

country every part of which abounds in the traces of great volcanic eruptions; but still, it enables you to meet an incipient earthquake with infinitely more composure than I at least should feel, under similar circumstances, at Caracas, or upon the ruins of Callao. The natives are both more sensible than strangers of the smaller shocks, and more alarmed by them; while even animals give evident indications of anxiety at their approach.

Having given so detailed an account of the first journey of the Commission to the Capital, it will be unnecessary for me to state any thing with regard to my return to the Coast, except that, not being encumbered with a carriage, I was enabled to effect it in a very short time. I took with me a number of baggage-mules very lightly laden, and two good horses for myself, and my servant. My escort, which the unsettled state of the country rendered indispensable, was changed at each of the towns through which we passed, so that I proceeded with great rapidity. I took the La Puebla road, (the disturbances at that place having been entirely settled,) and made my first stage to the Venta de Córdova, about eight leagues from Mexico, having left that town very late in the day. The second day I reached Lă Pūēblă; the third, Ojō dē Aguă; the fourth, Pērōtē; the fifth Jălăpă, where I passed the morning of the sixth day, and from whence I arrived at Věrăcrūz in twenty-four hours, which included a few hours rest at Plan del Roi, and Pūentē dēl

Rēy, I found the Thetis still at her anchorage, but was prevented from embarking by a violent Norte, which, with other circumstances, compelled me to remain at Veracruz for nearly a week. Fortunately, the season was healthy, and the firing from the Castle at an end; a suspension of hostilities having taken place in consequence of both parties being tired of such desultory warfare. I lodged at the house of Mr. Smith, (subsequently appointed His Majesty's Vice-Consul,) which was exactly opposite the great battery of San Juan de Uloa, and bore evidence to the precision with which the guns had been brought to bear upon the town, by the number of shots which had gone through it. It must have been a very uncomfortable residence, from what I saw of the effect produced by the opening of the batteries one evening, during my stay, which was sufficiently unpleasant to have induced me to seek other quarters immediately, had not the violence of a Norte without rendered it impossible to think of a change of abode. Nothing can be more melancholy than the appearance of Veracruz during one of these winds. The air is filled with sand, and the sky darkened with clouds, while the waves are driven with such impetuosity upon the beach that the whole line of coast is one sheet of foam. All communication between the shipping and the town is suspended, even when at anchor under the walls of the Castle, which are not half a mile from the pier-head. The rapidity with which

these gales come on is equal to their violence. A little ripple from the North first indicates their approach, and if boats are out, or on shore, not an instant should then be lost in placing them in security. Five minutes afterwards I have seen the strength of a whole boat's crew exerted in vain, in order to keep the head of the boat towards the sea: they sometimes succeeded in carrying it through the shoal water off Mocambo Point, but, as soon as they trusted to their oars, they were driven back again, and compelled to abandon the attempt. The only consolation in these cases is the reflection that, as long as the Norte lasts, there is no danger in the detention on shore. It purifies the atmosphere, and seems to destroy for the time the seeds of that terrible disorder, the "Vomito," which at other seasons proves so fatal to foreigners, upon the whole Eastern Coast of New Spain. This fever, which is very similar to the worst species of the Yellow Fever common throughout the West Indies, takes its names from one of its symptoms, the black vomit, (*vomito prieto*,) by which dissolution is usually preceded. At Veracruz its cause has been sought in the local peculiarities of the situation, and there is little doubt that the exhalations from the marshes which surround the town, must have a tendency to increase the virulence of the disorder. But throughout the Gulph of Mexico, the Vomito has made its appearance wherever a number of Europeans have been assembled for the purposes of trade. At Tām-

pico, where it was little known, or, at least, little remarked, before 1821, it is now almost as prevalent as at Veracruz; and New Orleans, to the extreme North of the Gulph, being subject to it during the hot months of the year, it is probable that all the intervening line of Coast will be found exposed to this scourge, when the arrival of Foreigners shall call into activity the latent malaria, which appears not to act upon the natives with similar violence. In them it produces *Frios*, (Agues,) from which many suffer during the summer months, and to which Europeans who have survived the Vomito are likewise liable; while with others it leads to a bilious fever of so very virulent a nature, that unless the most powerful remedies are immediately employed, there is but little time for medicine to act. In many recent cases, the disorder has proved fatal on the third day. Those who survive the fifth are almost out of danger, if they have sufficient stamina to carry them through their convalescence; but there is such a total prostration of strength, that nature often fails at the moment when the most sanguine hopes of recovery are entertained.

One peculiarity of this disease is the facility with which it is contracted. There have been instances of individuals who have not even passed through the town of Veracruz, but have got into a litter upon the beach, and taken the road to Jälápá within a quarter of an hour after leaving the ship, who have nevertheless carried with them the seeds of the dis-

order, and died of it upon the road. I should be inclined however to think that these must have been persons of a particularly nervous disposition, whose very anxiety exposed them to additional danger, by creating great mental irritation, and with it a predisposition to fever. Precautions ought not indeed to be neglected, but the best are temperance, and abstinence from wine on the voyage out, so as to produce a good habit of body before arriving on the Coast. Any unnecessary stay at Veracruz, and too great an exposure to the sun, should also be avoided; but in all other respects a predestinarian would have a much better chance of escaping, than a man over-anxious to hurry the preparations for his departure in a country where, without the exertion of something far beyond any ordinary patience, very little can be effected. On reaching the level of the Encerrō, it is supposed that all danger of infection ceases. It is at least certain that the Vomito never spreads amongst the inhabitants of Jalāpā, or of the villages upon the higher parts of the road to that place, in which poorer travellers sometimes stop to die. As far as Plan del Rio its ravages are occasionally felt: it is probable that the disease is indigenous there, as at Veracruz, for Humboldt denies that it can be communicated by infection, or contagion, and states that there is nothing in the air of a sick man's chamber that could render the miasmata, which might exhale from it, dangerous to those around him. Be this as it may, the rarefaction of

the air in the higher regions exempts them from such visitations; and although the disorder may prove fatal to the patient, it has never been known to extend to those who attend him.

When once contracted, however, removal to a more healthy region is of no avail; the Vomito runs its course with equal violence to Jalapa, and on the Coast, and the event depends entirely upon the strength of the sufferer. In general it is remarked that the most robust in appearance are the first to sink under the attack: women are less liable to it than men, and very young children have, I believe, never been known to be affected by it. There is a difference too between the inhabitants of the Southern parts of Spain, or Italy, and other Europeans; the first being less frequently visited with the disorder, while very few natives of a Northern climate, if they become residents, for any time, at Veracruz, are known to escape it. Like the small-pox, it seldom visits the same person twice. Those who survive the first attack, particularly if it be a severe one, consider themselves as acclimatés, and think no farther precautions necessary. The inhabitants of the Table-land of Mexico are even more liable than Foreigners to be seized with the Vomito on visiting the Coast. This is probably owing to the suddenness of the transition: the rapidity of the descent from Pērōtē allows no time for the body to become seasoned to the moist heat of the Tropics, so different from the dry and rarefied atmosphere of

the higher country: all the pores are opened at once, and the general relaxation of the system necessarily renders them peculiarly susceptible of disease. Few of the muleteers of the Interior will descend lower than Jalapa during the hot months, (from the end of April to the beginning of October,) and when they do, it is lamentable to see the poor wretches, as I have done more than once, actually dying upon the road. When they can no longer sit their mules, they stretch themselves out under the first tree or shrub that will afford them protection from the sun, wrap up their heads in their blankets, and meet their fate with that composure, which, in every part of the New World, seems to be one of the characteristics of the Indian race.

During this season, the Government couriers are changed at Jälápä, and no one, who is not compelled to do so by business of the most urgent nature, thinks of visiting the *Tierra Caliente*. Commerce is nearly at a stand; and it is only upon the approach of the autumnal equinox that business begins to be again transacted, with any sort of activity. From the middle of October till the end of March, if the winter be not unusually mild, Veracruz, though never a safe, is at least not a very dangerous residence.

The Nortés, though inconvenient for the shipping, are infinitely preferable to the almost certain destruction of the crew with which the fatigue of unshipping the cargo of a merchant-vessel in summer

would be attended; and while they continue, the unhealthy season is seldom known to commence. There have been instances, indeed, of deaths from Vomito in the months of November and December, but these are exceedingly rare, and would probably be found, if inquired into, to have proceeded from some incautious exposure, or excess, on the part of the sufferer.* In an ordinary year, I should have no objection to pass through Veracruz at any time between October and March: indeed, with proper precautions, I should think that it might be done without very great risk much later in the year. The persons most likely to suffer would be servants, and persons of that class, who often will not be induced to prepare themselves for landing beforehand, and, when on shore, are either excessively apprehensive, or unnecessarily imprudent. Amongst these the mortality is sometimes very great. In 1826, a number of Frenchmen, mostly in inferior stations of life, who had come to Veracruz *pour chercher fortune*, were swept away at once; the want of hospitals, which have not been properly re-organized since the Revolution, rendering the progress of the disease doubly rapid. In 1825, a terrible instance of the

* In November 1826, Mr. Oxley, a gentleman who had been travelling for some time in Mexico on the account of some great Manchester houses, died at Veracruz of the Vomito, after having purposely delayed his departure from the Capital from July to October, in order to select the most favourable time for it.

effects of the climate in cases where exposure to the sun is unavoidable, occurred. In consequence of some delay in the completion of the Real del Monte steam-engines, the expedition, which was entrusted with the charge of conveying them up the country, under the orders of Captain Colquhoun, did not reach Veracruz until the commencement of the sickly season; and out of this small party fifteen men were buried near the spot where the disembarkation of the machinery was effected. The attempt to remove it inland was of course abandoned, until the commencement of the winter, but it is grievous to reflect upon the waste of life which was occasioned by a little miscalculation with regard to the time on this side of the Atlantic.

Of the mode of treatment adopted in cases of Vomito at Veracruz I am wholly ignorant. The natives do not willingly resort to the violent measures which are common in the West Indies, and which, where the patient is sufficiently strong to support them, undoubtedly cut short the disease at once. They usually employ medicines of a less decided character, such as olive oil, and infusions of various kinds, which if not very effective as remedies, at least do no harm.* In such cases, the pa-

* Mr. Carrington, who came out to Mexico in April 1826, and afterwards resided for nearly a year with me, got over the Vomito at Jalapa, by a negative treatment of this sort. He arrived there in a state of delirium, having been seized with the disorder upon the road, and was immediately forced to take

tient, if he survives, is indebted for his recovery to the goodness of his own constitution. This, at least, is the language of our English physicians, though I have seen the copious bleedings, and still more copious use of calomel, which our sailors endure at Jamaica, prove fatal at once, when tried upon the less robust constitution of a Spaniard. No clever medical man has yet practised at Veracruz. An American doctor, who was very successful there in the early part of 1826, was carried off by the disease himself at the end of the season; and no good account has been given, either by him, or any one else, of the change which the late influx of foreigners has produced in the proportion of the number of deaths to that of the persons attacked by the fever, which Humboldt states, in the best of the Veracruz hospitals, (in 1804,) not to have exceeded sixteen in the hundred. The Vomito has become, I believe, much more generally fatal, since natives from so many of the Northern parts of Europe have been exposed to its action; I know, however, some instances of persons who have escaped, and whose general health has been even improved by the dangerous crisis which they have undergone.*

a large tumbler of oil and lemon-juice, by the master of the inn. Youth, (he was only nineteen,) and a good habit of body, probably contributed still more effectually to save him, which they did after a severe struggle.

* Amongst the most remarkable of these instances I might mention Don Rafael Beraza, who is employed as King's Mes-

Neither the natives of Veracruz, nor the black population, are subject to the Vomito. By natives, I do not mean the inhabitants of the whole Province, (for those on the Slope of the Cordillera dread a journey to the Coast as much as those who descend at once from the Table-land,) but individuals born in the town of Veracruz, or in the *Tierra Caliente* immediately around it. These seem to enjoy a special exemption from the dangers of the climate, and, strange as it may appear, they do not lose it even if they are removed at an early age from their native shore, and pass several successive years in countries, the natives of which cannot sustain the heat of the Tropics without imminent danger. I am myself acquainted with one young man, of a most respectable Veracruz family, who, after having been sent to receive his education at Paris, Hamburg, and Madrid, returned to Veracruz at the very worst period of the sickly season of 1821, (which was remarkably violent,) after an absence of ten years, and remained there, without the slightest apprehension of danger, for nearly six weeks.

Whether the rule is a general one, or whether his was an exception, due, perhaps, to the very freedom from anxiety, which the conviction of his own safety produced, is a question well worthy of inves-

senger to the Mission in Mexico, and who, having survived the first attack, now performs the journey to Veracruz on horse-back with his dispatches, once or twice a month, in the very worst seasons, without apprehension or inconvenience.

tigation: the general belief of the country is decidedly in favour of the first supposition.

I have been led into details which belong of right to a later period than that comprehended in this Section, by my wish to state connectedly all the facts with which I am acquainted relative to a disorder, the nature of which, as our commercial intercourse with Mexico becomes more extensive, it will be of infinite importance to ascertain.

It is to be hoped that the attention of some competent person will soon be drawn to the subject; for although it is hardly to be expected that art can devise a remedy for a disease, the seeds of which seem to lie in the action of the sun upon the mass of rank vegetation, which, wherever there is water, a Tropical climate is sure to engender; still, there is little doubt that its effects upon the human frame will be less dangerous, in proportion as they are better understood. Great indeed will be the benefit conferred upon mankind, by him to whom the merit of even a moderately efficacious treatment of the Vomito is first due. Most fortunately, its ravages are confined exclusively to the land, few or none of the ships, in which common precautions are taken, and the men not unnecessarily exposed, having suffered from the fever. This has been particularly remarked of our men of war, many of which have remained at anchor off Veracruz, on different occasions, five or six weeks, and yet have left it with a clean bill of health. In vessels where

solitary cases of Vomito have occurred, it has not spread on board, unless where several of the men have been exposed to the action of similar exciting causes, in which case the vessel itself at last becomes a foyer, or receptacle, of those miasmata, by which the disorder is supposed to be propagated. The whole crew is then exposed to the utmost danger; but such instances are exceedingly rare, and with the attention that is now paid to cleanliness and ventilation, they may be expected rather to diminish, than to increase. The Thetis buried only one man during the seven weeks which she passed at the anchorage of Sacrificios, and he died of a disease in the heart.

On the 5th of February, 1824, I returned on board, and we sailed for England the same morning. In crossing the Gulph we met with a severe Norther, which, however, was much more disagreeable in its effects, than while it actually lasted, as it threw the whole volume of water into such a commotion that we had not a quiet moment afterwards for several days. I still recollect with pleasure the relief which we experienced, after passing five whole days with our quarter-boats alternately under water, as we glided past the Morro, and entered the magnificent harbour of the Havana, where there was neither a ripple to be seen on the surface, nor the slightest motion to be felt in the ship. The transition to such a perfectly quiescent state, to a young sailor

like myself, was inexpressibly delightful, nor have three subsequent voyages made me forget it.

We were ten days in reaching the Havana from Veracruz, and ten more in the Island, notwithstanding which we anchored within the Plymouth Breakwater on the 17th of March, after a passage of twenty-one days.

Few ships have performed the voyage in so short a time. We were only thirty-one days at sea between Veracruz and Devonport.