

vegetation was now also entirely changed, and we were reminded of the finest parts of Europe. We passed along a fine paved road, bordered by the most luxuriant trees and shrubs, of every form and hue, the whole of which were new to us. It might be compared to a ride through an extensive park in Europe, having its roads bounded by a succession of the finest exotic trees and plants to be found in our hot-houses and conservatories. On reaching the summit of a hill, we discovered the beautiful city of Jalapa before us. Its white churches and buildings have a very pretty appearance, standing at a height of 4,264 feet above the level of the sea; commanding an extensive view, and having a grand back ground, formed by Perote, Orizava, and other volcanic mountains."

"There are in Jalapa," says one of the liveliest of all our Mexican travellers—Madame C— de la B—, "some old churches, a very old convent of Franciscan monks, and a well supplied market-place. Everywhere there are flowers; roses creeping over the old walls; Indian girls making green garlands for the virgin and saints, flowers in the shops, flowers in the windows; but, above all,

everywhere one of the most splendid mountain views in the world."

I *must* go on. "The Cofré de Perote, with its dark pine forests and gigantic *chest* (a rock of porphyry which takes that form), and the still loftier snow-white peak of Orizava, tower above all the others, seeming like the colossal guardians of the land. The intervening mountains, the dark cliffs and fertile plains, the thick woods of lofty trees, clothing the hills and the valleys; a glimpse of the distant ocean; the surrounding lanes, shaded by fruit trees; aloes, bananas, chirimoyas, mingled with the green liquidambar, the flowering myrtle, and hundreds of plants and shrubs, and flowers of every kind, and of delicious fragrance; all combine to form one of the most varied and beautiful scenes that the eye can behold.

"Then Jalapa itself, so old and gray, and rose be-covered, with a sound of music issuing from every door and window, and its soft and agreeable temperature, presents, even in a few hours, a series of agreeable impressions not easily effaced."

[Forgive me, dear Madame C— de la B—, for thus culling your sweets; but how pleased must my readers be once more to sip them.]

Hear what Charles Joseph Latrobe, in his "Rambles in Mexico," has to say, on his arrival at Jalapa:—

"The change from the sterility of the table land above [he was coming *from* the city of Mexico] to the luxuriant and teeming vegetation of this lovely region, was not more striking than the contrast between the characteristic features of the great level plains with their barren volcanic cones, to the varied and beautiful wooded hills, vales, and mountains, which characterise this most lovely region of New Spain

"A lovelier sight, and more beautiful scenery, you need not seek in the torrid zone! Below you a steep descent leads rapidly down the verdant and fresh slopes, towards the shore of the gulf, which is just visible from the highest part of the town, at the distance of twenty leagues and upwards. Above you, ridge rises above ridge, crowned by the Cofré de Perote; and, yet further to the southward, by the magnificent, snow-covered summit of Orizava, in comparison to whose sublime and majestic stature, the elevated mountains which cluster round its feet appear but as pigmies. To the right and left, extending along the mountains'

sides, at the height of between four and five thousand feet above the sea, lies a delicious and and salubrious region, covered with magnificent forests, and diversified by some of the most beautiful towns in New Spain: a country smiling with an eternal spring, under the kindly influence of the heavy mists and dews, which, rising thus midway up the steep Cordillera from the bosom of the gulf, pause here in mid-air, and promote that rich verdure which is equally grateful to the inhabitants of the arid and sterile table land, or of the fervid sands of the sea board. . . .

"I often linger in fancy among its (Jalapa's) low, red-tiled, broad-eaved habitations, or exuberant gardens, and muse upon the marvellous beauty of its convent-crowned hill, and the freshness of its gushing waters, lakes, and shady woods . . . In architecture the town affords a delightful example of the old Spanish style, and many of the country seats in the vicinity are delightful retreats. The population amounts to thirteen thousand."

Brantz Mayer, Secretary of the United States Legation, in 1841-2, has written an excellent account of his travels, with capital illustrations on wood. The work, which well deserves perusal, is

entitled "Mexico, as It Was and as It Is," published by Wiley and Putnam, New York. Unfortunately, Mr. Mayer passed through Jalapa when under one of its heavy mists; but he does justice, notwithstanding, to the city,—“high, healthy, and built on almost precipitous streets, winding, with curious crookedness, up the steep hill sides. This perching and bird-like architecture makes a city picturesque, although its highways may be toilsome to those who are not always in search of the romantic.” Mr. Mayer was told (and such is the fact) that many of the best houses were furnished and decorated in a tasteful style; and he adds: “the hotel in which we lodged was an evidence of this; its walls and ceilings were painted in a style of splendour rarely seen out of Paris.

“When the Neapolitans speak to you of their beautiful city” (Mr. Brantz Mayer still *loquitur*), “they call it, ‘a piece of heaven fallen to earth!’ and tell you, ‘to see Naples and *die!*’ It is only because so few travellers extend their journey to Jalapa, and describe its scenery, that it has not received something of the same extravagant eulogium. . . . Yet I saw enough,” through the

mist, “to justify all the praises even of extravagant admirers. Its society is said to be excellent, and its women are the theme of the poets throughout the republic.* As I descended from the top of San Francisco, and wended my way to the hotel, I met numbers of the fair *doncellas*, lounging homeward from early mass. The stately step, the liquid eye, the pale yet brilliant cheek, and an indescribable look of tenderness, complete a picture of beauty rarely matched in northern climes, and elsewhere unequalled in Mexico.”

Who has not read the “Adventures in Mexico and the Rocky Mountains,” of the highly-gifted Ruxton—prematurely called, alas! from scenes to which his pen lent such striking and undeniable charms? Who does not know his “Life in the Far West”? And who would not wish that he had been spared, for the sake of the world, which he had already delighted, and was so well calculated, by his active habits, his energetic character, his graphic powers, his literary attainments, his happy vein of humour, and his intellectual strength,

* “*Las Jalapeñas son muy Halaqueñas,*” says the Mexican adage, “the women of Jalapa are very bewitching.” *Witches* they would be called in Lancashire, as the women of that county are designated.

to continue to delight and to instruct? Yet long ere the fruit was ripe, it was blown from the tree. While travelling in the United States, he was carried off by dysentery, at St. Louis, on the Mississippi, on the 29th of September, 1849, at the early age of thirty-eight.

In respect to his lively and entertaining work on Mexico, I have here, of course, only to do cursorily with his account of Jalapa. After giving some particulars of the alternate either heavy or drizzling rain—the *Chipi-chipi*,* as it is termed, and splendid sunshine, Lieutenant Ruxton proceeds:—

“On a bright sunny day, the scenery round Jalapa is not to be surpassed: mountains bound the horizon, except on one side, where a distant view of the sea adds to the beauty of the scene. Orizava, with its snow-capped peak, appears so close, that one imagines it is within reach; and rich and evergreen forests clothe the surrounding hills. In the foreground are beautiful gardens, with fruits of every clime—the banana and fig, the orange, cherry, and apple.”

* The sun is for days obscured, and the Jalapeño, muffled in his *serape*, smokes his *cigarro* and mutters, “*Ave Maria purisima, que venga el sol!*” “Oh, for a peep at the sun, Holy Virgin!” literally, “Holy Mary, let the sun come out!”

Mr. Ruxton put up at the same hotel as we did, (the Vera Cruzana), and let him describe it, instead of myself:—

“In the Fonda Vera Cruzana, where I put up, and advise all travellers to do the same, were two daughters of mine host: one was as fair as Jenny Lind, and the other dark as Jephtha’s daughter, and both very pretty. Although the proverb says, ‘*Ventera hermosa, mal para la bolsa*’ ‘a pretty hostess gives no change,’ here it is an exception; and my good friend Don Juan will take care of man and beast, and charge reasonably.”*

Such is the concurrent testimony to the charms of Jalapa, its scenery, and its people. With these extracts, I think my picture is pretty well complete; and I have made some of my own sketches give way to what has appeared to me to be so well said, giving authenticity to my statements, by others.

* Of Captain Lyon’s “Journal,” I shall speak in another place.