

TEXAS
AND
THE GULF OF MEXICO;

OR

YACHTING IN THE NEW WORLD:

BY
MRS. HOUSTOUN.



WITH PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1844.

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Hail to thy face and odours, glorious sea !
"Twere thanklessness in me to bless thee not.

How welcomer

Thy murmurs than the murmurs of the world !
Though like the world thou fluctuatest, thy din
To me is peace, thy restlessness repose.

CAMPBELL.

MARCH 31st.—We took our Pilot, Simptom, again on board and made sail. The men, as before, were busily employed in

shifting ballast. A north wind had been blowing for some days, but the weather was calm and fine; after crossing the bar, the pilot was discharged, and I then really felt that I had bidden adieu to Texas.

Gradually the low shores of Galveston receded from our view; I stood on deck as long as I could catch a glimpse of the land, and continued my speculative reveries on her present and future fate, till other objects arrested my attention, and till the horizon was bounded only by the wide and quiet ocean. I entertained such disagreeable recollections of the September gales, that I rather dreaded putting to sea in March, but our master assured me that the vernal equinox was not at all to be dreaded, and I felt my courage strengthened. All this day, and the beginning of the next, I had reason to be satisfied with

the weather, and reposed in confident belief of a pleasant and quiet voyage to Havana. Alas! for the short-sighted anticipations of a woman!—in the afternoon of the 1st of April, as I was quietly eating my luncheon in the cabin; I heard distinct preparations for a gale, darkness crept over the sky, and I heard the voice of the mate, “Take in a reef in the fore stay sail;” I never liked the sound of the reefing process; we always carried a great deal of sail, and I knew it was never reduced without absolute necessity. Soon after, it was “Take in another reef in the foresail, look alive;” the lowering of the mainsail soon followed, and by this time it was blowing a violent gale of wind. The sea, in an incredibly short space of time, had risen to a great height, and instead of enjoying the placid motion of the

waves, reposing on my couch on the deck, I had to hold on and devote all my energies to prevent myself rolling about in all directions. There is certainly something very laughable in the efforts made by landsmen and women to keep themselves steady on the deck during a gale of wind. Our present storm, indeed, was really no laughing matter; at a late hour I retired to rest, and continued putting up my head out of my cabin every five minutes to enquire how the wind was, and whether there was any chance of its abating. On such occasions as these, the appearance of daylight was always hailed by me with unwonted satisfaction; I liked to see my situation with my own eyes, and to have the power, at any moment, of applying for information to one or other of the crew; of course they always comforted me with as-

surances that it was nothing ; — it was only blowing fresh ; this always reassured me, but more than all the rest, I rejoiced to see their cheerful faces, and to hear that they could joke. On the morning of the 2nd of April I went on deck early ; it was not seven o'clock, but I had had a sleepless night, so I wrapped a large cloak about me, and staggered up to see the aspect of affairs ; and a scene of blank desolation it was ! The decks were wet and slippery with the spray ; everything looked out of order and forlorn ; the watch on deck had on their rough pilot coats and south-westers well secured under their chins, and were crouching under the bulwark, to leeward, to avoid the constant showers of spray. The sea was of one dull heavy leaden hue, except where the summits of the huge tumbling waves were crested with a snow white

foam. It is one of the most fearful effects of the tremendous waves in a heavy head-sea, that your view is bounded only by high walls of inky looking water. Around, and a-head the prospect is circumscribed by these tremendous bulwarks of the raging element, which seem ever on the point of engulfing you in their descent. As I stood on the poop, and the bowsprit pitched into the hollow pit of waters, it seemed almost like a perpendicular descent, and I closed my eyes for a moment as though all was over.

Before eight o'clock, a second reef was taken in the fore topsail; there was no break in the clouds till about noon, when the sun for a moment appeared through a thin veil of grey. In the afternoon the weather became much more moderate, reefs were shaken out, and I began once more to feel happy

and at ease. The swell, however, was still very heavy, and we were told was likely to continue so, the Gulf of Florida not being notorious for the quiet of its seas. We saw a great deal of the gulf-weed, which floated past us in large quantities. This sea-weed is very light and pretty when first taken out of the water, but it soon becomes shapeless, and will not bear drying. I believe a vast number of shipwrecks have occurred in the Gulf stream; there are fearful currents and eddies, and ships are frequently driven out of their course. From the narrowness of the channel the sea is always in a state of commotion, and after the violence of the late gale, the waves were more fearful than ever. We were all, I mean the "idlers," more or less prostrated, either by internal or external *malaise*. Poor Monsieur de C—— was quite

hors de combat, with the best intentions of making a good fight against the enemy. He never tasted food for five days, and to this moment I am at a loss to understand how he contrived to exist through such a period of inanition. As usual, we went through the ceremony of every meal, as regularly as if we were on land. The cook was never put out by weather, and let the ship roll about as she would, he never made any alteration, and his *entrées* were as good and as numerous as ever. The table, which was a swinging one, sometimes caused a little delay in the consumption of the viands; often, when on the point of securing a mouthful on our forks, the well spread board would mount up towards the ceiling on one side, and we were forced to wait its pleasure before we resumed our meal. This was amusing enough to me, and as no

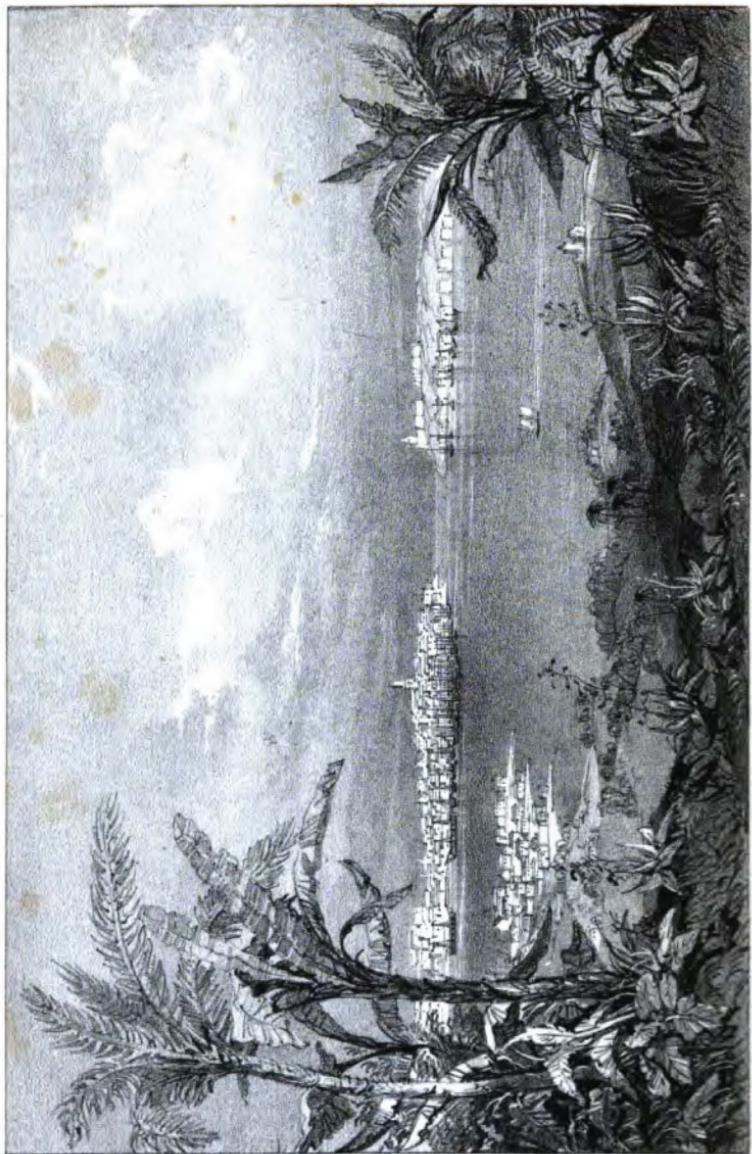
one was very hungry at such a time, the delay did not so much signify; but the noise is not to be described. I believe the Dolphin to be (without partiality) as quiet as a ship can well be, but the masts and bulkheads began, after their long rest, like giants refreshed, to labour out their peculiar noises with a spirit unknown before. I was told it was nothing, and certainly, after the first night or two, I slept soundly and heard it no more. How we were flung about! my swinging cot rocked to and fro like an insane thing, whilst I felt myself a passive victim to its sport. One night I found myself, with a sudden shock, prostrated on the deck: I had been sleeping soundly, and at first could not make out in the least what had happened. I soon, however, ascertained that the lashings of my cot had given way, from the constant strain

upon them : luckily for me the bump upon the deck was not felt by my head, as it was the lashing at the feet that had given way. It was not pleasant, however, to find oneself, in the dead of the night, in an angle of forty-five. The occurrence recalled to my mind some descriptions of practical jokes, related by Captain Marryat, and I thought how hard it was for unwary midshipmen, to be cut down at the head, when they least expected it ; the escape from concussion of the brain must be narrow. It is to be inferred, from its unfrequent occurrence, that the young gentlemen in the navy, half a century ago, were not very susceptible in that organ.

April the 3rd, was rather squally, but it was only single reef weather, and I did not mind it. 4th, light breezes, "out all reefs," delightful sound ! but it was not to last, and

during the three following days it blew hard enough; the current was running very strong, and we were driven forty miles out of our course. I believe that nothing but the violence of the gale would have induced our poor passenger to come on deck; I had not seen him for four days, when on a sudden he made his appearance on the companion ladder; sickness and suffering had made sad havoc with his outward man, as indeed they had with most of us. The weather on the eighth was more moderate, and in the morning several sail were in sight. It was delightful to watch them, —to speculate on what they might be, and to feel that this stormy stage of our aquatic journey was so nearly at an end. At eleven o'clock A. M. the man at the mast head sung out land "a-head." The wind was S.E. half east; the current was driving us

to the eastward. We gradually neared the land, and at five o'clock P. M. I heard the welcome order to clear anchors. Soon after we sighted Moro Castle ; the high lands were beautiful ; once more we rejoiced in the sight of the waving tops of the cocoanut trees, and felt the hot sun of the tropics. But we had no time for admiration, the British ensign was hoisted and flowing gaily aft—the little schooner had passed the Moro Castle, and was sailing up between the closely packed shipping in such a perfect manner ! She certainly excited great admiration, if we could judge by the faces and marked attention of those on board the ships through which she passed. I was prepared by description for the striking appearance of the harbour, particularly of its entrance. The Moro Castle is on the left, a high imposing building. On



the right is the fort of Punteo, and the prisons built by Tacon, when he was Captain General of Cuba. The bay, in which more than one thousand ships may anchor with safety, opens out beyond this narrow entrance. Our Master almost always made a point of taking a pilot, and this was one of the few occasions on which he deviated from his rule. The yacht, after threading the mazes of this difficult navigation, brought up at six o'clock p. m. in seven fathom water; decks were immediately cleared; and sails furled, and we prepared once more for a quiet life.

There was so much to interest, and to attract attention, that I stood on deck absolutely staring at all the interesting objects I saw. There were ships of every nation, and we were soon boarded by a number of dingy looking men from a wretched looking boat

bearing the Spanish flag. The deck of the schooner was soon crowded by these officials, for such I supposed they were, while some rushed below, examining her in all directions; an order was given at last that no more should come on board. They could not all have a right to board us, and civility evidently was not the object of their visit. I had been so long in democratic countries that I was quite rejoiced at the sight of some faint symbols of royalty. And, (I confess my weakness) the dirty crown, on the still more discoloured flag, was quite refreshing to my feelings. To be sure, it was but the crown of degraded Spain, the lowest of the monarchies of the earth, but I respected it nevertheless. I began almost to despair of being ever left to ourselves. No sooner was the curiosity of one party satisfied than another boat-load made its appearance.

They dispersed themselves over every part of the vessel, and poked their black and tan faces into every hole and corner, filling our eyes and noses with tobacco smoke, and defiling the white decks of the Dolphin with the odious consequences of their national habit. The fact was, that they could not be made to comprehend the nature of our craft. She was armed — that was suspicious — but then we were evidently not a belligerent set — were we traders ? No — they concluded that there must be concealed cargo somewhere, and consequently hunted about in all possible and impossible places for our supposed merchandize. Monsieur de C—— with the dismal recollections of his late sufferings fresh upon him, remarked “ I think it very natural,— of course they find it impossible to comprehend how any rational beings can be sea-sick for pleasure !”

The Spaniards evidently could not understand it; they shrugged their shoulders, looked puzzled, and with most dissatisfied faces returned to their boats. Then came the sharks in the shape of bum-boat women, entreating and coaxing the sailors to buy of them; jokes were cut as they leant over the ship's side, and every now and then, when some adventurous individual completed his purchase, it was handed up in triumph, and the fortunate possessor began to discuss its real value coolly and at leisure. My attention was diverted from this rather amusing scene by perceiving an English man-of-war's boat pulling towards us. She contained, besides the rowers, only a midshipman, a small boy, who if only as a clean countryman of our own, we were delighted to see. He had been dispatched from the Thunder surveying ship, Captain Barnett,

which was lying near, to make enquiries, and to ask if we were the "Charlotte" yacht? Having replied in the negative, (and it seemed that our advent had caused much speculation among our countrymen,) we thanked Captain Barnett through his envoy for some kind and civil offers, he had made us, and our new acquaintance took his leave. Except the Romney, receiving ship, the Thunder was the only English man-of-war then at Havana. After dinner, a very polite Aidecamp, attended by a Yankee interpreter, (very boastful and very loquacious,) came to make enquiries after the health of the crew. The surgeon made out his statement that we were all tolerably well and that no immediate anxiety need be felt on our account; a clean bill of health was therefore given us, and we were graciously allowed the liberty of going on shore. Early

the next morning Mr. Houstoun took advantage of the permission and called on Mr. Crawford, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul General, to whom he had letters to deliver, and we had the pleasure of dining at his house the same afternoon.

This was called, the cool season at Havana; no one complained of heat, indeed some of the old inhabitants pronounced it quite temperate. I could not understand this, for to me it was most oppressive. We had again recourse to our awning, and as one proof among many, that our sensations did not deceive us, the fish that was bought alive in the market, at ten in the morning, was in an uneatable state at four o'clock on the same day. How fearful must be the heat during the reign of the yellow fever! The healthy season is said to commence in November, and to last till February,

so that I fear we had slightly encroached upon the limits of the yellow fever dominions. The dews here are remarkably heavy; the deck early in the evening being quite wet, as though heavy rain had fallen during the day, and drops fell heavily from the masts and rigging. These dews are supposed to be particularly injurious to Europeans, and the latter should be particularly careful not to expose themselves to their influence.

It is the custom at Havana to dine early, and a very sensible custom it is. The ladies remain at home during the heat of the day, lounging over their chocolate and cigars, or taking their accustomed siesta. When the sun has nearly set, their life of movement (if such it can be called) begins. Then it is that they enjoy their drives, and pay their visits of ceremony or affection. After dining with the Consul Mrs. Crawford's car-

riages conveyed the whole party to drive on the Passeo, the fashionable promenade of the city. Almost the only carriage in use is the Volante, it is a description of vehicle, peculiar I believe to Cuba; and I must, therefore, attempt a description of it for the benefit of those who have not had an opportunity of seeing it. It is in shape not unlike a cabriolet on extremely high wheels; it is six or seven feet in height, and the wheels are above the head of the occupant. The shafts are extremely long, and the effect is very light and graceful. The volante is driven by a postilion, almost always a black, and his dress is the gayest that can be imagined; gold and silver are spread with a lavish hand on his person, and red and blue, and every gay and gaudy colour, is chosen for his adornment: the famed Postilion de Longjumeau would sink into

obscurity and shabbiness by the side of these black performers. Sometimes a second horse is attached as an outrigger, and has a pretty effect ; this however is not allowed within the precincts of the city. Gentlemen are not often seen with ladies in the volante ; two of the latter generally occupying the only seat which is extremely wide. The rate at which the postillions drive, considering the narrowness of the streets, is surprising. The mules here are more esteemed than the horses ; they are many of them beautiful animals ; and I saw some of a cream colour, which I admired extremely. I believe very high prices are given for them ; as much as from sixty to two hundred pounds. I was delighted with the appearance both of the ladies and their showy equipages, as they assembled on the Passeo. The volante itself is much ornamented with

silver, and the harness is always plated, wherever plating can, by any possibility, be applied. The ladies wear the mantilla, and their costume, in their volantes, consists (as it appeared to me almost *de rigueur*,) of white muslin *décollété*, with short sleeves, and neither gloves nor mittens. Their dark hair is always beautifully shining and well dressed; their heads are well set on, and at the back hang the elegant folds of the lace mantilla. Every one has something to say of the surpassing beauty of the Spanish women,—their eyes! their figures! their walk! are all described as something so exquisite, that no women, of more northern climes, can venture to compete with them.

I confess I was terribly disappointed by these far-famed beauties. One volante after another rolled by, and not one tolerable face, take it altogether, had I seen. I have

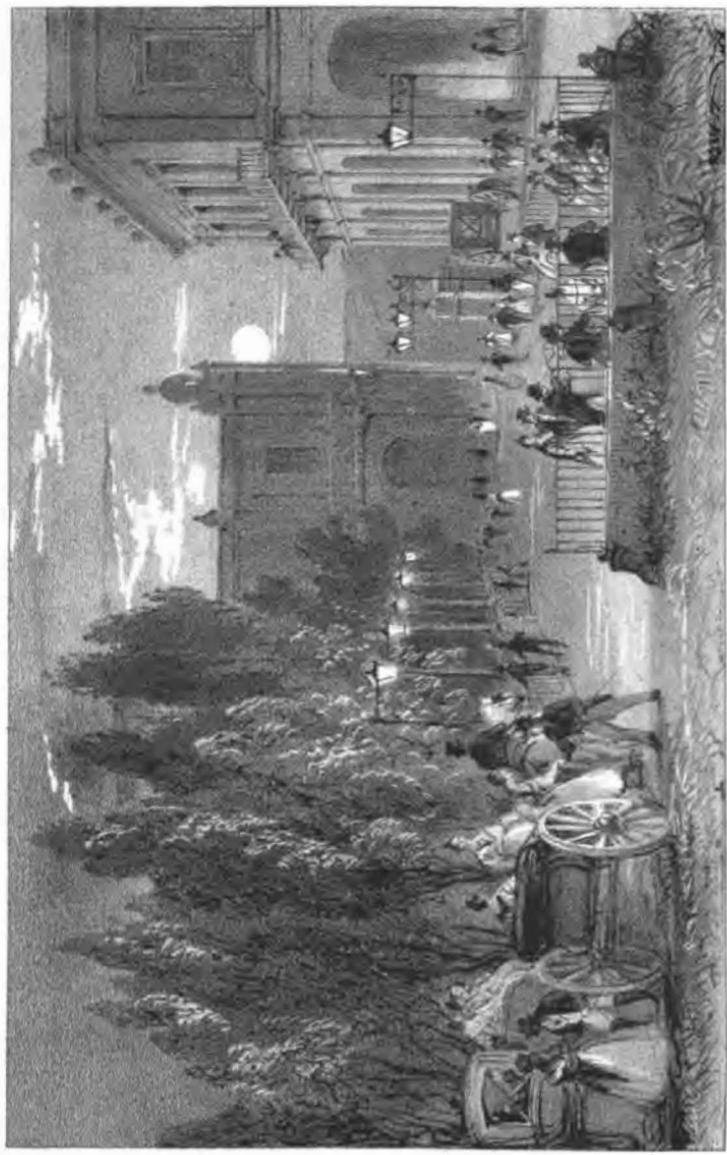
no doubt that the extreme heat of the climate, to a certain degree, increases the natural duskiness of their complexions ; certainly, in daylight, they were, I thought, much too yellow to be pleasing. By daylight, however, they are rarely to be seen ; it is at night that they are viewed to advantage. They all use rouge, I was told, from early childhood — but their black eyes, which are magnificent, do not require this foreign aid to make them sparkle. I saw some reputed beauties in the morning, and thought them plain ; while at night, I could not believe them to be the same persons, and felt inclined almost to change my opinion I had formed in the morning. The walk of the Spanish women, which is described as being so peculiarly graceful, I had little opportunity of seeing. No lady walks at Havana : nor do they

even descend from their volantes when on shopping expeditions : naturally indolent, this relaxing climate seems to deprive them of the little degree of energy which nature bestows on them. Their accomplishments are as limited as their sphere of action. They whisk about their large fans with surprising dexterity, and this seems to be one of the principal employments of their lives. They speak a little bad French, do a little indifferent religion, get through a considerable amount of flirtation, and not a little scandal. The evening drive on the Passeo is the grand event of every day ; gossip then goes on at a great rate ; every passer-by is scanned and scrutinized ; appointments are made, and reputations are sneered away. Great care is taken during the drive, that the long white drapery should hang out over the step of the volante ;

it not being etiquette for the flouncings and embroideries to be gathered within the carriage. I was warned of this by a young lady with whom I was driving, and who was shocked at seeing me endeavouring to save my gown from dust, and the contact of passing wheels. The *Passeo de Tacon* was constructed by the governor of that name, and is really a most striking promenade ; there being fountains, and statues, and rows of trees, and every thing requisite to make a delightful city drive : on Sundays it is crowded by volantes, both private and hired. Tacon made many improvements in Havana and its neighbourhood. It is a pity that this fine colony should not oftener have wiser heads to direct it, and that a government better qualified, should not exist in the Mother Country, to choose its viceroy.

In the *Plaza des Armas*, which is a large handsome square opposite the palace of the viceroy, a band of music plays almost nightly. The performance struck me as good : but the choice of music was not made with good taste, at least the fancy of the Captain-General, who selects the airs, must be a lugubrious one, to judge of the dismal sounds that saluted our ears. The preponderance of brass instruments is much too great, and I was soon glad to escape from the uproar, and refresh myself with an ice at a large *café* near the *Plaza*. This custom of eating ices, which are brought to them in their volantes, is a favourite diversion of the Havana ladies ; the gentlemen, meanwhile, offer their assistance, and are rewarded with smiles, and meaning flicks with the ever ready fan.

On Thursday, Monsieur de C—— and



"NEW YORK CITY, 1850. THE NEW YORK CITY AND NEW YORK FIRE DEPARTMENT, 1850.
LAWRENCE LINDNER, ENGR."

Mr. Houstoun dined with the Captain-General Valdez, by whom they were received with the greatest kindness and hospitality. It is not etiquette for the Viceroy to receive ladies at dinner, nor is he himself allowed to dine with any individual, let his rank be what it may. I was told that the Viceroy did not at all enjoy the forced monotony of his existence ; he is unmarried, but Madame Olivar, the wife of the Spanish minister at Mexico, is residing with him, and assists in doing the honours of the palace. Though not permitted to invite ladies to dine with him, this prohibition does not extend to evening parties, and I attended several *soirées* there, and was glad to make the acquaintance of Madame Olivar, who is a delightful person. During some of these visits, I learnt a good deal of the present state of Cuba — its pro-

ducts, and the policy of Spain with regard to the colony. My principal informant was a grave, sensible old Spaniard, whose name, however, I have totally forgotten. He took compassion on my evident want of information on the subject, and I felt much obliged to him.

CHAPTER XVI.

HISTORICAL NOTICE OF CUBA. COMMERCE. CRUEL TREATMENT OF SLAVES. CREOLES. REVOLT OF THE MATANZAS. ANTICIPATED REVOLT OF THE BLACK POPULATION. EXCLUSIVE STATE OF SOCIETY. "SUGAR COUNTS." ANIMALS, BIRDS, NOXIOUS INSECTS, AND REPTILES. RAIL-ROAD. COPPER, SILVER, AND COAL MINES. SPLENDID SCENERY. CUBA INDEBTED FOR ITS PROSPERITY TO VICEROY TACON. PLAZA DE TOROS. THE CATHEDRAL.

Never may from our souls one truth depart,
That an accursed thing it is to gaze
On prosperous tyrants with a dazzled eye ;
Nor, touched with due abhorrence of their guilt,
For whose dire ends tears flow, and blood is spilt,
And justice labours in extremity,
Forget thy weakness, upon which is built,
O wretched man, the throne of tyranny !

WORDSWORTH.

SINCE its discovery by Christopher Columbus, Cuba has frequently been a contested

possession between England and Spain. In the year 1760, the island was confirmed as a dependency of the Spanish government, and the Floridas were ceded to Great Britain in exchange. It is a rich and most valuable island; the soil is very productive, and yields two, and sometimes three crops of corn a year. Of the extreme fertility of the island, no one can form an idea, till, from some lofty eminence, he casts his eye over the beautiful aspect of its fertile plains and wooded hills.

Though early in the year when I was there, the country was covered with sweet-smelling and beautiful plants, while already the shrubs and trees were filling the air with the perfume of their fragrant blossoms. The following are some of the principal articles of export. Sugar, rum, tobacco, cocoa, coffee, molasses, &c. A great quantity of salted meat, and fish,

as well as grain of many kinds, are imported.

The slave-trade, as is well known, flourishes in this country, and to its existence may, I think, be attributed many of the degrading vices, and peculiar defects, which debase the general character of the white inhabitants of Cuba. The Spaniards have the reputation of showing more kindness to their slaves than the white masters in other slave countries. This may be the case with the domestic slaves, as the black population certainly look particularly fat, sleek, and well fed. It was at Havana, however, that I first saw the marks of stripes on the shoulders of a woman, and I cannot describe the effect that the sight produced upon me, both of horror against the unmanly wretches who could thus punish a woman, and disgust against the race of slave-owners collec-

tively. How this unnatural traffic brutalizes the human feelings ! I once witnessed, in the neighbourhood of Havana, the degradation of a negro slave preparatory to receiving punishment : he was being dragged along with a rope round his neck, like some refractory criminal. Similar, and I fear much worse instances of cruelty are, alas ! too frequently occurring in the Plantations.

The proportion of Negroes to white men is greatly in favour of the former. The policy adopted in regard to both Creoles and Negroes, is injudicious ; no attempts being made to conciliate the good will of either. The iron hand of military and despotic power is the only rule ; and where it not for that, there is no doubt but that this fine colony would soon pass from the hands of its present masters. No Creoles are ever

employed in any high or honourable offices, nor are they allowed any responsibility or share in the affairs of the government; thus this numerous class of the inhabitants are rendered disaffected, and ready to join in any scheme of revolt; and, moreover, the Creoles are many of them possessed of great wealth, which causes them to be infinitely dangerous as enemies. It is said that the Negro population are constantly on the eve of a revolt, and the consciousness of this being probably the case, keeps the government in perpetual hot water. The regular troops consist of only ten thousand men, while there are six hundred thousand blacks, rendered desperate by oppression, and ready at any moment to turn upon their rulers. The Spanish government in Europe seems but little aware of the volcano, which is so near

bursting beneath their overstrained and injudicious rule.

Not long ago there was a well ordered and nearly successful insurrection of the Matanzas negroes. They behaved with great courage and resolution, and having obtained some slight advantages, they secured themselves in a strong position, from which they did not emerge till they had obtained conditions extremely favourable to themselves. The authorities at Havana are now evidently roused to a sense of danger, for even the word freedom is suppressed, and the fine national air of "Libertad," is not allowed to be sung. It is vain, however, to suppose that such precautions will prevent the silent longing for freedom from finding a voice among a people, goaded to desperation by a sense of their wrongs. The coloured population of

Cuba may be subdued and crushed for a time, but the smouldering fire will some day burst forth from the trampled ashes, and not all the power of Spain will be able to stay its fury.

There are a great many natives of the Canary Islands here: they are said to be good, well disposed people; and, as servants, they are valued as faithful and intelligent.

The different classes of society at Havana, are kept, from all I could learn, strictly apart. There are a few still remaining of the real old grandes of Spain; indeed, I have heard persons well acquainted with the manners and habits of good old Spanish families declare, that such are to be found now only at Havana. In Spain, (though the Mother Country,) the race is said to be extinct. Great and un-

qualified contempt is felt and expressed by these aristocratic families for the "*nouveaux riches*," who, swelling with pomp and pride, lord it over their humbler neighbours. Many of the latter, however, are great landed proprietors, and slave-owners. "Sugar Counts" they are called ; and the epithet is remarkably well chosen, as it tells, in many instances, the tale of their increase of fortune, and at the same time conveys an idea of the possibility of their titles and riches melting away as speedily as they have arisen.

One of these "sugar noblemen," (his name I have forgotten, but he is said to be the richest man in the island,) made his fortune by the importation of slaves — a licensed dealer in human flesh. I looked at him as a sort of monster, when I reflected upon the vast amount of human

suffering of which he had been the acting cause.

The alligator, the sea cow, and the turtle, are all found in the island of Cuba. The latter, however, are not numerous ; and the supply for consumption at Havana is brought from the island of Nassau.

I saw birds in endless variety ; canaries, cardinals, nightingales, linnets, perroquets ; in short, every thing that can be imagined as most gay and harmonious. I could scarcely help fancying it the pleasant month of June, the air was so sweet and soft ; while the song of the birds filled my imagination with memories of past spring-times.

“ Now each creature joyes the other
Passing happy dayes and howers.
One birde reports unto another
In the fall of silver showers ;
Whilst the earth (our common mother)
Hath her bosome deckt with flowers.”

A great drawback to these spring delights, were the fearful number of noxious insects and reptiles; snakes of the worst kind, scorpions, centipedes, and I cannot tell what besides. The persevering blood-thirsty mosquitoes were already rife, but happily they did not venture much on board the yacht.

A rail-road has been in existence for some time in Cuba; extending to a distance of fifty miles between Havana and Guines. It traverses a not very level line of country, and there are several considerable cuts through hills, and also a tunnel of tolerable length. These things speak well for the industry and resources of the Cuba people; for even a little appearance of energy shows well among the enervated denizens of the West Indies. Extensive and valuable coal mines, as well as

those containing copper and silver, have been discovered in Cuba : these must be a source of immense wealth, and there is no want of ready money to work them. The rail-road traverses a beautiful line of country, diversified with cocoa-trees, and innumerable other plants, unknown except within the tropics. We passed in our rail-road excursion through extensive coffee and other plantations of tobacco, sugar, &c. The coffee shrubs grow very prettily, and the green of the leaves is rich and varied. There is great charm to a stranger in seeing the wild growth of the pine apple, the plantain, the custard apple, and the cocoa tree. The fruit hung on the dark boughs of the orange trees like

“ golden lamps in a green night.”

There were many other trees, of which I do not know the names, some of which were

literally loaded with green fruit. The forests are very thick, and clear rills of water trickle down the mountain sides, refreshing one by the very sight of their coolness.

The climate in the mountains is, I am told, healthy enough; but near the coast we heard enough of its baneful effects. We were warned not to expose ourselves to the influence of the moon's rays; the influence of the gentle planet being supposed to be particularly dangerous, and to bring on attacks of the fell disease.

The principal cities in Cuba are Havana, St. Jago de Cuba, Principe, and Santa Maria de Punto. There are several safe ports, and good anchorages, but from the vast extent of rocks and shoals, the navigation outside is difficult, and often dangerous. The forts above the city are covered with palm trees; the citadel itself is very strongly armed, as

well as the heights above the town, which are bristling with arms. No stranger is allowed to visit the arsenal, or to enter the fortifications ; admittance I believe, being limited to the government authorities, and the garrison. I heard of a poor artist from a foreign land, who, not being aware of the prohibition, strayed with his colours and brushes within the works. He was not even challenged by the sentinel, who, without any other notice, fired his musquet at the poor man. Fortunately, the wound was not a severe one. Officers of the British navy are especially excluded, not only from visiting the forts, but also from entering the ships of war.

I have already mentioned Tacon, the governor, as one to whom Havana, and indeed the island of Cuba generally, are indebted for much of their present peace and

prosperity. This clever and enterprising viceroy was sent from Spain some years since. He found the colony in a miserable condition ; there being but few public works and national buildings, and those in existence being neglected and abused. Robbery and murder were committed with impunity, and there were neither guardians of the public peace, in the shape of police, nor any laws by which justice could be effectually administered. All these evils, and many others, Tacon took upon himself to redress ; he established an efficient police, by which offenders were kept in awe, and quiet was restored to the capital ; he enforced obedience to the laws, protected trade, and hunted out and punished the bands of robbers which before infested the country ; he also built large prisons and enacted useful laws for their government

and regulation. I have before said that the planting and arrangement of the public promenades was his work, but the most conspicuous of the adornments, to which Havana is indebted to this indefatigable governor, is the Campo Militar, which is called the Square of Tacon; it has four gates, one on each side of the square, to which he gave the name of Columbus, Cortes, Pizarro and Tacon.

El Teatro de Tacon, as its name implies, was likewise erected under the late governor's auspices. It is remarkably handsome; I should say about the size of our Haymarket; and the ornamental part is in very good taste. The pit seats, which are usually occupied solely by gentlemen, are comfortably fitted up with arm chairs, each one having a number appended to it. There is a good Plaza de Toros, and the

bull-fights of Havana used to be celebrated, though at present great complaints are made of the scarcity of good bulls for the arena:—the ladies are in despair, “the stupid beasts are so tame.” The cathedral is well worth seeing, particularly during the Holy Week, when black kneeling figures are sprinkled over its wide pavement in all directions. The pictures it contains are scarcely tolerable, but there is an urn shown you, which contains, it is said, the remains of Columbus. I looked at the latter with great interest and respect, as the only mortal part of the great voyager, ordained by providence to bring into light and truth so large a portion of the globe.

CHAPTER XVII.

MAGNIFICENCE OF PRIVATE HOUSES. CEREMONIES OF THE HOLY WEEKS. ENTRANCE OF H. M. SHIP THE ILLUSTRIOUS, ADMIRAL SIR CHARLES ADAM. HIGH PRICE OF PROVISIONS. FRUITS. HIGH RENTS. GOOD FRIDAY. RELIGIOUS PROCESSION. PROTESTANT ORDINANCES STRICTLY FORBIDDEN. RACE-COURSE. DEATH OF POOR NANNY. THEATRE OF TACON. DANCE ON BOARD THE FLAG-SHIP. OUR LAST EVENING AT HAVANA.

La faiblesse est le seul défaut que l'on ne saurait corriger.

LA ROCHEFAUCAUD.

THE private houses at Havana, at least a great many of them, are magnificent. It is the custom here to leave all the windows to the street open at night; the living rooms are most commonly on the ground-floor, and the passer by is of course at liberty to enjoy the sight of many a gay *soirée* and

tertullia. In other towns, where such things and sights are unknown, a crowd would speedily be collected, but here the practice is so universal, that no one thinks, from mere motives of idle curiosity, of stopping to look in. Acquaintances of the house, or of some of the guests may occasionally peep in at the windows, in order to ascertain if any of those they would wish to meet are within, and if the result of the survey prove satisfactory, they enter without ceremony. This seems to me a very agreeable style of society, there are no formal *réunions*, and no person need enter a room with the chance of meeting a disagreeable or obnoxious person ; it is, in my opinion, another great advantage, attending this easy mode of visiting, that you are not compelled to remain a moment longer in any house than you find it agreeable.

Great preparations were being made for the ceremonies of the Holy Week; the gaiety of the previous days being to be replaced by the strictest mourning and gloom. Flags of every nation were floating in the harbour; the gaudy red and yellow of the Spaniard, the French tricolor, the ensigns of Hamburgh, Prussia and Belgium, to say nothing of our own national colours, which, in true loyalty to my country, I ought to have placed first in the list. All these brilliant national colours, if belonging to catholic countries, are, on Good Friday, lowered half mast high; the yards are canted, and the effigy of Judas Iscariot, after having been hung at the yard arm, is, with every mark of ignominy and detestation, thrown head foremost into the sea.

A few days after our arrival, our kind friends Mr. and Mrs. Crawford and their

party, besides Captain Barnett of the Thunder, and a Spaniard or two, dined on board the yacht. Our table was spread (as usual with us in hot weather) on deck, under the shade of the awning. The Illustrious, seventy-two, bearing the flag of the Admiral of the station, Sir Charles Adam, was hourly expected; indeed, to my great satisfaction, as I had had very little experience in naval matters, and looked forward quite as a treat to seeing a vessel of so large a size manœuvring her way through the narrow channel. The approach of the expected ship was telegraphed during dinner, and shortly afterwards we saw her tall masts rounding the Moro Castle. The entrance to the harbour is not more than about three hundred yards, and there being hardly any wind, the entrance of such a ship, her tacking, &c. did not seem by any means an easy

affair. Every thing else was forgotten in the interest of the sight, and in the anticipated pleasure of seeing more English faces in a foreign land. In spite of difficulties, the flag-ship came in beautifully, and came to an anchor close to the yacht. After dinner we went on shore to drive, and to shop. I went in quest of sweetmeats, which are excellent here, but expensive as all articles of food are. To us, so lately accustomed to the cheapness of living in Texas, the high prices of necessaries seemed still more remarkable. The price of a very small fowl was half a dollar, and beef was ten pence a pound ; the mutton was better flavoured than the beef, which was dry and tasteless ; the vegetables were excellent, and in great variety. We had young potatoes, french beans, peas, asparagus, cauliflower, in short every summer

vegetable which Europe produces, besides others peculiar to the country. The oranges and pines were delicious and the water melons were not to be despised. The Zapote Mamme I did not think a bad fruit, but the natives eat some kinds which are really detestable. The guava, which makes so good a preserve, is I think quite unpleasant in a raw state, both as to taste and smell ; and I am far from approving the mango, though it looks so tempting ; there is also a purple fruit, the name of which I forgot, but it is anything but delicious, and another equally bad, of an ugly brown colour, resembling in appearance a potatoe half baked with its skin on. In my opinion, none of the fruits here are to be compared to those we eat in England, as I confess I prefer an apricot greatly to a banana, and a good pear to a custard apple ; indeed,

many of the fruits, which are considered good in Havana, would be given only to the pigs in our country. Wearing apparel costs more here than it does in any place I ever was in ; the price of long white kid gloves are two dollars, more than eight shillings a pair. It will be seen that the expences of living in this city are not small, and I must wind up my items with mentioning the rent of houses — one of even tolerable size, cannot be hired at less than from four to five hundred pounds a year. The washing of clothes costs three dollars a dozen.

The following day we paid a visit to the Admiral, on board the Illustrious. I was conducted over the ship, and, it being my first time of undergoing the like ceremony, I was much surprised at all I saw. I thought the heat, when I arrived at the midshipmen's quarters something fearful, but I suppose

they soon become accustomed to it. We dined on board the flag-ship, and afterwards accompanied the Admiral on shore *to a soirée* at the Captain-General's. From the morning of the Thursday before Good Friday, till the evening of the Saturday following, the most perfect stillness reigned in the streets; not a carriage was allowed to pass through any part of the town, and we were consequently obliged to go on foot to the vice-regal residence. The distance from the landing is not considerable, but in this climate all exertion is disagreeable, and I felt inclined to quarrel with any thing that forced me to take exercise, let it be in what shape it would. The military band was playing in the square, and mournful, and tiresome airs, seemed the order of the day. The square was crowded with people, but principally by

negroes, to whom it appeared to be a sort of fête day. They were all dressed in white, and the contrast it afforded to their black hands and faces was very striking. The Spanish ladies, however, are dressed in the gayest colours, as if they wished to make themselves amends for the deep mourning, in which it was *de rigueur* to clothe themselves on the morrow. As we left the palace, the city watchmen, who are reckoned particularly good and efficient, told the hour from time to time, but with the exception of their warning voices, not a sound was heard to break the stillness of the night.

During all this time, I spent my mornings on deck under the awning; my sofa being spread where I could obtain the most of the refreshing breezes, of which, however, you feel but little in the harbour. I occasionally, in the course of the day, received

visits from my neighbours, and thus, in a most indolent, enervating mode of life, the scorching hours passed by.

Good Friday arrived ; the guns were fired, with a dull heavy sound, and muffled drums with all sorts and signs of gloom and lamentation, were in full display. Every one was in black, and the churches were thronged by penitential visitants.

About mid-day Sir Charles Adam gave us much pleasure by paying the Dolphin a visit, and I greatly regretted, that owing to its being Good Friday, we were prevented from receiving him with a salute and all due honours.

In the evening we witnessed a grand religious procession from the balcony of the Captain-General's residence. As we arrived early, before the entrance of most of the lady guests, I had a good opportunity of judg-

ing of the manner and appearance of each, as she entered the apartment. They wore black crape dresses, with fans and gloves of the same sombre hue, indeed there was not a speck of white to relieve the dismal mourning appearance they uniformly presented. As usual in this part of the world, the greeting between female acquaintances was a kiss on each side of the face ; and after going through this preliminary ceremony all the ladies sit down in a large half circle, and without saying a word, begin *flicking* about their fans with great perseverance. I thought I never saw any thing so dull as the party was at this stage of its performances, and I was beginning to feel almost ashamed of my own desire for greater liveliness, when discovering by accident that my neighbour could talk a little French, I began a conversation with her. By the

help of incessant questions on her part, and patient answers on mine, we kept up a considerable amount of talk, and thus whiled away the time till the procession begun.

No sooner was the first distant sound of military music heard, than the company generally displayed something approaching to animation, every one rushing to the balcony, and placing themselves on their knees; though I must say, with not a very devotional air. After the soldiers, with their bands of music, came rows of children bearing torches and incense: then there were negroes marching two and two together, and priests in various costumes according to their rank and the religious order to which they belonged. Last of all, there appeared a large canopy, carried by six or eight persons, under which was to be seen

the figure of the Virgin covered with tinsel, besides other figures, the representation of which appeared to me to be rank blasphemy : the whole ceremony, indeed, was poor and absurd, and was calculated to raise any feeling in the mind rather than that of devotion. Directly the procession had passed, the ladies with one accord rose from their knees, and commenced discussing the merits of the performance ; this however occupied but a short space of time, and the amusements of the evening soon began in good earnest. These consisted of making little parties to promenade to the churches, whence, after a few genuflexions and a prayer or two suited to the occasion, they returned with renewed spirit to their fans and flirtations, their ices, and their scandal. The ladies at Havana are not permitted

to enter the churches with their heads covered : the silk mantilla is the only pretence of covering, which shades the head and shoulders of these fair devotees. Bigotry and intolerance reign here with tyrannical sway, the effect of which is to render a large portion of the people averse to the subject of religion altogether. A great enmity is felt, and expressed towards the Protestant faith, and the exercise of its outward ordinances is strictly prohibited by the government.

Many strict rules, in regard to the regulation of moral conduct, are laid down by society here, and a great outcry is raised if any unfortunate individual is so rash or so misguided as to break through them. As an instance of this — no lady is permitted by the rules of decorum to drive in her *volante* on the Passeo, without being protected

either by a female companion, or by her own husband, and even her brother is not considered a proper *chaperon*. I suspect that there is more of outward show, than of real decorum, in all this vigorous straining after gnatlike trivialities, and I have often heard it remarked that neither the education of the young Spanish women, nor their habitual conversation, were in keeping with this overstrained prudery. Mothers and elder sisters are, it is said, in the habit of paying far too little attention to the moral education of the more juvenile, and female branches of their families ; and it not unfrequently happens, that topics of scandal are discussed, and reputations canvassed before them, the details of which are sufficient to blunt their moral perceptions. When it is remembered that in this country girls become wives, and the mothers of families

at an age when in England they would be still in the school-room, the evil of this fatal system of education will be seen in all its magnitude.

Saturday. We took a drive on the railroad through shrubberies of coffee bushes. The rate at which we travelled, was *not* greater than ten miles an hour, and I could not help rejoicing that we went no faster, as otherwise we should have seen much less of the country, which is extremely picturesque.

There is a height above the town, which it is well worth taking the trouble to ascend. The hill, which is very steep, is crowned by a fort, and the view from it, looking down on the city, and the surrounding country, is panoramic, and very striking. The race-course is within a couple of miles of the town; in the course of our late drive we

paid a visit to this spot, dedicated to the gambling propensities of the "gentlemen sportsmen" of Havana. It is a good and convenient course, and we saw several fine looking American horses in training. The Bishop's garden, which we next visited, is well worth seeing. It is crowded with oleanders, roses, verbenas, convolvulus, and every sort of beautiful flowers, growing in wild and tangled disorder, and all in full and luxuriant blossom ; the fire-flies at night were brilliant. The road to this paradise of flowers is thickly planted on both sides with guava and sour-sop trees, besides cocoanut trees, and palms, many of them loaded with green fruit. In addition to the trees I have mentioned, there are ebony, cedar, mahogany, and lignum vitæ ; Indian corn too is much cultivated, and adds not a little to the beauty of the country.

I noticed a great number of very beautiful goats feeding about, many of which were tethered under the trees, and regularly milked. Goats' milk is in great request here. Talking of goats, our poor New Orleans "Nanny" had caused us during the last few days a great deal of uneasiness. She had been in great and evident suffering, and we supposed that her illness was owing to her having picked up and eaten some large pieces of cotton, with which the sailors were cleaning the guns. Her groans were really melancholy to hear. In the evening we dined with the British Consul, and met the Admiral, and a large party of naval officers. I ought not to omit to mention that the individual of the party who made the greatest impression on me, was one of the prettiest English girls I ever saw; her roses had not yet paled under the influence of a tropical sun, and she was

a pleasing contrast to the sallow beauties of the island. We remained late on shore, and on our return on board, not being able to endure the heart rending groans of poor Nanny ; we condemned her to a watery grave. She had a piece of ballast attached to her feet, and was committed to the deep by torch-light, much to our regret.

The following day being Sunday, we had hoped to have heard divine service performed on board the flag-ship and most of the English, and Protestant inhabitants of Havana had assembled on board with the same expectation ; the Chaplain, however, was too unwell to officiate. Most of the party remained on board till the evening, when we again paid the Passeo a moonlight visit. This was the grand night for theatrical perform-

ances at Havana, and we went with a large party to the pretty theatre of Tacon. The house was crowded, and the performance, which, however, I thought tedious enough, was much applauded. There was a great deal of pantomimic acting, and the scenery, was remarkably good. The two boxes which had been secured for us would scarcely hold our party, and we should have been rejoiced, and so I doubt not would many others of his acquaintance, to have taken possession of the Captain-General's empty box. It is not etiquette for ladies to be seen in it, which seemed to me very strange, nor do I understand the motives for keeping this poor man so apart from the common enjoyments of life.

Monday. I and the Doctor were rowed about the harbour in the gig, while waiting

for Mr. Houstoun, who had appointed us to meet him at the landing place. As we came near the steps, our boat's crew were very nearly provoked into a fight by some sailors, in a boat belonging to a Spanish man-of-war. Their object was to cut in, and land before us, which our yacht sailors, whose boat had touched the stairs first, would not of course allow. Oars were raised, and violent menaces exchanged, while the officer on board the Spanish boat, as wretched a looking man as themselves, seemed to have neither the power nor the inclination to make them behave properly. I must say, I found it very painful to my *esprit de corps*, not to allow the English sailors to obtain their right, but a contention would not have been agreeable, and might have caused trouble with the authorities, so the men were reluctantly ordered to fall

back ; an order, which they obeyed, sulkily enough. There exists here a great jealousy of the English, among naval men, and as I have before remarked, none of our officers are allowed on board Spanish ships, which are certainly too ill-equipped, dirty, and ill-conditioned to bear inspection. On the evening of this day we had a delightful dance on board the flag-ship. There was a great deal of beauty present, particularly among the English. The Misses M———, who are half Spanish, unite in their own persons the charms of both countries, the dark brilliant eyes, betraying their Spanish descent, while the soft, clear complexion reminds us of our countrywomen.

It seems a strange thing to assert, that cigars are as difficult to procure, really good, in Havana, as in any part of the world. The state of the case is this,—it is

impossible to have good cigars unless you order them, and that also at a considerable period of time before they are required for use. It is well known how much time improves their flavour, and no smoker here uses them as fresh as they do in Europe. It is notorious, also, that the slaves steal the best tobacco, and make it into cigars, unknown to their employers; the cigars, thus manufactured, are excellent, but high priced, and extremely difficult to procure.

On the Wednesday previous to our departure we accepted an invitation to the house of the "belles of Havana," whom I have before mentioned; it was a pleasant "tertullia;" the windows opening into a delightful garden full of jessamine and the perfumed dhatura. Dancing was going on for those who liked it, while others, who in this fervid climate, preferred a state of qui-

escence, were at liberty to enjoy sweet sounds and perhaps sweeter thoughts, in indolent repose.

It was our last evening at Havana, and a last evening is always more or less painful and trying to one's feelings. We had to bid adieu to friends most kind, though lately found, and to leave a happy spot, which it was more than probable, we should never see again; I do not like saying "good bye;" it "sets me on end like," as Sam Slick says.

On our return from this scene of brilliant gaiety, I noticed, as our *volante* drove slowly through the suburbs, a house, the front of which was brightly lighted up; the lower windows, which were so large that they in point of fact formed the front of the house, were wide open, and afforded a perfect and distinct view of the objects within.

My curiosity was excited by seeing a raised platform within the room, at the lower end of which sat two men, in mute silence. To my surprise, for who would have supposed that the remains of the dead would be thus exposed to view, I saw on the platform the pale face of a corpse ; the stiffened limbs were stretched beneath a thin white covering, and in the next hour, the form, which in the morning was endued with life, was to be lowered into the earth. I cannot describe the effect that this spectacle had upon me, and how much I was struck by the contrast it afforded to the scene of dancing and merriment I had so lately quitted ; verily in the midst of life we are in death ! I went on board, and tried to forget it all, —the whirling dance and the blank face of the dead ! — but they haunted me all night, and I was glad when the morning came,

when I was to change this place of varied
recollections for our own wild changing
element once more.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DEPARTURE FROM HAVANA. "MOTHER CAREY'S CHICKENS." CUPID, PSYCHE AND PEDRO. BERMUDA. ST. GEORGE'S HARBOUR. HAMILTON. BERMUDIAN POPULATION. STAPLE COMMODITIES. WHALE FISHING. DELIGHTFUL GARDENS. VISIT TO THE BISHOP OF NEWFOUNDLAND. THE SEA GRAPE. "THE PRIDE OF INDIA." IRELAND HARBOUR. THE LAST HOME OF "THE UNITED SERVICE." DEPARTURE FOR ENGLAND.

But bless the little fairy isle !
How sweetly, after all our ills,
We saw the sunny morning smile
Serenely o'er its fragrant hills.

MOORE.

And now the fairy pathway seem'd
To lead us through enchanted ground.

IDEM.

FRIDAY, 20th April ; light breeze from the eastward. We left Havana harbour and passed Moro Castle at nine o'clock

in the morning; the flag-ship weighed anchor at the same time, and we promised ourselves her company on the voyage. The sea breeze at Havana begins about ten in the morning and dies away about three or four P. M.; it is, therefore, impossible for vessels to leave the harbour in the intermediate time. For two days and a night we went on well together, though in order to do so, we were frequently obliged to shorten sail. We amused ourselves during these two days by talking, unintelligibly enough I must confess, by signals, and we frequently found ourselves within hailing distance. On the third morning I looked in vain for our "tall friend;" we had burnt a blue light, during the night, which had been duly answered, but now not a vestige of her towering masts were to be seen, and we had to go on our way alone.