

LETTER XIV.

CAMPEACHY.

*Campeachy, 18th January
to 3rd February, 1849.*

ON Thursday evening, then, as already stated, we landed at the mole of Campeachy. A great number of persons stood upon it, gazing on us, suspecting, though they could only guess, that we were shipwrecked people.

Finding we had no British consul here, but knowing that Don Joaquin Gutierrez de Estrada was Lloyd's agent, I begged a well-dressed young man to direct us to that gentleman's residence. Several at once offered their services to us for that or anything else we wanted; so after having by their aid procured a custom-house officer to go on board the "Bella Isabel," we proceeded to Mr. Gutierrez's house. We were ushered up to his drawing-room, his place of business being closed. We, (i. e. those who entered), were Captain Sturdee, H—, Mr. Molesworth, the purser, and

myself. La Señora Gutierrez was in the room with some other ladies, and to her care H— was consigned by Mr. Gutierrez, while he stood with us, apart, discussing our business, in the English language, which he speaks perfectly.

Mr. Gutierrez was a tall handsome-looking man, under 40, with a fine, expressive countenance. A gentleman in manner, intelligent as a merchant and man of the world, we soon found that we could not have addressed ourselves to a more ready friend in our distress, nor to a more active agent to fulfil our business requirements. We arranged about discharging the "Bella Isabel;" the procuring of vessels to carry us away from Campeachy; for supplying our pecuniary wants; and for our accommodation at the "Hotel," during our sojourn in the city. Mr. Gutierrez's counting-house was to form the centre of our operations.

In the meantime, H— was entertained by la Señora Gutierrez. This lady, although the mother of many children, was in the prime of life; and in the possession of a beauty in face and form, which shewed as yet, no innovation by Time. The expression of her features was mild, and their cast regular; her eyes black, but her complexion quite fair. Her easy

graceful and quiet deportment, greatly enhanced her outward appearance, and altogether she seemed to be fitted to shine in any society. Of course she stands at the head of that of Yucatan. Mr. Gutierrez has been in the course of his career, but much against his will, governor of his native country. His family is the highest in the place, and some members of it have been leading men in Mexico, more particularly Mr. G—'s brother; so celebrated as a high-minded leader of the patriotic cause; while Mr. G— himself, is worthily transmitting to his sons, the untarnished honours which have uninterruptedly accumulated in his family.

Mr. Gutierrez had sent to the hotel to procure apartments for us; but he could only secure one large bed-room, with four *catres*, or stretchers, so great was the bustle which prevailed in "Don Pedro's" establishment. Yet all the passengers having got on shore, they were, some way or other stowed away, Don Pedro being a man who was never at a loss. Then H—, with Monsieur and Madame D—, and M. A—, were transferred to an untenanted house, near the hotel, as a temporary arrangement. But there was little rest for the "Naufragos" during their first night on shore;

for everywhere the mosquitos were terrible, the noise was great, and the talking was incessant.

The following day, our French friends having left the empty habitation, H— and I took their place. A ghostly looking house it was, but we were too busy at first to do anything in the way of "making things comfortable." We were occupied most of the day, through heat, and amid devouring mosquitos, in writing to England. On the 20th, we were occupied in the way I have detailed in my preceding letter; and on the 21st. we were extremely busy again writing for England, and in preparing copies of all the letters to and from Captain Sturdee, to send to different parties at home. He had chartered a brigantine to take himself, his officers, and ship's servants (steward, &c., &c.), as well as some of his passengers, to the Havana.

Towards eight — a beautiful night, as all the nights in Campeachy seem to be, our correspondence finished, and in Mr. Lawrence's possession, H— and I walked with him, Capt. Sturdee and Lieut. Molesworth, to the pier, to see them off. We parted from them as from friends that we had known all our lives. Had we only seen and

known them, *in the world*—only had an opportunity of an intercourse with them, under the generalities of a London life, for instance, how long might it not have been, ere we should have spoken and thought of each other, as highly esteemed friends! A very few weeks—I might almost say one week had brought about this result. And why? Because our natural feelings had been powerfully roused, and kept in play, by sharing a common danger; a circumstance at once evoking those deeper sympathies of our nature, which, in the common routine of life, lie buried in conventionalities.

And so we parted with our most intimate Avon and Forth friends, of whom I may just say a few more words before now taking leave of them.

When Captain Hast introduced Captain Sturdee to me, he said I should find him “a very worthy man”; adding, that he was truly pleased we were to finish our voyage under one, who, he was sure, would make us comfortable and happy. Captain S— had originally been Captain H—’s first officer, and had obtained a command by his own merits, joined to “the commodore’s” earnest recommendation.

At first, I was inclined to think that Captain

Hast had over-rated our new commander’s agreeable qualities; but I gradually found that I was mistaken. We are all inclined to be physiognomists; but the science does not always lead us to correct conclusions. Captain Sturdee had a somewhat stern expression of countenance. One morning, in order to keep the Yucatan wreckers, and some of our own men to their good behaviour, our captain armed himself as he best could; then jumping into his boat, he stood upright at the helm, with a very fine beaver hat (evidently not his own), a striped flannel jacket, with tight sleeves, as an outer garment; a flashy red silk sash tied round his waist, to serve instead of braces; a horse pistol stuck into it on one side, a cutlass on the other, with a life preserver slung on his wrist: his penetrating dark eye, and jet black hair, his rather swarthy complexion, and lip, which slightly curling up, shewed his white teeth: behold no bad impersonation of the brigand of “Gentle Zitella.”

But we found by degrees, that Captain Sturdee was really a sterling character. In a sailor-like way, he was kind, attentive and polite to all. He was full of joke and fun; was devoted to his duties, and, with gentlemanlike feelings, he possessed a

warm and generous nature. When all the excitement of the shipwreck was subdued, and he had time to consider his altered and disheartening position, the two paramount troubles which oppressed him, were sorrow for his young wife and family, and uneasiness about the safety of his professional reputation. Messrs. Wilson, Mann, Craigie and Barleigh, with Angus, chief engineer, formed a set of unexceptionable officers, as well as pleasing companions. I never met with more agreeable young men in their line. It was during poor Wilson's watch, that the Forth struck, and feeling that the whole responsibility of the shipwreck must rest on his shoulders, he was terribly affected with his misfortune. Although of Herculean frame, and great muscular power, he almost fainted away under his overwrought feelings. How nobly all these fine fellows, as well as our pleasant young middies behaved, from the time the ship struck to the hour of their leaving us, I have already incidentally mentioned. And I can only add, now, that one and all did great honour to the service to which they belong.

Mr. Rowland was a man quite according to my own heart; a true philosopher, with an easy

humour and quaint expression, forming the attic salt with which he seasoned his philosophy.

While he appeared to be careless of pleasing, he pleased everybody; and although possessed of that indescribable unobtrusiveness which characterises a gentleman, he was constantly making you smile or laugh, with his odd way of saying odd things. He affected, if I may so speak, an affected manner, while he was yet the most natural of men. The result was a quiet drollery, which was infinitely amusing.

Mr. Strutt, our purser, who now also left us, was quite a man of business—very kind and polite to us all, and I think I may say, to H— and myself, in particular, after the shipwreck. To be sure, he, as a matter of business, *did* order our great Perezean Museum overboard; but that was quite an unintentional mistake; and the wound which it caused to the scientific collectors is gradually closing up.

Of Mr. Edward Lawrence, I cannot speak too highly. A quietude of manner, a mild sedateness of deportment, obtained for him at once, in our mixed company, his right place. And when by degrees we subdivided, he became a favourite in

his own section, which comprised all the better spirits in the ship. There he opened up into a pleasant companion, social and good-tempered; education and good society, at home, practically improved by widely extended travel, had fitted him for a pleasant and instructive member of any community in which he chose to mix. He had, moreover, a reflective and observant mind, a clear and correct judgment. But it was not till the *shipwreck* that we had an insight into the higher qualities of heart and feelings which distinguished our friend. He was so kind, so thoughtful, so ready to perform all the little services which, under sudden reverses, are so acceptable: he took, from the first, so deep an interest in Captain Sturdee, and in all more immediately affected by the catastrophe of the Forth—he was at once so judicious, and so generous, in his views of the matter—he worked so hard and so willingly, yet so unostentatiously, in bringing affairs to the best possible bearing, both on the spot and looking prospectively to England;—that, altogether, I truly feel a pride in being able to call such a man my friend.

Of Lieutenant Molesworth what am I to say?

His character certainly rose with the occasion to a point far beyond that which we had, at an earlier occasion, anticipated. In a moment, he showed us the good stuff he was made of. You have seen, by our letter to him, how his noble conduct has been appreciated by his fellow passengers. Yet, it was not his gallant bearing as a sailor which most struck me; it was the goodness of his heart, the warmth of his feelings, the generosity of his nature. And although to ourselves, as perhaps among his more intimate friends, his impulses came out most freely, yet, throughout, his energies were given with the promptitude and efficacy of a hearty goodwill.

And so, of Molesworth, Lawrence, Sturdee, and Rowland, we took our leave at the pier, with feelings of affectionate interest, not proportioned to the length of time we had known them, but rather to the moving nature of the circumstances under which our intimacy had grown; to the admirable qualities which each, in his own way, had displayed; as well as to the extraordinary kindnesses and valuable and disinterested services which we had received at the hands of them all.

With respect to our own passage to Vera Cruz, I found we must either proceed early in the morning of the 21st, in a dirty, little, confined cutter of fifty tons burthen, or wait a less-incommodious passage by the "Rafaela," a schooner of one hundred tons, which we were told would sail in about eight days. Both H— and myself required some rest, for she was pretty well "knocked up," and I was still suffering from the combined effects of blows received on board the Forth, and a rheumatic cold caught afterwards; so I determined to wait for the Rafaela. But several of the other passengers, more pressed for time:—Herr L—, Mr. H—, the Admiralty Agent (with the mails), Señor C—, Señor L—, the Spanish Padre, and his companion, went on by the cutter.

Messrs. L— and H— were two of our favourite passengers. With the first, a philosophic German merchant of Mazatlan, the principal Mexican port on the Pacific, intelligent, though quiet—an amusing companion, a musician, a great linguist, and possessed of the minor social qualities,—we had been on cordial terms throughout the voyage. He pressed me hard to visit him at Mazatlan, and held

out tempting inducements; but I could only regret that I had no chance of being able to cross Mexico to the Pacific side, although to do so I very much desired.

I mentioned, at the commencement of these letters, a remarkably pleasant and agreeable young Scotchman, about to launch in the world, in a first-rate mercantile firm in Mexico. This was Mr. H—, who greatly ingratiated himself with every one by his modest deportment, joined to great good sense, and high feeling. His kind attentions to H— and myself during and after the wreck, we shall always gratefully remember. When my bruises rendered it difficult for me to walk, Mr. H— was ever by my side, to assist me. He was, you know, my partner in the Perez Museum, unwittingly committed to the deep.

Mr. C—, a Spanish trader, of Tampico, was a little man in stature, but not a little amusing in his ways. Señor L— (the great, rich, and fashionable tailor—the Stultz of Mexico,) talked always fluently, and *con amore*; generally had a knot of his own countrymen about him, who, although they listened with attention to his diversified, but often "long-spun" yarns, quietly

smoked their cigars while he declaimed, with his vehement but expressive gesticulations. The priest, — who affirmed he had nearly three hundred doubloons (£1,000) abstracted from his portmanteau, after the wreck—was, I fancy, a *rich* priest, and both he and his companion (they came on board at Havana, you may recollect,) being greatly addicted to taciturnity, is all I can say, for I know nothing farther of either. They were quiet and resigned during the shipwreck.

Thus were the Forth's passengers gradually dispersed. By the *Rafacla*, berths were taken for Monsieur and Madame D— and child: Monsieur A— and his *factotum*, Pedro; Monsieur M— (from Havana); the celebrated Herr F. von Kriesmar; Herr D—, one of our pleasantest friends; young Jenkins, who had enlisted himself under our banners; Mr. P—, a steerage passenger; and finally, for H— and myself. Mr. C—, the German Daguerreotype artist, with his wife, determined to settle, for a season, at Campeachy; he himself, in the first place, returning to the Island of Perez and the wreck, in the hope of recovering from it part of his property, which, unfortunately, constituted his whole stock in trade.

LETTER XV.

THE BROTHERS CAMACHO.

Campeachy, 28th Jan. to 3rd Feb., 1849.

I wish to separate from my further account of Campeachy, in this short letter, some notice of two remarkable brothers, whose acquaintance I made there, considering that they are well entitled to stand out in broad relief among the other "lions" of the place. They appeared to me certainly to constitute the most remarkable social feature of the city wherein they have fixed their final abode on this side the grave.

These brothers—I mean brothers by blood—are *monks*, and Spanish-born. In them, however, we find no trace of the austerity of the cloister. The eldest, about fifty, is the more entertaining; the younger, somewhere about forty-five, the more interesting of the two. Their fraternal affection