

LETTER I.

VOYAGE—VIEW OF PORTO SANTO—FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF
MADEIRA—QUARANTINE—LANDED AT FUNCHAL—ANNIVER-
SARY OF DON MIGUEL'S ENTRANCE INTO LISBON—RELI-
GIOUS PROCESSION—SUNDAY EVENING AT THE HOUSE OF
A FIDALGO.

Madeira, March 3rd, 1834.

SUCCESS to the good Ship ———! which brought us safely into the Bay of Funchal on the 22nd ult., after a passage of thirteen days from Liverpool. As you have never bounded it on the briny deep, I must, in the first place, give you some idea how we manage to kill time on board ship, before I describe to you my "impressions" of this "gem of the ocean."

We left the Mersey on the morning of the 9th ult., and on the 12th, passed Tuscar; nothing particular occurring, except during the

night, when a vessel kindly left her figure-head on our deck as she was passing. I heard the collision and the passengers rush on deck, as I lay in my berth quietly awaiting the result, which fortunately was favourable, as we had sustained little damage.

My fellow-passengers were Mr. B——, a strict Methodist; Dr. H——, who has twice visited China, and Mr. C——, a young gentleman going out to Jamaica to superintend a sugar plantation. Three characters more at variance scarcely could have been selected; B's constant topic of conversation being on religion, the Doctor wishing continually to play whist, whilst C. was much in want of a bottle-companion. Of course I joined each of the party, as best suited my varying mood, my mind being of a mingled character, like that of most men; and when I was tired of the trio, took a lesson in navigation from the Captain, who informed me, as all other Captains do, that his vessel was one of the best ever launched—she

was built expressly for himself—he had seen every timber placed in her—and knew she was the swiftest barque out of the port. What with wine, cards, long arguments on religion, shooting at the bottle at the yard-arm, and cigars in the evening, each day passed off uncommonly well till we made land, on the 21st ult., which was the island of Porto Santo. We passed this place at a distance of about four miles, and could descry a small town or village at the extremity of a beautiful bay, and fine sandy beach. Soon after we came in sight of the Desertas, a cluster of rocks, one of which, having a pyramidical form, appears at a distance like a ship in full sail; in fact, report says a Danish ship of war, after repeatedly hailing the same without answer, gave it a broadside.

We lay off Madeira during the night; and at eleven a.m. on the 22nd anchored in Funchal roads, about half a mile from shore. I was rather disappointed on my first view of the

Island, the appearance at a distance being barren, rugged, and very mountainous. On the extreme heights snow was easily discernible. It is seen, however, to the worst advantage as you are bearing down between the Desertas and Point St. Lorenzo, the track by which we approached the Island.

The city of Funchal, the capital of Madeira, is most beautifully situated at the head of a bay, the houses having a white and bold appearance, as seen from the anchorage, and shining under a sky as blue and serene as if a cloud had never crossed it, at once prepossessed us in its favour. To the left is Loo Rock jutting out into the sea, and, with its fort-crowned summit, presenting a lofty and singular appearance. In front of the bay is the Custom-House, with its *plaza*, on one side of which is the Governor's Palace, a strange barrack-like building; on the other, but more on the beach, stands a high tower, in an unfinished state, once intended to contain machinery for the unloading of the boats. On

the heights above the city are seen, in every direction, *quintas* of the nobility and merchants, surrounded by their vineyards and orange groves. About a mile up the mountain, in a direct line from the city, stands very prominent the large Church of Nossa Senhora do Monte.

After remaining several hours at anchor, we were visited by the customs' and medical officers, who showed their authority by at once placing us in quarantine, owing to our bill of health being signed by Don Pedro's consul, instead of that of the recognised sovereign, Don Miguel. A scene of tumult now commenced on board, which served for a time to dispel my own thoughts on quarantine laws, as well as on the rights of either Don Miguel or Donna Maria to the throne of Portugal. The Captain swore most bitterly against all Portuguese, and declared, if he had not *pratique* the day following, he would weigh anchor, and proceed on to Jamaica; at the same time placing

us on short allowance of water. The Methodist was gaily dressed for shore, and begged of the Captain to be a little more guarded in his language, which, of course, had just a contrary effect. The Doctor cared little for a few days' quarantine, but vowed he would not go on to Jamaica; whilst our *bon vivant* was busy purchasing a bunch of bananas from some Portuguese, who had come with their boats alongside; at the same time offering them a dollar per bottle for a dozen of old Madeira, if they could bring it off to the ship. After dinner had passed, with sundry blessings to the officers who had placed us in quarantine, we were astonished to learn that boats were alongside, and the vessel was at liberty to land her passengers.

Though it was getting dark, we determined to enjoy the evening on shore, being apprized that it was a complete gala night—the anniversary of Don Miguel's entrance into Lisbon, which, we were informed, partly accounted for

our being kept so long on board; the officers, on such days, *not wishing to be troubled* with business.

Once more on *terra firma*, the streets presented a bustling and gay appearance; bonfires were giving their blazing light in every direction, whilst our ears were greeted at intervals with a loud cheer of "*Viva Dom Miguel!*" The consignee of our ship kindly gave us a welcome to his house till he made the necessary inquiries for us respecting lodgings, which he succeeded in obtaining at Mrs. French's, 33, Rua da Carreira. We remained at this gentleman's house till late in the evening; his good lady (a most beautiful Portuguese) entertaining us with some music on the piano, composed by Don Pedro; whilst from the balcony we had a view of the military, headed by their general, and saw also exhibited the portrait of Don Miguel, to which due homage was shown, strongly reminding me, at the time, of Gesler's hat in "*William Tell.*"

On Sunday I dined with a Portuguese *Fidalgo*, from whose balcony we had a view of a procession coming from a church, it being a particular Saint-day, which I shall describe to you as briefly as possible. First came more than a hundred penitents, covered from head to foot with blue cloaks, some carrying across their shoulders heavy bars of iron, whilst others were chained in couples; following, was a body of soldiers, and band of music; then a number of children, beautifully dressed, and adorned with flowers, representing angels; next, twelve or fourteen of the Catholic gentry, carrying, on a platform, the figure of Christ bearing the cross, surrounded by priests who were chanting; and, in the rear of all, was a long procession of friars, &c. &c. From this church they were proceeding to another, where they met a second procession, with a representation of the Virgin Mary; and after the ceremony on meeting, they returned with torches to the former place. Tired with such

a scene of mockery and superstition, I hurried from the balcony, and on re-entering the house, was surprised to see a suite of rooms thrown open, where some sixty or seventy persons were enjoying themselves in dancing, and with music and cards. It was a sabbath scene, different to any I had ever before witnessed; but, of course, in a country like this, was nothing strange. At three or four card tables the elderly persons were busily engaged at whist and ecarte; whilst the younger and lighter-hearted part were footing it in the gayest manner. Between the dances, our hostess, Donna H——, would call on some fair *Senhora* for her song, which was always accompanied with the guitar. Every lady who plays this instrument (and there are few here who do not), at a party like this brings her own, so that, when called upon, she may be ready to show off to the best advantage. There was nothing particular in the ladies' style of dress, neither was there much per-

sonal beauty; but no lack of flattery passing in their continual chatter with one another. I preferred a *tête-à-tête* with an American lady, who was somewhat more intelligent and interesting than most of them; and after arranging for a pic-nic to the country in the following week, took my leave of this gay assembly.