CHAPTER III.

ISLANDS AND SHOALS OFF THE COAST OF LOWER CALIFORNIA BETWEEN SAN DIEGO AND CAPE SAN LUCAS.

Cortez Shoal.

The following remarks on the Cortez Shoal are taken from the Directory for the Pacific Coast of the United States (U. S. Coast Survey):

"The extent of this bank, which lies 46 miles SW. ¼ W. (mag.) from the south-east end of the island of San Clemente, has been sounded out carefully and found much greater than the early examinations led us to suppose. Within the limits of the 50-fathom curve the general trend is parallel with the islands of Santa Catalina, San Clemente, and San Nicolas, and it stretches about 17 miles from lat. 32° 24′ N., long. 118° 59′ 30″ W., to lat. 32° 32′ N., long. 119° 17′ 30″ W.,* but curves slightly to the south-west. It has an average and nearly uniform width of 3½ miles. The nature of the bottom is hard, composed of white sand, broken shells, and fine coral at the south-east portion, and sand with broken shells at the north-west. The shoalest and most dangerous part is that known as the *Bishop Rock*, lying 5 miles from the south-east tail of the bank and having but 2½ fathoms of water upon it. Around this danger the depth increases gradually, and in an extent of 2½ miles in the general direction of the bank reaches but 15 fathoms. The geographical position of these rocks is, approximately, lat. 32° 25′ 45″ N., long. 119° 05′ W.

"From the north-west end of the island of San Nicolas the rocks bear SE. ½ S. (mag.), distant 57 miles, and from the south-east end of San Clemente they bear SW. ¼ S. (mag.), distant 46 miles.

"The next shoal spot is one of 10 fathoms, about the middle of the bank, and of limited extent, being only half a mile

* The longitudes given of various points on Cortez Shoal require a correction of + 1′ 21″ to make them correspond with latest Coast Survey determinations.

square within the 15-fathom curve. Its geographical position is approximately, lat. 32° 26′ 45″ N., long. 119° 10′ 30″ W.

"From the north-west end of San Nicolas, the spot last mentioned bears SE. by S. (mag.), distant 54 miles, and from the south-east end of San Clemente it bears SW. ¼ W. (mag.), distant 50 miles. From the Bishop Rock it bears W. ¼ N. (mag.), distant 5 miles.

"To the north-westward of this latter shoal spot the depth is nearly uniform at 49 fathoms for 7½ miles, and between it and the Bishop Rock the depth is uniform at about 43 fathoms.

"Upon this bank the current is variable, frequently setting against the strong NW. winds with a velocity of nearly 2 miles per hour producing at all times a heavy swell and even in moderate weather breaking heavily upon the rocks. In passing over the bank at night we have been sensible of our proximity to it by the increased swell. In the detailed examination of 1856 it was found that the general set of the current was to the southward and eastward, and the greatest velocity 1½ miles per hour, but no statement is made concerning the prevailing wind.

"This bank lies in the direct route now followed by the Panama and San Francisco steamships, and was discovered by Captain Cropper, of the steamship *Cortez*, in March, 1853. His position was determined by bearings upon San Nicolas and San Clemente and was very close, being within a mile of the latest and best assigned place.

"Attention was subsequently called to a more extended examination of the vicinity by the clipper ship *S. S. Bishop*, of Philadelphia, striking on the rock (in 1855), since called by her name, and under unfavorable circumstances two points of rock were supposed to exist, to which approximate positions were assigned. In 1856 the bank was sounded out to the extent of 130 square miles, and from a consideration of the highly-favorable circumstances under which this last survey was made confidence is expressed that the point of rock above mentioned is the only one existing; but as it is very difficult to find detached single points of rock below the surface in a sea-way, it will not be surprising if others be eventually found. At all events the prudent navigator will give this bank a good berth. Its existence forcibly sug-

gests the probability that other submarine ridges lie parallel to the coast."

Guadelupe Island.

Guadelupe Island, lying in lat. 29° 10′ 50″ N., long. 118° 18′ 30″ W. (*obs. spot at North Point*), is 14½ miles long in a north and south direction, and from 3 to 5 miles wide. It is of volcanic origin and has a ridge of mountains throughout its length, the high est of which, near the northern end, is 4,523 feet high. The island can be seen in clear weather at a distance of about 60 miles and will appear, when bearing either east or west, lower at its southern extremity than at its northern. The shores are generally bold, rocky bluffs, with detached rocks close to. (View opposite page 52.)

Off the south end of the island are two rocky islets, one of which is half a mile and the other, which is 560 feet high, 1½ miles from it.

The southern part of the island is very barren, but in the northern part there are several fertile valleys and there is some vegetation on the mountains.

Wood, water, &c.

Wood and water may be obtained from a small cove on the north-east side of the island, and goat's flesh may be obtained for the trouble of shooting the animals.

Anchorage.

There is a small cove on the south east side of the island, formed by a few outlying islets, where vessels may anchor in 7 fathoms water and find shelter from all winds except those from SE. to ENE., which seldom blow here. There are no dangers to navigation at a distance of a quarter of a mile from the shores of the island. Sailing vessels bound from San Francisco to the Gulf of California generally sight it, passing to the westward on account of the stronger northwest winds.

The longitude given for the north point of this island may be slightly in error, as no late determination has been made.

Alijos Rocks.

The Alijos Rocks are a dangerous group lying in the track of sailing vessels bound down the coast of California, in lat. 24° 58′ 6″ N., long. 115° 44′ 47″ W. They extend about half a mile north and south and not over a cable east and west; the southernmost and highest of the four principal rocks is 112 feet, and the northernmost 72 feet high. Beside the four principal rocks there are numerous smaller ones, the whole appearing, when seen from a distance, like a ship under sail.

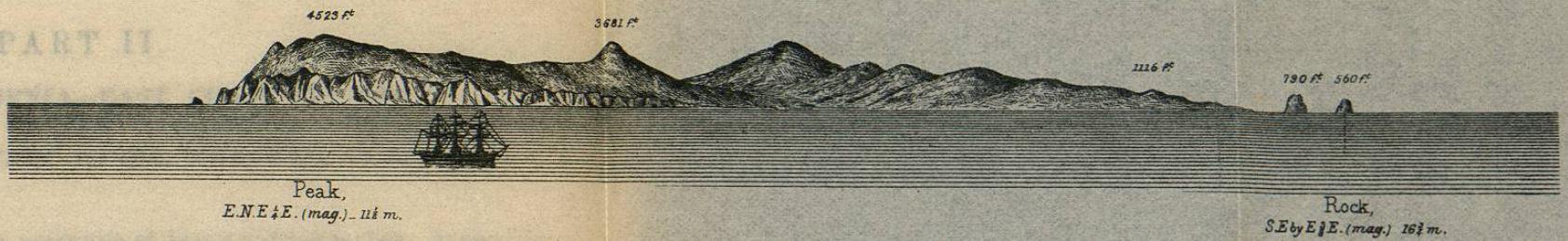
The geographical position given is that of the southernmost rock. (View opposite page 52.)

Reported Islands and shoals.

Numerous shoals and islands have been reported to exist off the coast of Lower California as far as 140° west. Among them are New Island, Maria Laxara Island, Gaspar Rock, Paxaros, Passion, Cooper, and Henderson Islands, with some others. Careful search has been made for them by the United States ships *Portsmouth* and *Narragansett* in the years 1873 to 1875 without finding them or detecting any indications of land near the positions assigned to them.

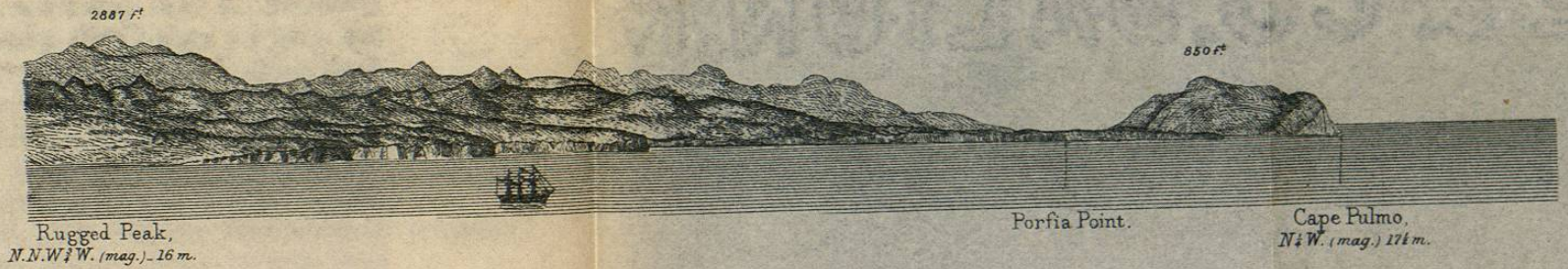
Similar search has been made by vessels of other governments with the same result.

Plate X.



Guadalupe Island, from the Westward .

Alijos Rocks, from the Southeastward .



Cape Pulmo, from the Southward .