suite of rooms, containing a library of several thousand volumes; were coffee, cakes, etc., were prepared in beautiful Sèvres porcelain and gold plate. We left the house at last to the music of the national hymn of Spain, which struck up as we passed through the gallery.

Should the north wind, the dreaded Norte, not blow, we sail to-morrow, and have spent the day in receiving farewell visits. We also went to the theatre, where every one predicts we shall not get off to-morrow. The play was "Le Gamin de Paris," translated. After our return, I paid a very late visit to the P—r family, who live close by us, and now, at two in the morning, I finish my letter sleepily. Many beautiful souvenirs have been sent us, and amongst others, the Count de S— V— has just sent C—n a model of the palace of Madrid, one of the most beautiful and ingenious pieces of workmanship possible. It is carved in wood, with astonishing accuracy and delicacy.

My next letter will be dated on board the Jason.

LETTER THE THIRD


JASON, 24th November.

This morning, at six o'clock, we breakfasted, together with Captain Estrada, the commander of the Jason, at the Casa H—a; and the wind being fair, repaired shortly after in volantes to the wharf, accompanied by our hospitable host, and several of our acquaintances; entered the boat, looked our last of the Palace and the Ytendency, and of Havana itself, where we had arrived as strangers, and which now, in fifteen days, had begun to assume a familiar aspect, and to appear interesting in our eyes, by the mere force of human sympathy; and were transported to the ship, where a line of marines, drawn up to receive us, presented arms as we entered. The morning was beautiful; little wind, but fair. We took leave of our friends, waved our handkerchiefs to the balconies in return for signals from scarcely-distinguishable
figures, passed between the red-tinted Cabaña and the stately Morro, and were once more upon the deep, with a remembrance behind, and a hope before us. Our Beringtina is a handsome vessel, with twenty-five guns, five officers, a doctor, chaplain, and purser, and one hundred and fifty men.

We find the commander very attentive, and a perfect gentleman, like almost all of his class, and though very young in appearance, he has been twenty-nine years in the service.

25th.—The weather delightful, and the ship going at the rate of five knots an hour. The accommodations in a brig not destined for passengers are of course limited. There is a large cabin for the officers, separated by a smaller one, belonging to the captain, which he has given up to us.

At seven o'clock C——n rises, and at eight, a marine sentinel, transformed into a lady's page, whom we are taking to Mexico as porter, brings us some very delicious chocolate. He is followed by the Captain's familiar, an unhappy-looking individual, pale, lank, and lean, with the physiognomy of a methodist parson, and in general appearance like a weed that has grown up in one night. He tremblingly, and with most rueful countenance, carries a small plate of sugar-biscuits. These originals having vacated the cabin, I proceed to dress, an operation of some difficulty, which being performed tant bien que mal, I repair upstairs, armed with book and fan, and sit on deck till ten o'clock, when the familiar's lamentable announcement of breakfast takes us down again. The cook being French, the comestibles are decidedly good, and were the artist a little less of an oil, and more of a water painter, I individually would prefer his style. We have every variety of fish, meat, fowl, fruit, dulces, and wines.

A very long interval has to be filled up by reading, writing, sitting, or walking upon deck, as suits the taste of the individual, or by drinking orangeade, or by sleeping, or by any other ingenious resource for killing time. At five, dinner, at which no one joins us but the captain and one officer; and after dinner on deck till bed-time, walking about, or gazing on the sky or sea, or listening to the songs of the sailors.

26th.—Little wind, but a day of such abominably cruel "balances," as they call them, that one is tempted to find
rest by jum ping overboard. Everything broken or break-
ing. Even the cannons disgorge their balls, which fall out by their own weight.

28th.—We have had two days of perfect weather though very warm; the sky blue, without one cloud. To-day we are on the sound, and have lain to, about noon, to let the sailors fish, thereby losing an hour or so of fair wind, and catching a preposterous number of fish of immense size. The water was so clear, that we could see the fish rush and seize the bait as fast as it was thrown in. Sometimes a huge shark would bite the fish in two, so that the poor finny creature was between Scylla and Charybdis. These fish are called cherne and pargo, and at dinner were pronounced good. At length a shark, in its wholesale greediness, seized the bait, and feeling the hook in his horrid jaw, tugged most fiercely to release himself, but in vain. Twelve sailors hauled him in, when, with distended jaws, he seemed to look out for the legs of the men, whereupon they rammed the butt-end of a harpoon down his throat, which put a stop to all further proceedings on his part. He was said to be quite young, perhaps the child of doting parents. The juvenile monster had, however, already cut three rows of teeth.

We are sometimes amused in the evening, when upon deck, by a little drummer, who invariably collects all the sailors round him, and spins them long, endless stories of his own invention, to which they listen with intense interest. On he goes, without a moment’s hesitation, inventing everything most improbable and wonderful; of knights and giants and beautiful princesses, and imprisoned damsels, and poor peasants becoming great kings. He is a little ugly, active fellow, with a turned-up nose, a merry eye, and a laughing mouth. Amongst his axioms is the following verse, which he sings with great expression.

Hasta los palos del monto
Tienen su destinacion
Unos nacen para santos
Y otros para hacer carbon.

which may be translated so:

Even the mountain-trees
Have their allotted goal,
For some are born for saints
Whilst others serve for coal.
29th.—Beautiful day, fair wind, great heat, and more fishing. At least thirty large fish were caught this morning, also an infant shark, a grandchild who had wandered forth to nibble, and met an untimely grave. We have seen several alacrans or scorpions on board, but these are said not to be poisonous. The ship is the perfection of cleanliness. No disagreeable odour affects the olfactory nerves, in which it has a singular advantage over all packets. This, and having it all to ourselves, and the officers being such perfect gentlemen, and all so kind and attentive, makes our voyage so far a mere pleasure trip.

We had some of the Countess de V——’s cocoa-nuts, of which she sent us a great supply, pierced this morning, each containing three tumblers of fresh and delicious water.

1st December.—We are now about thirty leagues from Vera Cruz, and if the wind blows a little fresher, may reach it to-morrow. This is Sunday, but the chaplain is too sick to say mass, and the heat is intense.

2nd.—An unpleasant variety—a Norte! I knew it was coming on, only by the face of the first lieutenant when he looked at the barometer. His countenance fell as many degrees as the instrument. It is very slight, but our entry into port will be delayed, for, on the coast, these winds are most devoutly dreaded. It has rained all day, and, notwithstanding the rolling of the ship, we attempted a game at chess, but after having tried two games, abandoned it in despair, a “balance” having, at the most interesting period of each, overturned the board, and left the victory undecided, somewhat after the fashion of Homer’s goddess, when she enveloped the contending armies in a cloud.

4th.—Yesterday evening a south wind, and the Spanish proverb says truly

“Sur duro,
No te seguro.”

“A south wind strong,
The norther ere long.”

This morning the sky is covered with watery clouds, yet we can see the Cofre de Perote and the peak of Orizava, which are thirty leagues inland! The latter, called by the Mexicans, Citlal Tepetl, or the mountain of the star, from the fire which used to burn on its lofty
summit, rises nineteen thousand five hundred and fifty-one feet above the level of the sea. Covered with perpetual snows, and rising far above clouds and tempests, it is the first mountain which the navigator discovers as he approaches these shores.

But the south wind continues and we are obliged to turn our back to the coast. There is much impatience on board. A— was taken ill, and declared she had got the yellow fever. The doctor was sent for, who, very sick himself, and holding by the table to keep himself from falling, told her, without looking at her very particularly, that there was nothing the matter, only to keep yourself "quite quiet and still;" and the ship rolling at the same moment, he pitched head-foremost out of the cabin, showing practically how much easier precept is than example. As we shall no doubt have a norther after this, which may last three days, our promised land is still at some distance.

5th.—The weather is charming, but the south-west wind holds most implacably, and the barometer has fallen five or six degrees, which, added to other signs of the times known to navigators, causes all hands to prepare for the dreaded enemy.

6th.—Job never was on board a ship. A norther, not a very severe one, but what they call a Norte chocolatero, that is, its shock tore a sail in two, as I tear this sheet of paper. The most ingenious person I see is "the master of the sails." He sews most excessively quick and well. Towards evening the wind calmed, but the ship, tossed upon a horribly swelled sea, became a mortal purgatory. Still the wind is lulled, though Humboldt and others say a Norte must last forty-eight hours, and we have only had it for twenty-four. We shall see.

7th.—A most horrible night! My hammock, which I foolishly preferred to a bed, not having room to swing in, threw me furiously against the wall, till fearing a broken head, I jumped out and lay on the floor. To-day there is a comparative calm, a faint continuation of the Norte, which is an air with variations. Everything now seems melancholy and monotonous. We have been tossed about during four days in sight of Vera Cruz, and are now further from it than before. The officers begin to look miserable; even the cook with difficulty preserves his equilibrium.
Life in Mexico

Sunday, 8th.—A Norte! The sky is watery, and covered with shapeless masses of reddish clouds. This is a great day amongst all Spanish Catholics, Le Virgen de la Concepcion, the patroness of Spain and the Indies; but no mass to-day; the padre sick and the Norte blowing. What a succession of long faces—walking barometers!

9th.—Yesterday evening the wind held out false hopes, and every one brightened up with caution, for the wind, though faintly, blew from the right quarter. The rain ceased, the weather cleared, and “hope, the charmer,” smiled upon us. The greater was our disappointment when the breeze died away, when the wind veered to the north, and when once more the most horrible, rolling seized the unfortunate Jason, as if it were possessed by a demon. Finding it impossible to lie in my hammock, I stretched myself on the floor; where, during a night that seemed interminable, we were tossed up and down, knocked against the furniture, and otherwise maltreated.

This morning there is little wind, but that little from the north, so that the termination of our voyage appears as far off now as it did eight days ago. The faces of all on board are calmly lugubrious. Little said. A few Spanish shrugs interchanged with ominous significance.

10th.—As there is only one particular wind during which it is not dangerous to approach the coast, namely, “la brisa,” the breeze which usually follows the norther, we may spend our Christmas here. The weather is beautiful, though very sultry, especially during the calm, which intervene between the nortes. With books one might take patience, but I read and re-read backwards and forwards everything I possess, or can find—reviews, magazines, a volume of Humboldt, even an odd volume of the “Barber of Paris”—“Turkish Letters,” purporting to be the translation of a continuation of the Montesquieu’s “Lettres Persanes,” and in which the hero, disguised as a gardener, brings the Visier’s daughter a bouquet, which she condescendingly receives, lying in bed à l’Espagnole! I am now reduced to a very serious Spanish work on the truth of Christianity.

This evening, to the joy of all on board, arose the long-desired breeze. The ship went slowly and steadily on her course, at first four, then eight knots an hour. The captain, however, looked doubtfully, and, indeed, towards
morning, the wind changed to the south, and our hopes died away.

11th.—Contrary wind. A south, expected to be followed by a “norte seguro.” But now, at eleven, A.M., it is quite calm, and very sultry, whilst to increase, if possible, our weariness, a long range of lofty mountains stretches along the horizon, from Punta Delgada to the Cofre de Perote, and on till they seem to sink in the ocean. Behind the Cofre rises Orizava, now like a white cloud, but this morning tinged with a rosy light by the rays of the rising sun. The sea is tranquil and the horizon clear, nevertheless the enemy is looked for. There are a few white and feathery clouds flickering about in the sky, and there is an uneasy swell in the waves. . . . At three o’clock, out burst the norther, which, like the flaming sword, guarding the issues of paradise,

“Waved over by that flaming brand, the gate
With dreadful faces throng’d and fiery arms,”

seems to warn off all vessels from approaching these iron-bound shores. Eleven days within a few hours’ distance of the coast!

16th.—Five days more passed with a continuation of contrary winds and constant rolling. We are further from hope than we were fourteen days ago. Captain, officers, sailors, all seem nearly disheartened. This morning they caught the most beautiful fish I ever beheld, of the dolphin species—the Cleopatra of the ocean, about four feet long, apparently composed of gold, and studded with turquoises. It changed colour in dying. There is a proverb, which the sailors are repeating to each other, not very encouraging: “Este es el viage del Orinoco. Que él que no se murio; se volvió loco.” “This is the voyage of the Orinoco, in which he who did not die, became crazy.”

17th.—Spoke a goleta, who came close up by our vessel, and seemed to have a miserable set on board, amongst others, a worthy pair from Havana, who had just come out of prison, having been accused of murdering a negro. The wind continues contrary. I shall fold up this seascrawl, and write no more till we reach Vera Cruz.