

should listen to in England, pleases me, as yet, more than the plays. The first night we went they gave the *Somnambula*, with the Italian text, of course. I certainly did not admire the *Elviro*, who could neither boast of voice nor good looks. The *Amina* was much better, although the 'Ah! non giunge' was too much for her. The orchestra was terrible; while the best part of the performance was the chorus, which was small, but the voices were fair, and they sang in good time and tune. The second night, we saw 'Lucia,' in which all got on better; and, altogether, it amuses me very much. But stay, I am omitting my principal point—the audience, or 'concur-rencia.' The ladies are, in general, nice-looking, and a good many very pretty; and almost all dressed in good taste."

LETTER XXVII.

DIARY OF A MONTH.

Mexico, 10th April, 1849.

FOLLOWING up my plan of giving you *something* by every packet, till I get to England once more, I resume the thread of my story from the departure of our last mails.

We have now resided here six weeks, and, as a natural consequence, I now know something more of the *City* of Mexico than I did at the close of my last letter; and I shall accordingly go on in my journalising way, and desultory mode of observation.

On the 9th of March we began to look for the packet—for its arrival is *the* event of the month—and we seemed to have been an age without letters from England. Ah! how few are there, man or woman, born on English ground, who do not, on quitting *home* for a foreign country, leave behind the greater part of his or her affections

and pleasurable associations! And how do we long accordingly for those periodical arrivals, which are to delude us into a momentary belief that we are placed in contact with all those who have principally occupied our thoughts and feelings in the interval! "Letters from home!" "The packet letters!" None but those who *have* been abroad know all the magic influence on the heart of these short but significant exclamations.

No packet, however, came in on the 9th; and instead of reading letters we made the acquaintance of Mrs. and Miss C—, wife and daughter of a highly respectable old English gentleman, in business here, and with whom I had previously become acquainted. Miss C— is lively, clever, thoroughly at home with the Spanish language, and well acquainted with Mexican character. Her acquaintance is a great acquisition to H—.

Saturday, the 10th, no packet; and therefore we feel unable to *settle down* to prepare letters for its return, although we ought to do so, Beraza being now under official orders for a start on the 15th. The 13th is the usual day, but *February* makes the difference on this occasion.

Mr. M. and I again waited on the Minister of

Finance, and after transacting business, and satisfactorily forwarding the object of my mission, towards which we remained nearly two hours with his Excellency, we agreed to meet once more before the packet sailed, to settle as to the official communications which it was to take forward.

Sunday, the 11th; a case of "hope deferred." Still no packet, and therefore a continuance of that *ansia*—that longing desire for letters kept up. We had several visits to-day, among them Dr. M'C— (our medical man)—a truly pleasant, intelligent, and amusing countryman of my own, and Don José Martinez del Rio, one of our old London acquaintances—an agreeable friend, and a leading man here.

Monday, the 12th. Still no packet; and we begin to fancy that the loss of the Forth has so deranged the route, as to prevent the packet of this month from coming to Vera Cruz at all. I had my promised meeting with Mr. Piña y Cuevas to-day, towards arranging for the packet. All satisfactory; and the continuance of that gentleman in office seems all that is wanting to give the best effect and happiest termination to my mission.

Tuesday, 13th, we were engaged all day writing. But still no packet letters, and all are agreed that if they are not with us by the 14th, they may be given up.

Wednesday, 14th. No packet! In such a case as this, every new day of disappointment adds its quota to the accumulated heap of impatience already resting on the mind. *Vires acquirit eundo*. But the mail for England was advertised at the *lonja* (Exchange), to be made up at eight, A.M., the following day; and our *Chargé d'affaires* assured us he could not possibly detain his courier. So all were obliged to go on in good earnest with their correspondence. From Don Manuel Piña y Cuevas I received an excellent letter for transmission to London.

Thursday, 15th, to our joy and surprise, our famous courier, Beraza "the desired" arrived with the mails; and Mr. Doyle could not do otherwise than allow our tired, though unflinching friend, twenty-four hours' rest. So another day was given us. We got budgets of letters, keeping us busier than ever all this day. At ten at night, I received another letter from Señor Piña y Cuevas, announcing an unexpected and unasked-for remit-

tance of ten thousand pounds for the bond-holders, which was really pleasant. I did not finish my correspondence till eight, A.M., Friday morning; and Beraza was finishing the packing of his mail towards starting, when I gave him some tolerable packets, as my contribution to the general correspondence.

We rested on Friday; and our luggage which we had left at Vera Cruz, arriving the same day, we spent Saturday, the 17th, in unpacking, arranging, and finishing in a desultory way, a very busy week.

For two or three Sundays we had been talking of a drive to the village of Tacubaya, the celebrated and fashionable resort of the *elite* of Mexico; and to-day, Sunday, the 18th, it was determined we should proceed to that place. Accordingly at eleven o'clock, behold the *coche de Campo*, the *country* carriage drawn out; the handsome and sturdy mules harnessed, the postillion mounted, the footman in the rumble, Mrs. M—, H— and I inside; and Mr. M—, *a la Mexicana*, on his handsome iron grey, with his groom behind him in the costume of the country, and also on a fine spirited horse, in which form and state we dashed off for Tacubaya.

We went out by the *Paseo nuevo*, the road lying, as far as Chapultepec, along one of the two immense aqueducts which supply the city of Mexico with water. They are characterised by that solidity which I have told you, is the great feature of all Spanish architecture; but like all their works, also, they are in any thing but good repair. Of Chapultepec I shall speak when I come to tell you of a visit *ex profeso* to it. From this point we went on about a mile and a half, principally through plantations of the Maguey, and over a brown, uninteresting part of the Mexican plain.

The hilly country commences at Tacubaya, and the village is prettily situated in the lap of an ascending ground, the villas with which it is dotted, commanding generally a beautiful view of the plain, the city, Chapultepec, and the neighbouring mountains. Tacubaya itself looks best at a distance. Among the whitewashed houses and villas, glittering in the sun, trees (all evergreens) are thickly interspersed, relieving the glare, and contrasting happily with the monotonous brown levels which lie below. But when you enter the village, the deep sandy roads, the dirty people, and the many mean and untidy habitations, with

every here and there a ruinous one, offend the eye of an Englishman, accustomed to the pretty villages of his own country.

We kept ascending through the village, and, arriving at about the highest point, we got to the Rancho de los Remedios; a quaint name given by Mr. Mackintosh to his "casa de campo" at Tacubaya. He held for several years there a large house (belonging to the Marquis de Guadalupe), and passed a considerable part of the year in it. Being obliged, however, to give up the Marquis's house, Mr. Mackintosh, in order to *remedy* his wants, built his *rancho* or cottage, and called it "el Rancho de los Remedios," this latter name being at the same time one of the titles of the Virgin Mary, "Nuestra Señora de los Remedios," enshrined in her chapel, not far from Tacubaya.

El Rancho de los Remedios is a gem; that is, if one could divest one's mind of the dissatisfied feeling which arises on finding that a country house has no more grounds about it than a lawn and flower garden, which Mr. M. jokingly says "may be covered by a table-cloth." But this granted, the Remedios is a beautiful *multum in parvo*. For the house itself, nothing could be

better or prettier. It is of two floors, with two small projecting wings. From the one to the other, on both floors, run wide, spacious, handsome corridors, adorned with a profusion of well-filled flower-pots, and with vases holding scented shrubs and luxuriant creepers. The front windows and balconies overlook the city, the valley, Chapultepec, and a grand amphitheatre of mountains. These corridors, particularly the upper one, constitute a remarkably nice promenade; and a little *boudoir* simply but elegantly furnished, which forms one wing, opens, like the drawing-rooms, on the higher corridor, making this part of the establishment complete. The lower corridor is also ornamented with flowers and shrubs; so that, however limited the space, there was everything you could desire to find in a cottage *ornée*.

On Monday, the 19th, we called on Mrs. and Miss C—, who may be called the female representatives of England in Mexico—for Mrs. J—, our only other countrywoman at present, lives constantly at Tacubaya. Then we went to see our pleasant fellow passengers, Dr. D— and his Chihuahua wife, residing with their friend, Mr. A—. They were greatly pleased to talk over with us all

the perils and incidents of our passage from England.

At dinner, this day, we had two visitors—new arrivals. One was Mr. F—, whom I knew well by report, and who came as representative of Messrs. Baring Brothers, and Co., to assist in carrying into effect their negotiation for the payment of the present instalment of the indemnity money, through Messrs. Manning and Mackintosh. The other is Mr. E. B—, who accompanies Mr. F—, intending to enter by-and-bye on a wide field of travel.

For the evening (19th) H— and I had an engagement, which we could not decline, to a small *tertulia*, at the house of the *licentiate* and judge of the district, el Señor Inclan, to whom we were to be introduced by La Señorita Robles, the young, amiable, and lively sister of Commandant Robles, of Vera Cruz, and of whom I have spoken so highly. Doña Carmelita called for us, and we went together in her carriage to the Inclans. We were received by them in the most cordial manner, and found them to be people “according to one’s own heart;” so much so, that we did not get home till two in the morning.

On Wednesday, the 21st, great was my surprise to see Mr. C—, from Liverpool, walk into the library, where I sat writing this diary. He was one of the last persons I saw in England, and so far was he then from thinking of visiting Mexico, that he offered me letters of introduction to Mr. and Mrs. J— here, of the same mercantile house as himself. But such is the present age of travel! Last century, the fashion was to make one's will before undertaking, with fear and trembling of his household, a journey of a few hundred miles. In these fast times, we pack up a portmanteau in the morning, say "*au revoir*" in the evening, and take our departure to another hemisphere—to go and to return in a shorter time than was occupied by our forefathers between London and Edinburgh.

On the 21st, we made the acquaintance of Don Juan L—, a decided notability. He is, at present (although, I understand, on the point of resigning), *Impresario*, or lessee of the Grand National Theatre. He is a native of Spain, of good family, and held a high office in this country under the Spanish *régime*. He is decorated with a Spanish order of knighthood, and he is generally

called by his English friends, "Sir J—." His house is one of the most fashionable; his daughters and niece are leading *belles* of the *haut ton*. Lastly, "Sir J—" is a "*corredor de numero*," or sworn-broker, and he frequents the *lonja* in the afternoon, mixing mostly with the leading English subscribers. He keeps a handsome equipage, gives an excellent dinner, and his *tertulias** are quite the thing. By some misunderstanding (I suppose); some intricacy of Mexican etiquette, on our arrival—which I have not been able to fathom—we have not got into visiting terms with Sir J—'s amiable and distinguished family.

We had more or less our usual routine up to the 28th, when, having previously made the acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. J—, an English family, as I think I have mentioned, they gave us a quiet and therefore a pleasant family dinner, enlivened by Mr. C—, my friend from Liverpool, and Mr. Morphy, equally a Mexican and Englishman, lively, intelligent, and finally, one of the Murphy's of the celebrated colony of Cadiz, of which I have spoken in my 15th letter, Vol. I., page 236.

* For *tertulia*, we have no English synonym. The French have *soirée*.

We dined at half-past three. In the evening the ladies went to the Paseo; Mrs. J—'s turn-out being one of the best. Altogether, we passed a delightful evening, and got home just in time to go over the same pleasant ground with our own party; which, at half-past nine had adjourned to coffee in the drawing room.

LETTER XXVIII.

DIARY OF A MONTH CONCLUDED.

Mexico, 10th April, 1851.

SATURDAY, the 31st, was a day of diplomatic courtesies. Our *Chargé d'affaires* accompanied us to the French Legation, there to be introduced to the Minister and his lady. Our party was made up of Mr. and Mrs. M—, H—, Messrs. F— and B—, and myself, led by Mr. Doyle. The Legation occupies one of the handsomest houses in Mexico, in a fashionable street, with the odd name of "Calle de Don Juan Manuel."

M. Levasseur speaks little Spanish as yet; but he is refined and piquant in his own language. Madame is a German lady; lively, clever, intellectual, and accomplished, speaks five or six languages fluently, and has some knowledge of