

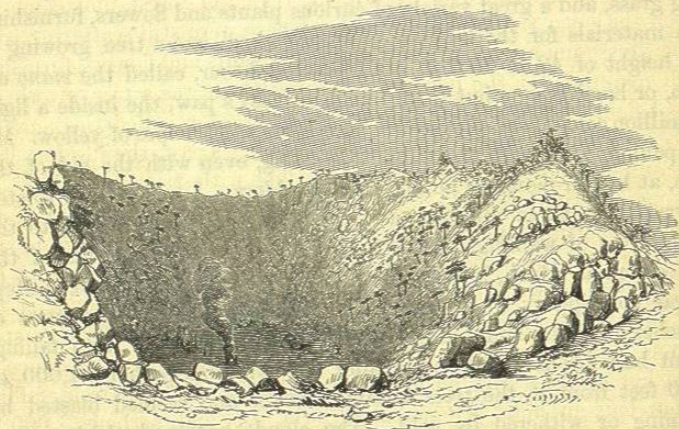
road became so steep and slippery that we dismounted, and commenced the ascent on foot. The Indians went on before, carrying water and provisions, and each of us was equipped with a strong staff. At a quarter before eight we entered the middle region, which is covered with a broad belt of thick forest; the path was steep and muddy, and every three and four minutes we were obliged to stop and rest. At a quarter before nine we reached a clearing, in which stood a large wooden cross. This was the first resting-place, and we sat down at the foot of the cross and lunched. A drizzling rain had commenced, but, in the hope of a change, at half-past nine we resumed our ascent. The path became steeper and muddier, the trees so thickly crowded together that the sun never found its way through them, and their branches and trunks covered with green excrescences. The path was made and kept open by Indians, who go up in the winter-time to procure snow and ice for Guatemala. The labour of toiling up this muddy acclivity was excessive, and very soon my young companion became fatigued, and was unable to continue without help. The Indians were provided with ropes, one of which was tied around his waist, and two Indians went before with the rope over their shoulders.

At half-past ten we were above the region of forest, and came out upon the open side of the volcano. There were still scattering trees, long grass, and a great variety of curious plants and flowers, furnishing rich materials for the botanist. Among them was a tree, growing to the height of 40 to 50 feet, bearing a red flower, called the *mano del mico*, or hand-flower, but more like a monkey's paw, the inside a light vermillion colour, and the outside vermillion with stripes of yellow. My companion, tired with the toil of ascending, even with the aid of the rope, at length mounted an Indian's shoulders. I was obliged to stop every two or three minutes, and my rests were about equal to the actual time of walking. The great difficulty was on account of the wet and mud, which, in ascending, made us lose part of every step. It was so slippery that, even with the staff, and the assistance of branches of trees and bushes, it was difficult to keep from falling. About half an hour before reaching the top, and, perhaps, 1,000 or 1,500 feet from it, the trees became scarce, and seemed blasted by lightning or withered by cold. The clouds gathered thicker than before, and I lost all hope of a clear day. At half an hour before twelve we reached the top, and descended into the crater. A whirlwind of cloud and vapour was sweeping around it. We were in a perspiration; our clothes were saturated with rain and mud; and in a few moments the cold penetrated our very bones. We attempted to build a fire, but the sticks and leaves were wet, and would not

burn. For a few moments we raised a feeble flame, and all crouched around it; but a sprinkling of rain came down, just enough to put it out. We could see nothing, and the shivering Indians begged me to return. On rocks near us were inscriptions, one of which bore date in 1548; and on a stone were cut the words,

Alexandro Ldvert,
De San Petersbrgo;
Edvardo Legh Page,
De Inglaterra;
Jose Croskey,
De Fyladelfye,
Bibymos aqui unas Boteas
De Champana, el dia 26
de Agosto de 1834.

It seemed strange that three men from such distant and different parts of the world, St. Petersburg, England and *Philadelphia*, had met to drink Champagne on the top of this volcano. While I was blowing my fingers and copying the inscription, the vapour cleared away a little, and gave me a view of the interior of the crater. It was a large oval basin, the area level and covered with grass. The sides were sloping, about 100 or 150 feet high, and all around were masses of rock piled up in magnificent confusion, and rising to inaccessible peaks. There is no tradition of this mountain having



ever emitted fire, and there is no calcined matter or other mark of volcanic eruption anywhere in its vicinity. The historical account is, that in 1541 an immense torrent, not of fire, but of water and stones, was vomited from the crater, by which the old city was destroyed. Father Remesal relates that on this occasion the crown of the mountain fell down. The height of this detached part was one

league, and from the remaining summit to the plain was a distance of three leagues, which he affirms he measured in 1615. The area, by my measurement, is 83 paces long and 60 wide. According to Torquemada (and such is the tradition according to Padre Alcantara, of Ciudad Vieja), this immense basin, probably the crater of an extinct volcano, with sides much higher than they are now, became filled with water by accumulations of snow and rain. There never was any eruption of water, but one of the sides gave way, and the immense body of fluid rushed out with terrific force, carrying with it rocks and trees, inundating and destroying all that opposed its progress. The immense barranca or ravine by which it descended, was still fearfully visible on the side of the mountain. The height of this mountain has been ascertained by barometrical observation to be 14,450 feet above the level of the sea. The edge of the crater commands a beautiful view of the old city of Guatemala, 32 surrounding villages, and the Pacific Ocean; at least so I am told, but I saw nothing of it. Nevertheless, I did not regret my labour; and though drenched with rain and plastered with mud, I promised myself in the month of February, when the weather is fine, to ascend again, prepared for the purpose, and pass two or three days in the crater.*

At one o'clock we began our descent. It was rapid, and sometimes dangerous, from the excessive steepness and slipperiness, and the chance of pitching head foremost against the trunk of a tree. At two o'clock we reached the cross; and I mention, as a hint for others, that, from the pressure of heavy water-proof boots upon the toes, I was obliged to stop frequently; and, after changing the pressure by descending sidewise and backward, catching at the branches of trees, I was obliged to pull off my boots and go down barefooted, ankle deep in mud. My feet were severely bruised by the stones, and I could hardly walk at all, when I met one of the Indians pulling my horse up the mountain to meet me. At four o'clock we reached Santa Maria, at five the Antigua, and at a quarter past I was in bed.

The next morning I was still asleep when Señor Vidaurre rode into the courtyard to escort me on my journey. Leaving Rumaldo to follow, I was soon mounted; and emerging from the city, we entered the open plain, shut in by mountains, and cultivated to their base with cochineal. At about a mile's distance we turned in to the hacienda of Señor Vidaurre. In the yard were four oxen grinding

* I ascended this volcano, shortly after Mr. Stephens, during perfectly clear weather, and beheld from its summit one of the most extensive and beautiful views I ever beheld, reminding me much of the view from the top of Mount Etna. The thermometer fell from 74° to 34° in less than ten minutes.—F. C.

sugar-cane, and behind was his nopal, or cochineal plantation, one of the largest in the Antigua. The plant is a species of cactus, set out in rows like Indian corn, and, at the time I speak of, it was about four feet high. On every leaf was pinned with a thorn a piece of cane, in the hollow of which were 30 or 40 insects. These insects cannot move, but breed, and the young crawl out and fasten upon the leaf; when they have once fixed they never move; a light film gathers over them, and as they feed the leaves become mildewed and white. At the end of the dry season some of the leaves are cut off and hung up in a storehouse for seed, the insects are brushed off from the rest and dried in ovens, and are then sent abroad to minister to the luxuries and elegances of civilized life, and enliven with their bright colours the *salons* of London, Paris, and St. Louis in Missouri. The crop is valuable, but uncertain, as an early rain may destroy it; and sometimes all the workmen of a hacienda are taken away for soldiers at the moment when they are most needed for its culture. The situation was ravishingly beautiful, at the base and under the shade of the Volcano de Agua, and the view was bounded on all sides by mountains of perpetual green; the morning air was soft and balmy, but pure and refreshing. With good government and laws, and one's friends around, I never saw a more beautiful spot on which man could desire to pass his allotted time on earth.

Resuming our ride, we came out upon a rich plain covered with grass, on which cattle and horses were pasturing, between the bases of the two great volcanoes; and on the left, at a distance, on the side of the Volcano de Agua, saw the Church of Ciudad Vieja, the first capital of Guatemala, founded by Alvarado the Conqueror. I was now on classic ground. The fame of Cortez and his exploits in Mexico spread among the Indian tribes to the south, and the Kachiquel kings sent an embassy offering to acknowledge themselves vassals of Spain. Cortez received the ambassadors with distinction, and sent Pedro de Alvarado, an officer distinguished in the conquest of New Spain, to receive the submission of the native kings, and take possession of Guatemala. On the 13th of November, 1523, Alvarado left the city of Mexico with 300 Spaniards, and a large body of Tlascaltecas, Cholotecas, Chinapas, and other auxiliary Mexican Indians, fought his way through the populous provinces of Soconusco and Tonalá, and on the 14th of May, by a decisive victory over the Quiché Indians, he arrived at the capital of the Kachiquel kingdom, now known as the village of Tecpan Guatemala. After remaining a few days to recover from their fatigues, the conquering army continued their route by the villages on the coast, overcoming all that disputed their progress; and

on the 24th of July, 1524, arrived at a place called by the Indians Almolonga, meaning, in their language, a spring of water (or the mountain from which water flows), situated at the base of the Volcano de Agua. The situation, says Remesal, pleased them so much by its fine climate, the beauty of the meadows, delightfully watered by running streams, and particularly from its lying between two lofty mountains, from one of which descended runs of water in every direction, and from the summit of the other issued volumes of smoke and fire, that they determined to build a city which should be the capital of Guatemala.

On the 25th of July, the festival of St. James, the patron of Spain, the soldiers, with martial music, splendid armour, waving plumes, horses superbly caparisoned in trappings glittering with jewels and plates of gold, proceeded to the humble church which had been constructed for that purpose, where Juan Godines, the chaplain to the army, said mass. The whole body invoked the protection of the apostle, and called by his name the city they had founded. On the same day Alvarado appointed *alcaldes*, *regidores*, and the chief *alguazil*. The appearance of the country harmonized with the romantic scenes of which it had been the theatre; and as I rode over the plain I could almost imagine the sides of the mountains covered with Indians, and Alvarado and his small band of daring Spaniards, soldiers and priests, with martial pride and religious humility, unfurling the banners of Spain and setting up the standard of the cross.

As we approached the town its situation appeared more beautiful; but very early in its history dreadful calamities befell it. "In 1532 the vicinity of the city was ravaged, and the inhabitants thrown into consternation by a lion of uncommon magnitude and ferocity, that descended from the forests on the mountain called the Volcan de Agua, and committed great devastation among the herds of cattle. A reward of 25 gold dollars, or 100 bushels of wheat, was offered by the town council to any person that could kill it; but the animal escaped, even from a general hunting-party of the whole city, with Alvarado at the head of it. After five or six months' continual depredations, it was killed on the 13th of July by a herdsman, who received the promised reward. The next great disaster was a fire that happened in February 1536, and caused great injury; as the houses were at that time nearly all thatched with straw, a large portion of them was destroyed before it could be extinguished. The accident originated in a blacksmith's shop; and to prevent similar misfortunes in future, the council prohibited the employment of forges within the city.

"The most dreadful calamity that had as yet afflicted this unfortunate place occurred on the morning of September 11, 1541. It had rained incessantly, and with great violence, on the three preceding days, particularly on the night of the 10th, when the water descended more like the torrent of a cataract than rain; the fury of the wind, the incessant appalling lightning, and the dreadful thunder, were indescribable." . . . "At two o'clock on the morning of the 11th, the vibrations of the earth were so violent that the people were unable to stand; the shocks were accompanied by a terrible subterranean noise, which spread universal dismay; shortly afterward, an immense torrent of water rushed down from the summit of the mountain, forcing away with it enormous fragments of rocks and large trees, which, descending upon the ill-fated town, overwhelmed and destroyed almost all the houses, and buried a great number of the inhabitants under the ruins; among the many, Doña Beatrice de la Cueba, the widow of Pedro Alvarado, lost her life."

All the way down the side of the volcano we saw the seams and gullies made by the torrents of water which had inundated the city. Again we crossed the beautiful stream of El Rio Pensativo, and rode up to the convent. It stands adjoining the gigantic and venerable church of the Virgin. In front was a high stone wall; a large gate opened into a courtyard, at the extremity and along the side of which were the spacious corridors of the convent, and on the left the gigantic wall of the church, with a door of entry from one end of the corridor. The patio was sunk about four feet below the level of the corridor, and divided into parterres, with beds of flowers, and in the centre was a large white circular fountain, with goldfish swimming in it, and rising out of it, above a jet d'eau, an angel with a trumpet and flag.

Señor Vidaurre had informed Padre Alcantara of my intended visit, and he was waiting to receive us. He was about thirty-three years of age, intelligent, educated, and energetic, with a passion for flowers, as was shown by the beautiful arrangements of the courtyard. He had been banished by Morazan, and only returned to his curacy about a year before. On a visit to him was his friend and neighbour Don Pepe Asteguieta, proprietor of a cochineal hacienda, and a man of the same stamp and character. They were among the few whom I met who took any interest in the romantic events connected with the early history of the country. After a brief rest in the convent, with a feeling more highly wrought than any that had been awakened in me except by the ruins of Copan, we visited a tree standing before the church, and extending wide its branches, under whose shade, tradition

says, Alvarado and his soldiers first encamped; the fountain of Almolonga, or, in the Indian language, the mountain from which water flows, which first induced him to select this spot as the site for the capital; and the ruined cathedral, on the spot where Juan Godines first said mass. The fountain is a large natural basin of clear and beautiful water, shaded by trees, under which thirty or forty Indian women were washing. The walls of the cathedral were standing, and in one corner was a chamber filled with the skulls and bones of those destroyed by the inundation from the volcano.

After breakfast we visited the church, which was very large, and more than 200 years old; its altar is rich in ornaments of gold and silver, among which is a magnificent crown of gold, studded with diamonds and emeralds, presented by one of the Philips to the Virgin, to whom the church was consecrated. Returning to the house, I found that Padre Alcantara had prepared for me a visit from a deputation of Indians, consisting of the principal chiefs and women, descendants of caciques of the Mexican auxiliaries of Alvarado, calling themselves, like the Spaniards, Conquistadores, or Conquerors; they entered, wearing the same costumes which their ancestors had worn in the time of Cortez, and bearing on a salver covered with velvet a precious book bound in red velvet, with silver corners and clasp, containing the written evidence of their rank and rights. It was written on parchment, dated in 1639, and contained the order of Philip the First, acknowledging them as conquerors, and exempting them, as such, from the tribute paid by the native Indians. This exemption continued until the revolution of 1825, and even yet they call themselves descendants of the conquerors, and the head of the Indian aristocracy. The interest which I felt in these memorials of the conquerors was increased in no small degree by the beauty and comfort of the convent, and Padre Alcantara's kindness. In the afternoon, we walked down to the bridge across the Rio Pensativo. The plain on which the Spanish soldiers had glittered in armour was shaded by the high volcanoes, and the spirit of romance rested upon it.

The day which I passed at the "old city" is one of those upon which I look back with pleasure. Señor Vidaurre and Don Pepe remained with us all day. Afterward, when Padre Alcantara had again been obliged to fly from the convent at the approach of an invading army, and we had all passed through the crash of the revolution, on leaving Guatemala to return home, I diverged from my road to pay them a visit, and they were the last friends to whom I said farewell.

In the morning, with great regret, I left Ciudad Vieja. Padre Alcantara and Don Pepe accompanied me, and to help me on my

journey, the latter lent me a noble mule, and the padre an excellent servant. The exit from this mountain-girt valley was between the two great volcanoes of Agua and Fuego, rising on each side nearly 15,000 feet high; and from between the two, so unexpectedly to me as almost to induce a burst of enthusiasm, we overlooked an immense plain, and saw the Pacific Ocean. At a league's distance we reached the village of Alotenango, where, among Indian huts, stood another gigantic church, roofless, and ruined by an earthquake, and where, with the hope, in which I was not disappointed, of seeing them again, I took leave of the cura and Don Pepe. The road between the two great volcanoes was singularly interesting; one with its base cultivated, girt by a belt of thick forests, and verdant to the very summit; the other with three bare and rugged peaks, covered with dried lava and ashes, shaken by the strife of the elements within, the working of internal fires, and emitting constantly a pale blue smoke. The road bears marks of the violent convulsions to which it has been subject. In one place the horse-path lies through an immense chasm, rent asunder by a natural convulsion, over which huge stones, hurled in every direction, lay in the wildest confusion; in another it crosses a deep bed of ashes, and cinders, and scorified lava; and a little farther on, strata of decomposed vegetable matter cover the volcanic substances, and high shrubs and bushes have grown up, forming a thick shady arbour, fragrant as the fields of Araby the Blessed. At every step there was a strange contrast of the horrible and beautiful. The last eruption of the Volcan del Fuego took place about twelve years ago, when flames issued from the crater and ascended to a great height; immense quantities of stones and ashes were cast out, and the race of monkeys inhabiting the neighbouring woods was almost extirpated; but it can never burst forth again; its crater is no longer la Boca del Infierno, or the Mouth of the Infernal Regions, for, as a very respectable individual told me, it has been blessed by a priest.

After a beautiful ride under a hot sun, but shaded nearly all the way, at three o'clock we reached Escuintla, where was another magnificent church, roofless, and again with its rich façade cracked by an earthquake. Before it were two venerable Ceiba trees, and the platform commanded a splendid panoramic view of the volcanoes and mountains of the Antigua.

In the streets were soldiers and drunken Indians. I rode to the house of the corregidor, Don Juan Dios de Guerra, and, with Rumaldo for a guide, I walked down to the banks of a beautiful stream, which makes Escuintla, in the summer months of January and February, the great watering-place of Guatemala. The bank was high and beautifully

shaded, and, descending to the river through a narrow passage between perpendicular rocks, in a romantic spot, where many a Guatemala lover has been hurried, by the charming influences around, into a premature outpouring of his hopes and fears, I sat down on a stone and washed my feet.

At two o'clock, under a brilliant moonlight, and with a single guide, we started for the Pacific. The road was level and wooded. We passed a trapiche or sugar-mill, worked by oxen, and before daylight reached the village of Masagua, four leagues distant, built in a clearing cut out of the woods, at the entrance of which we stopped under a grove of orange-trees, and by the light of the moon filled our pockets and alforgas with the shining fruit. Daylight broke upon us in a forest of gigantic trees, from 75 to 100 feet high, and from 20 to 25 feet in circumference, with creepers winding around their trunks and hanging from the branches. The road was merely a path through the forest, formed by cutting away shrubs and branches. The freshness of the morning was delightful. We had descended from the table land called the *tierras templadas*, and were now in the *tierras calientes*; but at nine o'clock the glare and heat of the sun did not penetrate the thick shade of the woods. In some places the branches of the trees, trimmed by the machete of a passing muleteer, and hung with a drapery of vines and creepers, bearing red and purple flowers, formed for a long distance natural arches more beautiful than any ever fashioned by man; and there were parrots and other birds of beautiful plumage flying among the trees; among them Guacamayas, or great macaws, large, clothed in red, yellow and green, and when on the wing displaying a splendid plumage. But there were also vultures and scorpions, and, running across the road and up the trees, innumerable iguanas or lizards, from an inch to three feet long. The road was a mere track among the trees, perfectly desolate, though twice we met muleteers bringing up goods from the port. At the distance of twelve miles we reached the hacienda of Naranjo, occupied by a major-domo, who looked after the cattle of the proprietor, roaming wild in the woods; the house stood alone in the midst of a clearing, built of poles, with a cattle-yard in front; and I spied a cow with a calf, which was a sign of milk. But you must catch a cow before you can milk her. The major-domo went out with a lazo, and, playing upon the chord of nature, caught the calf first, and then the cow, and hauled her up by the horns to a post. The hut had but one guacal, or drinking-shell, made of a gourd, and it was so small that we sat down by the cow so as not to lose much time. We had bread, chocolate, and sausages, and after a ride of

twenty-four miles, made a glorious breakfast; but we exhausted the poor cow, and I was ashamed to look the calf in the face.

Resuming our journey, at a distance of nine miles we reached the solitary hacienda of Overo. The whole of this great plain was densely wooded and entirely uncultivated, but the soil was rich, and capable of maintaining, with very little labour, thousands of people. Beyond Overo the country was open in places, and the sun beat down with scorching force. At one o'clock we crossed a rustic bridge, and through the opening in the trees saw the river Michatoyal. We followed along its bank, and very soon heard breaking on the shore the waves of the great Southern Ocean. The sound was grand and solemn, giving a strong impression of the immensity of those waters, which had been rolling from the creation, for more than 5,000 years, unknown to civilized man. I was loth to disturb the impression, and rode slowly through the woods, listening in profound silence to the grandest music that ever fell upon my ear. The road terminated on the bank of the river, and I had crossed the Continent of America.

On the opposite side was a long sandbar, with a flagstaff, two huts built of poles and thatched with leaves, and three sheds of the same rude construction; and over the bar were seen the masts of a ship riding on the Pacific. This was the port of Istapa. We shouted above the roar of the waves, and a man came down to the bank, and loosing a canoe, came over for us. In the meantime, the interest of the scene was somewhat broken by a severe assault of mosquitoes and sandflies. The mules suffered as much as we; but I could not take them across, and was obliged to tie them under the trees. Neither Rumaldo nor my guide could be prevailed upon to remain and watch them; they said it would be death to sleep there. The river is the outlet of the Lake of Amatitan, and is said to be navigable from the Falls of San Pedro Martyr, seventy miles from its mouth; but there are no boats upon it, and its banks are in the wildness of primeval nature. The crossing-place was at the old mouth of the river. The sandbar extends about a mile further, and has been formed since the conquest. Landing, I walked across the sand to the house or hut of the captain of the port, and a few steps beyond saw the object of my journey, the boundless waters of the Pacific. When Nunez de Balboa, after crossing swamps and rivers, mountains and woods, which had never been passed but by straggling Indians, came down upon the shores of this newly-discovered sea, he rushed up to the middle in the waves with his buckler and sword, and took possession of it in the name of the king his master, vowing to defend it in arms against all his enemies. But Nunez had the assurance that beyond that sea "he would find immense

stores of gold, out of which people did eat and drink." I had only to go back again. I had ridden nearly sixty miles; the sun was intensely hot, the sand burning, and very soon I entered the hut and threw myself into a hammock. The hut was built of poles set up in the sand, thatched with the branches of trees; furnished with a wooden table, a bench, and some boxes of merchandise, and swarming with mosquitoes. The captain of the port, as he brushed them away, complained of the desolation and dreariness of the place, its isolation and separation from the world, its unhealthiness, and the misery of a man doomed to live there; and yet he feared the result of the war, a change of administration, and being turned out of office!

Toward evening, rested and refreshed, I walked out upon the shore. The port is an open roadstead, without bay, headland, rock, or reef, or anything whatever to distinguish it from the line of the coast. There is no light at night, and vessels at sea take their bearings from the great volcanoes of the Antigua, more than sixty miles inland. A buoy was anchored outside of the breakers, with a cable attached, and under the sheds were three large launches for embarking and disembarking cargoes. The ship, which was from Bordeaux, lay off more than a mile from the shore. Her boat had landed the supercargo and passengers, since which she had had no communication with the land, and seemed proudly independent of so desolate a place. Behind the sandbar were a few Indian huts, and Indians nearly naked were sitting by me on the shore. Yet this desolate place was once the focus of ambitious hopes, high aspirations, lust of power and gold, and romantic adventure. Here Alvarado fitted out his armament, and embarked with his followers to dispute with Pizarro the riches of Peru. The sun was sinking, and the red globe touched the ocean; clouds were visible on its face, and when it disappeared, ocean and land were illuminated with a ruddy haze. I returned to the hut, and threw myself into my hammock. Could it be that I was again so far from home, and that these were the waves of the great Southern Ocean breaking on my ears?