

REMINISCENCES OF THE ISLAND OF CUBA; OR, THE SMITHS AT THE HAVANA.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

FRAY O'DONNELL GIVES THE SMITHS AN INSIGHT INTO THE DOINGS OF
SOME OF THE CAPTAINS-GENERAL; ALSO A BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT
OF THE CELEBRATED GENERAL DON MANUEL TACON.

Mrs. SMITH was as good as her word. On the following day, whilst we were assembled in her apartments, Father O'Donnell paid her a visit; barely giving this excellent man breathing time, she begged him to give her an account of the mode of government of Cuba, which she was desirous of adding to the notes and memoranda, which already occupied a prodigious space in her wonderful *dairy*, which she kept under lock and key. It would have been a glorious treat for us to have got a peep at this extraordinary journal, which was dedicated to her cousin, Mrs. Margery Stubbs, who no doubt got possession of this edifying work on Mrs. Smith's return to London. Let us hope that Mrs. Stubbs will preserve this valuable manuscript from devouring moths and worms, so that at her death she may bequeath the same to the British Museum.

"You wish, ladies and gentlemen," said Fray O'Donnell, "to have some account of the administration of this lovely island? I shall be happy to comply with your request, but crave your patience and indulgence, as historical narrations may be compared to that species of pudding which schoolboys vulgarly call *stick-jaw*, though the technical name is "*bolster*"—in other words, they are generally somewhat dry. I shall endeavour, to the best of my ability, to intersperse my tale with a modicum of salt, pepper, and butter; so that, by adding zest, give the wherewithal to make it palatable."

The monk's observations made us all smile, for it put us in mind of those days, when we were glad enough to satiate our craving appetites with *bolsters*, *dumplings*, and *Yorkshire puddings*, so hard and so dry that our troops might have battered down the Bogue Forts with them, had their cannons been charged with this indigestible schoolboys' fare!

"Before I commence my historical relations, I must beg the favour of your keeping my communication entirely to yourselves. We do not live under a constitutional nor a republican form of government, where men