

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

evening, to the *hacienda* of Santa Ana, a patrimonial estate of the Escandon family, and where preparations had been made for our night's lodging. The distance was about five leagues; and as we advanced, the table-land, as far as the eye could reach, stretched away on every side, covered with immense crops of barley and Indian corn. These are chiefly raised for the breeding of pigs, which are here extensively reared by farmers.

The heat of the afternoon knocked up our carriage-mules; and Don Antonio Escandon and I took to pedestrianism, six or seven miles from Santa Ana. The walk was somewhat toilsome, but novel and interesting. We tried near cuts through heavy fields, and found we had only further to walk. We skirted the town of San Andres, lying in the very lap of the great Orizava mountain; and we did not get to Santa Ana till after dark, both of us not a little fatigued with our long walk over heavy roads.

The *gathering* at the manor-house of the *hacienda de Santa Ana* had a feudal aspect. Two or three friends and neighbours who had gone out on horseback to meet the Messrs. Escandon, swelled the coming retinue. The great *patio*, after we

entered, was a gay and busy scene, filled with travellers, friends, retainers, carriages, horses, mules, and escort—all preparing first for a good dinner, and then most of us for a good night's rest, after a very long day's journey.

The dinner-table we found laid out in the great salon, with about thirty covers; and at half-past seven P.M. we sat down to our abundant and excellent cheer. Several guests from San Andres had come in to welcome the lords of the soil, and among the rest, el Señor Cura. But the most interesting and amusing personage was a distant relative of our hosts, Don Manuel Argüelles, a man of infinite humour, a poet, and an unsurpassable improvisatore.

The dinner withdrawn and the wine and the fruit left on the table, the *brindis*, or "toasts and sentiments" went round. Fun and wit sparkled with the wine. Many off-hand and good *brindis* were given. Every one of Don M. Argüelles's were capitally and quite poetically improvised. In many of them I could not detect a flaw, and every one had a good *point*. Of the many, here is one as a specimen of the Spanish, only presuming that the *brindis* was addressed to Don Manuel, and had

reference (in very high terms to make the rhyme suit) to his friendship for myself.

Bien contemplo que en el viage,  
Placer tu alma encontraria,  
Por venir en compañía  
De un ilustre personage.  
Tu amistad no se relaje,  
Conservalo intacta y pura  
Supuesto que tal ventura,  
A pocos es concedida  
En esta mesquina vida  
De tormentos y amargura.

The following *punning* impromptu by M. Argüelles, was made on another occasion. A young lady of San Andres, named Angeles (diminutive Angelita), having been courted for seven years by a gentleman called Don N. Camino, at last gave her hand to a stranger, whose Christian name was *Angel*.

Siete Años por un *Camino* (road)  
Angelita transitó:  
Pero del Fresno vino  
Un *Angel* que la indicó  
Que no era ese su destino.

“Angelita went for seven years by one road, but an angel from Fresno came and shewed her that her destiny lay not in that way.”

The company broke up at eleven, and then we

retired to beds provided for all, H. having the state bed-room of the house.

On Tuesday morning, the ninth, we were astir at five o'clock. Our coffee was discussed, and our preparations finished by seven, when we started as the day before.

We passed through and examined the picturesque town of San Andres, the capital, as it might be called, of the district. Thence, winding round to the opposite side of Orizava, we got to a rising ground, from which we obtained a truly magnificent sight of the massive proportions of the mountain. We were at its very base, which formed a complete garden. We seemed to be almost within reach of the noble summit, which rose majestically above us, undisturbed by lesser eminences. The rising sun, in the clear morning, shone upon the snow of dazzling brightness which capped this most beautiful of all mountains, and filled the mind with indescribable feelings of wonder, awe, and delight. The altitude is upwards of seventeen thousand feet, and nothing interfered to distract the attention from its wondrous height. To view the peak of Orizava from the far distance is grand; but to be placed thus in proxi-

mity to its giant proportions is sublime. I have crossed the Andes, and gazed on Tupungato, the highest peak of the whole four-thousand-mile range—superior even to Chimborazo; but as it rises gradually for leagues from the level of the sea, and is surrounded by other mountains, it does not appear to the eye nearly so elevated as Orizava.

As we continued to wind round its base, we diverged from the main road, and cut across to the Cañada de Istapa, or, as now called, de Morales. Still as we receded, mile after mile, Orizava towered above us, as if we had not budged from the spot where we rested and took our first view. We seemed still to be at the base; and all the difference was, that at every turn of the road we saw some new and striking beauty in the lap of this wonderful work of nature.

At Morales we stopped to breakfast, and a most amusing affair it was. A rough, dirty, large and substantial homestead; dogs, cats, and pigs; earthen floors, wooden platters and spoons, two or three saw-like knives, and as many one-pronged forks, for all the party; dishes which, in their cookery, could not have altered for a couple of centuries; a table for half of us, and old

cupboards for the other half to stand at and eat, either with one-pronged forks or with their fingers. It was laughable and very entertaining. Don Joaquin was in despair; his people were employed in every direction; but (I am glad to say) he could not take the relish of the breakfast out of it. For myself, I never enjoyed one more in my life.

After leaving Morales, we entered on one of the great wonders of this part of Mexico, called the "Cumbres" or "Summits." It was a wide carriage-road, made at an incredible expense, and crossing a succession of mountains and narrow intervening valleys. The road zig-zagged the whole way, and that, from the abruptness and great height of the mountains, at the sharpest possible angles. Even so, the road rose and fell on very steep inclinations, and in fact as our line of carriages and horses stretched out, one part going due south, and another due north, we were always within speaking distance of one another. From each of the "Cumbres" we obtained magnificent views of the valleys under us; and when in these, we seemed to be completely hemmed in by the surrounding heights. The road *ought* to be paved all the way, but there are many gaps and roughnesses, although constant

repairs are going on, and a toll is levied to pay for them. The heavy torrents, however, which pour down during the rainy season, are scarcely to be withstood by human exertions. When dark, the road is in many places very dangerous.

At length, after an arduous march, the most lovely and fertile of all valleys—that of Orizava—opened up its beauties to our wondering eyes. This valley is twenty-four miles in length, and is watered by a fine stream throughout. The scenery I must leave to your imagination, for it baffles description.

At the pleasant and lively little town of Acuzingo, we were received by the director of Mr. Escandon's great cotton factory at Orizava, Mr. Thomas Grandison, of Glasgow, accompanied by other friends.\* Proceeding onwards, having about seven leagues still to accomplish, we fell into the main road at *El Ingenio* (the Engine Mill), another small town, having a very fine and powerful course of water, running by it; and we entered the city of Orizava in the dusk of the evening, stopping at the *Administracion de Tabacos*, where we were most politely and kindly received by El Señor Elguero, the *administrador* of the establishment. The house

\* See Appendix.

is handsome, and of great extent: the rooms, as must needs be in *Tierra Caliente*, large and lofty.

We found a banquet prepared, and sat down, fourteen in number, to enjoy it; and at night we dispersed. Don Manuel, H—, and I, accompanied Mr. Grandison to his house at the factory, "*Cocolapan*," about a mile off: Messrs. J. and T. Escandon, and their uncle, the Colonel, remained with Mr. Elguero; Mr. Bringas went to a brother settled in Orizava; and the Messrs. Martinez del Rio took up their residence with Don Francisco Vallejos. We ourselves got installed into most capital quarters, and after nineteen hours of travel and movement, we enjoyed our repose.

One word of statistics here, in reference to the department of Orizava. It forms part of the state of Vera Cruz: is divided into three cantons—Orizava, Cordova, and Cosamaluapam: has sixty-three "*Pueblos*," towns, and villages, and about 100,000 inhabitants. Of these, from 8,000 to 10,000 form the population of the city of Orizava, which boasts of many excellent houses and good streets. What we should call the *High Street* is, I think, the widest I have seen in Spanish America, where quadrangular uniformity is the basis of all

the towns. All tropical productions flourish in the department; but the two staple articles are, tobacco and coffee.

We spent Wednesday, the 10th, in viewing the immediate beauties of Cocolapan, and in a minute inspection afterwards of the factory. When I tell you that, first and last, it cost the parties who erected it about one million two hundred thousand dollars, you may imagine its extent and the high perfection of every part of its numerous buildings and works, and of its machinery. When this sort of property became depressed, a very few years ago, Mr. Escandon purchased the Fabrica de Cocolapan, and all its appurtenances, for a very much smaller sum than it had cost.

Mr. Grandison is a son of the engineer of the same name in Glasgow, and he has, as it were, been born and bred in the midst of machinery and manufactures. To his practical knowledge of his business, he unites general intelligence, energy of character, urbanity of manner, and patience of temper (the latter so indispensable in his business in Mexico); and accordingly, you may suppose what is the fact, that all proceeds prosperously and smoothly under his rule.

We had a courier this day, from Mexico, with our packet and other letters; and to our great regret, we found that Mr. Escandon's communications compelled him to give up his trip to New Orleans. He was called on to return to Mexico, without even going as far as Vera Cruz.

The next day (Thursday) was given up to an inspection of Orizava, and to a large party given by Mr. Elguero, at whose house, to our great satisfaction, we found our esteemed poet Argüelles had just arrived. The metal was too attractive at Orizava to allow him to remain at San Andres; and so he had followed us. He had been benighted among the "*Cumbres*" after very heavy rains, and was in no small danger; and his indignation that for such bad roads he should have had to pay a *toll*, broke out, as much fun went forward after dinner, in the following impromptu:—

Por lograr el placer cierto  
 Dé veniros á abrazár,  
 Hè tenido que pasar  
 Mil trabajos en el muerto.\*  
 Vengo de lodo cubierto

\* "Muerto"—la Cuesta del Muerto—the dead man's hill is full of danger to traverse during the rainy season. The hill, or, as we should certainly call it, mountain, forms the crossing from the valley of Charchicomula to the city of Orizava.

De la Cabeza á los pies,  
Y así, Manuel, qual me vès,  
El piage se me ha exegido,  
Que pagar hé resistido,  
Por que de Justicia—no es.

Here to meet the certain pleasure  
Of a parting, kind embrace,  
Dangers have I, without measure  
In Muerto dared to face.  
Smeared with mud from head to foot,  
Shaken, bumped, and bruised to boot.  
Yet, oh Manuel !\* in this plight,  
Toll exacted was from me:  
I resisted such a right,  
Sure that just *it could not be.*

Mr. Argüelles kept us in great merriment during the evening with his droll accounts of his disastrous journey, interspersed with his poetical toasts. One of them addressed to H— was full of gallantry; and his concluding one called on all present to "*brindar*" to the favours which Mexico had constantly received at the hands of England.

Next morning (Friday), before breakfast, we all made an excursion to a beautiful place called Rincon Grande, in order to view a celebrated waterfall there. We got to the edge of a wooded

\* Mr. E. was one of the road trustees.

precipice which overhung a deep dell, down which rushed a mountain stream. Descending, we found at this part of the river two or three islets, rocks, and immense trunks of trees, which lay in a rapid of the stream. Its course thus obstructed, it rushed round the impediments with incredible force and impetuosity; while the curves again meeting under the precipitate bank, formed a whirlpool, which added a striking feature to the scenery of the place. Another fall, higher up the river, at Zoquitlan, is composed of one deep sheet of water, said to be extremely fine, but a visit to which we were unable to accomplish.

We spent the remainder of the day (after partaking of a grand Mexican breakfast at the Fabrica), between Cocolapan and Orizava, with an excursion in the neighbourhood, through a charming country. In the evening we went to a nice little theatre which, with very creditable performers, Orizava possesses, and we returned on foot to Cocolapan sufficiently late to have the light of the waning moon.

On Friday, the twelfth, we began preparations for our departure for Cordova. We paid our farewell visit to many agreeable Orizava friends,

including Mr. Nieto, a clever and entertaining naturalist. His collection was extremely curious, particularly as illustrative of the natural history of the province of Orizava; and he made me up, as a reminiscence of the place, a small case of the feathered tribe, well prepared, and containing some handsome ornithological specimens. We went to an evening party given by the Señora Vallejos (with whom our friends Messrs. M. del Rio were staying), in order to introduce us to a more extended circle of the good families here. We had dancing and music, and, by a Spanish gentleman, some inimitably well-sung comic songs—those of Andalusia, which for racy humour cannot be excelled. We were much pleased with all the genuine tokens of kind-heartedness which we received—always refreshing to those who have lived in great cities, where the feelings are either blunted, or their warmth hidden under the cold conventionalities of mixed society.

## LETTER LII.

ORIZAVA TO VERA CRUZ.

*Vera Cruz, October, 1849.*

ON Saturday, the 13th, then, at an early hour of the morning, we bade adieu to our kind friends, Mr. and Mrs. Grandison, and our old party, (Colonel Garmendia, however, replaced by Mr. Argüelles), took our way to Cordova. We gradually got into the richest and most luxuriant scenes of this part of Tierra Caliente. As we approached the old-fashioned, primitive town, the coffee plantations rose about us, and the plants in the fields adjoining the road, mixed gracefully with the tall hedges on either side. You know how beautiful the coffee plant is, when nurtured and strengthened by a tropical sun and a rich soil. The beans, yet in their dark green, hung in clusters, clothing the plants with a great additional beauty. We got to Cordova between ten and