

An aqueduct runs down one side for carrying off the water from the shaft, while the ores are brought to the "despacho," or receiving-room, in carts. The ventilation is excellent, and we were much struck with the order and regularity apparent in every part of the establishment, in which from four to six hundred men are employed daily. The mine, at the end of 1826, was not "de buenas," that is, was not producing good ores; and it was even supposed that there would be a deficit of from three to four thousand dollars upon the year; but Don Xavier Martin informed me that, as Rescatador, he had frequently purchased ores there at the rate of 300 dollars per carga, (of 300 lbs.) and that he once, from eleven pounds of ore, from a particular working called El Ojo de San Pedro, obtained nine marcs and six ounces of silver: the ore was what is called "metal azue," (blue metal,) the value of which he happened to be the first to discover. In 1825, the weekly sales of La Luz frequently amounted to 20,000 dollars. My desire to be acquainted with its proprietor was much diminished by learning that for fourteen years he had not seen his mine, never having had the curiosity even to visit the beautiful works that have been executed there by his agents. Passing from one extreme to the other, he now dreads incurring the slightest expence that the mine itself will not cover; and the administrador informed me, that should another six months elapse without

profits, the whole establishment would probably be broken up.

The socabon has been continued about 100 varas in the direction of the Purisima, beyond the point where the vein of La Luz was cut; but the work is now suspended. Five hundred varas more are required in order to reach the Veta Madre, the whole distance being calculated at 1,300 varas, of which 814 are already driven. The other great adit (that of La Purisima) is 700 varas longer, and consequently will be attended with more expence; but it has the advantage of intersecting the Veta Madre at a much lower point, and of thus rendering tributary several mines in lieu of one.

Dec. 1.—We visited La Purisima, and Concepcion, Guadalupe de Veta Grande, and the other mines upon the mother vein.

The two first belong to the family of the Obregones; and the brothers, Don Lorenzo and Don Isidoro Obregon, reside at Catorce, in order to superintend the works. The Purisima was discovered in 1780 by some wood-cutters, who denounced the spot, in consequence of having found some lumps of silver attached to the roots of a tree there, but sold their title for 300 dollars to Don José Antonio Dávälös, who again made over a half share in the mine to the father of the Obrëgönës, on condition that he should be at the expence of sinking a shaft, of which the mine was in want. The first great

Bönānză began in 1787, and continued for more than twenty years, in which time the mine was sunk to its present depth, 536 varas. It has now three shafts, one below the other; and this increases the difficulties of the drainage so much, that many are of opinion that it can only be effected by the adit of La Luz, which, as already stated, would enter the lower levels at the depth of 412 varas. The mine, however, is still kept "Amparada" by the present proprietors; that is to say, men enough are employed upon it, from time to time, to preserve a legal right of possession; and in a good week, ores to the amount of four or five hundred dollars are occasionally raised.

The Concepcion belonged originally to Don Bernade Cēpēdă, who sold the mine in borrasca to the Āgūirrēs, with whom Obrēgōn made a contract similar to that concluded with Davalos for the Purisima. In 1798, a Bonanza commenced, that only terminated with the Revolution.

During the war, the mine was neglected, and became gradually full of water; in consequence of which, a contract was concluded with the house of Gordon and Murphy for a steam-engine, by which it was hoped that the drainage might be speedily effected.

This engine, the first of the kind transmitted to Mexico, was sent out, in 1821, by a special permission from the Spanish Government, and landed at Tampico in May 1822. Its conveyance from this place into the interior was entrusted principally

to Mr. Robert Phillips, whom I found in charge of the machinery at the time of my visit. Of the hardships endured, and the perseverance and activity displayed by him in the execution of this task, I can give no better idea than by publishing an account of his journey, as drawn up by himself, which will be found in the Appendix, (Letter A.) The engine did not reach Catorce until the 11th November, 1822; the caravan having found it necessary to proceed as far North as Monterey, in order to reach the Puerto de los Muertos, the only spot north of Jălăpă at which it is possible for a wheel-carriage to ascend from the coast to the Table-land. They afterwards proceeded by Saltillo to Catorce, and deposited the boilers, and all the larger pieces of machinery at the Potrero, from whence they were drawn up to the summit of the mountain by means of pulleys, and a six-inch rope, an operation which it required four whole days to effect.

Unfortunately a fatal error had been committed in not sending out iron-pipes for the pumps. Wood was not to be procured at Catorce, and was brought at a vast expence from La Huasteca, (the *Tierra Caliente* below;) but when bored, the timber proved unable to sustain the weight of the column of water, raised from the depth of 300 varas; and, after a great loss of time, Mr. Phillips was sent to Cincinnati, (on the Mississippi,) where he succeeded in procuring cast-iron pipes. With these he returned to Catorce, in September 1825, and on the 1st of June, 1826,

the engine again began to work. In November, the mine was almost entirely drained; but the working was not carried on with activity on account of the want of funds.

It is hardly to be expected that the *Aviadores*, or "Habilitators," will ever derive much advantage from the speculation, as they have no confidential agent upon the spot, and have not attempted to interfere personally in the management. All the absurd charges established in the infancy of Catorce in order to attract workmen, have been renewed at Concepcion. Besides a "Partido," varying from one-half to one-fourth, (the quantity diminishing as the ores increase in value,) the "Cuchara," or share, of the Administrador swallows up one-tenth of the whole produce of the mine, whether the ores raised prove sufficient to cover the weekly expences or not. This lucrative situation is held by a Mr. Medina, whom the Habilitators selected as their confidential agent; and who, after making over one-third of his profits to Don Isidoro Obrégón, as an inducement to undertake the whole management of the concern, lives in comfort and idleness upon the remainder at San Luis Potosi. His profits during the year 1825, when the mine *lost*, are said to have been 20,000 dollars. The produce of 1825 was, however, considerable; a *clavo rico* having been discovered in the upper levels, overlooked in former times, which produced, when worked, 80,000 dollars. Out of this the castings for the steam-engine, and a part of the

money advanced upon the mine by Mr. Dollar, were paid.

It is through this gentleman, whose contracts were made over to the Anglo-Mexican Association, that that Company now holds a share in the Concepcion. They have likewise made some trifling advances upon the mine themselves, one moiety of which has been already repaid. Of the goodness of the mine there is as little doubt as of the power of the engine to drain it, if it be regularly worked; but the system at present pursued is so bad, and the misunderstandings between the "Aviadores" and the proprietors so frequent, that but little is to be expected from the undertaking. Seventeen and a half per cent. (including the share of the administrador, a tax of five per cent. called *capilla*, and another of two and a half per cent. in favour of a doctor who does not exist,) are now deducted from the produce, and distributed amongst those more immediately connected with the mine: the remainder barely covers the "memorias," or weekly expences; and while this plan is adhered to, there is little difficulty in predicting the result.

Besides the share in Concepcion, the Anglo-Mexican Company holds at Catorce contracts for the mines of Guadalupe de Veta Grande and Milagros. Both of these are regarded as undertakings of great promise; but the terms upon which the Company has undertaken to work them are so onerous that it is absolutely impossible that the drainage should

proceed until the contracts are cancelled, and more equitable conditions substituted for them. In Guadalupe, for instance, the "Habilitators" have only six barras, or *one-fourth*, for which they paid at once 20,000 dollars as "alimentos," and bound themselves to lay out 100,000 dollars upon the mine. Should this prove insufficient, for every additional sum of 20,000 dollars advanced by them, they are to receive an additional barra until they have acquired nine barras, which number they are not to exceed. The Company would therefore pay 180,000 dollars in all, for something more than one-third of the mine; and this, in a district where the possibility of obtaining more favourable terms has been so clearly demonstrated by the contracts concluded by Mr. Crawford, on the part of the Catorce Company, with the Governor and Don Xavier Martin, for the socabon of La Purisima, and the mines upon the Veta Madre connected with it; in all of which the "aviadores" are allowed a full half, without "alimentos" or advances of any kind, except those required for the prosecution of the work itself.

In Milagros the works had been suspended in consequence of a law-suit with the proprietor.

The Veta Descubridora of Catorce was worked as early as 1773: it is situated to the N.N.W. of the town, and has never produced a single good mine; nor were the riches concealed in its vicinity suspected until 1778, when a free black, by name Milagros, a wandering musician, returning across

the Sierra late in the evening from Mätéhualá, where he had been employed at some village fête, lost his horse, and being forced, in consequence, to pass the night in the mountains, lighted a large fire upon the spot where the shaft of Milagros was afterwards sunk. In the morning he discovered a cake of silver amongst the embers, upon which he immediately denounced the vein, and is said to have drawn from it, within ten yards of the surface, ores producing sixty marcs of silver to the carga.

But before this denunciation, which first attracted the attention of the public, Don Bernabé Cépěďá was working the mine of Gũadälüpě on the Veta Madre, in the midst then of impenetrable forests, and sending silver to Mätéhualá, and other places, to be reduced, without any one knowing from whence it proceeded. The good fortune of Mĩlāgrōs soon covered the barren rocks with inhabitants. Shafts were sunk upon the Veta Madre in rapid succession, the most important of which I have already enumerated; and other veins were discovered, some intersecting the great mother-vein, as that of La Luz, and others perfectly distinct from it, as those of Zavala, Dolores Trompeta, and San Ramon.

The principal mines upon the vein of La Luz were San Geronimo and Santa Ana, which belonged to Captain Zuñiga, of whose will I have already made mention. He bequeathed four millions of dollars for charitable institutions, reserving a fund for working his mines, which appears to have been swallowed up,

together with all other judicial deposits, during the Revolution. The great Bonanzas of his mines began in 1787 and 1789.

The mine of San Rāmōn belonged, together with the mines of Dolores and Serreno, to Don Jorge Parodi, a Genoese, and produced, in 1787, a Bonanza of two millions of dollars. The richness of the ores may be inferred from the fact, that those of the mine of Serreno, which yield five and six marcs of Silver per carga, were regarded as unworthy of attention, and the workings not extended beyond their present depth of one hundred and thirty-seven varas: while the vein of San Ramon was explored in all its ramifications with the greatest care.

Zuniga, on his arrival at Catorce, was merely a muleteer, who visited the mountains with supplies for the newly discovered district; meat and every other necessary being then paid for almost *à peso de plata*, (by their weight in silver.) Encouraged by the examples of sudden riches which he saw around him, he sold his mules, and purchased with the proceeds (about 2,000 dollars) the two mines from which he afterwards derived such enormous wealth. They were at that time "catas," that is, new denunciations, without a shaft, or any other requisite; but the ores were rich at the very surface, and the Rescatadores, who flocked to Catorce from the neighbouring districts, enabled him to convert the produce at once into dollars, and thus to prosecute his works with great activity. His title of captain he bought in his more prosperous

days; indeed, it appears that, from his munificence, he almost bought the Viceroy himself; for on the great Besamanos days in Mexico, he used to appear at court with a pocket-handkerchief full of gold toys, and tell Branciforte, (at that time Viceroy,) as he passed him almost without a salute, and proceeded to the private apartments of the Vicequeen, "I don't come to see your Excellency; *Soy un barbaro, y no sé nada de Cortes*, (I am a barbarian, and know nothing of courts,) *vengo à ver a mi niña*, (I come to see my little girl,)" the Viceroy's daughter, on whom the contents of the handkerchief were of course bestowed.

Most of those who made fortunes at Catorce, were men like Zuñiga, of little education, and no resources. Parodi, Don Pedro Medellin, (the proprietor of the mine of Dolores,) and twenty others, whose names it would be useless to enumerate, were all "*barbaros*;" and the extravagance of their expenditure was such as might have been expected from the facility with which their wealth was acquired. Medellin, upon one occasion, spent six-and-thirty thousand dollars upon an entertainment given in honour of a godchild at Saltillo; and at the time when the Partido amounted to one-third of the ores raised, common miners have been known to lose two and three thousand dollars in a morning at a cock-fight. Fortunately, there were some exceptions, and though the descendants of the more prudent adventurers, who invested in land a part of their profits, have

all quitted the vicinity of Catorce, and purchased property in more fertile districts, their estates still bear evidence to the richness of the mineral deposits from which they proceeded. The Dāvālōs purchased large Haciendas near Aguas Calientes. The Obregones at Leon. The Aguirres established themselves at Mātēhualā, and are proprietors of the great Hacienda of Vānēgās. The Padre Flores acquired large estates in Zācātēcās. The Licenciado Gōrdoā, (proprietor of La Luz,) has done the same: and in addition to these a number of small fortunes were made, varying from sixty to one hundred thousand dollars, by Spaniards, all of whom have removed to Europe since 1810, with their capitals.

The present produce of the district, in which there was not, in December 1826, a single mine in Bonanza, varies from fifty to seventy bars of Silver monthly.* There being no mint at San Luis, the greatest part of these bars are transmitted to Zacatecas, and coined in the mint there; but many are sent direct to Refugio, at the mouth of the river Bravo, where they are exchanged for contraband goods from New Orleans and the Havana, with which Catorce is better supplied than any other place in the Federation. Almost every house in the town is a shop, and you may find in them French and Spanish wines, Virginia and Havana tobacco, Catalan paper in abundance, (all articles most strictly

* By official returns in my possession, it appears, from January to November, (1826,) 7856 Bars had been sent to San Luis.

prohibited,) with European linens, cottons, and hardware, mantas, and even furniture from the United States, which are introduced through Refugio, where the duties are never very burthensome, even in cases where their payment is not entirely evaded. The goods are landed upon the coast by small American schooners, and afterwards conveyed into the Interior by a sort of mixed breed of French, Spaniards, and Italians, who are perfectly acquainted with the country and the wants of the different towns, and time their remittances accordingly. Several of these adventurers were pointed out to me, who came to Catorce, at first, with a board of images upon their heads, but now rank amongst the most respectable *merchants* of the place. Throughout Mexico, indeed I believe in every part of Spanish America, they are ignorant of the distinction made in Europe between the wholesale and the retail trade. There is nothing at all inconsistent with their ideas of propriety in keeping a shop: a "tienda" is, on the contrary, attached to every Hacienda, and the proprietor regards the profit on the sale of the goods, with which it is his business to keep it supplied, as a part of his yearly income. This was always done, too, in remote parts of the country in great mining "negotiations;" and thus the wages of the miners being naturally exchanged at the shop for the supplies of which they might be in want, a small capital was sufficient to keep up the circulating medium required, the whole of the weekly issues returning almost immediately into the