

mutual regret at parting. He was, with justice, looked on as the *facilis princeps* of our passengers.

These being now very much diminished in number, I got transferred to a better cabin, where I sat down, accompanied and assisted by H—, to write letters for England. At half-past twelve, she retired. I closed at half-past two in the morning; went on deck to breathe the balmy air, to take my last view of the scenery, now made doubly serene by a soft, clear moonlight, reflected back from the bosom of the placid sea. The murmuring ripple of the waves fell mournfully on my ear, and led my mind to a somewhat melancholy contemplation of the vicissitudes of life, and to the wonderful variety of scene and fortune which the course of time offers to the restless mind of man. In such mood, I sat on deck for an hour; and, after retiring, ere I could bring sleep to refresh my weary frame in my crib, the bustle of getting under weigh began. The dog-watch sounded four bells, and as at last I fell into an uneasy slumber, I felt that we were once more steaming on the Atlantic.

## LETTER VI.

PASSAGE FROM ST. THOMAS'S TO VERA CRUZ  
CONTINUED.

*At Sea, Lat. 24° 20' N., Long, 84° W.  
Friday, 12th January, 1849.*

I have said, in the course of my letters, that a large English packet, running to foreign parts, presents an epitome of the society of the world at large; and now the many devious and unexpected turns which our voyage has taken, may entitle me to call it a pretty accurate representation of the mutabilities of life. This will be best seen, perhaps, when I come to sum up our passage.

We had a delightful run from Jamaica to the Havana: splendid moonlight nights, a favouring breeze, smooth sea, and deliciously balmy air. We were much on deck, and many and various were the nautical games brought out to amuse us:—"Bull" and "Monkey," "Rooster-quarrel," and

"Sea-billiards," with many others, which I need not stop to explain; but they were all a source of merriment on deck. The evenings were given to dancing; and for a musician we had now "George," the quaintest and most old-fashioned little cabin-boy you ever saw. When dancing commenced, he was mounted on the capstan, where, with his little legs dangling in the air, he moved his indefatigable bow to polka and waltz with entire success.

Yesterday morning, Thursday, the 11th, we came in sight of the Havana; and at nine o'clock, we were abreast of the celebrated fortification, called "*el Morro*," situated at the entrance to the narrow passage which leads into the beautiful harbour. The fortification, which is triangular, and erected on a fine promontory, cost the Spanish Crown ten millions of dollars in the construction. A smaller fortification stands on the opposite side; and a fortified castle crowns a neighbouring hill, which commands the seaward approaches. The entrance to the harbour is by the passage between the two opposite shores, three-quarters of a mile long; but the *channel* of which is so narrow, that only one vessel can enter at a time, and it is fortified

through the whole distance. The "Morro" is mounted with forty pieces of ordnance, almost flush with the sea;\* while the opposite fort, called "Puntál," is strong, and connected with the town to the north. The harbour will accommodate almost any number of ships of the largest class.

We were up early, and ready to go on shore. All idea of quarantine had fled from our minds:—when, lo! a boat, rowed by eight men, with a gruff old Charon at the helm (he being harbour-pilot), neared us. He ordered a rope out, by which he attached his boat to our vessel, and thus, as we *towed* our pilot, from the stern, he sat in his boat giving orders, directing, at last, our commander to anchor in the quarantine ground! O, the dismay which filled our souls! Then came the health boat. The ominous yellow flag was thrown to us to hoist, and strict quarantine was confirmed by the Captain of the Port, a handsome-looking man, who came off in his boat, bringing with him Mr. Crawford, our Consul-General. Yes; strict quarantine for *all*, with intimation to our

\* I forget what 64-gun ship it was that was re-manned three times before the Morro, when the English took the Havana, in the Seven Years' War.

wretched fellow passengers bound for *Havana*, that they would be transferred to another vessel, and there remain in quarantine for twenty days! Twenty long, dismal days of close and insalubrious imprisonment awarded wholesale, without the remotest allegation of crime, wrong, or fault, by the unhappy prisoners committed!

Now consider the folly, the extravagance, the absolute insanity of this proceeding—alas! but an imitation of the wretched example which we at home first set to other nations.

Cholera, we know, is not infectious: it is epidemic; it is in the air. When we left England, the cholera existed in so mild a form, that only nineteen cases were reported, I think, in one week, throughout the whole country. From England to Havana, we had been at sea forty days. We had landed at St. Thomas's, where we changed our ship; we had landed at Jamaica, and thence we had a clean bill of health; not a case of sickness of any kind had arisen on board, all were in robust health; forty days of fine sea-breeze, not a complaint, not a trace, of illness among us; and yet the unfortunate passengers for the Havana were to be shut up in a close, pestiferous little

cabin for twenty days! Our *vessel* had not been in an English port for five months; but, having taken a European passenger at St. Thomas's, quarantine in the Havana for twenty days! This is the beautiful, rational, sensible system which dear enlightened old England not only refuses to give up, but encourages, throughout the world, by her noble example! O the amiable reverence with which we regard the follies and the freaks, and, above all, the ignorant prejudices, of our dear forefathers!

The execrable part came first, and the laughable part followed. In the health-boat were sundry small casks of vinegar and chloride of lime, under the charge of a man who may be designated *tongsman*. His tongs were of bright brass, ingeniously constructed, and fastened to the end of a long pole; so that, resting the under part on a rope of our vessel, the tongs opened; and, on being lifted off again, they closed with a spring, tightly grasping whatever was inserted in them. Up, then, came the bright tongs for our muster-roll and some other paper: in the purser pushed them, and away went the shining messenger with the prey in its mouth. It was swayed to a

vinegar-bucket in the boat, plentifully sprinkled with vinegar, then delicately laid hold of by the thumb and forefinger of an affrighted sailor, who conveyed it to the harbour-master. A variety of papers were subjected, separately, to this purifying process, and then commenced the delivery of our correspondence from England.

The bags were lowered down to our *own* boats, and there disgorged thousands of letters, newspapers, packets, and pamphlets. A sharp chisel was then struck through each letter, paper, etc.; chlorine and vinegar were next thrown over them, and then the now-disinfected property was transferred to the Havana boat. You will receive your letters from me thus purified. The operation was a long one; and meantime we went on *coaling*, in which the same fanciful and farcical care was taken to prevent contamination from ideal cholera.

Another change, one of great difficulty to some on board, was announced. Mr. Crawford ordered us to proceed direct to Vera Cruz, leaving the passengers bound for New Orleans and Tampico to make the best of it. Of course. What are passengers? So much live lumber, which must not

be allowed to interfere with, or cumber, Her Majesty's mails. So our fellow-passengers, in this case, had the pleasing alternative of proceeding to Vera Cruz, and *returning* to Havana, to go by the following packet to New Orleans and Tampico; or they might await the return of the packet to Havana—they remaining, meantime, in quarantine. The latter course was adopted by only two of the passengers placed in this predicament; and *their* peregrinations, caused by our long passage, form a dismal little episode in our principal epic action. I have been so busy with other matters, that I have not yet mentioned Mr. Johnson, and his sister Mrs. Morris.

They are Americans (United States): the brother settled at New Orleans; the sister, with her husband, at New York. Thither Mr. Johnson had gone on a visit; and Mrs. Morris being in delicate health, it was determined she should winter in the mild climate of New Orleans: but, in an evil hour, our travellers farther resolved that, instead of going direct (a short operation, by land and water, through the States), they should take the royal mail steamer which now visits New York monthly, go passengers to Bermuda, and

there trans-ship themselves, to the out-coming packet from England, for Mobile and New Orleans.

Now the vessel in which Mr. Johnson and his sister were to take this latter passage, was the "Avon," which, as you well know, never got to Bermuda at all. Mr. J. waited there five days for us; and then, against good advice given him, he resolved to go to St. Thomas's, expecting to find us there; but being, day by day, disappointed after his arrival at that island, he had actually taken a passage, and was just about to sail, with his invalid sister, by a little sailing-vessel, on the very day when (happily, as Mr. Johnson thought) we made our appearance. So they came with us to Jamaica and Havana, as New Orleans passengers.

Figure, then, the dismay of this couple, on being told, at Havana, that, although they had taken and paid for their passage to New Orleans, the "service" of Her Majesty's Government, and of the Company, would not permit of the "Forth" going to Mobile; and that, therefore, Mr. Johnson and Mrs. Morris must take the chance of the following steamer, which might, in all *probability*,

go to the said port. Great was the wrath of Mr. Johnson, and a most natural wrath it was. He threatened the captain, and spoke of all sorts of protests; he condemned, in unqualified and plain-spoken terms, the way in which he had been cheated, bamboozled, and taken in. He sneeringly asked if that was the way in which England *generally* fulfilled her engagements? Perhaps not; but then, what are passengers when outnumbered by letter-bags from Saint Martin's-le-grand? Chaff to be blown away from the corn—the refuse to be thrown overboard by Her Majesty's Superintendent of the Mails. So all Mr. Johnson's just indignation, as a neutral, went for nothing: our condolence only irritated him. "Be just and honest," said he; "and then we shall not require your condolences." At Mr. Crawford, who tenaciously kept to his orders, our American friend looked revolvers: all in vain! poor Mrs. Morris was too ill to bear the voyage down the gulf and up again: there was nothing for them but quarantine and patience. Of the former, Mr. Johnson was going to have a great deal; of the latter, unfortunately, he had very little.

But, to come down to our own *petites misères*.

All our hopes of spending a couple of pleasant days ashore, and of seeing the lions, "vanished into air, thin air." What was my letter of introduction to the good old Spanish house of Mongoaga and Co. worth now? Nothing. And the Tacón—the splendid opera-house—with *Marini's* benefit that very night! All disappeared from our tantalised vision, under the pestiferous shade of the hated yellow flag. O how sensibly do we feel, and how vividly do we see the folly and stupidity of governors of nations—, (and blush! dear Lords of the Admiralty, to think that you have, in the present instance, led off the dance of tom-foolery—,) when their absurdities affect our own comfort! Never before did I so heartily quarrel with the quarantine laws! Never had I obtained so clear a perception of their perverse, silly, and laughably-barbarous tendencies and effects, as at Madeira and Havana! Would that, at the latter, we had had the First Lord of the Admiralty, bound for Cat Island, and disinclined to run all the risks for nothing of the Gulf of Mexico.

We had to content ourselves with a view of the fine city before our eyes, and of the surrounding objects which adorned the shores of the great

natural harbour in which we lay, from the deck of the Forth, even as a beggar has to content himself with looking at the display of a pastrycook's front through the window. No fruition in either case. The scene around was animated and picturesque. The number of vessels gathered along the quays, and riding at anchor in the bay; the bright houses in the town, mostly white, but a good many *sky-blue*, and some washed with other tints, all clean looking, many handsome buildings; the grey spires; the gigantic palm trees behind the city; the villas, the green fields; all were grouped together in a pleasing panoramic view. Then, by the light of the silver moon, which at night rose and gradually threw its beams over the gay city, and on the perfectly still deep-blue water, the objects came out in lines so softened, yet so clearly defined, as to give a still more charming effect to the scene than it possessed in the broad glare of day.

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*Saturday, 13th, at Sea.*

Yesterday morning, at seven o'clock, the Forth being ready to proceed on her voyage, we had the

health-boat, and the officers and the captain of the port in his own boat, again accompanied by Mr. Crawford, at the ship's side. There, in the health-boat, sat the master of the tongs once more, surrounded by his vinegar barrels and trough, to conclude his purifying and disinfecting functions.

At eight A.M. the melancholy procession of the quarantine prisoners, whom we were about to see consigned to a twenty days' seclusion from the world, moved off from the gangway, in profound silence, and descending over the ship's side, they were rowed in a boat, belonging to an American brigantine (one of a cluster of quarantine vessels), to their aquatic lazaretto, where we presently saw them take their pensive stand under the frightful yellow flag. The passengers who then left us were nine in number, seven for the Havana and two for New Orleans. Among the former were:—

1st. Mr. and Mrs. Z—, a Spanish couple, established at Havana, he being one of the rich planters there, and, though a young man, making, as I was told, £15,000 a year *nett* by his sugar estate! What a different tale have our once rich Jamaica planters to tell! But Mr. Z— works his estate himself—no waste, no riotous living, no

absenteeism, no complication or roguery of management. "*El ojo del amo,*" says the Spanish adage, "*engorda el caballo,*" and so Mr. Z. looks after his own horse and has a sleek, fat animal for his pains. Mr. and Mrs. Z— were agreeable and genteel people—, the latter young and pretty.

2nd. Our nice friend Mons. D—, the best of our foreign passengers. He went, as I have said, by the name of Cavaignac among us. A well-bred, lively young Frenchman; well informed, a staunch Royalist, and, above all (for our selfish views), a splendid musician.

3rd. Doctor F—, an estimable man, with whom H— and I were much delighted. He predicts confidently the downfall of Cuba, by some movement or another, and although well established there, he is already looking out for some other place where he can calculate on greater stability of public affairs: The doctor's deafness distressed him sometimes, for he feared it might end in being total. But generally he was lively in his manner, and had a playful and happy wit; while his modesty alone hid from general view his varied knowledge and highly scientific acquirements.

4th. Our Spanish spinster, as she turned out to

be, although she assumed matrimonial honours. She was a bold, pretending, and disagreeable woman, of dubious character, and unlady-like behaviour.

5th. Mr. Johnson and Mrs. Morris, our unfortunate North American passengers, mentioned a few pages back.

We are now enjoying beautiful weather, and I shall resume (D.V.), from Vera Cruz, where we expect to arrive on Tuesday, the 1st.

## LETTER VII.

## THE SHIPWRECK.

*Campeachy, Yucatan,*

*19th January, 1849.*

“CAMPEACHY! Yucatan! 19th January, when you ought to have been in Vera Cruz on the 16th!” Such would have been your natural exclamation, had this account of our voyage reached you first; but although it will not be so, I must proceed to chronicle, even more minutely than heretofore, the new and unlooked-for events and misadventures of our voyage.

We got out of Havana harbour, as I have said, on the morning of the 12th, re-passing the “Morro,” at about nine A.M. We picked up four new passengers, as we were clearing the bay:—a German professor of Daguerriotype, with a Spanish lady, whom he had lately married, and loaded also with his whole stock in trade, with a view to setting up in Mexico. The others were a padre or priest,