CHAPTER XII.

JOURNEY NORTHWARDS.

A. D. 1817.

REASONS FOR UNDERTAKING THE JOURNEY. — PREPARATION FOR IT.—SOLDIERS AT PORTO D'ESTRELLA.—MILITARY SYSTEM OF BRAZIL.—PACKING OF MERCHANDIZE FOR THE INTERIOR.—MODE OF CONVEYING IT.—PLAINS OF INHOMERI'M.—MANDIO'CA.—SERRO DOS ORGANOS.—HEADS OF THE PIABU'NA.—ITAMARETE'.—RANCHOS.—MODE OF FARMING.—MANNERS OF TRAVELLERS.—CHARACTER OF MY COMPANIONS.—ESTATES OF PADRES, LUIZ, AND CORREIO.—WATER MILLS.—BEATING OF HORSE SHOES.—SCANTY SUPPLY OF LUXURIES.—STRANGERS FROM MATTO GROSSO.—SNAKES.—SOWING OF MILHO.—LARGE TREES.—PEGADO.—FARM AND FARMER THERE.—A GAMELLEIRO.—CEBOLAS.—HUNTING DOGS.—ITINERANT BLACKSMITHS.—CLAYING OF SUGARS.—EFFECT OF GARU'PA.—POWER OF VEGETATION.—PARAHY'BA.—OCCURRENCES AND REMARKS THERE.—ANTS' NESTS.—PARAHYBU'NA.—RICHNESS OF THE RIVER.—BARS OF GOLD.—THEIR CERTIFICATES.—MODE OF SEARCHING FOR GOLD DUST.

AS my engagement to reside in Brazil would close in 1818, the previous year necessarily became a leisure one, and I wished to visit some gentlemen, with whom I had long traded, in the Province of Minas Geraes; partly with a view of strengthening old acquaintance, or laying a foundation for new connections; partly to take my leave of some whom I should probably see no more; and also to become better acquainted with a country, in whose fate and improvement I had been interested for the last ten years. So soon as my purpose was known, several friends in the city interested themselves, and made anxious preparation for my comfort on the road; and their good offices availed me greatly. It was arranged that I should travel in the slowest of all

modes, with a Tropeiro, or carrier, whom they recommended to me not only as a good man, but possessing all the important qualifications of an agreeable companion. He was to find me a riding mule, and one to carry my baggage; my servant rode one of my own mules, and led, for my accommodation, a long tried favourite stallion.

I took with me, besides wearing apparel, a bed and bed-stocks, which are constructed for the convenience of travellers, folded up in a small compass, and constitute what is called a Cama da Venta. I was furnished also with a small writing-desk, implements for drawing, a thermometer, and an excellent small telescope. I carried also the little luxuries of biscuit, Jamaica rum, wine, porter, tobacco, tea, and sugar; a knife, fork, and spoon; candles and candlestick. I adopted partly the dress of the country, and my servant carried an extra japanned hat, to serve in wet weather. It will be evident, from this sort of preparation, that we expected the route to afford us none of the luxuries of life, nor always the indulgences which may be derived from the abundant produce of the country through which we were to pass. It may excite some degree of surprise, among those accustomed to European travelling, to learn that, in Brazil, the common articles of pepper and salt, as well as those of more importance, are often placed beyond the reach of wealth itself to purchase.

We left the city amidst the good wishes of many friends, and coasted along the Eastern side of the Ilha do Governador, passed the Island of Antonio da Sylva, stood away, without impediment from shoals, to the mouth of the Inhomerím, and, in the evening, reached Porto D'Estrella, a distance of seven leagues. The town was very full of soldiers, for the militia of the country, both cavalry and infantry, had been assembled there for the purpose of training, a circumstance which takes place every three months. Their term had expired that evening; those who resided in the neighbourhood had already gone to their homes, but some of them came from places more than an hundred miles distant, so extensive is the district to which this corps belongs. In almost every other country such a military system, comprehending so

wide a space, and compelling the attendance of every white man, would be deemed an intolerable grievance; and Brazil itself will most undoubtedly find an amendment of it, in these points, necessary. The evening was spent with officers in the exercise of such great good humour and gaiety, as in some sedater parts of the world would be thought extravagant.

At the venda where we lodged, are several large sheds, under which the goods in transit are deposited, and where the persons who have the charge of them sleep. Those intended for the interior are made up, before they leave the city, into packages about four feet long, three broad, and two deep, and inclosed in a covering of waxed cloth, to preserve them against injuries from the weather. The whole are so adjusted, by the due admixture of bulky and of heavy articles, as to weigh about seventy pounds each. Hats and other goods which do not admit of close package, as well as those which are liable to be broken or spoiled by pressure, are put into cases and covered by a similar kind of oil case.

These loads, or as they are generally denominated cargoes, are to be conveyed through the country on the backs of mules; and on this account, as well as its singularity, the pannel or saddle to which they are adapted, will require a short description. It is composed of two pieces of wood, formed almost like the letter Y inverted; these are placed parallel to each other, and the two forks are joined together by laths in such a manner that the angular or curved part will stretch across the back of the mule. It is rendered easy to the animal by a stuffing of dried Sapé, a species of coarse grass or rushes, which is laid longitudinally within side the wood, and fastened to it either by withs, or cords nicely platted from vegetable fibres. When the pannel is laid on the back of the mule, the two knobs are in an upright position, about two feet asunder, one above the withers the other over the loins of the beast. A broad belt of dry untanned hide passes from it round the buttocks, to prevent the load from slipping forward, and another round the shoulders, and under the neck, to keep it from sliding backward. The mule has also about its head a long halter made from the same material.

At the Port, the first business is to put round each package two girders, with loops attached to them, at such a distance from each other as the knobs of the pannel or pack-saddle may require. These are also made of raw hide, but soaked in water, that they may admit of greater tension, and bind the more closely; they are indeed the cords of the package; in loading, the loops are put over the knobs of the pack-saddle, so that one bale is suspended on each side of the mule, and made to balance its companion; other smaller packages, or articles useful for the cattle or their drivers, are placed between the bales over the saddle, and the weight of the whole is adjusted to the strength of the beast. Over all is thrown a dried hide, doubled and bound on with a wanty, to keep the load dry. The average weight of each load is estimated at two hundred and fifty-six pounds; but among the packages consigned to our troop was one of tea-boards, which weighed six arrobas and a half, and this must be balanced on the saddle by an equal weight, so that one poor beast carried four hundred and sixteen pounds.

It is owing to this mode of conveying goods, that small packages are so much esteemed in the South American trade. Those which exceed in weight half the burden of a mule, must undergo some change at the Port, and on that account are frequently saleable only there, or to people who can dispose of large quantities of goods. Hence for large packages the number of customers is diminished, and the price proportionally lower; hence also pigs of lead, bars of iron, barrels of nails, and a variety of other articles, which are conveyed with ease in European waggons, must undergo an expensive process in Brazil, in order to adapt them to the backs of mules. Bars of iron, v g must not only be reduced to a proper weight, but be doubled into a proper form, about two feet in length; and a pig of lead, which weighed half a ton, was an absolute incumbrance, when I first went to Brazil, for the people had not the skill, nor the means, necessary for dividing it into smaller portions; besides, an article of this kind, when cut, is imperfect, and may be cut again, and is therefore subject to a kind of plunder which cannot be detected.

On Sunday morning, the day after our arrival at Porto d'Estrella, the people went very early to mass, and then proceeded, as is usual, to their labour. The scene was a very busy one, for at the Venda where I lodged, beside the common business of packing salt, which is put into small bags of raw hide, there were at least five hundred mules to be loaded, and most of their burdens to be arranged and adjusted. Every troop is divided into sections of seven beasts and one driver, who is generally a slave; ours consisted of seven of these sections, or forty-nine beasts of burden, beside those we rode upon, and was superintended by the owner and one assistant on horseback.

The business of distributing and loading the packages occupied us until nearly twelve o'clock; when the first division of our troop set off. Soon afterward I mounted the mule destined for my riding, a fine tall female, very safe and tractable, and rode nine miles over a sandy plain, so little raised above the level of the water, as to be frequently, if not generally, overflowed. The road passed between thick hedges, and conducted us to Inhomerím, a small plain, somewhat drier than the surrounding country, where the Parish Church of the district stands pleasantly amidst some of those round hills, which are common at the foot of the mountains.

The appearance of those before us became very imposing, the range is fully in view, consisting of lofty pinnacles, large projections, immeasurable precipices, and deep recesses; the whole, except in those perpendicular faces where only lichens can grow, covered with a vast sheet of foliage, differing in its tints, its texture, and its altitude; decorated with the glowing splendour of the mid-day sun, with patches and larger masses of shade. As we proceed, the passage over the Serro becomes distinctly visible, and its white road forms no unpleasing feature in the Landscape.

Our appointed rendezvous was at a place called O Pe do Serro, situated, as its name indicates, at the foot of the mountains, and close to a wooden bridge crossing one of those clear, harmless, rippling streams, so common in mountainous countries, which, when swelled by rain, rolls

a noisy, turbulent, and overwhelming torrent. Having arrived before any of my companions, I applied for such accommodations as a place so miserable might afford, and was absolutely denied them. Determined however, if possible, to procure a dinner, I went on to a better looking house, which stood about a quarter of a mile further, and on rapping at the half-open door, was pleased to hear the well-remembered voice of Mr. Langsdorff, the Representative of his Imperial Majesty of Russia at the Court of Brazil; a gentleman already known to the public by his remarks during a voyage and journey round the Globe, by way of California, Japan, Kamptschatca, and Siberia. He had purchased here a very fine estate, and was improving it upon principles little known in Brazil, and deserving of her grateful attention. He showed me a plant which he had discovered in his grounds, having, as he said, the singular property of producing, not only its root and stem, but also its flowers and seed vessels entirely under the surface of the earth. He possessed here also a very fine specimen of the Anta, and for several years has been engaged in forming a complete Cabinet of Brazilian Insects. After dinner, we took a hasty and short walk into his grounds, for this active—I had almost said restless Minister, was obliged to return to the city that evening, in order to attend a Levee at Court the next day.

The first part of my ride to-day, was over soil formed by the action of the waves, the latter part over clayey ground with a sandy bottom, formed most probably by the alluvial matter from the mountains. The country, as far as could be discerned on either hand, was flat, in some measure swampy, and exposed to floods. At Mandióca, the land was a few feet higher, and we found the red clay which is common in every part of Brazil.

Immediately by the house, begins a new road up the face of the Serro. It is cut out of the side of the mountain, takes the line of a narrow and irregular defile, and is paved with large stones; the ascent in some places is very steep, but the angles are formed with judgment. There is only one other work of the kind, I believe, in Brazil, which communicates between Santos and St. Paul's. Both of them do great

credit to such an infant state, both of them in some places are dilapidated, and, like all works undertaken by this Government, are well executed at first, but neglected afterwards, and suffered to go out of repair.—Funds, it is true, are provided for the support of this, yet, being collected at the Register of the Parahybúna, a hundred miles further on, they derive no aid from those, who, living on this side the river, are most benefited by the work, and who, seldom passing the Register, contribute little to the toll. In this respect they exhibit at least a fair specimen of Brazilian management.

As we ascended, the defile presented some admirable specimens of mountain and woodland scenery. On the left, the brook brawled deeply below; on the right, appeared crags and pinnacles in the wildest confusion: here the declivities retreated and exhibited a feature peculiar perhaps, to this ridge of mountains, where other smaller valleys transversly intersect the general slope, and show their respective lines higher and beyond; while at other points, the masses rose in abrupt rocks and almost overhung the road. The height of one of these was roughly measured in the following manner, on the 16th of September, at ten o'clock in the morning, in Lat. 22°. S. the sun had not risen on a point of the road a thousand feet above the level of the sea, his rays being intercepted by the summit of a peak, whence a perpendicular would meet the plane of the horizon at one mile distant from the observer; data which show that the mountain rose about a mile above us.

At the highest part of the road, after an ascent of four miles and a half, we are about four thousand feet above the level of the sea, and the cones on each side of us rise two thousand more; thence we look down upon the flat land, near the foot of the Serro, upon the bay of Rio de Janeiro, and the country round it, as upon a map; the Sugar Loaf, Corcovado, and Gavia, are directly before us, and we can trace the coast, beyond which lies a vast expanse of ocean, from Cape Frio to the Point Joatinga, a distance of nearly a hundred and fifty miles. The defile presents many fine stations for military defensive works, which most certainly ought to be made impregnable, should the city ever be attacked

by an enemy. On the summit of the pass, the heat is said to be generally excessive, but at noon we found it moderated by a strong breeze from the North-East, a circumstance which led me to think that the stratum of the sea-breeze does not always extend to this elevation; nor does the current refreshing us agree with the theory which maintains that the sea-breeze is produced by cold air rushing in to supply the place of that, which being heated by the land, ascends above it to the upper regions of the atmosphere. Such phenomena deserve investigation, and probably may be accounted for by local circumstances, when these shall be better known than they are at present.

The soil, as we ascended the hill, consisted chiefly of decomposed granite; at the summit, which is nearly level, and beyond the end of the paved road, which terminates here, it is composed of red clay, exhibiting a thousand proofs of being very soft and miry, when the weather is wet. To obviate the difficulties which would arise from this circumstance, a road of logs is made over it, and continued, at intervals, through the whole province. Among the minerals near to, and upon the summit, we met with iron stone, the quantity of which decreased as we descended on the Northern side; and the core of the mountain appeared to be composed of gneiss.

Having descended at intervals about three hundred feet, we reached Corgo Seco, a miserable Venda, where the people were civil, young, ignorant, and ingenious. We stopped here to collect the mules, which had become fatigued and dispersed in climbing the hill, and appeared to have joined an incipient stream, running through a narrow and depressed bed toward the North. The mountains on either hand were very bold, covered with untouched woods, and rose a thousand feet higher. As we proceeded through a narrow and picturesque valley, the country opened to the right and showed some of the Eastern Peaks, large, smooth, and naked, forming together a rugged and desolate scene. As we still descended, yet passing over ground with considerable undulations, to a place where a small stream flowed to join the principal one on our left, the valley became narrower and close, until the road was only a mule track

cut out of the side of a rock. At Itamareté, a lone house pleasantly situated upon the Eastern side of the stream, which has here become considerable by the junction of a brook from the West, and is now joined by a larger one from the South-east, we took up our abode for the night.

This is one of those resting places which abound through the whole central part of Brazil, at least where there are frequented roads. The owner of a large estate builds what is called a Rancho, which, in general, is nothing more than a long and broad roof covered with tiles, and raised upon rough and unhewn posts, about twenty feet high; intended to afford shelter from the sun and rain, but it has generally no walls whatever, and very frequently the ground upon which it stands is not even rendered smooth and level. In these respects, therefore, they are inferior to the common hovels of English farms, under which cattle are usually housed. Beneath these sheds, those who travel with a troop, for the most part, take up their residence for the night, and have no communication whatever with the house or the owner of it. Just by he establishes a venda, that he may be able to dispose of milho, a chief article which the farm produces, and too bulky and heavy to be conveyed over mountainous roads, to a distant market, where also the price obtained would hardly defray the expences of carriage. At a small distance also, upon the farm, is a pasture, into which the cattle belonging to the troop are turned at night. This is generally in some secluded valley, where the mules require neither inclosures nor keeper, for they seldom stray from the spot, separate from each other, or mingle with the individuals of another troop. For pasturage a small sum is paid to the owner of the land, and he derives the additional advantage of keeping his estate in some measure free from brushwood, and in a condition suitable for furnishing his own cattle with grass.

At Itamareté the Rancho was an hundred and fifty feet long by thirty broad; as the mules arrived and were unloaded, the larger packages were carried within it, and arranged in such a manner as to inclose an area of about ten feet square, at one corner of which was left an entrance

into this singular apartment. In another corner were placed such small and light things as were most liable to be either lost or stolen. On the outside of our temporary walls, at a little distance from them, the pack-saddles were placed upon each other in the most exact order; the wanties were hung together upon one of the beams which form the roof, the halters and the hides were duly arranged; in short, every thing was so disposed as to be immediately found when wanted; beyond the range of pack-saddles a fire was kindled upon the ground for cooking, and our temporary kitchen established there.

When dinner was ready, which consisted only of Carne-secca and Farinha, a table was formed, within the area, by two square packages, laid one upon the other; our cloth was spread over them, and the plates arranged upon it in the neatest order, accompanied by knives and forks, with other things requisite for a comfortable meal; another package, or a barrel, served each of us for a seat. Without being delicate in my appetite, or scrupulous in my choice of food, I sat down to this meal with some degree of disappointment, for it had been reported to me that, along the principal road in Brazil, poultry or pigs, at least, could be purchased at every station.

From the ceremonies used before meat, I discovered that my Guide was a religious and devout man. So also was his assistant, the chief Muleteer, whom, by inquiring whether they did not usually dine together, and begging that my presence might make no difference in their ordinary modes, I introduced to our dinner party. The circumstance gave pleasure to each, and to me afforded a new opportunity for the observation of character. The countenance of this attendant strongly expressed a want of cultivated intellect, a great degree of pertinacity, and a small portion of mind. He was almost as ignorant as a human being, not absolutely an idiot, could possibly be; and was superstitious in the extreme. He was afflicted with a violent liver complaint, and to effect his cure, carried in his hand a small white flag, on which was painted a figure of the Holy Ghost. Of this treasure he was exceedingly careful, and as he passed along was frequently requested by strangers

to unroll it, that they might have the satisfaction of bowing reverently, crossing themselves, and kissing it. On one occasion I noticed that he left the sacred emblem behind him forgotten, became inwardly distressed, and the object of a sarcastic smile from the slaves; as the bauble gave him pleasure, I was glad when he recovered it.

A troop or caravan, like our's, carries with it every thing which can be anticipated as necessary or useful, except milho, and the afternoon is spent in busy employment; some of the party act as farriers, black-smiths, or saddlers; others as attendant labourers; all are so much occupied as to form a highly interesting scene. The pannels which were worn or become hard, or otherwise uneasy to the mules, were newly stuffed; a small anvil was fixed in the ground, and horse-shoes and nails prepared and pointed against the time when they might be wanted. The advantages derived from iron, even in this lowly respect, were evident, and frankly acknowledged by those who could compare the period, when it was a scarce article in Brazil, with the present; and when beasts of burden were obliged to travel over hard roads, with-heavy loads, without shoes. While we were at dinner the mules had been suffered to roll about in the sand, to stray to the waters, and to cool and refresh themselves as they were able; afterwards they were collected, tied to sticks placed upright in holes of the earth, formed to receive the lower ends of them; every back was examined, and the general health and condition of the animal noticed; proper remedies were applied to those which were sickly, or galled, and the latter, I observed, were chiefly of the caustic kind; to those which wanted shoes this valuable defence was supplied. Every driver was expected to know and take care of the seven mules, which formed his particular section of the troop; to keep them in good order, and to feed them, by placing their noses in a small bag, containing a certain quantity of milho. When this was consumed, the whole troop was conducted to pasture for the night.

At the Rancho we had been joined by two brothers who were Tropeiros, the elder of them, an intelligent and gentlemanly man,