

tains; growing day by day and year by year, by the accumulation of its own refuse, amidst the showers of its own ashes, the flow of its lavas, and amidst 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; disgoring 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 sterile 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, amidst 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, Guanajuato, 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 dyke over which Alvarado made his celebrated

tains; growing day by day and year by year, by the accumulation of its own refuse, amidst the showers of its own ashes, the flow of its lavas, and amidst 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; disgoring 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 sterile 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, amidst 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, Guanajuato, 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 dyke 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 its enclosure of its church-yard, 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 part 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 entrenchment, 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 south-eastern extremity of the city. But, as I soon got tired of the stately recreation of the Promenade; and after a few experiments at playing '*Vaimable*' 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 the singularity of position of Chapultepec—the *hill of the grass-hopper*—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 overspread by luxuriant vegetation. That it was a favorite 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 is 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 Pedrigal. 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 had 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 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 occasions of seeing the shrine, and its riches, at my leisure. Nuestra 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.¹

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.

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

¹ 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.

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 refraction 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 a 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, both 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