

the Pegador instantly tore out the matches, and was fortunate enough to extinguish them all (seven in number) in time to prevent an explosion.

After dining at the Tiro General, where we were most magnificently entertained by the Marquis of Rayas, we proceeded to visit the mine itself, in company with Don Domingo Lazo de la Vega, the managing agent of the United Company in the district of Guanajuato. The descent into the mine of Rayas, is by a flight of steps, down which ladies may be carried by Indians in a chair with poles attached to it; Mrs. Ward adopted this mode of conveyance, and found it by no means disagreeable. There was, however, but little to be seen of any interest, except the huge excavations from which the "*Clavos ricos*" of the first Bonanza are said to have been extracted, all the best levels being still under water. From those which have been drained, ores to the amount of 75,000 dollars had been raised in November 1826, at which time the total outlay of the Association upon the mine amounted to 412,000 dollars. Of its repayment, and of the probability of very large ultimate profits, no reasonable doubt can be entertained; for Rayas is regarded as one of the richest mines in the world; its ores being, in the deeper levels, both abundant, and of such quality, from the Ley de Oro which they contain, that a very few cargass are equivalent to a much more copious extraction from any other mine. The proportion of gold has been found to amount, in some of the rich-

est stones, to 2,100 grains in the marc; and in the ores called "*Guija de Oro*," native gold is found disseminated in considerable quantities in the Quartz. I had an opportunity of observing in this mine, as well as in the Valenciana, the weight of the loads of ore brought up to the mouth of the shaft by the Tenateros, (carriers;) I saw myself loads of thirteen, fifteen, and one of sixteen and a half Arrobas, (325, 375, and 412½ English pounds,) delivered at the *despacho*, or receiving-rooms, by Indians, not distinguished by any appearance of extraordinary muscular strength, but inured from their infancy to this species of exertion, by which the muscles of the neck and back acquire a strength much beyond that possessed by any other member of the body.

Since its first discovery in 1556, Rayas appears, by the books of the proprietors, to have paid to the Provincial Treasury, as the King's fifth, the sum of 17,363,000 dollars. It has not yet nearly approached the depth at which the produce of the Veta Madre is supposed by Humboldt to become less valuable; and as a large tract of virgin ground will be laid open by the Tiro General, it may be considered almost as a new mine, with all the security for its future productiveness that an experience of three centuries can give. In the course of the present year, the works may be expected to be completed, and the company may then look for immediate and valuable returns.

The mine of Sêchō was worked formerly without

profit, and subsequently abandoned. The adventurers who denounced it anew, and from whom the United Company has obtained a share as "Aviador," discovered almost at the surface a "*clavo rico*," or rich mass of ores, which had been overlooked by the former proprietors, but which proved sufficient to repay, at once, a great part of the advances made by the Company; as the best ores (Polvillos) sold for one hundred and eighty dollars the Quintal, or six hundred dollars the Carga of fourteen arrobas. This little Bonanza was interrupted by what is termed a Cavallo de Bronze, or mass of rock, of almost incredible hardness; which it required much time to cut through. This being effected, the vein was again found to produce excellent ores, and when I saw it, about two hundred Cargas were raised weekly from different "*labores*," which were bought up eagerly by the "Rescatadores," at thirty-five and thirty-seven dollars the carga, for the Azogues, or ordinary Ores, and forty-five dollars the quintal, for the Polvillos.

From all appearances, there is reason to expect that Sēchō may prove a most valuable mine, for it is situated upon a part of the Veta Madre which, in every direction around, has produced immense wealth; but there is no certainty, in the opinion of the old miners, until the workings reach one hundred varas in depth, that being the line at which the great riches of the vein have been hitherto found to commence. In the mean time, the speculation

is attended with no risk, as the mine pays its own expences; and should it turn out well, the net profits will consequently be in the same proportion as the additional produce.

The third mine habilitated by the United Company in Guanajuato, is one of the oldest in the district, Cata. It did not attain any great celebrity until the commencement of the last century, when it was worked, in conjunction with Mellado, by Don Francisco Matias de Būstō, afterwards created Marquis of San Clēmētē, and celebrated as the richest man of his age. Cātā occupies the whole of the valley of that name; its extreme depth is three hundred and sixty varas; yet the mine has been drained, and put into complete repair, by the application of Mexican machinery, in fourteen months, with an outlay not exceeding 255,000 dollars. As to the future produce, very different opinions are entertained. Mr. Alaman, and the managing agent, Mr. Lazo de la Vega, are sanguine in their expectations of success, but the public in general regard the mine as exhausted, and think the attempt to work it anew injudicious. From this, however, no conclusion can be drawn, a similar sentence having been pronounced against many other celebrated mines at the close of their first great Bonanzas, which, when taken up anew after a lapse of several years, were found amply to repay their new proprietors. Such was the case with the mine of La Quebradilla at Zacatēcas, when its management was undertaken by

La Borde; with the Pävällön at Sombrerete, when denounced by the Fägöägä family; and with the famous mine of Bärāncö at Bölānös, which, after being given up by its first proprietor, (Barranco,) gave immense wealth and his title to the second, (the Marquis of Vibanco,) and afterwards yielded an enormous mass of silver when worked by a Company formed for the purpose, although with little profit to the adventurers, on account of the expences of the drainage.

It is to be hoped that the name of Cata may be added to this list, although, in 1826, the amount of silver raised did not exceed 19,000 dollars.

The United Company possesses four Haciendas de beneficio, containing in all seventy-two arrastres. That of San Matias, which I visited, belongs to the Marquis of Rāyas, and is rented by the Association. It was exceedingly well fitted up in all its parts, but the process of amalgamation being nearly the same there as at Sālgādö, any farther description of it would be superfluous.

The necessity of fitting up these Haciendas, and of bringing all the larger timber employed in them from the Sierra of Maravatio, (in the vicinity of Tlāl-pūjāhūa,) a distance of nearly forty-eight leagues, has been one of the great drains upon the Companies; this has now ceased, and, the works having been well executed, they will require but few repairs during the remainder of the term for which the contracts are held.

The town of Guāñajuātö, in the immediate vicinity of which all the mines mentioned in this sketch are situated, contains many splendid memorials of the former wealth of its inhabitants. The houses of the families of Ötērö, Vālenciānā, Rühl, and Pěřez Gālvěz, are all magnificent, as are the Church, formerly belonging to the Jesuits, built by the Marquis of Rayas, the rich ornaments presented by the family of San Clemente to the Parroquia, the road to the Valenciana, and the numerous chapels, and religious edifices, constructed in different directions, in the surrounding district. Many of these are still in an unfinished state, for the piety of the miners usually commenced with a Bonanza, and this did not always last long enough to enable them to complete the works, which it prompted them to undertake.

A great part of the landed property both in Guajuato and in the neighbouring States, likewise belongs to mining families. The Countess Ruhl has large possessions near Aguas Calientes. The estates of the Pěřez Gālvěz family occupy no inconsiderable portion of San Luis Pötösī; and the Öbrögönēs, (descendants of the first Conde de Valenciana,) possess some beautiful Haciendas near Leon, with many others of less importance, which it is needless to enumerate.

From the Governor of the State, Don Carlos Montesdeoca, a man of liberal and enlightened views, the Foreign Companies have received every encou-

agement and protection; and it is principally in consequence of his exertions that they have been enabled so soon to overcome those national prejudices against strangers, with which all our Companies had to contend upon their first establishment. In November 1826, not a trace of this feeling seemed to remain. The Marquis of Rayas, indeed, whose family is celebrated for its piety, was still intractable enough to object to the employment of heretics in his mine, but he proved by his courtesy towards all my party that he did not consider a friendly intercourse with us as at all objectionable. In this respect the clergy of Guanajuato have shown an admirable example, many of them having advocated from the pulpit the cause of foreigners, and endeavoured to convince their countrymen of the advantages to be derived from an unreserved communication with them.

The State of Guanajuato contains, according to the census of 1825, a registered population of 382,829 souls, or 450,000, if something more than one-sixth be added to cover the deficiencies in the official returns. These are supposed to have been unusually incorrect, in consequence of an attempt to enforce the payment of a sort of Income tax, at the very time when the census was forming.

The revenue consists, as has been stated generally in the Fourth Section of the Third Book, in the Tobacco monopoly, the Alcavalas, the Mint dues, and Municipal duties payable on various articles of

domestic produce and manufacture, with three per cent. upon the foreign goods consumed in the territories of the State. The whole yielded, in the year ending January 1826, 247,810 dollars, while the expences of the Government, (contingent included,) amounted to 264,010 dollars. The Governor attributed the deficit (16,199 dollars) to the failure of the Income tax, or Contribucion directa, which, though calculated upon the supposed value of the labour of each individual for three days in the year, only produced 5,042 dollars in all.

The Tobacco fabrica yielded 54,704 dollars; and this, after deducting 22,266 dollars due to the Federation for Tobacco in leaf, left a balance of 32,438 dollars in favour of the State. Great improvements may however be expected in the receipts of this department; the annual profits of the Cigar manufactories of Guanajuato before the year 1810, in the eight "Administraciones" established in the principal towns, having averaged one hundred and fifty-seven thousand dollars.

One hundred and thirty thousand, eight hundred and nineteen dollars were the produce of the Alcavalas, and 30,085 dollars of the Municipal duties. The receipts at the mint did not exceed 27,127 dollars, the quantity of silver raised in 1825 being very small: but this, as well as most of the other branches of the revenue, were likely to increase, and it was expected that the receipts of 1826 would fully cover the expenditure.

Guanajuato may be called either a Mining or an Agricultural State, for the prosperity of the two branches is so closely connected that one can hardly flourish without the other. The importance of the great Haciendas of the Băxiö ceased at the same moment with that of the mines, and is reviving at present in proportion as the capitals invested in them create anew a demand for agricultural produce; while the increased produce, on the other hand, facilitates all those complicated operations, by which alone the mines can be brought into full activity.

Manufactures of wool and cotton abounded formerly in the towns of León, Īrăpūatö, Silăö, Săn Míguēl, and Sălămăncă, (usually designated as "Las Villas;") but the "Mantas," "Rebozos," "Pañetes," and "Gergetillas,"* for which they were famous, have already been replaced by similar articles from Europe and the United States. Their decadence has fortunately been gradual during the last fifteen years, so that it will require no very violent transition to give employment to the hands thus occupied, in some other pursuit, where no competition is to be apprehended.

The State Constitution of Guanajuato was sworn in April 1825. Since the fall of Iturbide, public tranquillity has not been in any way disturbed there, and at the period of my visit nothing but a continuance of it seemed requisite in order to develop

* By these names the coarse cloths and wrappers most in use amongst the lower orders are distinguished.

the internal resources of the State, and to restore its inhabitants to that prosperity which they enjoyed, in an almost unexampled degree, before the Revolution. This seemed to be the general feeling of all those with whom I held any intercourse. Peace at home and abroad was the common object, the universal wish; and however discouraging an appearance affairs may since have assumed, the existence of such sentiments throughout the country affords ground to hope that any disturbances that may arise will never again be sufficiently generalized to affect the mass of the population, or to lead to a renewal of the disastrous scenes of the Civil War of 1810. One good effect the Revolution has already produced in the attention now shown to the education of the rising generation. In 1824, Guanajuato did not possess a single school; in 1826, the sons of respectable parents could obtain a decent education even at Valenciana and Rayas, where schools upon the Lancasterian principle had been established by the Miners themselves for the improvement of their families.