom of the country, for the inhabitants of the city and adjoining valley to bring their domestic animals for baptism by the hands of the priest; the popular belief being, that till this is done, they do not belong to the Catholic church, and cannot possibly prosper.

And here, at the proper time, in company with many animals of less pretension, came the two English dray horses. They were regularly sprinkled, the fee was paid to the cura, and from that time, being considered as *Christianos*, they were allowed to hold up their heads and perform their labours without molestation!

Our stay at La Puebla was, as you may suppose, very hurried, as we here found the report that the packet really sailed on the first instant fully confirmed. My sketch, therefore, like my survey, must be hasty and brief. The city is large, and regularly and handsomely built, with a population estimated at 60,000 souls; and the traveller sees much to remind him of the capital. It was founded three centuries ago, by the Spaniards. A hill clothed with wood rises to the north; and the plain in its immediate vicinity is well cultivated, and produces a vast quantity of wheat and maize. In adornment and arrangement the houses resemble those of Mexico in every particular. Sixty-nine churches, many of them richly endowed, many monasteries, nunneries, and colleges, prove the sanctity of the city and the piety of the inhabitants.

The cathedral is the most splendid and richest structure in New Spain, superior to that of the capital in the beauty of its architecture and for the mass of riches collected within its walls. The high altar, throughout its

gorgeous details, is of almost unrivalled magnificence. Our short stay was sufficient to show us that the mass of the population comprised a considerable number of *leperos*.

The city was in a disturbed state; and it was rumoured that the general feeling was hostile to the present government, and only awaiting an occasion for a demonstration in favour of the clergy now in disgrace. The bishop, the most energetic and talented man in the country, being personally obnoxious to the members of the present cabinet, which had given orders for his arrest, was at this time in concealment somewhere in the city; it was whispered in one of the convents.

As it was our intention to pursue our journey the following morning towards Jalapa, we lost no time in taking the necessary steps. A coach was hired with its train of mules, and an escort of five dragoons obtained for it, by an application to the commandant. As to M'Euen and myself, we stoutly determined to continue our route as hitherto, on horseback, and to trust to our savage appearance, or rather to the keeping of Providence, for escape from the dangers of the road to the coast.

At daybreak, April 26th, we were *en route* on the beaten track, and a barren one it was, after quitting the Haciendas de Trigo, or corn estates, in the vicinity of La Puebla, till we reached the swelling hills covered by a pine forest, known by the name of El Pinal. This is one of the most accredited stripping places on the road.

Here, hardly a month earlier, the *diligence* from Vera Cruz to the capital was robbed, with the most ludicrous regularity, for weeks together. When stopped, the passengers—who generally contrived to have nothing on their persons that was worth fighting about, and no arms to fight with—were told to alight, and to lie down in a row on their stomachs on the sand, into which their noses were unceremoniously thrust, with threats of instant death if they stirred. Their persons and the coach were then thoroughly rifled; and they were left, with the warning, that if any moved or looked up for the

space of half an hour, the carbine or the *cuchillo* should settle matters. After some patience and cautious peeping, they would gather themselves up, shake their ears, clamber into the diligence, and proceed thankfully on their journey. But as to ourselves, we have no adventures to relate.

During the whole of our morning's ride, the beautiful mountain, La Malinche, lay on our left hand. It is the highest summit between the chain of Orizava and that of the Mexican Nevadas. I have, upon what authority I cannot now recollect, elsewhere termed it the volcano of Tlascala, but though its form would favour the conclusion, I am not prepared to prove that it is such. We made our noonday halt at a village a little beyond the Pinal, after a ride of ten leagues, many of which lay through deep sand.

And here I took the liberty of prying a little into the character of our doughty escort. It consisted of four privates and a corporal; and five more inoffensive warriors never mounted on horseback. Their horses were none of the best, but quite good enough for the purpose. The riders were dressed in a species of uniform, consisting of red coats and a black round hat, with a narrow strip of white linen tied round it. Their nether garments were not conformable; and it was evident their pay and discipline did not extend so far down. "But it is not the dress, after all, that makes the soldier," you may say: true, there are the arms and the valour! As to the arms, all were furnished with a long lance, with a little green and red penoncelle fluttering at the end, which they carried in proper military fashion—a dangerous weapon if used with determination and discretion. Moreover, all were furnished with carbines and cartridge boxes, and the leader was armed with a sabre with a leather sheath. This was not so much amiss, and would do very well at a distance: but during the two hours' halt at the village aforesaid, I took it into my head, while the owners were enjoying their siesta under the shade of the gateway, just to stride in among them, and take a nearer inspection of the weapons, and

I furnish you with the following note made at the moment of my scrutiny:—

“Carbine I. Much worse for wear—no flint and a broken trigger—cannot imagine how it is to be discharged.

“Carbine II. Seen much service, no flint, no ramrod.

“Carbine III. Lock broken short off, and otherwise damaged.

“Carbine IV. Utterly devoid of all appearance of lock.

“Carbine V. Furnished with all the outward signs except ramrod; but from its appearance, doubt very much its efficiency, especially as I have no proof that there is a single cartridge, either in the weapons or in the cartridge boxes.”

So much for the arming of our escort. Now as to their valour.

For what purpose were they hired—at the cost of eighteen dollars, to ride by the side of the coach, from La Pueblo to Perote? To scare away thieves and robbers. But if the thieves would not be frightened—to fight? No! such an idea never came into their heads. To fight!—he, he—ha, ha—ho, ho!—to get, perhaps, a shot from a real carbine, or a slash across the nose—or at least to be lassoed, half strangled, dragged from horseback, and ground to powder, by being hurried along the road for a few hundred yards—and all that for only eighteen dollars! and for the pleasure of their valours, the three heretic dons? No, the idea is ridiculous! Does it not appear almost such to you? Seriously speaking, I believe an escort in Mexico is never expected to fight, not only because I never heard of a well-accredited case of their doing so, but from the peculiar style and character of the arms wherewith they are furnished. This strange circumstance apart, I must give our dragoons a good character. They gave us no trouble, always stuck to the carriage, spoke not an unnecessary word, and were dismissed at Perote, where all danger from banditti was supposed to be at an end.

To resume the notice of our journey. Six leagues



of road over the wide undulating surface of the sandy plains brought us towards evening at our halting place, Ojo de Agua ; a posada built at a spot where a clear and abundant stream issues forth from the foot of a mass of volcanic matter, and forms a green oasis in the middle of the desert. Till the afternoon of this day, we had been unable to catch a glimpse of the great cone of Orizava, towards the northern extremity of whose chain we were gradually approaching. The weather had been dull and hazy ever since we reached Cholula, whence we should otherwise have been able to descry it. Now, as we trotted slowly over the plains, our eyes were busily engaged in searching among the shifting layers of light cloud which rose above the distant horizon, for some indication of his presence. One bright spot after another was the production of much speculation and ultimate disappointment ; at length, about two hours before we reached our resting place, we became unanimous in believing that a certain indistinct whitish mass, high up in the smoky atmosphere, formless and vague as it was, could be no other than the object of which we were in search ; and true enough, as the sun went down behind us, and the air cleared, we saw it become brighter and brighter ; and, in fine, shaking aside its veil, the colossal cone stood before us in majesty, at the limit of the table land over which it soared to the perpendicular height of ten thousand feet.

As we proceeded over the almost interminable plains the following day to Perote, it stood revealed in all its sublimity, as well as the whole of the chain with which it is connected. This range is terminated to the north by the extinct volcano called the Coffre de Perote. A sudden change in the air about noon, which we were all sensible of, was immediately recognised as indicating a norte on the coast. At Perote we arrived towards evening, after halting for two hours in the vicinity of an isolated volcanic mass, called the Cerro de Pizarro.

Perote is a small decayed town, with a fort, or rather a depot, in the vicinity, situated at the height of 7691

feet above the gulf, near the eastern limit of the table land. An early march of a few hours the following morning brought us to the crest of the Pass, to the north of the Coffre de Perote, and to the commencement of the great descent to the coast.

Our journey thus far from Perote had been rather barren of interest, but upon gaining the elevated alpine village of Las Vigas, it was far otherwise. The sandy route now gave place to a steep Calzada, over which the unwieldy coach came lumbering down, with many a jog and many a jolt, to the great discomfort of the occupant, and the apparent peril of the train of mules. The upper part of the road crosses the flanks of the Coffre de Perote, a mountain so called, from a square, chest-shaped eminence which crowns its long ridge, and contains the crater of a volcano, which, however long dormant, must once have been the vent of tremendous eruptions, judging by the signs scattered over the neighbouring country. Las Vigas lies at the height of 7820 feet above the gulf, and consequently within the limit of the *tierras frias*. The forests in the vicinity are chiefly pine. At this elevation we were enveloped in cold driving mist, worthy of the Alps; and though its partial clearance before we descended to Jalapa, three thousand five hundred feet lower, gave us many a glimpse of the magnificent scenery around, yet it must be conceded, that we lost much by not having a brighter and less clouded view. Some distance below Las Vigas, we entered upon a *pedrigal* covered with scanty vegetation; and we continued for many miles to descend over slopes covered to a great depth by volcanic deposits; here thick beds of black cinders and scoria, coating the rock with a thick stratum, and lying just as they had rained from the heavens; there floods of black lava, hard as adamant, and yet bearing upon their unequal surface abundant signs of the liquid state in which they had poured down from the mountains above. As usual, the surface of the lava was never smooth, even in places where it had met with the least obstruction, but displayed an infinity of sharp wrinkles overlapping each other, or, rather, I should

say, shooting from under the other. In parts of the country where rocks, or inequalities of the original surface, had interposed impediments to the gentle flow of the volcanic matter, the scene of confusion was truly terrific. Here, the surface would be heaped with huge blocks of solid rock, hundreds of tons in weight, masses which had evidently once floated like corks upon the irresistible flood; and their black rifts and yawning caverns would mark the struggles of the fluid, as it pitched down some mountain steep to a lower level.

We halted for breakfast at a hamlet situated in the very centre of this volcanic matter, and afterward resumed the sharp descent. Below the lavas, the forests became more luxuriant, teeming with curious trees and shrubs; and the views far more open. Judging from what we saw, they must be of a most splendid description, and that epithet may be worthily bestowed upon the situation of the city of Jalapa, where we arrived at two o'clock in the afternoon, having left Perote at four A.M. The change from the sterility of the table land above to the luxuriant and teeming vegetation of this lovely region, was more striking than the contrast between the characteristic features of the great level plains with their barren volcanic cones, to the varied and beautiful wooded hills, vales, and mountains, which characterize this most lovely region of New Spain.

You and others have asked me, what comparison can be drawn between the Alps of Europe and the Cordillera? I was going to say none, but the traveller must learn not to be rash. The lines of just comparison are very faint. The highest summits are covered with snow; the green swelling mountain and pastures of the middle region have a general resemblance with the lower Alps of Switzerland, in their outlines and colouring, though hardly in their climate; and there is something in the general features of the upland vales of the Cordillera, where they break down towards the coast, which puts you in mind of the scenery of those magnificent valleys, where the icy streams of the great southern chain of the Alps precipitate themselves towards the sunny plains of

Italy, and carry far down into the clime of the vine and chestnut, the *debris* of the inhospitable regions of bare rock and snow.

But as to those details, which you would take as chiefly characteristic of either chain, no similarity whatever can be established.

In the limestone, slate, and granitic ranges of the Alps, beauty of outline is far from being confined to any single ridge. It is an attribute of the secondary, as well as the most elevated; of the parallel chains, as well as of the diverging mountains, which, like ribs, start out from the great back bone of the continent, and sink gradually to the level of the plains on either hand. Piled, range behind range, with deep vales between—with numerous lakes, and clothed up to the very limit of eternal snow, with green or forested slopes—they are eminently picturesque; and the gentle luxuriance of the lower valleys contrasts felicitously with the precipitous rocks and masses of snow which occupy the higher regions. The scale and the structure of the Alps permit the eye to command, in almost every situation, the whole of their varied detail. The enormous extent of the glaciers on the upper plains and acclivities, and the peculiar manner in which they descend towards the valleys, are mainly characteristic of these mountains.

Now as to general outline, both from what I have seen and have heard with regard to other parts of the Andes, that of the great porphyritic chains of the Cordillera can hardly be said to be generally picturesque. It is scarcely broken enough; its details are too vast. One enormous wall of mountains rises behind another, each buttressing a broad step of table land, but in general the interval between them is far too great for the eye to command more than one at a time. Here and there, from the general level of the undulating mountain ridge, rises a tremendous cone, with a breadth of base, and an even smoothness of outline, which, at the same time that they proclaim its origin, and add to its sublimity, take from its picturesque beauty. The summit bears its mantle of snow; but compared with the mass, it is but a cap—not

a flowing mantle, with its silver and purple folds and its fringe of ice.

There are again, for the reason stated, few positions in which your eye will command, at the same time, the rich and gorgeous vegetation of the lower slopes of the Mexican Cordillera, and the sublimity of the superior ranges. The vast sheets of the barren table land are interposed, the *tierras templadas* separate the *calientes* from the *frias*. Each has its peculiar characteristics, but they can seldom, if ever, be comprised in one and the same picture.

You look in vain among all the exuberant forest growth and the giant flora of Mexico, for the sweet cheering freshness of Alpine vegetation; that luxuriance without rankness, which clothes the lower valleys.

From this you will see, that where the two chains might be supposed to have points of resemblance, they have little or none.

Besides that, in the style of its vegetation, both in the torrid and temperate regions, the plains and their peculiar characteristics, the prodigious barrancas, the whole series of volcanic phenomena, which prevade the country, from the sands of the coast to the craters of the highest volcanoes, as well as in colouring, the more prominent features of Mexico are so marked and so utterly different, that they extinguish the idea of comparison.

Suppose us now at Jalapa, a picturesque town situated high upon the broken sides of the huge mountain rampart which serves as a base for the great chain of the eastern branch of the Cordilleras. A lovelier sight, and more beautiful scenery, you need not seek in the torrid zone! Below you, a steep descent leads rapidly down the verdant and fresh slopes, towards the shore of the gulf, which is just visible from the highest parts of the town, at the distance of twenty leagues and upward. Above you rises ridge above ridge, crowned by the Coffre de Perote; and yet farther to the southward, by the magnificent snow-covered summit of Orizava,\* in

\* Height of Orizava, 17,375 feet.

comparison to whose sublime and majestic stature, the elevated mountains which cluster round its feet appear but as pigmies. To the right and left, extending along the mountains' sides, at the height of between four and five thousand feet above the sea, lies a delicious and salubrious region, covered with magnificent forests, and diversified with some of the most beautiful towns in New Spain; a country, smiling with an eternal spring, under the kindly influence of the heavy mists and dews, which, rising thus midway up the steep cordillera from the bosom of the gulf, pause here in midair, and promote that rich verdure, which is equally grateful to the inhabitants of the arid and steril table land, or of the fervid sands of the seaboard.

To this "city of refuge" flies the unacclimated European from the port below, as soon as that dreaded sickness, the *vomito prieto*, makes its annual appearance within the narrow walls, forgetting the thirst of gain, in sudden solicitude to preserve dear life. To this point, the moment he lands, the panting traveller presses up the steep mountains with might and main; and blesses God when he feels the fresh air of the mountains, and sees the white walls of the convent of San Francisco crowning the steep: and here the inhabitant of the table land, or the departing stranger, pauses and lingers, ere he descend into the infected tierra caliente, and ventures to inhale the hot and subtile breath of fever and disease.

Our view of Jalapa was but a glance, but it was one which has left on my mind a delightful impression of beauty; and I often linger in fancy among its low, red-tiled, broad-eaved habitations, or exuberant gardens, and muse upon the marvellous beauty of its convent-crowned hill, and the freshness of its gushing waters, lakes, and shady woods.

In architecture, the town affords a delightful example of the old Spanish style, and many of the country seats in the vicinity are delicious retreats.

The population amounts to thirteen thousand. We here met with the majority of the gentlemen who were

to be our fellow-voyagers in the packet; and, as the exact hour of sailing was now known, and our departure from Jalapa in company fixed for the evening of the following day, our short stay was fully occupied. In fact, far from being a day of repose, as was advisable, it was one of unremitting alacrity of body and mind.

To dismiss our retainers, to sell our horses and furniture, to make all the dispositions for final departure from the country, entailed upon us more fatigue than you can perhaps imagine.

But about noon, somehow or other, all was arranged! The arriero was on his way back to Perote, with the baggage of a party ascending to the capital. Garcia and Jose Maria, neither of whom had the slightest wish to risk their precious lives by advancing a step farther, were remunerated for their services; if not to their hearts' content, far beyond their deservings: and, masters of two of the horses of the train, were at liberty to seek other and equally gullible masters. Poor Pinto had to partake the fate of his comrades, and learn to obey another bridle and another spur, and those perhaps none of the mildest, being sold for less than the cost of his shoes. When I think that he may have found a hard master, I have sometimes regretted that I did not shoot him with my own hand; for he had been a noble and fleet horse when young, and one of some renown; and was still active and generous, notwithstanding his rough coat and wisp of a tail; and I had insensibly become attached to him. We had travelled three months cheerily together, and gone through many strange scenes; and when I passed my hand over his neck for the last time, I own that I felt a very disagreeable tightness about the lower end of the gullet. I love poor dumb beasts.

Since our first landing in America, Pourtales and myself had made trial of almost every imaginable mode of travel and locomotion—carriage, coach, gig, sulky, carry-all, and carry nothing, mud waggon, dearborn, horse, mule, steamboat, steam carriage, goelette, shallop, skiff, wooden canoe, bark canoe, raft, rail, tree stump, the back of an Indian, and what not. We were now to

adventure our persons in yet another manner. The Mexican *littera* is a kind of oblong box, about a foot deep, three feet wide, and six feet long, unfortunately more frequently shorter than longer. Two long poles passing down and fastened to the sides, project fore and aft, and serve as shafts for two mules, to whose pack saddles the ends are attached by straps. In short, a long box instead of an upright one, a recumbent and supine position, instead of a sitting one, and two four-footed porters instead of two biped ones, are the main points of difference between the *littera* and the sedan chair. It is furnished with a leather awning and cotton curtains, and ordinarily with a well-worn mattress, through which you may feel the rough boards upon which you recline.

We had heard the litter described as the most luxurious mode of travelling; and accordingly, each slipped into his independent vehicle, with a feeling of great satisfaction.

We formed a train of ten, with a horde of sumpter mules. Each litter, besides its two mules, was furnished with a mounted leader, a driver, and three spare animals, to serve as relays. The price of each, to the coast, was forty dollars.

So down the deep paved street we clattered, amid the plaudits of the *poblanitas* from window and balcony: we were soon beyond the town, and travelled forward for hours through the forests, which gradually changed their character—the oak and his congeners disappearing, and the *miimosa* taking their place.

Night soon closed in; and when we halted, we found it was four o'clock in the morning, and that we had reached the celebrated bridge called by the builders, Puente del Rey; still later, Puente Imperial; and now Puente Nacional; where we were to lie quiet for twelve hours, the heat being such as to forbid advance. We had passed, between waking and sleeping, the villages of Encero and Plan del Rio.

I was now in some degree authorized to judge of the luxury of the litter. Pourtales was, it is true, in ecstasy



at the bliss of being thus transported from place to place, with no effort on his part but what was necessary to lie steadily on his back, light another cigarita, or demolish another pineapple or watermelon, with which we had taken care to furnish ourselves; and, by-the-by, compared to the pineapples of Jalapa, all others are but turnips. M'Euen was extremely quiet—probably from there being something in the swinging movement of the machine which gave him a foretaste of the coming sorrows of salt water, from which he always suffered grievously. For myself, I admit that novelty had charms for about ten minutes; when I discovered that my litter wanted in length what it had in breadth. It was at once too broad and too short for me; and I had, in consequence, to double myself up, both from necessity, and to steady myself as it swung from side to side. In addition, I found both dust and heat nearly insupportable; during the night especially, when it seemed probable, that I should be quite dissolved before dawn. Then there was the motion—soothing enough when the ground was even, and the mules well behaved, but extremely disquieting when they were not of one mind, or when they stumbled down one of the sudden pitches which are common upon this mountain road. It sometimes appeared inevitable, that I should be shot forth on my feet; at others, that I and the litter should be dragged in twain; and long before we came to a halt, I made up my mind, that, “were it not for the honour of the thing,” I would much rather have walked.

This being the state of affairs, it was a great relief to escape from my shell, and take a little rational exercise at Puente del Rey: it is my temper to prefer old names to new ones. The river Antigua, over which this noble causeway and bridge were constructed early in the present century, is formed of the combined waters of two dashing mountain rivers, which issue from their several glens at this point, and intermingle their streams just above the bridge. The whole scene is very striking, from the massive and noble character of the bridge and its approaches, contrasted with the savage character of the

defile. The acclivities are very steep, rocky, and mostly covered with forest. The elevated promontory between the two forks, forms a commanding, but not a very tenable position. It is fortified, if that term can apply to the existence of a rude fort, with a few pieces of cannon, without either soldiers or ammunition. It has, however, been frequently squabbled for during the last twenty years.

A long, sleepy, broiling hot day was passed among the palmetto-thatched cottages of the hamlet near the bridge, which is far from being unpicturesque; and at five in the evening, we crept into our litters again, and resumed our journey. Barren roads, covered with low bushes, conducted us to Santa Fe, which we reached at two in the morning. Here, for the second time, pursuant to the system of caution which terrible experience has inculcated, our line came to a second halt within three leagues of Vera Cruz. At Puente del Rey, we had lost many of the hangers-on of the train; and here all who were not quite acclimated, or whom necessity did not compel to enter within the infected border, took their leave, as now farther advance would bring us within the influence of the danger.

At five we set forward again. The level surface of the country became open, sandy, and steril; and forbidding beyond all description—without a hut or patch of cultivation—and the scenery glared upon us in a ghastly manner in the white light of the newly risen sun.

In the course of two hours, escaping from the long ridges of sand with which the lower levels are covered, we arrived upon the hot beach of the gulf, a little to the north of the city. We straightway despatched a messenger to the merchant to whom we were recommended, and passing the gate, threaded a few deserted streets, and heedless of anything but escape, alighted at a fonda on the quay. Half of an hour sufficed to transact our business. Our baggage had not arrived from the capital, and we found we must sail without it. By nine or soon after, on the first of May, we were already on board the New-York packet, then lying in the roadstead—for port it can

hardly be called—abreast of the celebrated castle of San Juan de Ulua, and within full view of the sea wall, and the numerous towers, cupolas, and the batteries of the city. Low shores and banks lay on either hand, and the Island of Sacrificios just broke the watery horizon to the east.

After reading the above, you will not expect me to say much in description of La Villa Rica della Vera Cruz.

Regularly and even beautifully built, with fine open streets, a noble spacious square, and many churches—the principal channel through which the riches of New Spain are poured into the Old World—Vera Cruz is deserted in its appearance, and forbidding, from the utterly steril character of the shore on which it is based, and the flights of unclean birds which perch upon its roofs and churches, and hover round its walls. Mammon is the sole god of the city which is called after the symbol of our faith; and here the bones of thousands of his worshippers whiten in the sands. The population has dwindled down from sixteen thousand to five thousand souls; and every year, a large proportion of the new inhabitants, or the foreign arrivals, whether from the cool table land above or from beyond sea, are carried off by that terrible malady the “black vomit.”

The season when the *vomito* displays its greatest virulence is commonly from August to October. This year, it had never ceased to carry off new comers, even during the cool months following the preceding rainy season, and already in January it had made considerable ravages. At the time we thus came within its power, forty deaths a day were reported, and it was supposed many more actually occurred.

The intense heats of the climate, augmented by the high walls of the city, and the rise of the sand hills—together with the stagnant waters in the neighbouring lagoons—are supposed to be the nurses of this terribly malignant and subtle form of bilious fever, to which experience has proved that the unacclimated is exposed, though he breathe the infected atmosphere but a

single hour. No care, no precaution, no previous course of medicine—no certain antidote can be prescribed. In daring it from necessity, you must rest satisfied with following the advice given, and taking those measures which, however vain in many cases, experience has sanctioned, and throw yourself upon the mercy of God for the rest.

And this we had done to the best of our ability. We were told that the preceding three days' norte was, to a certain degree, in our favour, as during its continuance the pestilence abates something of its virulence. On shipboard we might be considered to be in no danger; but we had passed two or three hours within reach of the infection; and though there was a strong impulse in our bosoms to chant *Te Deum*, there was that uncertainty in our position which mingled the wailing accents of *Miserere mei, Deus!* with the song of praise.

The castle of San Juan de Ulua belongs to that class of fortresses whose real strength is much more remarkable, than their outward appearance is striking or picturesque. It lies low on the water, in the midst of the harbourage, having for its base nothing more elevated than a mere sand bank, of which the shallow flats form its defence to the seaward. We had a permit for the inspection of the interior, but were in nowise tempted to take advantage of it. The morning passed away swiftly, in making the necessary arrangements for the voyage; and the afternoon, in hourly expectation of departure. One by one, our fellow-passengers came dropping in; and all being on board by five in the evening, we were glad and thankful to weigh anchor, and see the bow of the handsome vessel turned to the northeast. The sun set in haze and cloud, over the summits of the distant Cordillera. Orizava was completely covered. The wind was favourable, and long before dawn, we had lost sight of the coast of New Spain.

And now what would you have me say more.

It would be deemed presumptuous in one who had spent but three months in a country, if he were to pretend to speak decidedly as to the condition of its inhabitants and character of its government. Little as we saw, nevertheless there are certain broad traits which strike the foreigner immediately, and I believe the correctness of his first impressions is fully substantiated by the experience of all whose position has yielded an occasion of looking at the state of society more closely. My hastily imbibed impressions of the inhabitants of New Spain were far from being favourable either to the people or to the system they have been pleased to adopt for their guide. If I may judge by what I saw and what I learned, I should infer that the barber, whose opinion I have elsewhere mentioned, was in the right, and that, of all countries I had ever seen, New Spain contains the largest proportion of *canaille*. How few, in that motley population, from the bedizened official of an hour to the lazar sleeping on the steps of the churches, merit any other name.

In the United States, however strong your bias to the opinion, you pause in asserting that the theory of popular self-government can never be reduced to successful practice among the present races of mankind. However strong your secret conviction, that, though circumstances may have there favoured it thus far, it will, however wise and however reasonable in theory, ultimately prove itself inapplicable to man in his fallen state, even in that vaunted instance, there exists, for the time being, so much which would appear to tell in its favour, that you may as well shun the war of words. You feel that you had better hold your tongue and not argue, but let Time, the prover of all things, speak for you. But here in New Spain the case is otherwise; and the same may be said of all its southern neighbours in like positions: the experiment is one of which the madness is evident, and that it has not been, thus far, attended with like evils in the United States, is to be attributed to the difference of lineage, blood, and position; not that the theory is a wise one.

No one who has ever spent a month in Mexico will pretend to say that the present state of the country is flattering to the advocates of republicanism. He detects want of system ; want of public and private faith ; want of legitimate means of carrying on the government, of enforcing the laws, or maintaining order ; total absence of patriotism ; a general ignorance ; indifference to the value of education, linked to overweening arrogance and pride ; an incredible absence of men of either natural or acquired talent of any description ; and intolerant support of the darkest bigotry and superstition. The meanest partisanship stands in the place of patriotism. The government of the moment has not the power of effectually governing, even if it were sincere in the desire. No party is trusted ; no man in the country can command even the respect, much less the co-operation of all ; (I say respect, because a man of undoubted talent and probity and honest views, will be respected even by his political adversaries ;) and why ?—because self-seeking and self-aggrandizement is the purpose of all. They vapour about patriotism, and know not the signification of the word.

The people of the United States, and the partisans of their system all the world over, find a ready answer or apology for the disreputable state of things among these their imitators ; and lay the present disorganization to the charge of the ancient tyranny. No—even granting that Spain in the government of her colonies was tyrannical, there are other causes which incapacitate the Mexicans from treading in the footsteps of the states more to the north, and which will, it is probable, always prevent them attaining to their respectable position, however it were to be wished. They have neither the principles of government, nor the reason, nor the conviction of the value of education, and more than all, the strong moral sense and general diffusion of religious principle, which distinguish their more northern neighbours. And what is to give it them ?

I have now but little more to add of a character likely to interest you.

The "Mexican," for so our packet was called, was a fine new vessel, clean and well-ordered, a fast sailer, and altogether the most comfortable ship I ever was in. We had our staterooms on deck in a kind of open round-house.

The voyage was, upon the whole, prosperous; and for many days it seemed as if it would have been made in an unusually brief space of time—such was the rapid advance made under the influence of a steady breeze, and the rapidity of the great gulf stream, whose current was in our favour. In one forty-eight hours, we logged an advance of full five hundred miles. However, three days' storm in the latitude of Cape Hatteras, delayed us considerably; and it was on May 19th before we crossed the bar at Sandy Hook, and entered the port of New-York.

There was one occurrence on board, however, which made a great impression upon the ship's company at the time, and with the mention of that I terminate my chronicle. Among the Europeans who had come down from the capital with the other passengers for the packet, was Mr. P., a young French gentleman of family, an attache of the French legation. He had spent two years in the country, and was now returning to New-York and Paris with despatches, to the joy of his parents, to whom, as we learned afterward, this long separation had been a grievous trial.

Gay and careless, on arrival at Jalapa, far from following the advice or example of every other individual of the party similarly circumstanced, he persisted in continuing his journey to Vera Cruz without delay, laughing at the idea of the danger—preferring to pass jovially a day or two with his acquaintances in that city, to the detention in a town on the mountains, where he felt no particular interest. He went—and on the evening of sailing, he joined us on board, dilating upon the social hours he had passed in consequence of his better management.

Poor fellow!—little did he imagine, that that heedless

contempt of danger would cost him his life ; that at that very moment, the seeds were sown of the fatal disease ; and that, in the eyes of more than one experienced observer on board, he was already a doomed man. In common with many of the passengers, he suffered from seasickness during the first two or three days, but when they, one by one, recovered health and spirits, he continued very ill, and evidently grew worse instead of better. The bad habit of body in which he evidently was, accounted for this in some degree ; but on the fourth day, a total prostration of strength, the horribly livid hue of his countenance, and other yet more certain symptoms of the *vomito*, began to excite more than ordinary interest and attention. The idea of having the horrible disease among us was repulsive, as you may imagine. Many denied the possibility, and for some time the matter was rather whispered than openly debated. The fifth day brought delirium and raving. No remedy suggested by the experience of those around him, no care, brought any alleviation. It was affecting to see at this time, when the nature of the dreadful malady which he had thus introduced, by fatal imprudence, into our floating prison became unquestionable, how all seemed to front the danger with firmness. There was no skulking and no murmuring ; no shunning the sick man's couch when assistance was necessary. He had no intimate friend on board, and all seemed therefore to claim an equal right to do what could be done. De Pourtales in particular, who felt not only the tie of language with the sufferer, but the similarity of their ages and positions, was unremitting in his good offices.

The night between the seventh and eighth was a dreadful one. We were off the Campeachy Bank ; and soon after dark a heavy squall with thunder and lightning came on.

The poor patient had been removed from below to one of the deck staterooms, both for a freer circulation of air, as well as to diminish the danger of infection. Pourtales, M'Euen, and myself, occupied the berths in his immediate proximity,



I cannot describe to you the effect produced upon the mind, as, during the long watches of that night, the fevered and agonizing ravings of the dying man were heard mingling with the whistling of the wind in the cordage, the wash of the sea, and the roll of the thunder. The rocking of the vessel on the short seas, and the shocks which it received, evidently aggravated his sufferings—and from sundown to sunrise, neither spirit nor body found repose. He frequently called us by name ; but when we crept to the side of his berth, all was incoherence.

Poor young man ! he had been brought up in the heartless school of French immorality, and had lived without God or shame ; and now, with clouded reason and senses, was dying beyond the sense of sorrow and repentance for sin. The day which followed was a weary one ; we all trod the deck in silence. The patient got no rest. His spirit was literally “ raving round its prison walls,” and seeking exit. Towards evening, the last fatal symptom of his dreadful malady came on—the black vomit—and yet he lived. We could none of us rest, but watched when the end would come. Our captain was a noble character, and his behaviour was, throughout, such as to reflect honour on himself and the service. Had he been the dying man’s brother, he could not have evinced a more complete and more generous devotedness than he did from first to last. There he sat, hour after hour, supporting the languid head, and watching the gasp for breath, perfectly regardless of the risk of infection ; and when about half past one, on the morning of the eighth, the sufferer at length ceased to breathe, he was still at his post.

When all was over, energetic measures were immediately adopted to avert danger to the passengers and crew. The body was strongly sewed up in canvass ; and by seven o’clock most signs of the past trial had been carefully removed. But there was still the shapeless corpse, which, covered with a flag, lay extended upon a plank, resting upon the starboard bulwarks of the vessel.

There had been no indecent hurry—at the same time

that there was no risk knowingly incurred. Out of respect to the dead and the living, and for the sake of those for whose breasts this heavy blow was preparing, it was unanimously decided that all that decency could suggest should be done. He might not be of our faith—he might not have lived and died to the Lord: our duty as men was clear; and for the rest, we left judgment to Him that judgeth righteously.

At sunrise the small crew clustered round the mainmast, and the passengers under the roundhouse. The ensign of the United States, with its stars and stripes, floated halfway up the rigging; and the ship was kept under easy sail on the fresh but favourable breeze which had sprung up after the squall. The sky was without a cloud. In the absence of a clergyman of any church, the duty of reading the service over the body was imposed upon me. I never heard that exquisitely beautiful portion of the ritual of the Church of England read without emotion, and none need wonder that I felt my voice tremble, as now, in the face of the broad blue sky, and amid the world of waters, I was called to utter its solemn strain over the lifeless remains of the companion who had thus been suddenly taken away while we were left. Others may have forgotten the incident long ago—I never can forget it. Yet the circumstances were such as sobered the most unreflecting for the time. All saw before them a striking proof that “*Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery!*” and that “*In the midst of live we are in death.*”

Thus we committed the body of our fellow mortal to the deep, to be turned into corruption: looking for the resurrection of the body, when the sea shall give up her dead.



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