

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

eleven, and alighted at the house of Mr. Saenz, by whom, and his family, we were expected. After one of the old and accustomed Mexican breakfasts, we sallied forth to view the town. There was a primitive and old-fashioned air about it—a peaceful and quiet aspect—which I have never seen exceeded. The Plaza is large and airy; and the municipal and other public buildings run along two sides of it. On another side is a sort of conjoint market and bazaar, where many incongruous things are sold. In the plaza also, of course, is the parish church of Cordova, redolent like everything else of the olden time. It was a pleasant morning's stroll.

In Mr. Saenz's *garden-patio*, I found the most magnificent parasitical plant I had ever seen in my life. It spread over the whole length of the long and high wall to which it clung, and was covered from one end to the other with a splendid light blue flower. Mr. Saenz, seeing how much I admired the plant, had one of its large bulbous roots dug up for me, carefully matted, and placed in one of the carriages, where I had also, by the by, a magnificent collection of air plants, very rare in Europe, and gathered in the wildest districts of Cordova.

We set forward after the mid-day heat, and at sunset arrived at the finest of the Escandon estates—that of “the Potrero.” I find jotted in my note-book—“Describe the beautiful scenes of this day”—but easier said than done. I have, doubtless, long ago tired you with my scenic sketches of Mexico, where, in its natural aspect wonder rises upon wonder. Suffice it here to say, that every step we took increased the beauty and richness of the country around us.

We arrived at the *hacienda* at sunset, and, as had happened throughout our progress, we found every preparation made for us; and they were similar to all the others preceding—comfortable in every way. We retired pretty early; but towards one o'clock, I was awakened by sobs from the next room, where H— slept. I hastily half-dressed, went in, and found her very ill. Don Manuel also had risen and dressed, and was soon by my side. We called up Dr. Martinez, and I shall never forget the solicitude with which he attended our patient, and the skill with which, in two or three hours, he removed all anxiety from our minds. It is not always that, under such circumstances, one happens to travel with a medical

friend of such well-known and acknowledged reputation as Dr. Pablo Martinez.

"All right,"—at half-past six next morning, Sunday, the 13th, we were called to bid adieu to the three brothers Escandon, to Dr. Martinez, and Don Manuel Argüelles. I must not trust myself to say a word of my feelings on giving a last *abrazo* to Don Manuel Escandon and his brothers: from my simple relation of facts, you can infer how far H— and myself had become their debtors. It was a sorrowful parting. Mr. Argüelles, with all his *sans façon* and joyous spirits, did not like it; and Dr. Martinez looked pensively on the leave-taking.

The old family coach of Señor Vaenz—as best fitted for the heavy roads—was drawn up to the door, and our friend Don Martinez del Rio, H—, and myself, set off for San Diego, *en route* for Vera Cruz. We were silent enough, although the beauty of the Hacienda del Potrero, through which we passed, beggars all description. How pleased Sir William Hooker would have been to be with us. The tropical flowering shrubs—the orchids, quite unknown in Europe, as I believe, which hung on almost every tree—the trees them-

selves—the flowers without end—to say nothing of the ever-varying scenic beauty of the woodlands through which we passed—were something to astonish any one not accustomed to such climates, and such redundant beauties of nature.

The road would only allow the old family coach to carry us to the extremity of the "Potrero," a distance of three leagues.

Here we found three *líteras*, and the necessary relay of mules waiting for us, accompanied and superintended by the faithful Ventura, Don Manuel's body servant.

After passing the various points and villages of Chiquihuite, Puente del Macho, Paro Ancho, El Camaron, and Palo Verde, we approached the river Xamapa. But two hours ere we had done so, daylight had closed in upon us, rendering the latter part of our day's journey half amusing, half alarming, for we constantly got separated in the dark woods,—the mules got tired,—we kept hailing one another—deviating from the road—uncertain whether to go on or stop. Ventura contrived always to keep me near to H—, but Mr. Martinez was sometimes so far from us, and sometimes so long of coming up, as to make us

quite uneasy about him. In short *litereros*, passengers, *arrieros*, and mules, staggered up to the banks of the river, I don't exactly know how.

The crossing, too, in utter darkness, was a tremendous business, for the *paso* is very wide indeed, a sort of estuary to grope through, which, in *literas* with mules tired out, deaf to remonstrance, and impervious to blows, was a somewhat nervous operation. At any rate, we gave "*Gracias a Dios*" when we fairly found ourselves in the miserable village of San Diego.

Such a night as there, passed I never. We first went to one horrible sort of public-house, but it was so full of men, women, horses, mules, and other living creatures, that Ventura went in search of some other. He hit upon one, where we had at least the open corridor in front to ourselves. To this place our *literas* were brought, and arranged as beds. It was now ten o'clock, P.M., and we were to be stirring at three, A.M., by phaetons sent from Vera Cruz. We had had seventeen hours of travel, pleasant as regarded the country, but by no means easy, as touching our bodily comfort,—in point of fact, we were altogether knocked up, and desirous of rest.

But behind the house, in a corner, lay a dying horse, whose convulsive movements, in its agony, every now and then distressed our nerves; in another corner a dog howled to the stars; in the house four or five children lay at death's door with hooping cough; and to listen to them and to the wailing mother and attendants was something terrible. The smells which assailed us were anything but pleasant; and if you add to all this, that the mosquitos seemed to take a demoniacal pleasure in blistering every accessible point of our bodies, you will comprehend the nervous impatience with which H—, Don José, and myself, without any attempt at sleep, awaited the hour of half-past three, A.M.

Monday, the 15th, was the last day of the expiring moon, so the night was as dark as pitch. Two *volantes* or phaetons had been ordered for us from Vera Cruz; so, insisting on Ventura's returning to his master at Orizava, we left San Diego under the guidance of two lantern-bearers, who, marching in front, shewed our drivers, as they best could, the sinuosities, the ruts, and the holes of the road. We drove through a wood, and many were the bumps and thumps we received

before daylight broke. But, as the sun rose, we sped our way cheerily through a pretty country of wood and pasture; and arriving at eight, A.M., were received, as we had been before, with a hearty welcome.

It was our fortune, or rather our misfortune, on this occasion, to participate largely in the annoyances and troubles consequent on a strong "Norther." It commenced the day we arrived at Vera Cruz; but as the packet had not yet come in, we did not, then, so much mind the gale.

On Tuesday, the 16th, our friend Beraza brought us the city correspondence, and I received mine from England. Much of my convention, of which I have yet to speak, I found was considered disadvantageous by the Committee of Spanish American Bond-holders; but I consoled myself with the belief, that all minor difficulties would disappear upon my arrival in London.

Wednesday, as the day before, the "Norther" kept acquiring force, but still no packet appeared. Meantime we lived pleasantly ashore, making the acquaintance of several of those who were to be our fellow-passengers. We found Madame L—

and her family, Madame G. de A— and her accomplished daughter, and Mr. H—, with whose father I had been connected, five and twenty years before, in the River Plate—the son now going home to visit his relations with his wife, a *Guanajuatense* lady. Here, also, I renewed my acquaintance with Don José Garay, a gentleman whose name has acquired a world-wide fame as the holder of the celebrated Tehuantepec privilege, to form a communication between the shores of the Mexican Gulf and those of the Pacific Ocean.

On Thursday, the 18th, our packet, the "Teviot," came in, with the "Norther" still unabated: but orders were issued to the passengers to embark the following morning.

On Friday, the 19th, accordingly, a note of preparation was sounded, and we were stirring at half-past five, A.M. The "Norther" had lulled, and we were all on board at eight o'clock. We ourselves, with our friend Mr. Garay, were the last to embark in the Resguardo boat, the breakers at the Mole still running high. Scarcely were we on board when the "Norther" again blew a gale, rendering the shipment of the silver impossible; so

that all hope of sailing that day was given up. We had the "Norther" all night, and in the morning it blew with increasing fury. We were miserable enough on board, fidgeting to be off, and yet despairing of a move for some days. We were sixty-two passengers in number; and no communication with the shore possible. And although our commander, Captain Rivett, a man of agreeable manners, did his best to keep us in good humour, the task, I fear, was somewhat difficult.

On Sunday, the 21st, we were still without a hope of starting, the gale being, although not quite, yet nearly as strong as the preceding day. The passengers were patient enough, although we had now lain forty-eight hours at anchor; but it was very trying. Captain Rivett sent a market-boat on shore, but nothing could be sent off; the breakers still sweeping over the Mole.

But Monday, the 22nd, brought a welcome change. The "Norther" had given way the previous evening, and Captain Rivett was then able to land. At six A.M. a busy scene commenced. In four hours \$250,000 in specie and 200 bales of cochineal were shipped. The day was beautiful.

Our friends came off to see us; and at two, P.M., with a light breeze and calm sea, we were steaming through the ships in the harbour, on our way to Mobile and New Orleans. Such are the pleasures of a "regular Norther," and such was our departure from Mexico.