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**A visit to the South Seas, in the United States' ship Vincennes, during
the years 1829 and 1830**

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Letter XI.

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LETTER XI.

PRISONS, JUDICIARY, AND SLAVE TRADE.

City Prison.—Judiciary.—General Aspect of the City.—Political State of the Empire.—Botanic Garden.

Praya do Flamengo, at Rio de Janeiro,
April 14th, 1829.

IN leaving the episcopal palace on Saturday we walked near one of the city prisons, the grated windows of which on the street allow a full view of the interior of two of the apartments. The spectacle presented was truly affecting: criminals of every age, from beardless boys to gray-headed men of every colour, from the jet of Congo to the fair skin of Germany, and probably of every crime, were seen crowded together in haggard filth and rags. Many of them appeared to be hardened villains, scowling upon us in Satanic impudence in return to the look of compassion given to their misery, and I drew back in horror from the sight of such a den, no less the receptacle, than it must necessarily be the school of vice.

It presents a fair sample, I am told, of the prison discipline, not only of the empire, but of the whole southern continent, and shows how wide a field there is, in its fermenting kingdoms, for the philanthropic exertions of one breathing the spirit and clothed in the mantle of a Howard.

The whole judiciary of the empire is in a state worthy the darkest ages of Portugal; and to effect

a reform, to the praise of the emperor, has been a leading feature in his late addresses to the Cortes. At present there is no process of form in an arrest, no habeas corpus, and no notice of the witnesses to appear against the accused. The time of trial is left entirely to the accuser, while the subject of the arrest, whether innocent or guilty, is in oppressive confinement, without an allowance of food, or any means of bringing his innocence to a legal test.

But for the charities of the monastic establishments, from which a daily pittance of food to prisoners is served, many doubtless would constantly thus perish; and under the persecution only, it might be, of an unprincipled enemy.

A glimpse at a still more abhorrent and tremendous evil was caught, in the same vicinity, while crossing the end of a street appropriated to newly arrived and unsold slaves. It is here the emaciated and half-starved cargoes are deposited from the stifling holds of the slave-ships, and daily exposed to brutal examination till a purchaser is found. The sight is such, to an unaccustomed eye, as unavoidably to sicken the heart and unnerve the soul; and hitherto, at the strong solicitation of others, I have avoided it.

The number of slaves brought into this port has, for the last ten years, amounted to more than twenty thousand annually; and this year it is probable there will be three times that number, for no less than thirteen thousand have already been entered since the first of January. Ships are daily arriving, crowded with them; and almost at any time, gangs just landed and nearly naked, may,

with their drivers, be seen in one part or another of the city.

The streets of Rio are in general narrow and regular, notwithstanding the hills jutting in at the sides and rising from its centre. These, indeed, are highly ornamental, and having their abrupt acclivities in most places covered thickly with the verdure of trees, creepers, and rich parasitical plants, they rise upon the eye from various points of view, both in the streets and habitations, in near and refreshing beauty.

The city contains a population of 200,000, and is an active and business-like place, resounding with the hum of varied mechanical industry; while in its numerous shops are exposed all the luxuries produced by foreign arts and manufacture. Still, to one accustomed to the general elegance, neatness, and purity of such cities as Boston and New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore, and a hundred others in our own happy land, and to the intelligence, competency, and respectability exhibited by the various classes seen in their streets, Rio, with all the magnificence of its scenery, the superior advantages of its location, the beauty of much of its architecture, and the wealth of many of its inhabitants, is a most disgusting place: more so, in most of its streets, than even the lowest haunts of poverty and vice in New York or Philadelphia.

Nothing contributes more to the offensiveness of a first impression, than the large proportion which the half naked negroes and mongrels of every tint and degree of blood, make of the persons seen in the

streets. The slaves in general, though often tugging at burdens on cars and low trucks, in sweat and dust, till every muscle is strained to the utmost, are said to be more kindly treated than in most slave-holding countries. The Catholic religion affords them the relief of great numbers of holidays, besides Sunday; and they seem contented, if not happy. Those engaged in light employments, such as vending various articles of merchandize and trade, which they bear along the streets in trays and baskets upon their heads, and those keeping the stalls in the market-places, are often seen in groupes singing merrily, and dancing for the amusement of the crowds around. Still, in view of the nature of their condition, their number to the eye of the stranger is fearfully great; and were I an inhabitant of the city, there would be times at least at which I should tremble in the fear of witnessing the developement of a tragedy like that of St. Domingo.

A safeguard to such a catastrophe exists, in a degree perhaps, in the extensive amalgamation, by marriage and blood, of the white and coloured population, and in an equality allowed in many respects to the free blacks. Numbers of the soldiers are of this class, and I have met individuals of high office in the army, and others ordained to the services of the priesthood, of as jet a skin and as pure African blood as any in the country. Still there is ample room for apprehension on the point, and to dread eventually some fearful retribution at the hands of the afflicted and oppressed.

Even if spared the horrors of an insurrection of

the slaves, not only the city, but the whole empire is far from being in safety against another, which may be ranked next to it in bloodshed and ruin, revolt and civil war among an ignorant and heterogeneous people. The foundations of the empire, from all I can learn, are far from being sure. It is morally and politically corrupt, and filled with ignorance and superstition; and the leaven of republicanism is scattered so extensively through the dominion, that it is not improbable that Brazil, in her order, will be the theatre of that turning and overturning which for twenty years has kept the neighbouring states in agitation and distress.

This no philanthropist or enlightened politician, acquainted with the elements of the population, could wish to see, for it would only be to impoverish the empire, and to deluge the land with its best blood, without meliorating the state of the people in general, or securing to them any immunities, worth the sacrifice, which they do not now enjoy.

Every native-born citizen of the United States knows and feels, as well as believes, the republican form of government to be the best and most noble for a people prepared, in morals and education, for its high privileges and mild dominion; yet I have met none who, after a personal observation of the countries in South America, are not decidedly of the opinion that a perpetual executive, with more than republican powers, is best suited to their present condition. And this must continue to be the case till knowledge is much more generally diffused than it now is; and till pure morals and an enlightened

piety take place of the vice and superstition which too extensively reign.

Two objects of particular interest in the vicinity of Rio remained yet unvisited, the Peak of the Corcovado, commanding a sublime prospect of both land and sea, and the Botanic Gardens, founded by the late king, John VI. of Portugal, during his residence in Brazil. The ascent of the Corcovado is tedious, and the weather at the summit, from the clouds which gather round it, uncertain; which circumstances, added to the danger of the way, except to an armed party, from negroes who have fled from bondage to the fastnesses of the mountain, and are driven for subsistence to theft and robbery, have led me to relinquish the expectation of making it. Impediments of the kind do not exist in a ride to the gardens, five miles distant, in the direction of Botafogo; and this morning Commodore Thompson, Lieut. Hull, Dr. Osborne, and Mr. Armstrong, from the *Guerriere*, and Lieut. Downing, late of the *Vandalia*, came on shore for the purpose of making the excursion. Dr. Walsh, of the British embassy, and myself, made up the whole number of our party.

Carriages and horses were at the door by eleven o'clock, and the company arranged according to the choice of each one in the mode of riding. Dr. Walsh, after ascertaining that I was accustomed to pedestrian excursions, proposed that we should walk; to which I readily agreed, and we followed at our leisure the cavalcade in advance.

The heat of the sun was great, however; and before we had reached Botafogo Dr. Walsh became

quite indisposed, so much so that we thought best to seek a carriage. As there were none to be hired in the vicinity, we called on the English clergyman of Rio, whose residence was near. He was exceedingly kind and willing to assist us in our dilemma as far as in his power; but he had no carriage, and but one horse. This we thankfully accepted, agreeing, with a laugh "to ride and tie" for the remaining distance; my friend taking the pony for the first stage, and I keeping pace by his side. He is a learned and scientific man, and an amiable and pleasing companion; and notwithstanding the discomfiture of the onset, we had an interesting, and, to myself, delightful morning.

The road from Botafogo is across a flat piece of land in a gorge between the mountains around the Corcovado, at the foot of which the gardens are, and the range terminating at the Sugar-Loaf. It is richly cultivated, and covered with all the varied and luxuriant productions of the country. The scenery on every side is beautiful in the profusion of its bloom and verdure. A charming sheet of water, four or five miles in circumference, lies immediately in front of the gardens, called the Lagoa de Rodrigo Frieres, while in the rear the Corcovado springs, seemingly within its precincts, in one perpendicular, and on this side inaccessible shaft to its loftiest height. It was so late before I arrived at the gardens, that our party had returned, and fearful of keeping the dinner of the whole in waiting, I took but a hasty and imperfect survey of it.

The whole is laid out in extensive squares, planted

with trees, now grown beautiful and lofty. It was not designed for indigenous plants, but for the most valuable of oriental growth, especially for the tea, which the king obtained from China, with a number of families skilled in its cultivation. The plants have thrived well, but most of the Chinese are dispersed, and little tea has yet, I believe, been cured. The cinnamon, nutmeg, clove, allspice, camphor, &c., are growing luxuriantly, as if in their native soil. A fine stream, passing through a lovely valley above, waters the gardens. The attendants were polite and obliging, readily furnishing me with specimens in flower and seed of the choicest plants, and offering refreshments of nuts and fruit: and I had to regret that a day, instead of half an hour, was not at my command for a more satisfactory view of the whole.

LETTER XII.

CHARACTER OF THE HON. WILLIAM TUDOR.

Education and Writings of Mr. Tudor.—His Diplomatic Services.—His Modesty and Private Worth.—Family Attachments.

U. S. Ship Guerriere, Rio de Janeiro,
April 16th, 1829.

THE whole party visiting the botanic gardens yesterday, dined at Flamengo on their return; and as the Guerriere was expected to sail early this morning, I was under the necessity, in the evening, of bidding farewell with them to Mr. Tudor, and of rejoining the ship.