

GENERAL TABLE OF CONTENTS TO THIS VOLUME

BOOK V.

PERSONAL NARRATIVE.

SECTION I.

FIRST VISIT TO MEXICO IN 1823.—JOURNEY FROM VERA CRUZ TO THE CAPITAL.

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* Vide Sketch of the Revolution, Book II.

O'Gorman, now His Majesty's Consul-General in Mexico, Mr. Mackenzie, who resided for some time as Consul at Jalapa, Mr. Thompson, Secretary to the Commission, Dr. Mair, and myself. Our voyage was monotonously prosperous; it is therefore only necessary to state that we embarked at Plymouth, on the 18th of October, 1823, on board His Majesty's ship *Thetis*, commanded by Sir John Phillimore, and anchored off the island of Sacrificios on the 11th of December, being prevented from entering the harbour of Vera Cruz, by the hostilities which had commenced, about two months before, between the town and the Castle of San Juan de Uloa.

On the passage we only touched at Madeira, where we passed four delightful days.

This island forms a connecting link between the Old and the New World, and possesses many of the characteristics of both. The curtain of vines, which extends over the whole face of the mountain above Funchal, and rises gradually to the foot of the eminence, upon which the Convent of Nuestra Señora de la Soledad is situated, is worthy of Italy or Andalusia; while the Interior recalls, at one moment, the volcanic remains so frequent in America, and at another, the striking scenery of Switzerland or the Tyrol.

This again contrasts singularly with the minor beauties of cultivation in the vicinity of the town: the trellices extending across the steep, paved road, the walls of which are covered with the *Camellia*

Japonica, the wild luxuriancy of the gardens, and the brilliant white of the houses glittering in the sun, with verandas sheltered from its rays by a large tree, or a cluster of bananas. The whole forms a scene which is not easily forgotten, and which was, perhaps, impressed the more forcibly on my mind, by its total dissimilarity to that which succeeded it—the gloomy sand-hills of Veracruz.

On the morning of our arrival at Sacrificios, I was commissioned by Mr. Hervey to go on shore in order to open our communications with the Mexicans. Not being aware that, since the firing from the Castle had commenced, the great gates of the town had been closed, and that all intercourse with it was conducted by a road from Mōcāmbō Point, (nearly opposite to our anchorage,) we took advantage of a momentary silence in the batteries on both sides, and rowed straight for the pier-head, passing within a quarter of a mile of the Castle, the walls of which were covered with men. On reaching the mole we landed, and proceeded towards the gate at the farther extremity, where, after much delay, we succeeded in obtaining admission through a wicket, behind which we found a breastwork of sand-bags, and a few straggling soldiers, with an officer, who, on due explanation being given, conducted us to the house of General Victoria, at that time Governor of the Province, and Commander-in-chief of the Army employed in the siege of Uloa.

Nothing could exceed the melancholy appearance

of the streets through which we passed. A town entirely abandoned by its inhabitants, must be, at all times, a strange, and a mournful sight; but when to this unnatural solitude are added the marks of recent warfare, houses riddled with shot, churches half in ruins, and flights of vultures, congregating around the carcase of some dead animal in the streets, it is difficult to imagine a more striking picture of desolation.

Nor was there any of the military bustle which usually attends a siege, to enliven the monotony of the scene. The garrison of St. John of Uloa was so small, and the climate of Veracruz so dangerous, that the Mexican force consisted merely of men enough to work the batteries, which had been constructed in the hope of making some impression upon the Castle, the bomb-proof casemates of which would have bid defiance to any such attempt, had not hunger and disease lent their powerful assistance to the besieging force without.

I do not believe that we met with a single living creature from the sea-side to Victoria's house, where, to our great surprise, we found ourselves suddenly in the midst of loud and boisterous rejoicings. It was his Saint's day, (the day of the Virgin of Guädälüpě,) and all the officers of the garrison were dining with him, in order to commemorate it. Rather a fine band of music was playing in the Court; a number of dark, muscular-looking men were scattered carelessly around; and al-

though the appearance of many of them was sufficiently uncouth, still, both amongst them, and amongst the officers to whom we were afterwards introduced, there was some attempt at uniformity of dress, no traces of which could be discovered in the guard, by which we had been admitted at the gate.

Of the pleasure with which the intelligence of the arrival of a British Commission in Mexico was received by General Victoria, who came out in person to welcome us, it is needless to speak. Next to the Independence of his country, his first wish through life had been to see an intercourse established with England; and that wish was at length gratified! After a long conversation with him, he conducted us to the room where the officers were assembled, by whom we were received with deafening "Vivas:" the Band was stationed in the Corridor; toasts were given in honour of England, and her King; in which the happy coincidence of our arrival having taken place upon the day sacred to the Patroness of Mexico and of Guädälüpě Victoria was not forgotten. Some of the impromptus made by the officers upon this "feliz Casualidad," were clever, and the verses by no means ill turned; although their principal merit naturally consisted in conveying to us the feelings of the moment.

After making arrangements for landing our baggage at Mōcāmbō, and receiving a promise that mules should be immediately provided for our conveyance

into the Interior, we returned to the boat, accompanied by a guard of honour, much superior in appearance to that which we had found upon duty, and took leave, at the gate, of our new friends. The last mark of attention with which they favoured us I should willingly have dispensed with, for wishing to honour us with a salute, on pushing off, they forgot that their guns were shotted, and directed against the Castle, which immediately opened its batteries in return, so that for some time we had the pleasure of finding ourselves between two fires. The balls and shells passed considerably above us, but we saw more than one strike the pier which we had just left, and many more bury themselves in the sands near a bastion at the Southern extremity of the town.

Notwithstanding General Victoria's wish to expedite our departure, several days elapsed before the arrangements for our journey could be completed. We found the greatest difficulty in procuring mules for our baggage, or horses for ourselves; for the trade of Veracruz having been transferred to Alvarado, a general emigration of the population had taken place, with the exception of a few sickly-looking families, which had established themselves in tents in the midst of what was once a wood of cocoa-nut trees,* a little beyond the range of the shells from

* The trees were all cut down, when Santana and Victoria were besieged in Veracruz by Iturbide's army, under the orders of General Echavarri.—*Vide* last Section of Book II.

the Castle. In the mean time a constant communication was kept up between the Thetis and the town, by the Mocambo road; Mr. Hervey and General Victoria exchanged visits, and on the 14th the whole Commission dined at the General's house, which, in the evening, presented a curious scene; for although there was not a woman in Veracruz, we had the music of all the regiments playing in the Patio, while the soldiers danced the *Jārāvě*, and other national dances, until a very late hour. A violent North-west wind came on about eight o'clock, which rendered it impossible for us to return on board to sleep, but General Victoria provided us all with beds, and during the night the gale abated sufficiently to enable us to reach the Thetis after breakfast the next morning. We there made our final preparations for landing, and got the last of our baggage on shore, in the hope of being able to commence our journey early on the 16th; but the long expected mules did not arrive till late, and when they did come, such was the confusion which ensued amongst the muleteers in parcelling out boxes and packages, very few of which were intended for the back of a mule, that although we were at work from six in the morning, it was four in the afternoon before we succeeded in getting fairly into marching order. I was at one time very much inclined to throw up the task of superintendence in despair, for with fifty baggage mules, and three English carriages, each drawn by seven wretched animals, to

marshal, I saw no hope of ever leaving the beach. None of our English servants were of the slightest use, as, with the exception of mine, who had been four years with me in Spain, they spoke no Spanish; but had they been perfect masters of the language, it would have been of little avail, for neither remonstrances, nor persuasion, nor abuse, produced the least effect upon the lawless set by which we were surrounded. Nothing but the very dregs of the population had remained in Veracruz, and out of these, of course, our muleteers and coachmen were selected. They were almost all blacks, or descendants of blacks, with a mixture of Indian blood, and seemed either never to have known the restraints of civilization, or, at all events, to have lost sight of them amidst the wild scenes of the Revolution: whilst with us, they certainly acknowledged no superior but the Corporal of the escort, whose sword, the flat part of which was applied without scruple to their backs, sometimes accomplished what it was impossible for any other mode of treatment to effect.

On quitting the beach with our whole caravan in marching order, we followed a path, which, after winding for about a league amongst the sand-hills by which Veracruz is surrounded, joined the road to Santa Fé, a village at which, although only three leagues from Veracruz, we had agreed to rendezvous, and pass the night. It was seven in the evening before I reached it, and eleven at night before the carriages appeared. I found them imbedded in the

sand about a league from Veracruz, with the coachmen stretched at full length by the side of their mules, and fast asleep; a measure to which our English servants told me that they had had recourse the very moment that a difficulty occurred in advancing. With the assistance of the guard, means were taken to awaken them; but seeing that it was useless for me to remain, I rode on, leaving a *sous officier*, and four men to bring them up; and rejoicing to think, that however necessary the carriages might prove in the Capital, all the members of our party were young, and active enough to be able to dispense with them upon the road. Even in the present improved state of the communications, they are a continual source of embarrassment on a journey, for English axletrees are not at all adapted to Mexican roads, and if a wheel or a spring be injured, there is no possibility of getting it repaired: but in 1823, there was hardly a single league between Veracruz and Përôté, in which some vexatious delay did not occur to make us regret that we had burthened ourselves with such incumbrances at all.

We found at Sântă Fê the first specimen of the sort of accommodations that we were to expect on our journey through the *Tierra Caliente* of Mexico. The village was composed of five or six Indian huts, rather more spacious than some which we afterwards met with, but built of bamboos, and thatched with palm-leaves, with a portico of similar materials before the door. The canes of which the sides are

composed, are placed at so respectable a distance from each other as to admit both light and air: this renders windows unnecessary. A door there is, which leads at once into the principal apartment, in which father and mother, brothers and sisters, pigs and poultry, all lodge together in amicable confusion. In some instances, a subdivision is attempted, by suspending a mat or two in such a manner as to partition off a corner of the room; but this is usually thought superfluous. The kitchen occupies a separate hut. The beds are sometimes raised on a little framework of cane, but much oftener consist of a square mat placed upon the ground; while a few gourds for containing water, some large glasses for orangeade, a stone for grinding maize, and a little coarse earthenware, compose the whole stock of domestic utensils. We found, however, provisions in abundance; fowls, rice, tortillas, (thin maize cakes,) and pine-apples, with a copious supply of orangeade, furnished an excellent supper, after which we commenced our preparations for the night. We had all taken the precaution of providing ourselves with brass camp-beds, which, in America, are one of the necessaries of life: they pack into so small a compass that two of them make a light load for a mule; while, when put together, which requires but little time or trouble, they ensure to the traveller the means of resting after the fatigues of the day with every possible convenience and comfort. Above all, the musquito-net should not be forgotten; for

without it there are few parts of the New World in which those troublesome insects do not make such an example of a *nouveau débarqué*, as not only to deprive him of rest, but to throw him into a fever for some days. We put up our beds in the open air, under the shed which projected from the front of the inn, while Dr. Mair and Mr. Thompson, whose baggage was not come up, slung two cots, which they had brought from on board, to the rafters above us. Our horses were picketed close round the shed, with an ample provision of *Zacātē*, (dried maize stalks;) the servants slept on the outside, wrapped up in cloaks, with our saddles for pillows; and beyond them again the men and horses of the escort were stationed, with a large watch-fire, and two or three sentinels, to prevent robberies during the night. Upon the whole, I have seldom witnessed a more curious scene, and we could none of us help remarking, as we contemplated it, that if this were a fair specimen of the introduction to American Diplomacy, there would be few candidates for the Missions to the New States amongst his Majesty's older diplomatic servants in Europe.

On the morning of the 17th of December, we quitted Santa Fé at about nine o'clock, having sent off the carriages and heavy baggage some hours before. Our day's journey was to be only twelve leagues, as we had been advised to sleep at Puente del Rey, a large village, celebrated as the scene of many a sanguinary engagement during the Revolu-

tionary wars; but although the ground rises but little in the intervening space, we found the greatest difficulty in advancing, from the extreme badness of the road, which was in many places a wilderness of sand. The carriage-mules knocked up, and the coachmen mutinied both at El Măntiāl, and at Păsō Ōvėjās, two Ranchos, at each of which they seemed determined to pass the night; and although we forced them on, and left a guard with them at last, with strict orders not to allow them to stop, they did not reach the Puente until two in the morning. We arrived ourselves about dusk, with barely light enough to enable us to admire the beautiful scenery by which we were surrounded. The bridge which is thrown over the river Āntīgūa at this place is, like most Spanish works of this description, admirably constructed. The arches are of stone, and the bridge itself communicates with a causeway, which, on the one side, winds down a steep descent, and on the other, forms an elevated road, along which the huts, of which the village of the Puente is composed, are scattered amongst some large trees, at considerable intervals from each other. But it is on looking towards the Veracruz side that you are struck with the picturesque appearance of the bridge, for there you perceive most distinctly the curve in which its peculiarity consists; while the fine masses of rock that command it, and the rapid stream that runs below, forcing a passage over a thousand obstacles,

form a scene far superior to any that we had met with since our landing. Nothing can be more monotonous than the general character of the country from Veracruz to the Puente; the sand-hills do not indeed extend above three miles into the interior, but for some leagues there seems to be a struggle between vegetation and sterility. Patches of a rich and luxuriant green are intersected by long intervals of rocks and sand, nor is it until you reach Păsō dē Ōvėjās, that any thing like regular cultivation is discovered. There we passed the ruins of a large Sugar Hacienda, which had been abandoned during the Revolution, and saw evident traces of a rich and productive soil. But on leaving the river to which this fertility is due, we again found ourselves in a sandy desert, where little but the Mimosa was to be seen, except in spots where some apparently insignificant stream called into existence, at once, the luxuriant vegetation of the Tropics. In these we were quite bewildered by the variety of plants, all new to the European eye, and generally thrown together in such fanciful confusion, that the most experienced botanist would have had some difficulty in classing them; for, as each tree supports two or three creepers, the fruits and flowers of which bear no sort of proportion in point of size to the slender branches of the mother plant, it is not easy to distinguish them, at first sight, from the produce of the tree to which they cling. The air is quite perfumed at times with this