

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 Cautla 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 refraction 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 hot-houses 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 south-east, 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 Malpais, 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 sterile 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 embosomed 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 noon-day 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 cargos 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 water-melons 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 sun-set, 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 set sun 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.¹

Though upwards of twenty years had since gone

¹ 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 entrenchments 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 fourth 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 2nd or 3rd 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.

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.

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 other lodgings.

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 these 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, amidst a volley of abuse and ribaldry from the household.

I must say, that we felt now 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 minute's 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 no wise 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 bye 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 pot-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-guard 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 court-yard 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 'Buono Viaggio!' opened the gate for our welcome departure.

Such is the souvenir which we have brought away from our visit to the patriotic Cautla 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 Yautepec, 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 flanks, 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 upwards. 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 south-western

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 arise 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 any thing of the kind. The utmost that I could positively 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 17,684 feet.¹

¹ It may interest the reader to know that four days after our visit the ascent of 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 oak 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 50°

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 enterprize. 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 about three miles in circumference, with perhaps a depth of a thousand feet. There is a break towards the east. The side walls

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 shed, which served at once for chapel and court-house, 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 north-east, 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 only halted two hours; and then trotted onward, hoping to are perpendicular. Vapours rise from several orifices, but rarely reach the edge of the crater. Here the adventurers stayed 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.

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 road-side proved the truth of the report.

Long before sun-set, 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 sun-beams were shining on the façade of the church of Nuestra 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.