

SECTION VI.

RETURN TO ENGLAND BY THE UNITED STATES.

—CHARACTER OF THE CREOLES—FEELINGS
OF THE COUNTRY WITH REGARD TO THE
PRESENT SYSTEM—CONCLUSION.

I PASSED three months in the Capital, after my return from the North; at the expiration of which time, my successor, Mr. Pakenham, having arrived, I set out for Veracruz, in company with Mr. Rocafuerte, and Captain Vernon, of His Majesty's sloop *Primrose*, who was commissioned to convey us to England, with the ratified copy of the Treaty, which had just been approved of by the Chambers.

We quitted Mexico on the 23d of April, and proceeded by *Ōtūmbă*, *Āpăn*, *Piedras Negras*, and *Vīrēyēs*, to *Pērōtē*, Mrs. Ward being no longer in a state either to travel on horseback, or to support the violent motion of a coach, in crossing the mountains between Mexico and La Puebla. At Jalapa,

where we were detained several days in order to allow time for the money sent by the April "*Conducta*"* to be shipped, we found most comfortable lodgings in a house which Colonel Dashwood had the goodness to engage for us, while his hospitality supplied all our other wants. We dined with him every day during our stay; and, under Mrs. Dashwood's direction, we made several delightful excursions in the environs of the town, the beauties of which seemed to grow upon us, as we explored them more narrowly.

On the 6th of May, having received intelligence that the *Primrose* was ready for sea, we slept at *Plan del Rio*, which we quitted at three o'clock on the morning of the 7th, in order to avoid the heat as much as possible. We breakfasted about seven at *Puente del Rey*, and reached the *Boca del Potrero* at two, where we passed the night. On the morning of the 8th we arrived at a very early hour at Veracruz, and embarked almost immediately, after taking some refreshment at Mr. Welsh's house, while our luggage was sending on board.

I rode almost all the way from Jalapa, notwithstanding the heat, which I did not find nearly so oppressive as I had expected. The rest of the party performed the journey in litters. *Hilario* and one other servant from the *Table-land*, accompanied us,

* "*Conducta*" implies the mules laden with silver, which leave the Capital once every two or three months for the coast, with a strong escort.

having volunteered a service, for which their countrymen in general feel the greatest repugnance, at a season when the *Tierra Caliente* is certainly not traversed without danger.

Veracruz was exceedingly unhealthy at the time of our departure. Several persons had been already attacked by the vomito, and Mr. Rocafuerte's servant, a Spaniard, shared the same fate: he was taken ill on board the *Primrose*, and died the fifth or sixth day. A young midshipman (Mr. Anson), who contracted the disorder while on shore for an hour in the morning with the boat that brought us off, was more fortunate. Youth and a vigorous constitution carried him through it; but he was very much reduced for a long time, and did not entirely get over the attack for some weeks.

The *Primrose* was under weigh when we embarked, and, the wind being fair, in a very few hours we lost sight of the Mexican coast. On the following evening, however, we again anchored off Tampico, to ship some more dollars, which were not put on board till the 12th, in the afternoon, when we sailed definitively for the Havanna. From thence we proceeded to New York, where the *Primrose* remained a week, both Mrs. Ward and the children being so much reduced by the rough weather which we had experienced, that it would have been absolutely dangerous for them to have crossed the Atlantic without some rest and relaxation on shore. Captain Vernon and I took advantage of this delay

to visit Washington, where we met with a most kind reception from my old friend Mr. Vaughan, under whom I had passed a year of my life, when attached to the Embassy of Sir Henry Wellesley at Madrid.

Washington is but little worthy of the reputation which it enjoys. It is the mere skeleton of a great town; and the houses being mostly built in the style of the architecture by which our own country is so much disfigured, with high gable ends, small doors, and cross lights in every direction, there is little to see, and less to admire. The real capitals of the United States are the great commercial cities, and of these the Americans may justly be proud. We passed through Philadelphia and Baltimore on our way, and in both these places, as well as in New York, we found ample proofs of an active, thriving, and powerful country, abounding in energy and wealth, and only requiring to be known in order to be duly appreciated. I will not fall into the error, so common amongst travellers, of passing judgment upon an empire, after a week's examination of its resources; but I will say, that those writers who have fostered the prejudices generally entertained in England with regard to American manners, and in particular as to their individual feeling towards ourselves, have rendered both countries a very great disservice. Captain Vernon and I found our character as Englishmen, sufficient to ensure us both civility, and attention, from our very numerous fellow-passengers on board the steam-boats, in which a great part of

the journey to Washington is performed; and both in the capital and at Philadelphia, we required no other passport to open the doors of several highly respectable houses.

Without participating in all Mr. Waterton's enthusiasm with regard to the American women, it is difficult for the most casual observer not to be struck with their appearance; nor do I know any part of the world (not even excepting England) where the display of female beauty is more striking than at New York, and Philadelphia, where, from the warmth of the climate, the light dress of the South of Europe is seen in conjunction with the freshness, and bright colouring of a Northern complexion.

We found our invalids entirely restored to health by their stay at Staaten Island, from whence they removed, after performing a quarantine of four days, to the hospitable house of Mr. and Mrs. Buchanon, to whose attentions we were all much indebted. On the 21st of June we embarked again, and on the 16th of July, we anchored at Spithead, after a quiet and prosperous voyage, during the whole of which we had daily and hourly reason to be grateful for Captain Vernon's unremitting kindness. The Primrose was much too small for the accommodation of so large a party as ours; and as, after a thousand ingenious contrivances, there was only room for one female servant, a Mexican woman, who was almost constantly unwell, the children, the eldest of whom was just two years

old, could not be properly attended to, and were a frequent source of discomfort and trouble. They were nursed, in turn, I believe, by all the ship's company, and formed a particular alliance not only with the officers, who were very kind to them, but with the boatswain and many of the men, who used to carry them about to every part of the ship, and introduce them to places which young ladies are not much in the habit of frequenting. To add to our embarrassments, Mrs. Ward was confined on board, ten days before we reached Portsmouth, when the maid's whole attention was of course devoted to her. The little girls were transferred to my cabin below at night, and during the day were kept either upon deck, or in the only part of the ship which Captain Vernon could call his own, (half the poop-cabin,) where he slept, and we all dined, separated from Mrs. Ward by nothing but a light partition, with an opening below to allow the tiller to traverse.

I am happy in having an opportunity publicly to express our acknowledgments to Captain Vernon, for the good-humour with which he endured the breaking up of all the comfort of his pretty establishment on board. Few men would have supported so long, and so severe a trial, with such patience as himself; and fewer still would have exerted themselves, in the midst of it, as he did, to promote, by every attention in his power, the comforts of his passengers.

Mrs. Ward, notwithstanding the want of a thou-

sand things which her situation required, but which could not, of course, be procured on board, recovered wonderfully, and on the 17th we were enabled to transport her in a cot to the Isle of Wight, where she gradually regained her strength, although much shaken by the fatigues which she had undergone.

Having thus brought my own story to a conclusion, it only remains for me to add a few observations upon points, which have either not been included in the preceding Sections, or, with regard to which, my opinions have undergone some modifications, in consequence of subsequent events; premising, as an apology for this irregularity, that, in order to prevent loss of time, my manuscript has been put into the hands of my publisher as written, and that, consequently, I am concluding, in 1828, a work, the first volume of which was in the press in December, 1827.

Our information with regard to Mexico has hitherto been so extremely circumscribed, that the details into which I have entered in the three last books, will, I hope, be excused, in consideration of the novelty of the subject.

To those who have studied the *Essai Politique*, the use which I have made of this admirable work in many parts of my own, will be sufficiently apparent. Indeed, to write a book upon Mexico, without referring to Baron Humboldt at almost every page, is nearly impossible. He first applied the lights of science to the New World. He discovered, and ex-

plained the peculiarities of climate and structure by which Mexico is so much favoured; and traced, with the hand of a master, the outline of that vast picture, which present and future travellers can only assist in filling up. I have endeavoured, however, in availing myself of the sanction of this great authority, not merely to transfer to my own pages information better communicated in his, but to carry on the view which he has taken of each subject up to the present day, and to institute as exact a comparison as possible between the state of things as represented by him in 1802, and as seen in 1827 by myself.

Before the appearance of the *Essai Politique*, the works of Robertson comprised all that was known in England, or, indeed, in Europe, with regard to the Transatlantic possessions of Spain, and from these but little information is to be derived that will apply to the present condition or prospects of the New States.

Wherever diligent research could supply the place of personal observation, Robertson's views are just, and his reasoning excellent. His errors arose from the impossibility of obtaining information with regard to many points, upon which the labours of Humboldt first threw a light. I have had occasion to point out some curious mistakes with respect to climate, and mines; and Humboldt has demonstrated the erroneousness of his calculations respecting the amount of silver raised, as well as his miscon-

ception of the value of the revenue derived from Mexico by Spain. But many parts of his Eighth Book (on the Colonial Policy of the Peninsula) are wonderfully correct; and in particular his observations both upon the mild spirit of the first *Leyes de Indias*, and the impossibility of enforcing them. His eulogy of the Council of the Indies,* though sound in theory, was not equally so in practice. It produced latterly none of those good effects, which were contemplated upon its first institution. The responsibility of the higher officers before it, as a tribunal, was merely nominal. Not one Viceroy suffered by the sentence of *Residencia*, with the exception of *Iturrigaray*, who did not deserve the severity with which he was treated. The schemes of improvement submitted to it were buried in the *Archivo-general de Indias* at *Siguenza*, where they still remain unnoticed and unknown. The most unjust decrees were obtained by bribery; and, latterly, the influence of the members of the Council was employed principally in stifling complaints, and supporting their respective protegés in the Colonial *Audiencias* against charges, which ought to have led to their immediate dismissal. In lieu, therefore, "of attributing to the wise regulations and vigilant inspection of this respectable tribunal, whatever degree of public order and virtue still remained in the Spanish Colonies," I should say that nothing had

* Robertson, Book viii. p. 20.

tended so directly to destroy both as the conduct of the Council of the Indies; which, by poisoning the very fountain of justice, convinced the Creoles that in the Old, as in the New World, it was equally unavailing for them to seek redress.

Robertson is likewise incorrect in what he states respecting Castes, and the natural antipathy between the Indians and the Negroes. Wherever there have been African slaves in America, it will be found that they have not only intermarried with the Aborigines, but are positively blended into a new race; and it was the extent to which this connexion had been carried, and the impossibility, (from its numerous ramifications) of proving themselves free from a taint of Negro blood, that occasioned such universal dissatisfaction amongst the Creoles, when the Cortes (in 1811) deprived of the rights of citizenship all those who were in any way contaminated by African descent.

Nor is Robertson's view of the character of the Creoles (Book viii. p. 32) at all to be relied upon. It is drawn not from nature, but from a bad likeness, sketched by no friendly hand. In considering what they were, we must bear in mind the prohibitions under which they laboured, and the very narrow circle to which their natural activity was confined. What inducement was there to acquire information, or to cultivate science, in a country where the labour of early years could be turned to no account in the career of maturer life? From the bar and the

church the young Creole was excluded; or, at least, if he entered either profession, he knew that to rise in it beyond a certain point could never be his lot. He could not hope to be rewarded for his exertions by the approbation of his countrymen, for the press was closed upon genius; and even in private society, from the jealous watchfulness of the Inquisition, freedom of discussion was unknown. There was nothing, therefore, but an absolute thirst for knowledge, unusual even in the most polished countries, to animate him in the pursuit of acquirements, of which he was forbidden to avail himself when attained: and none can wonder if, with so few incitements to exertion, vicious indulgence occupied but too large a portion of his time. But the Revolution has proved that the Creoles are capable of better things. The estimable parts of their character are rapidly developing themselves; and the field now open for the display of that energy, of which, during the Civil War, they have given such fearful proofs, seems to have called into life the qualities requisite in order to turn it to account. From what I have seen of the Mexicans, I should say that they possess great natural shrewdness and ability: they are brave, hospitable, warm-hearted where met with kindness, and only too magnificent in their ideas of what the intercourse of society requires. From a fear of not doing enough, they often do too little; but whatever they attempt is executed with a splendour, which is at times almost embarrassing.

In 1826, being anxious to have our eldest little girl baptized, we solicited the Count and Countess Regla, with whom we were upon very intimate terms, to be her sponsors. They consented with great readiness and satisfaction, on condition that the whole management of the ceremony should be left to them; and on receiving a promise to this effect, (given without any idea on our part of the consequences to which it was to lead,) a splendid church ceremony was prepared, with hundreds of wax-lights, and music, and crowds of attendants; and this again was succeeded on the following day by a dinner of twenty people, and by presents of diamonds, for which it was impossible for us to make any adequate return, while to reject them would have been regarded as a mortal offence.

From Don Pablo de la Llave, (at that time Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs,) by whom the service was performed, we likewise received a certificate of baptism, printed on silk and inclosed in a gold frame, with all the names of the child duly inscribed upon it. Frances was the only one selected by ourselves, but to this were added Guädälüpé, (in honour both of the Virgin of that name, and of the President,) and Felipa de Jesus, in commemoration of the only Mexican Saint acknowledged by the Church of Rome.

It is needless to add that we felt most grateful to the Regla family for their kindness upon this occasion. It had the effect, however, of preventing