

the luxury of the litter. Pourtales was, it is true, in extacy 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 pine-apple or water melon, with which we had taken care to furnish ourselves; and by the bye, compared to the pine-apples 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 disquieting extremely 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 characters of the bridge and its approaches, contrasted with 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 ex-

perience 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 further 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 sterile; 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 any thing 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 sterile 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 day's 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 harborage, having for its base nothing more

elevated than a mere sandbank, of which the shallow flats form its defence to the sea-ward. We had a permit for the inspection of the interior, but were in no wise 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 north-east. 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 partizanship 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 partizans 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 state-rooms 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 attaché 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 afterwards, 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 sea-sickness 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 state-rooms, 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 sun-down to sun-rise, 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 prisonwalls,' 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 no risk was 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 sun-rise the small crew clustered round the main-mast, and the passengers under the round-house. The ensign of the United States, with its stars and stripes, floated half way 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 Church of England ritual read without emotion, and none need wonder that I felt my voice tremble, as now, in the face of the broad blue sky, and amidst of 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, 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 life 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.

THE END.

