

tors, who continue, all their lives, to cultivate the spot upon which they are born, and transmit from generation to generation an estate, which supports themselves and their children, in comfort, and comparative affluence. He received us with great hospitality, and gave us a most excellent supper, with some Pulque, which, unaccustomed as we were to the beverage, most of our party thought exceedingly agreeable. This was not the case with the Chile, a powerful species of Capsicum, both green and red, of which the Mexicans make an immoderate use in most of their dishes: the taste is not disagreeable, but the pungency is so great, that a stranger finds it difficult to taste it without inconvenience. Robinson states, in his account of Mina's expedition, that with many of the American officers, who were compelled to live for some days upon Tortillas and Chile, on their march towards the Interior, excoriation was the consequence.

Our next stage from Ācōcōtlān was Cūautmānzīngō, where we were advised to pass the night, although the distance was only seven leagues, on account of the difficulty of reaching any other resting-place calculated to receive so large a party. The road was mostly good, but as it continued to wind around the foot of the Mālīnchē, it was occasionally intersected by deep barrancas, (or ravines,) which although perfectly passable for horsemen, retarded the progress of the carriages considerably. In one place we came to a descent of about twelve feet per-

pendicular, which there was no possibility of avoiding, as the barranca, both above and below, was exceedingly deep and rugged. The carriages were before us when this obstacle to our farther progress was discovered, and a dragoon came galloping back to announce that it was impossible to proceed. Upon reaching the place, however, we discovered that there was such an abundance of loose stones in every part of the ravine, that it would not be difficult to construct an inclined plane by which the carriages might descend; and this our joint efforts soon accomplished, a part of the escort having assisted in the conveyance of materials, while the rest broke down with their lances the side of the barranca. In about half an hour a very tolerable bridge was manufactured, and we had the pleasure of seeing the carriages all reach the bottom in safety.

At Cūautmānzīngō, where we arrived at an early hour, we were welcomed with the same hospitality which had characterized our reception everywhere, during our progress through the country. The most valuable portion of the estate consisted in some extensive corn-lands watered by the Mālīnchē, and in the Maguey plantations more immediately about the house. These we were glad to have an opportunity of visiting; and a part of the afternoon was employed in inspecting the progress of Pulque-making in all its stages. There is nothing disagreeable either in the smell or appearance of the liquor on the spot where it is thus prepared. The greatest atten-

tion is paid to cleanliness in the buildings connected with it, and it derives a very refreshing coolness from the slight state of fermentation in which it ought always to be drunk. It is only by exposure to the sun, and a careless mode of conveyance to the great towns, which are at a considerable distance, that it acquires that unpleasant flavour which Humboldt compares to the smell of putrid meat. In this state it becomes really offensive; although to the amateurs in the capital who are unaccustomed to Pulque in its original purity, it is said to be a recommendation. On the same principle, in Madrid, Irish butter is preferred to fresh, which is thought tasteless, and insipid.

We left Cuautmānzīngō early on the morning of the 29th of December, but stopped to breakfast at San Nicōlās, a fine Hacienda belonging to the Conde de Sāntiāgō, with whose family we had the pleasure of making acquaintance, as they happened to be residing in the country at the time. This was our first introduction to the Creole nobility, and we were much pleased with the unaffected politeness of their manners. After a most sumptuous entertainment, we were allowed to proceed on our journey, but not until our escort and servants had been made to partake of the Count's hospitality, which was extended even to the horses of our very numerous party. About four in the afternoon, we reached the Venta de las Indias, (the Inn of the Indies,) the magnificent name of which had led us to expect better

accommodations than the house, which is very small, was calculated to afford. The inn is about eleven leagues from Cuautmānzīngō, and seven from San Nicōlās. The whole intervening space is laid out either in fields of Maize, Frijoles, wheat, and barley, or in Maguey plantations, the value of which increases in proportion to their vicinity to the Capital. The country, as the name denotes, (Los Llanos, the plains, of Apān,) is flat and uninteresting. A few great Haciendas are scattered, at intervals, over the plain; but we did not see a tree throughout the whole district. Game we found in abundance, particularly hares, which differ from ours only in colour, having a much larger proportion of white, and being sometimes spotted with a sort of greyish blue.

On our approach to Otūmbā, (Dec. 30,) the appearance of a large species of Peruvian pepper, called El Arbol del Peru, and a little broken ground, announced our vicinity to the mountain-ridge which still separated us from the Valley of Mexico. The Arbol del Peru is, I believe, known in Europe, although at Madrid, where I have seen it, it was a pretty, but diminutive shrub; in Mexico, where it is very common, it attains a considerable size, and is remarkably ornamental, and graceful in its appearance.

Otūmbā, like most of the smaller towns through which we had passed, appeared to have suffered considerably during the Revolution. From its vicinity

both to the Capital, and to the Llanös, where a formidable Insurgent force was organized during the Civil War, it was transferred frequently from one party to the other, never remaining long in the possession of either, but equally maltreated by both. It will require many years of tranquillity to obliterate the traces of this period of universal suffering.

As usual, on entering the town, we found a dinner provided for us at the house of the Alcalde, of which we were forced to partake, though we regretted a delay, which retarded our arrival at *San Juan de Teōtihuacán*, (where we slept,) until after dusk, and consequently prevented us from visiting the Mexican antiquities in the vicinity of that place. These ancient monuments consist of two immense pyramids, dedicated to the Sun and the Moon, truncated, as all these pyramids are, and considerably defaced both by the hand of time, and by the fanaticism of the first conquerors, who seem to have left nothing undone in order to destroy every memorial of the primitive religion of the country. Such, however, is the solidity of these structures, that it has not been found possible to complete their destruction. They stand at some distance from the road, and it was nearly dusk when we passed them; but seen even thus, there was something imposing in the enormous size of these masses, which rise conspicuous in the middle of the valley, as if to testify of ages long gone by, and of a people whose power they alone are left to record. Reflections such as

these strike the imagination very forcibly after traversing the plain of Otumba, where the Mexicans made one of their most gallant struggles against the superior skill and weapons of their invaders. I could not help calling to mind the description given by Solis of that plain,—(a description which used to be my delight as a boy, long before I ever dreamed that it would be my fate to visit the spot,)—“with the rays of the sun playing upon the crests of the Mexican warriors, adorned with feathers of a thousand hues,” and contrasting the picture which he has traced of that brilliant army, with the state of ignorance, wretchedness, and abject submission, to which their descendants have been reduced since the Conquest. Whatever be the advantages which they may derive from the recent changes, (and the nature of these time alone can determine,) the fruits of the introduction of our boasted civilization into the New World have been hitherto bitter indeed. Throughout America the Indian race has been sacrificed; nor can I discover that in New Spain any one step has been taken for their improvement. In the neighbourhood of the Capital nothing can be more wretched than their appearance; and although, under a Republican form of government, they must enjoy, in theory at least, an equality of rights with every other class of citizens, they seemed, practically, at the period of my first visit, to be under the orders of every one, whether officer, soldier, churchman, or civilian, who chose to honour them with a command.

We left San Juán early on the 31st of December, and commenced, not without much curiosity, our approach to the Capital. We were gratified almost immediately with a view of the Valley of Mexico, but the day being unusually cloudy, neither the Lakes, nor the town, were distinctly visible. After descending from the ridge of hills, which forms the boundary to the North-east, and traversing a long stone causeway, by which the lake of Tēzcūcō is separated from that of San Christōvāl, we arrived about twelve o'clock at the Guăđălūpě gate, where we were met by Mr. Ālmān, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. This gentleman, after making us enter a large state-coach, which had been Ītūrbīdē's, but which was now destined by the Government for our use, conducted us to a house on the Ālmēdā, or great Public Walk, which had been furnished for our reception, where he left us to make our own arrangements, after begging us to consider ourselves completely at home, and adding that we should find every thing that we could possibly want provided for us.

Of this unexpected courtesy we were glad, at first, to avail ourselves, as all the heavy baggage had been left at Jālāpā; only a few mules, with our beds, portmanteaus, and a canteen, having accompanied us to the Capital. This is a necessary arrangement in Mexican travelling, as the ordinary pace of a Muteer, when his mules carry their full load of twelve Arrobas, (300 lbs.) does not exceed four leagues a

day: with a load of 200 lbs. they keep pace with a carriage without difficulty, and are then much preferable to any other mode of conveyance for baggage, as no roads, however bad, can stop them, while with any thing upon wheels, difficulties are constantly occurring.

None of our party had suffered from sickness on the journey, yet we were all much fatigued on reaching the Capital. There is something very trying at first in the climate of the Tropics, particularly where, as in our case, the sedentary life of a ship is exchanged for one of sudden and violent exertion. The transition, too, from the relaxing heat of the Coast, to the rarefied atmosphere of the Table-land, was severely felt by us all. We had disdained to use the precautions which the natives uniformly take when travelling, by muffling up the lower part of the face in a white handkerchief, and the consequence was that our lips were cracked by the sun, and the peculiar subtlety of the air, in a manner that long left us a painful recollection of our journey. In every other respect we could only look back to it with pleasure. We had traversed a country, hitherto visited by very few of our countrymen, where, if there were but few beauties, there was novelty in abundance to attract us, and we had received, at every step, the most unequivocal proofs, that the Commission with which we were entrusted was a most acceptable one to the great mass of the inhabitants. Many of them termed the commence-

ment of a more unrestricted intercourse with Europe, "the second discovery of the New World;" and such it has indeed proved to us, for we have acquired more information respecting America, and a greater insight into the capabilities of the country, and the character of its inhabitants, in the last three years, than had been obtained during the three centuries which preceded them.

## SECTION II.

## RESIDENCE IN THE CAPITAL; AND RETURN TO THE COAST.

THE approach to Mexico did not give us a very favourable idea either of the Capital, or of the country about it. The valley on the Otumba side possesses none of the beautiful features which are so remarkable to the South and East; for, having more recently formed a part of the great lake of Tēzcūcō, which in the rainy season still extends as far as San Crīstōbāl, the waters in receding have left a barren tract, covered with a crust of Carbonate of Soda. Sterility prevails, with few interruptions, from the village of Sān Jūan dē Tēōtihuācān to the Convent of Guādālūpē, in which the Virgin of Guādālūpē, the Patroness of Mexico, has taken up her abode. A drawing of this rich but singular building will be found in the first volume: it is difficult to say to what style of architecture it belongs, as all pretensions to uniformity are destroyed by the Capillas, (chapels,) erected in the vicinity of the principal