

LETTER L.

DEPARTURE FROM THE CITY OF MEXICO.

Vera Cruz, October, 1849.

It was a matter of no small disappointment to me, that my constant avocations in the city had not permitted me at any time to visit Cuernavaca, and its celebrated cavern of Cacahuamilca, or more shortly (for it goes by both names), Cacuhamilca. Cuernavaca, a part of which is, as a generic name, called "Tierra Caliente," lies at a convenient distance for the traveller from the city of Mexico; and embracing, as the excursion does, the ruins of the pyramid of Xochicalco, the cavern just named, Cautla de Amilpas, Cocoyotla, and other interesting places, all who *can, do* go to this part of Tierra Caliente.

The beauties of the country and the surpassing wonders of the cavern I did not see; and therefore

I must refer you, for an account of them, to Madame C— de la B—,* and Mr. Brantz Mayer.

Having on several occasions expressed to Mr. Escandon my regret at leaving Mexico, without seeing some of the finer parts of it, comprehended under the name of "Tierra Caliente," he himself determined to come to the rescue, in a manner I very little expected. He told me, some time before our proposed departure, that he had made up his mind to visit Orizava, where the family

* Madame C— de la B— conceives that the cavern cannot be described; because, as she observes, "there is nothing with which the cave can be compared." But there are several celebrated caverns in Europe of the same *kind*, composed of stalactites and stalagmites, petrefactions and crystallisations; and he who has visited the caverns, mines, and petrifying wells of Derbyshire—the Rutland, the Cumberland, the Devonshire, the Fluor, and the Speedwell caverns—can form a tolerably exact idea of the cavern of Cacahuamilca. The difference lies in the *extent* of the latter. It is like most of the wonders of nature in the New World—altogether gigantic in its proportions. Indeed, the *termination* of the Cacahuamilca cavern, after passing through saloon after saloon, galleries, and amphitheatres, for *miles*, has never been reached.

A beautiful, but small, cave, which I have visited, was a few years ago discovered in the Cheddar cliffs, Somersetshire; and it displays very comprehensively, though on a reduced scale, the wonders of the stalactite and stalagmite world. Some of the conformations are altogether wonderful.

had possessions, and he had interests of magnitude; and thence to proceed to New Orleans to meet his sister, then on her way to Mexico from Europe. He gave such an invitation as could not be refused, to H— and myself, to place ourselves under his wing, and to proceed to Vera Cruz, instead of going by the ordinary route by which we had come. Thus, unexpectedly, and much to my satisfaction, not only were H— and myself to escape from the toilsome and monotonous *return* journey to the coast by the way we came; but, under the best auspices, I was about to visit a part of Mexico quite out of the usual beat of travellers, and abounding with objects of interest both natural and social.

We had already made so many social acquisitions during our stay in Mexico; we had been treated with so much kindness on all sides; so much had been done to render our residence agreeable; and the welcome and hospitality accorded to us had been of so purely disinterested a nature—that our grateful feelings were mixed with unfeigned regret in parting with so many valuable and kind friends—English, Mexican, and foreign—even though we were returning to our native

country. To Mr. and Mrs. Mackintosh, in particular, our obligations were of a nature never to be obliterated from my daughter's or my own mind.

For the last two or three days we were very much occupied paying farewell visits to all our friends. On the 5th of October we dined with Mr. Doyle; and the following day, the eve of our departure, Mr. Mackintosh had a farewell party not only for us, but also for Doña Antonia Agüero and her daughter, who were to be our fellow-passengers to England.

Mr. Escandon's arrangements were, that he and we, accompanied by Don J. and Dr. Martinez del Rio, two more of Mr. E.'s guests, should proceed by the Vera Cruz route as far as Nopaluca, in the *diligencia*. Accordingly, on the 7th of October, H— and I (happily unencumbered by much luggage) were in the great establishment of Mr. Zuratuza; and we set off, on a beautiful morning, at five o'clock, for Puebla, accompanied by Mr. Escandon and the Messrs. Martinez del Rio, with a good escort for the road.

With such pleasant *compagnons de voyage*,

splendid weather, and incomparably fine scenery, time flew quickly on. If we were disappointed on our approach to the valley of Mexico, we were compensated on our departure from it. We had it, under a cloudless sky, in all its mixed beauty and grandeur—the morning sun giving a dazzling brightness to the snowy summit of Popocatepetl. We had also a better opportunity, on this occasion, of observing the different places through which we passed. Clearing the lake of Tezcucó and the Peñon Viejo and Tlapishuatla, we came to the town of Ayotla; then, passing by Amaluca and the Venta de Cordova, we arrived, about eleven A.M., at Rio Frio, where our old acquaintance, the German hostess,* who was particularly pleased once more to see H—, welcomed us all, and again gave us a famous breakfast, to which a six hours' drive lent a keen relish. We went on to Tsemelucos, an Indian village; and, changing horses at San Martin, had time to see this rather neat and clean-looking town, of some historical celebrity. The *Hacienda de Santa Rosa* was our next point; and as we approached Puebla, we had

* Vol. I. p. 320,—where, by the way, an error of the press, line 7 from bottom, has converted Frio into "Fris."

a fine view of Cholula, and the ruins of its far-famed pyramid. To what use it was employed by those who built it (the aborigines), is not now known. When discovered, it was found to rise to four stories; but its base stands on an area of 1,355 feet, although its height now is only 172 feet. Its traditions are lost even to the Indians. It is constructed of *adobes*, or sun-burnt bricks, interspersed with layers of plaster and stone-work. Behind it, has been erected a Catholic church, surmounted by a dome, and dedicated to *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios*.

Before entering Puebla, you pass a handsome bridge which spans a small stream, here crossing your way.

At Puebla, where we arrived at half-past four P.M., we met Messrs. J. and A. Escandon, and Bringas, who were to form part of our brigade, and Mrs. Landa and family, going direct to Vera Cruz, where we were again to meet. I had time on this occasion to take a better view of Puebla, visiting its public gardens and other objects of interest, all denoting the importance of this fine city.

At the great *Diligencia* hotel, a long *table d'hôte* was laid out at half-past six, and we all joined it.

The party was pleasant and merry; but we retired early, to be ready for an early start in the morning. Another friend had joined us for the Orizava tour—a retired colonel advanced in years, a relative of the Messrs. E—, very lively, of the old school, and extremely amusing as a fellow-traveller.

At five A.M., Monday, the 8th, two diligences started—Mr. Escandon having secured one entirely for his own party; seeing we now mustered eight in number. After passing through the two towns of Amazoe and Acajété, in no way remarkable, and skirting the Cerro del Pinal, we got to breakfast at Nopaluca; and here our *diligencia* travelling ended.

From this point our picturesque expedition began; and after the two *diligencias* had departed on their weary and dreary way for dismal Perote, the Nopaluca Diligence Inn presented an animated appearance. The plan of the campaign, if I may so speak, had been arranged and superintended by Don Joaquin Escandon; and, under his orders, it was very admirably carried out.

Two open travelling-carriages of the family—the *coche de campo* and a handsome *caratela*—were drawn up to the door, and many good things for country travelling were stowed away in them.

To the family coach six fine mules, and to the *caratela* four equally good, were harnessed. Three or four saddled horses were then brought up, led by grooms. Then came sumpter mules, which took our baggage and many creature comforts; and relay mules for the carriages followed. Don Joaquin's favourite gardener (going down to carry out some improvements at the *hacienda*) and his "tiger" (a black), a butler, and Don Manuel's body servant, Ventura, all mounted, completed our travelling array. In the carriages went Messrs. M. and A. Escandon, J. and P. Martinez del Rio, and Bringas, Colonel, Garmendia, H—, and myself. Don Joaquin, dressed in the handsome costume of a Mexican country gentleman, rode a beautiful horse, saddled and caparisoned *à la Mexicaine*; for he ever preferred the saddle to a cushioned seat in a carriage. We were in all, I think, twenty-three souls; all our attendants, drivers, and muleteers being domestic servants of the Escandon family. Thus we made our start; while at the same time the clanking of arms and accoutrements informed us that our *escort*, chosen from the "tobacco" guards, and headed by one of their officers, had mounted, and were dashing past us, to head the cavalcade.

LETTER LI.

NOPALUCA TO ORIZAVA.

Vera Cruz, October 1849.

VERY soon after we left Nopaluca, by the Orizava road, we entered on a country full of magnificent mountain scenery, clothed, as ever, with the finest woods of the richest foliage. We followed a road made on the mountain side, and skirted the smiling valleys below. We halted in the vicinity of a very noble estate, the *hacienda de San Francisco*—the palace-like building standing on a slight declivity of the table-land behind, surrounded by plantations, and commanding a view of the great valley and mountain-ridges which stretched out in front.

Here we changed mules and horses; our escort drew up in line, saluted us, and was replaced by a new corps.

From San Francisco we had to proceed, that