

about seventy cavalry; but, after proceeding a four days' journey on the route to the city, a courier from the viceroy brought orders to conduct him back to Oaxaca, and thence to Vera Cruz. Although he was disappointed in thus being debarred an interview with the viceroy in the Mexican capital, yet he was cheered with the hope, that on his arrival at Vera Cruz he should be permitted to depart for the United States.

On returning to the city of Oaxaca, he was placed in his old quarters in the convent; and, after the lapse of a few days, was sent, under the orders of a Spanish officer and a body of cavalry, to Vera Cruz, where he arrived on the 3d of February, 1817. On being presented to the governor, *Don José Davila*, he expressed great regret that he had instructions to *confine the writer in the fortress of San Juan de Ulua*, until further orders should be received from the viceroy. It was in vain to remonstrate against this cruel order; but, nevertheless, he expressed his indignation at the perfidious conduct of the viceroy in such strong terms, that Governor Davila and his officers looked at him with surprise, and asked him how he dared to speak so disrespectfully of so exalted a personage as the viceroy of New Spain. After making a reply which incensed them still more, he was ordered to proceed to the fortress, and there behave with proper humility, otherwise they would take measures to punish him for his presumption. The officer who conducted him to the castle, gave him a description of the barbarous character of the officer in command of the fortress, *Echaragari*, and cautioned him to beware of provoking his ire by repeating such expressions as he had used to Governor Davila. The moment the writer

beheld the countenance of this officer, he needed no other evidence of the ferocious soul that beamed in its every line. The adjutant of the castle was ordered to conduct him to his allotted apartment, which was a small room, or state dungeon, under one of the arches of the ramparts.

Were the writer to give a detail of his sufferings during a confinement of eleven months in that dreadful Bastile, it would be deemed incredible by his readers, unless any of them should have had the misfortune to have experienced incarceration among the Spaniards. Even in its mildest shape, it is worse than in any other civilized nation; but when we speak of the castles of San Juan de Ulua, and of Omoa, it must be understood, that there are not to be found such mansions of horror in any other part of the world. They have not only been the sepulchres of thousands, but in their horrid dungeons cruelties have been practised as dreadful as the most heart-rending scenes of the secret caverns of the Inquisition.

Had not the writer been blessed with an iron constitution, and a flow of spirits difficult to be subdued, and had he not received some benevolent succours from Don Lorenzo Murphy, of Vera Cruz, he must inevitably have perished. During an illness of several weeks, with a violent hemorrhage which daily threatened to terminate his existence, he besought his savage gaoler for medical aid, and for permission to be removed to the hospital; he met with a refusal. But he forbears to dwell on this painful subject, the thoughts of which fill him with such horror and conflicting emotions, that his perturbed mind cannot sufficiently collect itself

to describe it. From the sufferings of the prisoners belonging to Mina's expedition, who were confined in this infernal prison, which will be found related in the following pages, he must leave the reader to form some idea of the trials through which he had to pass.

The only consolation he experienced during his protracted imprisonment, was in a visit from Lieutenant Porter, commander of the United States' brig *Boxer*. Arriving at Vera Cruz, in September, 1817, this officer obtained the permission of the governor to visit the writer; but so fearful were they that he might discover the miserable situation of every thing that surrounded their prisoner, that they would not permit Lieutenant Porter to enter the castle, but detained him at the landing place, whither the writer was conducted, under a guard, to the interview. It is not easy to describe his emotions, on seeing one of his own countrymen, on shaking him by the hand, and hearing from him that he had official instructions to request the Spanish authorities to release him. He then felt that he was not wholly abandoned by his country, and hoped soon to escape from the fangs of despotism. As an interpreter and other persons had been sent by the governor to be present at the interview, the conversation with Lieutenant Porter was necessarily brief and cautious. The writer, however, freely expressed his indignation at the base and cruel treatment he had experienced; and requested the lieutenant, that if he did not succeed in obtaining his liberation, to demand that the Spanish authorities should at least explain their motives for thus immuring within a dungeon a citizen of the United

States, without a hearing or a trial. Lieutenant Porter endeavoured to console him, by assurances of a speedy release, and by promising to repeat his visit. He also furnished him with some wine, bread, and fowls, which indeed were luxuries to one who for several months had been fed on a scanty allowance of musty beans and rice.

On the termination of the interview, he was re-conducted to his miserable apartment, and there was left to indulge in those reflections that beguile the hours of the captive when a ray of hope unexpectedly breaks in upon him. For many weeks previous to the arrival of Lieutenant Porter, the writer had found his health and spirits rapidly declining; and although he had endeavoured to repel the approach of despair, yet it is highly probable that that demon would have seized him, had not the prospect of deliverance at length appeared to re-animate his spirits. He not only became cheerful, but the gloomy walls within which he was enclosed were no longer viewed with horror; the voice of the surly sentinels no longer grated on his ears; and so far did he indulge in visionary hopes and calculations, that he almost ceased to remember that he was still a prisoner in the castle of San Juan de Ulua.

These illusions were soon dispelled. The visit of Lieutenant Porter was not repeated; and, after expecting him for twelve days, the writer was informed that he had sailed, after having been refused permission to repeat his visit. It was likewise communicated to him, that the application of Lieutenant Porter for his release had proved ineffectual, the governor having answered, that he must consult the viceroy before such a step could be

taken; and as it was uncertain when instructions would be received from the capital, the lieutenant concluded that it was most proper to return to the United States, to receive further instructions on the subject.

The effects of this interposition of his government, although his immediate liberation did not follow, were of high importance to the writer, not only in respect to the restoration of his health and spirits, but to the alteration of the conduct of the Spanish authorities. He became more firm and indignant in his representations to the governor of Vera Cruz and to the viceroy, the latter of whom at length resolved on sending him to Spain, to receive the decision of the king upon his case. When this information was communicated to him, about the last of December, 1817, it caused him almost as much joy as if his actual release had been announced; for he had a presentiment, that if he could but get out of the castle of San Juan de Ulua, he should ultimately be freed from the clutches of Spain. So strong were his hopes in this point, that he did not permit a certain document which had been confidentially placed in his hands, to cause him any uneasiness. This curious paper is now in his possession, and is in substance as follows:—

“(SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL.)

“Mexico, May 21, 1817.

“The viceroy has avowed his intention not to grant Mr. Robinson the benefit of the royal indulto, but to send him to Spain; recommending to the authorities there his close confinement for life, because he has attained such a knowledge of the actual state of the insurrection in this country, and of the real dispositions

of the Mexican subjects, that it would be highly dangerous to his Catholic Majesty's interest ever to give the said Robinson an opportunity to publish such information abroad. This communication is made to Mr. R. for the purpose of apprizing him of the viceroy's determination.”

To the generous individual who at the hazard of his life made the above communication, the writer tenders his most grateful acknowledgments; and if his name be not now disclosed, the reasons for concealing it are obvious: but the period perhaps is not far distant, when the writer will be enabled with pride and pleasure to publish the name, without implicating the personal safety of him who bears it. The reader will find, in the sequel, that the recommendation of the viceroy was honoured with due attention by the king of Spain.

Early in January, 1818, the writer was embarked at Vera Cruz, on board his Catholic Majesty's frigate Iphigenia, destined for Spain. The commander of the ship did him the favour to separate him from the rest of the unfortunate prisoners on board, and allotted to him a place in the gun-room with the officers. He was likewise furnished with food from the commander's table, and allowed to walk on the quarter-deck. For these attentions he shall ever feel grateful, as they emanated solely from principles of humanity.

A few days after sailing from Vera Cruz, they encountered violent gales of wind; the frigate sprung a leak, and was compelled to bear away for Campeachy. So serious was the leak, that time was scarcely afforded to land the crew, and about two millions of dollars, be-

fore the vessel sunk at her anchorage. The writer was conducted to tolerably comfortable quarters, and placed under a strong guard. He was there confined for *five months*: but, as the pleasures and miseries of life are frequently augmented or diminished by our own comparisons, he consoled himself with contrasting his imprisonment at Campeachy with his sufferings at Vera Cruz; and, with the aid of this reflection, passed the time cheerfully and in good health. The hospitable attentions he received from several distinguished inhabitants of Campeachy will never be forgotten, and he shall feel the highest satisfaction, should it ever be in his power to give them proofs of his gratitude.

From Campeachy he was taken to Havana, in the Spanish sloop of war *San Francisco*. On his arrival there, he was conducted to the common gaol, but was soon removed to the Moro castle, and placed in the most secure dungeon (*calaboso*) in the fortress. It was however spacious, and far superior to his quarters at San Juan de Ulua. The commander had very strict orders from the captain-general respecting him, and was made responsible for the security of his person. He rigidly executed his orders, but his conduct generally was kind, and his amiable family honoured the writer with the most friendly attentions. The American citizens residing at Havana also treated him in the most generous manner, and, by furnishing him with the means of living comfortably, caused him to become a favourite with the officers on duty at the fortress, who generally made his dungeon their head-quarters. He remained in the Moro castle for nearly *six months*, making occasional remonstrances to the captain-general

in a tone that displeased his excellency, at the same time that they convinced him of the injustice of his government; and, in an interview with which the writer was honoured, at the castle, in December, 1818, he succeeded in obtaining permission to breathe the fresh air on the ramparts.

On the 13th of January, 1819, he was again embarked on board the Spanish brig of war *Ligero*, commanded by *Don Juan José Martínez*, destined for Cadiz. This worthy officer performed towards him, during the passage, every duty of generosity and humanity. He was frequently invited to the captain's table, treated in the most friendly manner, and was so fortunate as to gain his esteem. On their arrival at Cadiz, on the 21st of February, he was represented by that worthy man in so favourable a light to General O'Donnell, the governor of that city, that when orders were sent on board the vessel for the removal on shore of the prisoners, of whom there were several beside himself, the writer was excepted; the adjutant of the governor informing him that he was at liberty to proceed to whatever quarter of the city he thought proper. This was cheering intelligence, inducing him to believe that his persecutions had reached their termination.

Accordingly, on the morning of the 22d, he landed, and proceeded to the house of Mr. Tunis, the American consul, who shewed much satisfaction and surprise at his being at liberty. He went to a hotel, and passed the evening in reflecting on this unexpected good fortune. He had not the least suspicion of the reverse that was about to take place; for, had he not felt assured of perfect security from further molestation, he

would undoubtedly have effected a precipitate departure; but, confiding in his innocence, and flattering himself that he should have an opportunity of obtaining redress at Madrid for his recent sufferings, he anticipated no ill.

He retired early to rest, but was roused from sleep, about eleven o'clock at night, by a loud knocking at his door; and, on opening it, he was requested by a Spanish officer to dress himself speedily, and accompany him. He was then conducted to a guard-house, where he was left to himself the remainder of the night, to ponder on the sudden alteration in the aspect of his affairs. The next day, he was taken to the castle of San Sebastian, and given in charge to the commandant.

This sudden change in the conduct of the governor was thus explained. It appeared, that he had forgotten a certain royal order, bearing date the 15th of October, 1818, which commanded him, immediately on the arrival of the writer at Cadiz, *to send him to Ceuta, there to be confined in the citadel, without communication with any of the other prisoners in that fortress.* But the governor's secretary, or some other of the persons employed about him, reminded him of the order, which occasioned the renewed imprisonment of the writer.

To be sent to Ceuta, and there confined in the citadel, without a hearing, convinced him that his Catholic Majesty was determined to conform to the advice of the viceroy of New Spain. He had written, on the day of his arrival at Cadiz, to the minister of the United States at Madrid, requesting his interference and protection; and, as he was uncertain what would be the result of this application, his first object was to endeavour to pre-

vent his removal to Ceuta, until he should hear from Madrid; for he was sensible, that if he once reached the former place, his liberation from it would be very doubtful. He therefore requested the American consul to interpose his good offices, to acquaint the governor that the American minister had instructions from his government to demand the release of the writer, and to suggest to him the propriety of not removing him from Cadiz until his Catholic Majesty's pleasure should be known. The governor politely listened to these representations; and the writer's apprehensions of being precipitately hurried off to Ceuta, were thus allayed.

On the 25th of February, he addressed a letter to General O'Donnel, complaining in strong terms of the government of Spain, and begging that he would grant him the liberty of the city on his parole of honour, until intelligence should arrive from Madrid of the result of the American minister's application in his behalf. On the 28th, he was conducted to the government house to have an interview with the general, who received him with great affability. His secretaries and clerks having withdrawn, the general entered into a frank conversation with him, relative to the affairs of Mexico, as well as to his own peculiar situation. The countenance and manners of General O'Donnel inspired him with confidence; and he was so fortunate as to create in the general a lively impression in his favour. After a short conversation, General O'Donnel called in his adjutant, and ordered him to accompany the writer to the castle of San Sebastian, with directions to the commander to permit him to leave it whenever he thought proper, and to reside in the city on his parole, until his Catholic Majesty should otherwise determine.

On the 4th of March, the writer received from the American minister the following letter:—

Madrid, February 27, 1819.

“ SIR,

“ Your letter of 21st instant, which should have reached me on the 25th, was not delivered till the 26th. I have this day written to the first minister of state (Marquis of Casa Yrujo), demanding, in pursuance of the orders of my government, long since received, your immediate release.

“ I have sent to that minister the statement of your case, contained in your letter of June 4th, 1817, to the secretary of state of the United States, and have added in my note to the minister such other circumstances, drawn from your letter to me, as I thought might be useful. I have called to the recollection of the marquis his correspondence with the intendant of Venezuela, the better to distinguish you from Doctor John Hamilton Robinson; adding my personal knowledge of you, in London, in the character of a merchant, in the year 1801, occupied, if I mistake not, in the affairs of your tobacco contract. At the suggestion of your friend Mr. Meade, I have also referred to Mr. Cagigal, formerly captain-general of Venezuela, and now resident at Santa Maria, near Cadiz, for information relating to your operations in that province during his administration, &c. &c.

“ Upon the whole, I hope that this representation may be attended with success; but, whatever may result from it, you shall be immediately informed.

“ With much esteem, Sir,

“ I am your obedient servant,

“ GEORGE W. ERVING.

“ Mr. William D. Robinson.”

The receipt of Mr. Erving's letter inspired the writer with that confidence which a citizen of his country must ever feel, when he finds himself under the protection of his government. But, on the evening of the 14th of March, an important circumstance occurred, which worked a total revolution in his affairs, and produced a corresponding change in his course of conduct. He was confidentially informed, that the governor of Cadiz had received, by a courier which arrived from Madrid that evening, *a severe reprimand for having granted him the liberty of the city of Cadiz, and was directed immediately to secure his person, place him in the castle of San Sebastian, and thence send him in a vessel of war to Ceuta, to be confined in the citadel, conformably to his Catholic Majesty's order of the 15th of October, 1818.* As the source whence this information was derived left no doubt of its correctness, the writer knew that if he did not take some precautionary steps, he should be arrested in a few hours. The emergency called for promptness of decision. He reflected, on the one hand, that he was bound by the laws of honour not to violate the parole which he had given to General O'Donnell; but, on the other, he considered that the Spanish government was about to make him a victim of its perfidy and injustice. He knew that the issuing of an order for his imprisonment at Ceuta, after the American minister had made a formal application for his release, was an unequivocal proof of a deliberate intention to sacrifice him, by confinement in a place where he should even be deprived of the means of making a remonstrance, and whence he could never expect to be freed, unless his government should adopt measures of the strongest

kind; and that, until such measures were adopted, he should be exposed to all the severities and dangers of Spanish incarceration. The horrors he had experienced in the castle of San Juan de Ulua were still fresh in his memory.

Under all these circumstances, he determined on making an attempt to effect his escape; but, as the gates of the city were then closed, it was necessary to wait until the next morning. He departed from his lodgings about eight o'clock at night; and, in about an hour afterwards, the adjutant of the governor was sent to arrest him, but on finding him absent, left a polite message, that General O'Donnell wished to see him. The following morning, he received information that a general search was making for him, and that it would be difficult to elude the vigilance of the guards posted at the gates. But these unpropitious circumstances did not deter him from his resolution, for a miscarriage could add but little to his misfortunes.

It would perhaps be improper here to describe the mode of his escape, lest some of his friends or acquaintances might fall under the suspicion of being accessory to it. He deems it necessary, however, to remark, that although several individuals in Cadiz knew of his intentions to escape, yet he did not implicate any one of them in the act.

On the afternoon of the 15th of March, he succeeded in passing the gates of the city; and the same evening, was outside of the harbour, on board of a vessel bearing the flag of his country. On the 19th, he reached Gibraltar, where he was received with every mark of friendship and hospitality, by Bernard Henry, Esq.

American consul, Richard M'Call, navy agent of the United States, Horatio Sprague, Richard Gatewood, Hill and Blodget, and by several other gentlemen; to all of whom he begs leave to offer his sincere acknowledgments.

A few days after his arrival at Gibraltar, a demand for his person was made by the Spanish government upon the governor of that fortress. It is almost needless to say, that such a demand was looked upon as an absurdity.

No longer under any apprehensions of falling again into the power of the Spaniards, and reflecting on the misrepresentations that would probably be made respecting his conduct, and being desirous of manifesting to the Spanish government, as well as to his own, that although his departure from Cadiz was perfectly justifiable, yet he was still willing to submit to a fair and impartial investigation of his conduct, provided that a guarantee were given that he should not suffer any new personal outrages, he addressed the following letter:—

“ Gibraltar, March 25, 1819.

“ SIR,

“ For your excellency's information, I beg leave to enclose copies of my letters to the Condé de Abisbal, governor of Cadiz, and to the Marquis Casa Yrujo, first minister of state.

“ I beg your excellency will pursue such measures as in your judgment may be necessary, under existing circumstances, as well to sustain my honour as interests.

“ I shall be entirely guided by, and hope to be honoured with, your advice; and have only to observe,

that if there should arise the least demur on the part of the Spanish government to give a formal and solemn assurance, that neither my person nor rights shall be subject to further outrages, I mean in such case to make my arrangements for an early departure for the United States. I am without any of your excellency's communications since your letter of the 12th instant.

" I remain, respectfully, your obedient Servant,

" WILLIAM D. ROBINSON.

" To his Excellency George W. Erving,

Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States at Madrid."

Under the same date, he wrote a letter to the Condé de Abisbal, of which the following are extracts:—

" SIR,

" I am well aware that your excellency may reproach me, for having violated my word of honour, in having left Cadiz without your consent; but I beg leave to state the following circumstances, which, I flatter myself, will be a complete justification of that step, and shew at the same time that it became imperiously necessary for me to adopt it.

" In the first place, my advices from Madrid, of the 9th instant, informed me that no answer had been given by the Marquis Casa Yrujo to the demand for my release made by the minister of the United States at Madrid, on the 26th ult. A silence of twelve days, on such a point, not only appeared to me to be at variance with the principles of national courtesy, but very clearly indicated an indisposition on the part of the marquis or his government to comply with the demand in question.

" Secondly—I had indubitable information that there existed, in your excellency's possession, *an order of his Catholic Majesty, dated October 15, 1818, directing, that on my arrival at Cadiz, I was to be sent to Ceuta, and there rigorously confined in the citadel.* When I reflected that the Chevalier Onis, minister plenipotentiary of Spain in the United States, had given to my government a solemn promise, that on my arrival in Spain I should enjoy a liberal and impartial hearing, at Madrid, against any charges which the viceroy of New Spain may have adduced against me, and that, instead of such promise being honourably fulfilled, his Catholic Majesty had issued so unjust and recent an order as the one before mentioned, it was obvious to my mind that the Spanish government had a premeditated intention to sacrifice me.

" Thirdly—On the 14th instant, at night, I obtained the most unequivocal information, that your excellency had received certain *secret orders from Madrid, again to arrest me, and to place me in security in the castle of San Sebastian, until an opportunity offered to send me to Ceuta.*

" Fourthly—On the night of the 14th, and on the morning of the 15th, I discovered that your excellency had adopted very active steps to get possession of my person, doubtless for the purpose of carrying into effect your orders from Madrid.

" The preceding four points embrace matters of a very delicate nature, and shew the imperious necessity of the course I have adopted. * * * * *

" Thirty months' imprisonment, in castles, gaols, dungeons, and convents, without a hearing, or even the