

A TRIP TO CUBA

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A trip to Cuba by Julia Ward Howe

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JULIA WARD HOWE

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BY

Mrs. JULIA WARD HOWE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE DEPARTURE.

WHY one leaves home at all is a question that travellers are sure, sooner or later, to ask themselves, — I mean, pleasure-travellers. Home, where one has the "Transcript" every night, and the "Autocrat" every month, opera, theatre, circus, and good society, in constant rotation, — home, where everybody knows us, and the little good there is to know about us, — finally, home, as seen regretfully for the last time, with the gushing of long frozen friendships, the priceless kisses of children, and the last sad look at dear baby's pale face through the window-pane, — well, all this is left behind, and we review it as a dream, while the railroad-train hurries us along to the spot where we are to leave, not only this, but

Winter, rude tyrant, with all our precious hostages in his grasp. Soon the swift motion lulls our brains into the accustomed muddle. We seem to be dragged along like a miserable thread pulled through the eye of an everlasting needle,—through and through, and never through,—while here and there, like painful knots, the *dépôts* stop us, the poor thread is arrested for a minute, and then the pulling begins again. Or, in another dream, we are like fugitives threading the gauntlet of the grim forests, while the ice-bound trees essay a charge of bayonets on either side; but, under the guidance of our fiery Mercury, we pass them as safely as ancient Priam passed the outposts of the Greeks,—and New York, hospitable as Achilles, receives us in its mighty tent. Here we await the “Karnak,” the British Mail Company’s new screw-steamer, bound for Havana, *viâ* Nassau. At length comes the welcome order to “be on board.” We betake ourselves thither,—the anchor is weighed, the gun fired, and we take leave of our native land with a patriotic pang, which soon gives place to severer spasms.

I do not know why all celebrated people who write books of travels begin by describing their days of sea-sickness. Dickens, George Combe, Fanny Kemble, Mrs. Stowe, Miss Bremer, and many others, have opened in like manner their valuable remarks on foreign countries. While intending to avail myself of their privilege and example, I would nevertheless suggest, for those who may come after me, that the subject of sea-sickness should be embalmed in science, and enshrined in the crypt of some modern encyclopædia, so that future writers should refer to it only as the Pang Unspeakable, for which *vide* Ripley and Dana, vol. , page . But, as I have already said, I shall speak of sea-sickness in a hurried and picturesque manner, as follows:—

Who are these that sit by the long dinner-table in the forward cabin, with a most unusual lack of interest in the bill of fare? Their eyes are closed, mostly, their cheeks are pale, their lips are quite bloodless, and to every offer of good cheer, their “No, thank you,” is as faintly uttered as are marriage-vows by maiden lips. Can they be the same that, an