

There are, however, a few to the south-east. Alamos contains some very good streets, well paved, and the houses are generally built of stone, or brick stuccoed white. Those which surround the square are of more modern architecture, and belong to the principal miners and merchants, who are numerous and wealthy. There are many capitalists in Alamos with from two to four hundred thousand dollars in silver and gold; and I have been informed by respectable authority, that the merchants and miners have at least six millions of dollars in specie and bars. Provisions are excessively dear, being brought from a great distance, for the country round is very sterile, or at least has no water to fertilize it. That used in the town is drawn from deep wells, and is very bad, and scarce. Wheat and corn are sent to Alamos from Ures, and the rivers Oposura and Dolores. Yet the inhabitants live sumptuously. They differ very much in character from the natives of Upper Sonora, for they are proud, reserved, and unsociable even amongst themselves, and have no amusements except gambling, which they carry to excess. The new church of stone is a very elegant building; it was only finished in 1826. In the inside of the altar they have placed in the wall, in carved stone, the arms of the King of Spain. The Alameda is a pleasant and agreeable promenade, formed of avenues of poplars, with stone seats. There are two companies of volunteers, or militia, consisting of about two hundred men, commanded by Don Francisco Almado. Alamos is noted for containing the greatest female beauty in the Mexican Republic, the daughter of a very respectable merchant. The population may be estimated at six thousand souls, and from three to four thousand more are employed in the mines.

To the westward and north-west of this place, as far as the river Yaqui, and up that river to near the Presidio of Buenavista, lies a fine and fertile country, inhabited by the Yaqui and Mayo Indians, who are very numerous, and live in towns. Those of the Yaqui tribe are Belen, Huadibis, Raum, Potan, Bican, Torin, Bacum, and Cocorun, which extend along the southern bank of the river, surrounded by beautiful gardens, highly cultivated, each family having one. Belen alone is on the north bank, and nearest the Gulf of California.

The Mayo towns are Santa Cruz, in the mouth of the river Mayo, which contains nearly ten thousand inhabitants, Echajoa, Curimpo, Nabajoa, Tuia, and Camoa; the whole are on the southern bank of the river Mayo, and they contain altogether a population of sixty thousand souls. These Indians are excellent labourers and miners;\* and besides those who live in the country above described, thousands are scattered through all Upper Sonora, in the towns, on the estates, and in those mines which are worked. They are a dark brown race, tall and well made, entirely in a state of nature, and they possess the finest country and climate in all Sonora. They go nearly naked, only using a piece of cotton, which they throw round the loins, or a small blanket. Their weapons are the bow and arrow, but they do not point them, and are quite inoffensive. The Yaqui is naturally docile; their chief is a general by title, named Cienfuegos, (or one hundred fires.) He is a very intelligent good man, and took great pains to explain to me the character of the people, the situation of the towns, their population, and distance from each other.

The Governor, Don Simon Elias, informed me likewise, that in the great plains between the rivers Mayo and Yaqui, are large lakes, which, at the rainy season, overflow the country, and leave behind a slippery black mud, which produces a most luxurious pasturage, abounding in an infinite variety of herbs. He described a bean as being very abundant, which agrees with the vanilla. He is a man of undoubted veracity, and explored, with his troops, the whole country in the end of 1825.

The road from Alamos to El Fuerte is excellent for coaches, and the distance twenty-four leagues; the direction a little to the southward of east. The country is almost entirely without population. El Fuerte formerly contained no more than a few scattered houses, but has risen within these three or four last years, to the rank of a considerable town, and is fast increasing. The situation is charming, for El Fuerte is seated upon the southern banks of the river of that name, which is a quarter of a mile in breadth, at an elevation of about thirty yards

\* I do not mean to say, that they are acquainted with mining, but they will move a hill from one side of a river to another, if they are ordered.

above it, and commands a fine prospect both up and down the stream. Since Sonora and Cinaloa have been incorporated into one of the Federal States of the Mexican Republic, this place has been made the seat of Government, the residence of the Governor, the Congress, and Tribunal of Justice. The Governor of the Mitre likewise resides there. This is the point where the Spaniards rested in their conquests to the north for many years, and established a fort on an eminence between the town and the river, which gave its name to the town: it contains at this day at least four thousand inhabitants.\*

At length the pieces of native gold and silver, and the gold dust, which the Indians brought down to trade and barter with their new neighbours, induced the Spanish Government to push their conquests farther, and the country was occupied as far as the Rio Colorado. The name given to the district by the first settlers was Señora, which has been corrupted to Sonora. In El Fuerte there is a good church, and a fine square, round which there are some excellent houses, very spacious, and built of stone. The Congress consists of eleven members; five from Upper, and six from Lower Sonora, who hold their sittings in a large hall in a private house, which has been furnished them. As in Alamos, every thing is dear and scarce. It was proposed, in 1825, to build a mint, in order to coin the metals produced in the State, but the contract has not yet been carried into effect. The heat in El Fuerte is extreme in summer, from March until July. Continued winds prevail at this season from the south-east, and after passing over the whole of Cinaloa, which is a whitish sand, penetrate into the houses, and render it impossible to sit still even in a cloth coat. To avoid as much as possible this inconvenience, they place the doors and openings for windows fronting the north, when the situation will admit of it. The only comfort a person finds at this season, is to eat melons, which are abundant and cheap, and to bathe in the river in the morning before sunrise, and in the evening. Hitherto I had seen no rain in Sonora, but on

\* Cortez, on his voyage up the Gulf, made no establishment north of San Blas.

the 18th of June, we began to observe to the eastward, indications of the approach of the rainy season, which generally commences about the 24th. I was now ready, and had made arrangements with my friends to leave them behind, and return alone with my servant to Mexico; and set out accordingly, accompanied by one of the Members of Congress, who was going to see his family in Culiacan, from whom I derived much interesting information on the road.

From El Fuerte, the roads through the whole of Cinaloa, in the travelling season, are superior to any that I ever passed over, not excepting the macadamized ones of the present day. They are of a sandy clay, almost without a pebble, and perfectly even and smooth. On the way from El Fuerte to Culiacan, there are several respectable towns, and a number of small ranchos. The towns of most consequence are Cinaloa, Mocerita, and Morito, none of which however deserve a particular notice. The distance between the two places is about eighty leagues. Culiacan is one of the oldest towns in Cinaloa, and in respect to size and regularity is superior to any, as it contains eleven thousand souls. It is prettily situated on rising ground, above a river of the same name, on the south bank, just above its confluence with the river Mayo, and is sixteen leagues from the sea. The square in the centre of the city is surrounded by the fine houses of the principal inhabitants, from each corner of which the streets branch off at right-angles, and are intersected by others, which run east and west, north and south. The church is an ancient and capacious building, and contains some respectable paintings. The lands in the vicinity are very fertile, particularly the valley through which the two rivers wind, and which contains many fine estates, and farms so well cultivated, as to present to the eye a very varied and pleasing prospect. There are three or four families in Culiacan who pride themselves on the antiquity of their names; the Espinosas de los Monteros, Las Vegas, Las Roxos, and Martinez. So afraid are they of mixing their blood with any of inferior quality, that four daughters of Martinez have married four brothers of Las Vegas, and the youngest daughter is waiting for another Vega, who is too young to marry. Though the people are usually proud,

like those of Alamos, they are more friendly and hospitable. The young men are very polite, of genteel address, and display the height of Mexican fashion in their dress. The ladies of Culiacan are justly celebrated for their fine complexions, and graceful forms. They are remarkably fond of music and dancing; the instrument which they prefer is the harp, but several play on the piano-forte and guitar, and they sing well. I remained there six days, well entertained the whole time with a variety of amusements and diversions peculiar to this part of the country.

While I was in Culiacan the rains commenced, on the exact day when they always expect them, viz: the 24th June. In the short space of four days all nature seemed changed, for on leaving Culiacan and proceeding to Cosala, instead of passing through a country without seeing a blade of grass or a leaf on the trees, for days together, every thing was clothed with verdure; grass had shot up from two to three inches high, even on the roads; the trees were throwing forth their leaves and blossoms, and every thing promised a most luxuriant scene.

Cosala is thirty-five leagues from Culiacan, to the South, a little Easterly, and covers nearly as much ground as the latter, but is more interspersed with gardens: it is well built, but not with so much regularity, and contains no more than five thousand souls. In respect to the commerce of the two, there is little difference; both have a very considerable trade.

Cosala is a mining district, and within five leagues of the town there are several good mines, but the principal one is that which belongs to Don Francisco Iriarte, called Nta Feñora de Guadalupe, which contains a vein of gold of considerable breadth. The mine is perfectly dry, at a good elevation from the plain, and might be worked to ten times the present extent; but the owner bears the reputation of being so capricious, that instead of working the mine, he sometimes allows it to lie idle for five or six months, and when at work, never takes out more than four arrobas, (one hundred lbs.) of gold per week. It is said, that he has more than two millions of dollars in gold and silver in his house, but this, from the character of the man, it is impossible to ascertain. He lives very economically, but

seldom goes abroad, and has three sons and a daughter, who never even go out of his sight; and, notwithstanding his enormous wealth, his sons keep a shop in Cosala. It is said, that in 1825, some foreigners offered Don Francisco Iriarte one million of dollars to allow them to work his mine for two years, but that he refused, alleging that he did not want money, and that if he did, he could take a million out himself.

In Cosala, the people have wens in their necks, as in Oposura, but they are even more common, and extend to the men as well as the women: they are also frightfully large, some having double ones. I saw a whole family of women, who had bunches of three or four: they looked like pelicans. They attribute this disease to the water of the neighbourhood.

During the rainy season, the traveller seldom attempts to journey down the coast, as the roads, from the heavy rains, break up, and become impassable: the rivers, too, swell, and the crossing them becomes dangerous. I therefore resolved to cross the Sierra Madre at this place, and to return to Mexico by Durango.

From Cosala to the foot of the mountains, the distance is only five leagues, due east. You stop at a little rancho, called Santa Ana, in the neighbourhood of which there are some veins of silver and magistral. The inhabitants of this place, about twenty in number, had all of them wens, and some are so dreadfully disfigured by them, that to look at one of them is disgusting.

At Santa Ana you enter a glen (La Quebrada), and soon get enveloped by the mountains, which rise almost perpendicularly. The glen is very narrow, and the bed at the entrance is composed of a coarse gravel, with which, after ascending seven or eight leagues, immense blocks of porphyry, granite, lime-stone, and alabaster, are intermixed. There being little sand in the Sierra Madre, at all seasons of the year there is a small stream running down this cañada, but not sufficient to impede the traveller; but after a succession of heavy rains for eight or nine days, the waters increase considerably, and I found it very difficult to ascend. The glen is so crooked that it was necessary to cross it every two or three minutes, and in many places to ride

up the stream from twelve to eighteen inches deep some distance, there being no side paths. This would have been impracticable for horses; mules only could have passed over a bottom composed of loose stones, of all sizes and forms, under the water, and even they frequently sink a foot or more at a step. The first night we slept in a shed, that we found about five leagues up the glen, completely drenched with rain; and the following day we accomplished eleven leagues more to the rancho de San Jose, where we passed a most uncomfortable night. Early in the third morning we performed six leagues more, which were worse than any which preceded them; for the ascent through the cañada became so steep, that we were continually annoyed by cascades or falls of water, from three to twenty feet in height. In some places it was necessary to dismount and lead the mules, or we might have been washed away if the animals had lost their footing. However, we cleared this glen about one o'clock, and arrived at a few huts, called Los Vivores, situated upon a plain, three leagues in breadth, which seemed to form a first tier of the Sierra Madre, about four thousand feet above the level of the sea. The morning had been delightfully fine, and the continued change of mountain scenery, clothed with an endless variety of trees and shrubs in full bloom, with the hollow roaring of the waters, and the echo of our voices, had an enchanting effect. I observed nothing of volcanic appearance in these mountains. They seemed generally to be formed of lime-stone, granite, and porphyry, of various kinds. The soil was a red and grey clay. Towards the bottom there are fine beds or veins of beautiful jaspers; the strata of minerals are also very abundant, not only silver, but iron and copper. Towards evening I resolved to gain the summit of the Sierra, and to sleep at the top, which now lay before us, and seemed almost perpendicular. I confess, that I felt a little repugnance, after so much fatigue, to cross a place, which, to me, appeared terrific and impassable; but my guide told me that the road was good and dry, and that there was no danger. The evening was fine, and in less than half an hour after commencing the ascent, I found myself amongst young pines. We continued to ascend by abrupt windings, so steep that we could

see nothing behind us but the plain below, nor before us, more than a few yards of the road. The path, however, was good, and about six feet in breadth; and a little after seven in the evening, we gained the summit, on which we found a plain, with good pasture, and a lake of water. This place was called La Laguna. The pine trees about it were of immense size, some of them being fourteen and fifteen feet in girth. I conceive that we must have ascended, in the course of the evening, four thousand feet at least, which brought us to the edge of the summit of the Cordillera. There we had to suffer the worst night that I ever experienced; having left Cosala only three days, one of the hottest climates in the Republic, and being now compelled, at the elevation of eight thousand feet, to sleep in the open air, in such a rain as I seldom, if ever, saw, without any shelter but the pine-trees. It thundered and lightened incessantly until daybreak, when we started, and reached the rancho of San Antonio, sixteen leagues, about four o'clock. This was a hard day's work, but I would rather have died upon the road, than have slept out a second night. The first three hours of this day's journey were over a very rugged surface, interspersed with other plains of small extent; after which, we entered an open fertile tract, with rich pastures and fine limpid streams, which took a south-westerly direction, and must some of them find an issue through the glen which I had passed, while others fall into the rivers south of Cosala. The forests were very extensive and luxuriant, and in many places there are openings in the woods, which resembled some of those artificial scenes that are formed in parks, in England, with a fine herbage, streams of chrysal water, and the foliage of the trees feathered to the ground. I regretted much not having a companion to enjoy such scenery with me, for so much beauty did not seem intended to gratify a single eye. After entering upon a more open plain, I discovered a number of cattle, which seemed to bespeak some establishment, and half an hour brought me to San Antonio, a rancho of about eight houses. I went to the best, where I was hospitably treated, but not until I had convinced the landlady and her daughters that I knew the creed and commandments, the Lord's Prayer, &c., and agreed

## CAPILLA ALFONSINA

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that the Priest of Gavilanes was the best man in the world, though I had never seen or heard of such a person. I stayed here all the next day to rest my mules, and was really astonished when the people related to me stories which they had heard of the English. I found this place half-way between Guarisamey and Papasquiaro, two celebrated mining districts, and met a quantity of quicksilver and other materials, going to Guarisamey. The arrieros told me that they should return to Durango with silver bars. I was now on the Table-land, in the State of Durango, and in every direction I saw great herds of cattle, for which Durango is famous, with herdsmen, called Vaqueros, mounted, and always on the full gallop, but could see no houses. They told me they had their habitations at a great distance from the road, in situations where the cattle came to water, when they could count them, &c. &c.

Twelve leagues from San Antonio, there are an immense number of large caves, which surround a circular valley about one hundred yards in diameter. The road lies down a cañada, through which a fine stream of water runs. I found, from the remains of old fires, that this was a regular stage for travellers, and I accordingly got a comfortable cave prepared for my own lodging. I have often met with and heard of echoes, but nothing that at all resembles this. The caves are of different stories, some a little distant, and the voices re-echoed a hundred times. At night I sung, and played the flute, and was wonderfully struck with the effect. The cave which I slept in, was one hundred and fifty-six feet in length, ninety-six in height, and forty-five in breadth.

Fourteen leagues more brought us to the great caves, called Las Cuevas de San Miguel. In this day's journey, I found the daisy, meadow-boat, lupins, marsh-mallow, crocus, daffodil, and a variety of English flowers, with white clover, and a herbage which had in general the appearance of the herbage in England, in April or May, except that in this country and climate nature displays a greater variety of flowers at the same time. The large cave of San Miguel I found to be two hundred and forty feet in length, eighty in height, and one hundred and fifty in depth, with a regular arched roof. In the back wall

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WARD, Henry George. 1797-1860

