

CHAPTER II.

Western, or prairie region—boundaries and extent—general appearance—extent of the prairies—soil—bays—rivers—settlements—inhabitants—Red river lands—their character—the partially explored region of Northern Texas.

THE western division, or prairie region of Texas, extends from the La Baca west to the Bravo del Norte, the western boundary of the country, a distance of nearly two hundred miles. It presents a greater diversity of surface, soil, and climate, perhaps, than either of the others, but is alike in the feature by which we have chosen to characterize it, the general want of wood.

It is not to be understood that this whole region is entirely bald. The streams have often a narrow skirting of wood, especially in the level country, and small patches, few indeed and far between, are found on the uneven lands; but the wood bears so small a proportion to the whole area, as scarcely to be worthy of being taken into the account. Some stately trees of various species are occasionally scattered through the level lands, but in the undulating country, which here approaches within forty or fifty miles of the coast, but one kind is rarely found, and that is a species of locust called the musquite. The tracts where it is found are distinguished by the name of musquite prairies. In gazing from the summits of the higher swells, over the waving ocean of prairie, the eye sometimes rests upon these poor apologies for trees, but finds little relief from so wretched an object. Its dwarfish size, ugly form, and scanty foliage serving rather to increase than diminish the sense of surrounding desolation. The nopal, which is sometimes seen where it has been building up and spreading out its alternate stem and leaf, perhaps, for a century, presents a far more agreeable object, and seen as it sometimes is at a distance of several miles, might be easily mistaken for a hermit's hut or gipsy's cot.

The barrenness here extends to nothing but wood, which nature, in the whims in which she is sometimes found to indulge, seems to have denied to this otherwise interesting and valuable country. It is almost everywhere covered with a rich coat of grass, and generally of a species very fine and nutritious, which from its being uniformly found in the neighborhood of the tree of that name, is here called musquite grass.

Besides the fruit of the nopal, or prickly pear, there are several species of ground fruits or garden vegetables, growing spontaneously here, which might sustain the life of man when lost in these almost boundless prairies, which are some of them several days' journey in extent. His faithful rifle would avail him but little here, although surrounded by whole herds of buffalo, deer, and mustangs, since there is no covert to conceal his approach; he would be only tantalized by the sight, and the sweet morsel would be for ever beyond his reach.

Upon the eastern confines of this division, along the river Guadalupe and its branches, and especially on its large eastern branch, the Saint Marks, there is perhaps a sufficient supply of wood and timber for any purpose for which it may be needed in that climate. The traveller might here be in some doubt whether he was not in the mixed, instead of having entered the prairie region, and the confines of the two might have been more properly placed here, perhaps, than upon the La Baca; yet the prairies greatly prevail here, and scarcely more than one tenth of the whole area in the Guadalupe district is in wood.

The soil is excellent, both here and on the river San Antonio, still further west, and scarcely surpassed in fertility by the lands of the middle region. West of the San Antonio, the country is oftener visited by severe droughts, to the serious injury of vegetation. Early planted crops, however, seldom fail there. The borders of the San Antonio river are favorable for very extensive irrigation from the waters of that river, and this is already practised to considerable extent; many of the farms and gardens in the neighborhood of the city of San Antonio or Bexar, are watered by numerous artificial rills supplied from the river; such rills are also conducted through many gardens within the city walls.

The whole of this division, with the exception of the valley of the Bravo del Norte, coast as well as interior, is more elevated than the middle region, less favored with rains, and with a soil in general of less depth and fertility, though abounding in various extensive tracts, perhaps equal to the former. All the productions which have been enumerated as adapted to the soil and climate of the former, may be produced here, but in less abundance.

The boundless extent of rich pasturage is even superior, and every square mile would enrich a farmer by its pasturage alone. The want of wood and timber presents a serious obstacle to the rapid settlement of this division, but means will be found to supply this want, and with the race of men now approaching and already upon its border, it may be safely predicted that this fertile region, which has lain waste during all past ages, will in that which is to succeed, be made to yield in abundance the rich and

varied agricultural treasures which nature has fitted it to produce, to tens of thousands of human beings who will then have found a happy abode on its broad and inviting surface.

The lower valley of the Bravo del Norte is the least valuable portion of this division, abounding in extensive marshes, not easily reclaimed; it offers neither health nor plenty, in a country which is elsewhere, over its whole surface, so liberal of both.

The Nueces, which falls into a bay of the same name, about midway between the Bravo del Norte and the San Antonio, is mostly bordered, for more than 200 miles, with extensive plains, covered with the deep black mould, which almost everywhere distinguishes the prairie, and promises a fertility unsurpassed even by the middle region.

This division is less favored with interior facilities of navigation, than other parts of Texas. The great river which forms its western boundary, is obstructed by sand-bars, or shallows at no great distance from its mouth, which are impassable for boats of any considerable size. The waters of Nueces have not been fully explored, no obstruction to the navigation of small steamboats has been discovered, and it is conjectured that such boats may ascend this river, a distance of 200 miles. The San Antonio and Guadalupe may be ascended by the same class of boats, the former about 80, and the latter about 60 miles.

Aransaso bay, which receives the waters of the San Antonio and Guadalupe, is an extensive sheet of water, extending some 30 miles into the country. It has several inlets from the gulf, which afford entrance for vessels of 100 tons burden, and a good harbor within. Nueces bay is not inferior to the Aransaso.

The settlements in this division are as yet confined to very narrow limits. The American settlements in their progress westward, have entered upon its eastern confines; some thirty or forty families are, or were, located along the borders of the Guadalupe. On this river also are a few Mexican settlements.

Victoria, a small town settled mostly by Mexicans, is situated upon this river a few miles above its mouth, and about sixty miles above was Gonzalos laid out and built by the colonists from the United States. It was burnt by the inhabitants, on the approach of the Mexican army. On the San Antonio river, are the most extensive Mexican settlements in Texas. More than a century has elapsed since the Spanish settlements were begun here, but so slow has been its progress, that the same ratio of increase would not cover a tract of a hundred miles square, allowing a family for every square mile, short of a thousand years.

The settlements upon the borders of this river were estimated before the present war, at about 6000 souls, nearly half residing within the walls of the city of Bexar, and the residue, partly on

the ranches or small farms in the neighborhood, and partly at Goliad, situated eighty miles below, and thirty from the mouth of the river. An Irish settlement was begun near the mouth of the Nueces, but has been broken up by the war. A few Mexican villages are found upon the Little Brazos, and perhaps upon the other small streams that fall into the gulf between the Nueces and the Bravo del Norte.

We come next to that part of Texas bordering the Red river; but of this we shall say little in a separate notice, not because it is deemed unworthy, but because it is a mere counterpart of the opposite border of the same river, which lies within the limits of the United States, and is therefore too well known to require a particular description.

A single fact may be adduced, affording sufficient evidence of the high character of the Red river lands, and that is, that wherever they have been brought into market by the United States, they have immediately advanced as high as twenty-five dollars and upward per acre, while in an uncultivated state.

There is great uniformity in the character of these lands, along nearly the whole extent of the river. Its borders present almost everywhere, Louisiana in miniature, with its swamps, and sluggish bayous in the rear. Yet so fat and warm is the soil, and so high its reputation for cotton, that so soon as the raft is removed, and the lands in market, hundreds of miles now lying waste, will become rich plantations, visited weekly by numerous steamboats, which will then wend their way more than a thousand miles up the wave of this, the last, but not the least, of the great tributaries of the *grande-monarch* of rivers.

A few remarks upon a portion of the region which we have designated as only partially explored, shall close our separate notices of the different divisions of the country.

The mountainous range mentioned as forming the northern boundary of the western and part of the middle division, covers but a narrow strip of country, and subsides on the north as on the south, into an undulating surface of mingled wood and prairie, extending to the level lands upon Red river. This large district, watered by the Brazos and Colorado, and their numerous branches north of the mountains, is yet entirely without settlements, unsurveyed and ungranted. It is found, so far as explored, not surpassed in beauty or fertility by the rolling lands below, and will soon become almost equally valuable.

Few interior regions are more highly favored with navigable waters, having the Red river at no great distance on the north, and the Brazos and Colorado, boatable through it for some hundreds of miles, the latter holding its course without rapids from its mouth far into this district.

Still west and northwest of this district, lies another, far more extensive, now claimed by the government and people of Texas. It extends along the Bravo del Norte, and its great eastern branch, the Puerco, on the west, and still north along the former to the head waters of the Arkansaw, thence down that river to the northwest corner of the territory of the same name, thence down the west line of said territory to the Red river. It is watered by the rivers which have been mentioned as mostly forming its outlines and their numerous tributaries. It is literally a region of head waters, having within its boundaries the sources of the Arkansaw, and its great southern branches, the Negracka, the Sabine, and the two forks of the Canadian, and also those of the Red river, Brazos, Colorado, and Puerco.

These mostly take their rise in the great chain of mountains called Sierra Madre, (mother ridge,) which ranges nearly parallel with the Bravo del Norte, from the sources of the Arkansaw, to the mouth of the Puerco, a distance of nearly one thousand miles.

The track of the trading caravans from Saint Louis to Santa Fe, crosses this district, and that lonely city which has long occupied a position so fearfully interior, stands on the east bank of the Bravo del Norte, and is therefore included in this part of Texas.

CHAPTER III.

General remarks upon the face of the country—soil—productions for export and use—herds of cattle—their fine appearance, and the causes of it—navigable waters—bays and rivers—the Sabine—Galveston—Matagorda—Aransaso and Nueces bays—the Bravo del Norte—Red—Brazos—Colorado—Puerco—Trinity—Sabine—Nueces—San Antonio—Guadaloupe and Neeches rivers.

HAVING marked out the natural divisions of Texas, as they strike the eye of the traveller, and concluded, according to our plan, a brief description of each under separate heads, embodying therein such facts as seemed properly to belong to each, we now proceed with our geographical sketch of the country, in a more general form; in doing which, we shall endeavor to avoid, at least, all unnecessary recapitulation. Many of the same objects must, however, again be presented, for the purpose of adducing new facts concerning them: but the repetition shall be confined almost exclusively to names.

Two facts being given in regard to the greater part of the maritime region of Texas, viz., the extreme low margin of the coast, scarcely rising above the waves of the gulf, and this continuing apparently almost a dead level, without the slightest natural eminence, and without a rock, stone, or so much as a gravelly pebble near the surface, for a distance in some places of nearly a hundred miles into the country; the inference seems to be almost irresistible, that this must be a country of swamps, marshes, lagunes and pools of stagnant water; and accordingly, the traveller, although he has been told that they do not exist here, is incredulous of the fact, and, after a vain search in their pursuit, expresses his astonishment that they are nowhere to be found. And it is only after carefully examining the streams, and finding them everywhere flowing with a quick current, that the mystery is cleared up; and he discovers that the whole surface has a regular inclination towards the gulf, of several feet in a mile. Both the eastern and western confines of the country are excepted from this remark.

The whole country, indeed, from the coast to the borders of Red River, is one vast inclined plane; and the range of mountains, which crosses it nearly midway, seems placed there only to

diversify the scene, and break the force of the north-winds, which might otherwise sweep with irresistible fury down this almost boundless plain—and perhaps also to purify the waters of the rivers that flow through it, since it does not, like most other mountain ranges, interrupt their course, or give them a new direction: so careful is it to avoid this, if reports of some of the Indian hunters may be credited, that when it cannot otherwise afford them a passage, it swallows them at its northern base, in order to disgorge them again at its southern. This range of mountains, or rather chain of peaks and knobs, is a continuation of the mother ridge, which leaves the Bravo del Norte at the mouth of the Puerco, and ranging off to the east, affording the sources of the Nueces, San Antonio, Guadalupe, and Saint Marks, and a passage through it for the Colorado: it terminates in a high and rocky bluff, on the west bank of the Brazos. Short spurs and isolated peaks are occasionally found standing out from the main range; but these are not of frequent occurrence; and in general it occupies but a narrow space, and the rolling lands reach its base unbroken, marked for a distance of twenty or thirty miles with an underlay of pure limestone, as would seem from the banks and beds of the small streams being often composed of that valuable material. The summits of the highest peaks in the range are bald; but, in general, the summits, as well as the steepest declivities, are covered with a thick growth of wood, mingled towards the base with an almost impenetrable undergrowth.

In a general view of the soil and productions of Texas, it cannot be necessary to add much, after what has been said upon this subject, in noticing the different divisions.

That the greater part of the country is alluvion, and mostly of the richest quality, is conceded by all who have examined it; and having, in some of its divisions, every variety of soil which is found anywhere in alluvial districts. With a climate between the temperate and tropical, and partaking of the advantages of both, it will be perceived that the abundance and variety of its productions, when carried to the extent of its capabilities, can scarcely be limited.

In addition to the valuable articles of cotton, sugar and tobacco, which it must produce largely for export, (and, in the former, it will very soon probably rival any other state in the world,) silk may at no distant day be added to the list, as the mulberry of several species is self-planted in the country, in great abundance; and wines and fruits of various kinds must soon follow.

The future exports from the waters of Texas have been classed by an intelligent gentleman, well acquainted with the country, in the following manner: from the Trinity, and the waters east, cotton, sugar and rice; from the Brazos, cotton, sugar and to-

bacco; from the Colorado, and other waters of Matagorda and Aransaso bays, cotton, sugar, tobacco, raw silk, wines, figs, raisins, and several other kinds of fruit.

Such is the abundance and variety of the native grape, in many parts of the country, that wine of several kinds, and in considerable quantities, may be made without the labor of cultivating the fruit: natural vineyards, of many acres in extent, producing several varieties of the sweet-skinned grape, pronounced by a French vintner to be equal to the best grown in France, are found on the Colorado and its branches, near the mountains; and, probably, may also be found in the same range of country, both easterly and westerly of this river.

The gardens of the earlier settlers are already enriched with a great variety of fruit-trees. Oranges have not yet reached a bearing state; but figs, peaches, apricots, plums and cherries, are produced in the highest perfection. Melons, unrivalled in size and flavor, are grown and ripened in the rich soil and warm sun of Texas; and for quantity and quality of its sweet potatoes, it challenges competition with any part of the earth.

The inhabitants have already availed themselves to some extent of the exuberant growth of nutritious herbage, which beautifies and enriches almost the whole surface of the country. Herds, of from five hundred to a thousand head of neat cattle, are not unusual among the planters who have been ten years in the country; and in a few instances the number has been increased to two or three thousand: and nowhere, in the northern and eastern portions of the United States, where the breeding of these animals from the choicest stocks has of late been so carefully attended to, are finer oxen, cows and bullocks found than in Texas. The traveller, after having noticed the diminutive size and meager appearance of most of these animals, along the southern coast of the United States, and having perhaps heard this degeneracy of the race imputed to the influence of a southern climate, is astonished to find here immense herds, nowise inferior to the very best English breeds. A constant and plentiful supply of food, of the best quality, serves to explain the whole mystery. The animal here, in its infancy, is seldom robbed of any part of that nourishment which is necessary to exhibit the full perfection of its nature; and the supply continuing almost equally generous, it attains here, at two years old, the size and proportions that elsewhere, with the ordinary mode of feeding, it seldom reaches at three. Working-oxen, such as would excite the envy of a whole neighborhood of New-England farmers, are found on every plantation in Texas; and the milk of a single dairy would derange the ample accommodations of half the dairy-women in Goshen and serve to concoct a cheese which would put to the

blush any of the mammoths of that order which have hitherto been exhibited to the world. There are—or were, before the present war—a few farmers in Texas, who could number among their stock more than one thousand cows.

The number of beasts of prey, and especially of wolves, must forbid the introduction of sheep into Texas, for some years to come; and the extreme low prices at which horses are brought from the interior of Mexico, and sold here, leaves little inducement for breeding this animal; from five to ten dollars a head being the common price of a four-years' old Mexican horse, broken only to the halter. Some of the older planters are beginning to bestow some attention to the raising of mules for the Louisiana market, and also on the higher breeds of horses, for pleasure and the sports of the turf.

For the climate, and health of the country generally, we must refer to the few remarks on this subject which were hazarded in noticing the different divisions; adding only, that those upon the mixed region of wood and prairie, are applicable to the greater part of the western division, and, in many respects, to other large districts of the country.

The navigable waters of Texas, like those in the United States, connected with the Gulf of Mexico, are all more or less obstructed with bars or shoals, where they communicate with the Gulf; and the tide here rising but slightly, and not at regular periods, but depending mostly upon the winds, the navigation must be limited, for some years to come, to the smaller class of vessels; and even these must be confined mostly to the bays, the mouths of the rivers being again obstructed, so as to forbid their entrance.

In a former age, the rivers of Texas would have been of little value for the purposes of navigation. Even if the obstructions at the mouths were removed, so as to admit of the entrance of vessels designed for navigating the deep waters, such are their winding and devious courses, and so quick their currents, that little progress could be made in ascending them; and the lighters and flat boats that on some rivers were formerly propelled by poles, carrying merchandise far into the interior, would have been useless on these rivers, since the poles would have penetrated the yielding soil which forms their beds too deeply to be easily recovered.

These rivers were formed for the age of steam; and fortunately the age of steam has arrived before they were needed for the purposes of navigation. The small boats propelled by steam, such as ascend the Connecticut above tide waters, may ascend almost any of the rivers of Texas, nearly to their sources; and with their flat boats in tow, may, at all seasons, unobstructed by ice, transport, at a trifling expense, merchandise, and the produce

of the country, to all points wherever it is needed. During the season of high water, larger boats may be used: but the season of high water is here of short duration; and the principal reliance must be upon the small boats referred to, which can proceed without interruption during the whole year.

The introduction of this class of boats will form a new era in the navigation of almost all southern rivers, which are now often useless as channels of transportation, for several months in the year. Being in general narrow, and without rapids, they hold a uniform depth of water in the driest season, sufficient for all purposes, if the right class of boats were in use; and they may be constructed as well for the accommodation of passengers, as for towing freight. Nature has furnished, in the numerous rivers of Texas, unequalled facilities for an easy intercourse and cheap transportation between all parts of the country; and a race of men are now here, of whom it may be safely predicted, that they will not fail to avail themselves of them to their fullest extent.

The bays of Texas, which cover, as may be seen, the greater part of the coast, in their present condition afford entrance and safe harbors for the largest class of coasting vessels; and the necessity which will furnish employment for ships of a larger class will also furnish the means of preparing the waters for their reception, the obstacles now presented being such as it has been found elsewhere practicable to remove at a moderate expense.

The Sabine Bay, or Lake, as it has been termed, at the eastern boundary of Texas, should be excepted from the foregoing remarks, in regard to its present or future direct intercourse with the Gulf. It has but four feet of water at its inlet; and the shoal extends too far into the Gulf, and is too formidable, ever to be removed. A deep bayou enters this bay from the west, which interlocks with another of a similar character, entering the extreme eastern point of Galveston bay; with which it may be connected at an expense of a few hundred dollars, so as to afford a passage for such boats as will be used in navigating the rivers which discharge their waters into this bay.

Galveston Bay next presents itself on the west. It is the largest in Texas; being, with its eastern and western arms, about eighty miles in length, and where it receives the waters of the Trinity and San Jacinto, extending about fifty miles into the interior. It is not only the most valuable bay in Texas, but in the whole circle of the Gulf of Mexico; having a haven large and safe, with five fathoms water, and good anchorage. It is sheltered for thirty miles by an island of the same name, at either end of which is an inlet; the western having sixteen feet water, and the eastern about half that depth, with a favorable tide. Sheltered as these passes are, by the extreme points of the island, the channel of

either may be easily deepened, for the entrance of the larger class of ships. This is probably the best naval station in the Gulf of Mexico; and its neighboring borders abound on one side with live and other species of oak, and on the other with Georgia pine, the best materials for ship-building. The extreme western point of this bay is within twelve miles of the Brazos river, and about forty from the head of Matagorda Bay; and seventy miles further west is Passo Cavallo, the only inlet to the latter.

Matagorda Bay has evidently been separated from the Gulf, in comparatively modern times, the riband-like peninsula described in our notice of the middle division, having been thrown up by the joint action of the currents of the rivers on one side, and the waves of the Gulf on the other. Opposite the mouth of the Colorado, the bay is now less than five miles broad, and the main and peninsula are visibly approaching each other by annual new formations; so that, at no very distant period, the eastern part of this bay will be reduced to the channel of the Colorado river, in its ordinary dimensions. There can be little doubt, that in the lower valley of the Mississippi, extensive bays have successively been made thus to disappear. The channel at Passo Cavallo has about twelve feet of water at low tide; and this holds with little variation to the bar, at the western outlet of the Colorado.

Towards its western extremity, Matagorda Bay stretches inland some twenty miles, where it receives the waters of the La Baca; and here also it is connected by a channel of but a few miles in length with the Aransaso, the bay next presenting itself in pursuing westward the coast of Texas. This bay, and that of Nueces further west, have a greater depth of water within, but less at their passes to the Gulf than Matagorda. They approach within a league at one point, if they do not, as some have supposed, actually flow into each other.

The value and importance of these extensive sheets of water, as the means of promoting commercial enterprises through the Gulf of Mexico, must be apparent to all.

But there are those who, looking to a rapid increase of population and wealth in the country, already point to still greater advantages, which will be afforded by the bays that stretch along almost the whole coast of Texas. Connected by short canals, where the chain is now broken, and extended to the Mississippi, through the lakes between that river and the Sabine, an inland navigable route would be opened from the Bravo del Norte to New-Orleans; and the rich products which Texas promises to yield in overflowing abundance, would find their way to a market without exposure to the storms of the boisterous Gulf. Such an undertaking might be accomplished with less expenditure of labor than has been required by some of the secondary enterprises

of the same character in the United States. The distance to be excavated for canals would scarcely exceed a hundred miles, through a country entirely level, presenting no impediment that may not be turned up with the plough.

The principal rivers in Texas, including those which form a part of its boundaries, arranged according to their magnitude, are the Bravo del Norte, Red River, Brazos, Colorado, Puerco, Trinity, Sabine, Nueces, San Antonio, Guadalupe, and Neeches. The Bravo del Norte takes its rise near the fortieth degree of north latitude, in the neighborhood of the sources of the Arkansaw; and, after a course in a southeastern direction of more than 1500 miles, including its windings, falls into the Gulf of Mexico, below the twenty-sixth degree of north latitude. The value and importance of this river can never be duly appreciated until the independence of Texas, embracing the country within the boundaries now claimed, shall be acknowledged by Mexico, or until it is received into the American union.

The eastern line of Texas strikes the Red River at the ninety-fourth degree of west longitude, and thence west to the one hundredth degree. This river forms the boundary between Texas and the United States. Its general course here is but little south of east, being almost entirely between 33° and 34° north latitude. It is supposed to be navigable for steamboats the whole distance, during the season of high water.

The Brazos, which falls into the Gulf nearly midway of the coast of the middle region of Texas, has a course little short of a thousand miles in all its windings. Its head waters are not far distant from those of the Red River; and its course for more than a hundred miles, is nearly parallel with that river, when it takes a southeasterly direction, and holds this general course to its mouth. Through its broad bottoms below the mountains, it winds at least three hundred miles, to gain two in a right line. During half the year, steamboats drawing four feet of water may ascend it for that distance: here the navigation is interrupted for a few miles by rapids; and above them it may be resumed to an extent as yet unknown. Few streams are more affected by excessive summer droughts; and there are times when the waters of this river of a thousand miles might flow in the channel of a pitiful rivulet; and again it sometimes swells so as to level the thirty-foot banks, and cover the adjoining meadows with a boundless sea of waters. The latter occurrence, however, is rare, since it has happened but once in the memory of living men.

The channel of this river, like most other rivers in Texas, is extremely narrow, compared with its depth. At its mouth, where it is thirty feet deep at low tide, it does not exceed sixty rods in width. There is a slight curve in the coast, at its mouth, which

can scarcely be called a bay; across this, nearly two miles out, is a hard, unyielding gravel bar, over which, at common tides, there is less than six feet of water. Outside of this, in a position far from being a safe one, vessels bound into the Brazos are often compelled to anchor: frequent shipwrecks are thereby occasioned; and an entrance into this river must be effected at some risk, until the fostering hand of a government, like that of the United States, has applied some of its ample resources in clearing a safe and commodious channel.

The far-famed salt branch of the Brazos, which, it is said, sometimes converts the whole river into a pickle, should be reserved, perhaps, to be classed with the remarkable curiosities of the country; but lest it should be forgotten, we will give it a passing notice here. It is a fact now well attested, that the principal branch among the head waters of the Brazos, by spreading itself over a surface of crystallized salt, when it overflows its banks, becomes so strongly impregnated, as to give a brackish taste to the whole collected waters of the river for some hundred miles below.

The Colorado, the next river in size, has its head-springs in the highlands, west of the sources of the Brazos, and discharges its waters, as has been before remarked, into Matagorda Bay. It has been usual to rank this river after the Brazos; but it is little, if at all inferior to it, either in the length of its course or the volume of its waters; and the latter being much less diminished by the summer droughts, it will become, as a channel of communication with the interior, far more valuable. As far as this river has been explored, no impediment to a continuous navigation has been found, excepting the really trifling one near its mouth, which an expenditure of from five to ten thousand dollars would be sufficient to remove. It is a river of sweet and limpid waters, flowing through a country which excites the continual admiration of the traveller; and from whatsoever portion of the earth he may have wandered, he never fails to pronounce the banks of the Colorado unrivalled for the happiest union of beauty and fertility.

We shall pass over the Puerco by referring to the map, confessing our inability to add anything to the knowledge which may be gained by its inspection.

The Trinity, the third river in size, which flows through the heart of Texas, and the most valuable for navigation, in an unimproved condition, collects its head-waters near the borders of Red River, and pursuing a southeasterly course of about 300 miles, forms at its mouth the eastern head of Galveston Bay. It flows with a less lively current than the rivers west of it. It is navigable at all seasons, for a distance of about two hundred

miles, and presents no rapids to obstruct a further progress, but may be ascended in high water with suitable boats, nearly to its source.

Salt springs, which have been pronounced as productive as those of Salina, have been found near its banks, about 150 miles from the coast. Works for boiling and evaporating, are now in operation here on a small scale.

The Sabine has a course of a little rising of three hundred miles, and for nearly half that distance it runs parallel with the Red river; its general course is then nearly due south to its outlet in the Sabine lake. The obstacles which forbid a near approach to the inlet from the Gulf, must, for a long time at least, render this river nearly useless for the purposes of navigation. It is well known as forming the only point in the south-western boundary of the United States, which is approximated by settlements on both sides. Its waters have therefore been supposed to partake of the virtues imputed to those of the real Ganges, as well as to those of the fabled Lethe. It is a happy compound, when the waters of purification and forgetfulness are found mingled in the same fountain, since they should be partaken together in order to give full effect to either.

The Neuces finds its sources among the peaks in the mountain ranges of Texas, and pursuing a course of about three hundred miles, falls into the bay of the same name. The facilities it may afford for an easy intercourse with the interior, is yet matter of conjecture rather than certainty; rumor speaks favorably on this point as well as of the character of the land upon its borders. This river has hitherto been considered the western boundary of Texas, the district between this and the Bravo del Norte having been included in the state of Tamaulipas, while the farce of a federal republic was played in Mexico.

The San Antonio is the shortest among those we have enumerated as the principal rivers of Texas, having a course not exceeding one hundred and fifty miles. But it springs into existence from a cluster of fountains, a full grown river, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter, in full maturity and beauty, grace, and we may add wisdom, if wisdom can ever be predicated of a river; hence it is ever found pursuing its even course, fulfilling the design of its creation, and never in a moment of madness mars its own goodly work. At the point where the waters of this river are collected from its fountains, it is twelve feet deep, and from twenty to thirty yards wide; it soon however expands over a broader surface, and becomes fordable at several places within the first few miles. It has occasional falls or rapids until within seventy or eighty miles of its mouth, and to this point, it may be easily ascended by that class of steamboats referred to

in the early part of this chapter. Uniting with the Guadalupe in its course, their joint waters are discharged into the Aransaso bay, which by a channel opposite the mouth of this river, is connected with Matagorda bay. The advantages of water power which are presented by this river for the first fifty or sixty miles from its source, cannot well be surpassed. Its use in irrigating the soil upon its borders has been already noticed. In closing our notice of this remarkable river, we will venture to repeat a report current among the hunters on the upper settlements of the Colorado, that may serve, if true, to account for the marvellous fountains at its source. It should be remarked that the fountains of the San Antonio, spring up near the southern base of one of the spurs of the mountain range. A river of a corresponding size, is said to lose itself at an opposite point in the northern base of the mountain. This is supposed to be the identical San Antonio river which rises and flows off upon the surface, after having held its subterraneous course beneath the mountain; whether any one has yet ventured to navigate this space, so as to be able to testify to its identity, our informant saith not.

The river Guadalupe, which unites with the San Antonio some few miles above their outlet, exceeds that river in length, though its volume of waters, except when swelled by the mountain torrents in rainy seasons, is much less. Its whole course is probably little more than two hundred miles. The longest spur of the mountain range, is found running parallel to the upper waters of this river, and in many places so near as to overhang its banks, and it is here that the mountains approximate nearest to the coast. This spur subsides at the crossing of the San Antonio road, about one hundred and fifty miles from the coast. Below this, the borders of the river present extensive tracts of rich, open prairie, alternated with thickly timbered bottoms, of less extent, but little less inviting than those of the middle region.

The Neeches, which with its eastern branch, the Angelina, waters the red lands of Texas, falls into the Sabine lake, after a meandering course of perhaps two hundred miles.

CHAPTER IV.

Natural history—geology—botany—animals—reptiles—government—civil divisions—population—extract from Morfit's report.

IN embodying a few facts which belong to the natural history of Texas, we shall confine ourselves almost entirely to those branches of the subject which may be denominated the useful, rather than the ornamental. In treating of these, we shall speak only of such things as serve to administer or otherwise to the comfort, convenience, and necessity of the inhabitants; neither our limits nor ability permitting a more extended notice.

The geological treasures of Texas, aside from her soil, which is believed to be such as to satisfy the most fastidious, can scarcely yet be known, there having been neither time nor opportunity to explore but a small portion of its surface, much less to search for what may be hidden beneath it. The important article of stone, or rock, a material deemed indispensable for building among civilized men, may be sought in vain in the level region of Texas. It soon appears in the beds of the smaller streams on entering upon the undulating lands, but the first specimens exhibited are generally of a friable species of limestone, which crumbles almost as easy as the earth in which it is embedded; other species soon appear in advancing interior, and at a distance of a hundred and fifty miles from the coast, there is little difficulty in finding stone of a quality suitable for building. Still nearer the mountains, limestone, fit for all the purposes to which it is any where applied, is abundant. In a few rare instances, isolated rocks, of from five to a hundred tons weight, are found within a few miles of the line of the level lands; these increase towards the mountains, though far from being numerous; perhaps a circuit of twenty miles will present but a single specimen.

In the district within twenty or thirty miles of the mountains, stone for all useful purposes may be quarried in sufficient abundance to supply the whole country. Lime can be furnished from the same district, and materials for brick making can be found almost anywhere, by removing the soil to a sufficient depth. Lime may also be manufactured along the coast, from the im-