

breeding estates (Haciendas de cria), abounding in mules and horned cattle; but agriculture was in a very depressed state, and the proprietors were looking anxiously to the mines, from which alone they expected a market. Of the mining districts, that of Jesus Maria was alone in a flourishing state; Santa Eulalia being entirely abandoned, and Bätöpiläs and the Päräl but little worked. Some account, however, of these sources of past and future prosperity, may not be uninteresting.

On entering the State of Chihuahua, the first district of any consideration is that of San José del Päräl, situated upon the Eastern edge of the Sierra Madre, and near the Southern boundary of the State of Chihuahuä, in a level country of easy access. The mines lie amongst some undulating hills, thickly covered with pasture, and of inconsiderable elevation. The lodes are easily distinguished by their rocky crests, which rise above the smooth and rounded surface of the hills. The ores are very abundant, but poor, although from time to time some rich "clavos" have been discovered. This disadvantage is compensated by the trifling expence at which they may be reduced, from the cheapness of the animals employed in the process, and the very abundant supply of grain in the surrounding country. The only article of high price is quicksilver. The salt and magistral are abundant, and cheap; but there is not a sufficient supply of water to move machinery during the whole year, and as the rains are very

variable, it cannot be depended upon, even for a certain number of months. The mines have been worked to a considerable extent, some of them being 300 varas in depth, and they are almost all in so dilapidated a state, that a considerable capital would be required to put them into repair. The water in the old levels is abundant. Päräl has a numerous population, but with the exception of two or three small mines of great promise, and which require an inconsiderable outlay, it is thought that capital might be invested with a greater prospect of success in other districts, where the ruins might be more easily repaired.

On the Western declivity of the Sierra Madre, and in nearly the same parallel of latitude as the Päräl, are the famous mines of Bätöpiläs. To enter into a minute description of this extraordinary district would exceed the limits of this work. I shall, therefore, only subjoin a few remarks upon its situation and produce. Its distance from Päräl is about eighty leagues, nearly due West, and it is situated in a very deep ravine, similar to that of Guärısämēy. The climate is warm, yet healthy. The metallic lodes, visible by their elevated crests, are almost innumerable, and by far the greater number of them have never yet been examined. The principal mines are, El Carmen, San Antonio, Pastraña, Arbitrios, Dolores, Candelaria, and Buen Suceso, with many others which it is not necessary to enumerate. The Carmen is the mine that produced the enormous

wealth of the Marquis of Bustamante, and from which a mass of solid silver was extracted weighing seventeen arrobas, or 425lbs. The ores of Pastraña were so rich, that the lode was worked by bars, with a point at one end and a chisel at the other, for cutting out the silver. The owner of Pastraña used to bring the ores from the mine with flags flying, and the mules adorned with cloths of all colours. The same man received a reproof from the Bishop of Durango, when he visited Batopilas, for placing bars of silver from the door of his house to the sala, for the Bishop to walk upon.

Buen Suceso was discovered by an Indian, who swam across the river after a great flood. On arriving at the other side, he found the crest of an immense lode laid bare by the force of the water. The greater part of this crest was pure and massive silver, and sparkling in the sun. The whole town of Bätöpiläs went to witness this extraordinary sight as soon as the river became fordable. The Indian extracted great wealth from his mine, but on arriving at the depth of three varas, the abundance of the water obliged him to abandon it, and no attempt has been since made to resume the working.

In this district the silver is generally found pure, and unaccompanied by any extraneous substance. The reduction of the ores is consequently easy and simple. When the silver is not found in solid masses, which require to be cut with the chisel, it is generally finely sprinkled through the lode, and often

seems to nail together the particles of stone, through which it is disseminated. The lodes are of considerable width, but the masses of silver are only met with at intervals.

In the mine of El Carmen, the Marquis of Bustamante, after the first bonanza, drove thirty varas in depth without meeting with any thing to repay his labours; but being fully persuaded that all lodes have their alternate points of good and bad, he continued until, at the depth of forty varas, he met with the second bonanza. There is very little water in the mines of Batopilas, excepting those situated near the bank of the river, and these the river itself might be made to drain. The population of the town was, at one time, very considerable, but it has decreased of late, whole families having gone to the new discoveries of Mörélös and Jesus Maria; the first of which lies in the vicinity of Batopilas, and appears to possess all the characteristics by which the lodes of that district are distinguished. It was discovered in the spring of 1826, by two brothers (Indians,) by name Arauco, to one of whom a little maize for tortillas had been refused upon credit the night before. In two months they extracted from their mine 270,000 dollars; yet in December 1826, they were still living in a wretched hovel close to the source of their wealth, bare-headed and bare-legged, with upwards of 40,000*l.* sterling in silver locked up in their hut. I possess two large specimens of the ores: they are almost pure silver, and there is conse-

quently no difficulty in reducing them by fire, however rude or defective the process. But never was the utter worthlessness of the metal, as such, so clearly demonstrated, as it has been in the case of the Araucos, whose only pleasure consists in contemplating their hoards, and in occasionally throwing away a portion of their richest ores to be scrambled for by their former companions, the workmen.

Throughout the Sierra Madre, instances of this sort have occurred, for these wild and distant districts are visited only when the fame of their riches attracts adventurers from the towns. For some time, they have neither supplies of any kind, nor intercourse with the more civilized part of the country; and when a few straggling pedlars first penetrate into these fastnesses, the avidity with which their wares are bought up, at the most unheard-of prices, is quite astonishing. The brother of the Governor of Durango, a lawyer by profession, informed me that, at the commencement of his career, he had been employed to visit the district of Refugio, which, like Morelos, was then recently discovered, in order to terminate some disputes between the proprietors of the different mines. He found the original discoverer, Pächēcō, surrounded by a swarm of harpies, to whom, not being able to convert his bars into dollars with sufficient rapidity, he had given checks (boletas) upon his mine for a certain number of cargass of ore, for which they had consented to exchange their goods; and he assured

me that one of these men, who had received a boleta so worded as to entitle him to select his own ores, (a toda satisfaccion,) by waiting, and refusing all but the very richest stones until he had completed his five cargass, obtained nearly 8,000 dollars for an old cloak with a red velvet lining, with which Pacheco's fancy had been much struck.

The real amount of the bonanza of El Refugio was never correctly ascertained, but Don Francisco Mirāmōntēs, who acquired as "Habilitator" three bars (or one-eighth) in Pacheco's mines in the year 1811, appears, by the registers of Durango, to have returned to that place in 1814 with 337,000 dollars. The mines, none of which exceed seventy varas in depth, having been worked only by an open cut, (a tajo abierto,) are now abandoned.

To the North of El Päräl, and about five leagues to the South-east of the city of Chihuahua, is the ancient mining district of Santa Eulalia. It has been long abandoned, and the mines are in a ruinous state. The ores were generally found in loose earth, filling immense caverns, (salones,) of which some are stated to be sufficiently large to contain the cathedral of Mexico. The correctness of this assertion may require confirmation; but there can be little doubt of their magnitude, since the last bonanza extracted from one of them continued for nine years, and one real being laid aside for each marc of silver produced, a fund was formed, out of which the cathedral of Chihuahua was built, and a fund of

reserve formed, of 100,000 dollars. The ores of Santa Eulalia are generally mixed with a considerable quantity of Galena, which renders them fit for smelting.

Upon the Western descent of the Sierra Madre, eighty leagues from Chihuahua, is the celebrated and recently-discovered district of Jesus Maria. This "Mineral"* was denounced in the year 1822, but was at first very little worked, in consequence of the scarcity of provisions, population, and every other necessary for mining operations. It was, in fact, nearly abandoned again, on account of these difficulties, until a few men more persevering than the rest, after suffering great privations, succeeded in working two or three of the most promising lodes, to the depth of fifteen or twenty varas, where they began to extract such rich ores that the attention of the surrounding country was again called to this spot. A search being made among the neighbouring mountains, upwards of two hundred metallic lodes were registered in one year, within a circle of three leagues

* "Mineral" is the term now used to express a Mining district, in lieu of "Real," which is thought to savour too much of *Royal* rights. In this, as well as in some other terms employed in this work, I fear that I have sinned against the prevailing notions of the day; for I have actually put into print "Puente del Rey," instead of "Puente Nacional," and talked of Counts, Marquises, and other obsolete titles, in lieu of designating their proprietors by their present appellation of citizens, which has been bestowed upon them by the simplicity of Republican phraseology.

in diameter. The first inhabitants who flocked to this new district, were principally poor people, who became possessed of mines which they had not power to work; and on this account few have yet attained any considerable depth. The deepest, (Santa Juliana,) is not more than seventy varas, but it has produced ores so rich, that they have been carried to Chihūahūa, (eighty leagues,) and to the Parral, (one hundred and thirty leagues,) to be reduced, there not being any reduction works on the spot when the bonanza commenced. Near the surface of the earth, all the lodes contain a considerable quantity of gold; this diminishes as the workings increase in depth, while the proportion of silver augments. The Mineral is situated in a deep ravine with very little level ground about it, the mountains rising on each side from the arroyo. In 1826, the population was rapidly increasing, and there was no want of the necessaries of life, though every thing was still exceedingly dear. In the immediate neighbourhood are several mining districts of very great promise, some ancient, and some newly discovered. Such are Rosario, Nabosayguame, El Potrero, Quipore, El Pilar de la Cieniguita, El Pilar de Milpillas, Batopillilas, and Cajurichic. These form a circle, the centre of which is the Indian village of Moris, situated in an open valley capable of considerable cultivation. Jesus Maria is near the summit of the mountains, and is consequently cold in the winter, the surrounding ridges being occa-

sionally covered with snow. Moris is in a temperate climate, almost bordering upon *Tierra Caliente*. Two leagues below Jesus Maria there is a small plain, well adapted for reduction works, and affording pasturage for animals, but it is necessary to open a road to it down the ravine.

The boundaries of Chihūahūa to the East and North-east are the States of Cōhāhūilā and Tēxās, and the Territorio* of New Mexico, with the Rio Bravo del Norte as a line of demarcation. To the West (both North and South,) the vast State of Sonora and Cinaloa extends, occupying the whole space between twenty-two and a half and thirty-three and a half of North latitude, and forming the Eastern Coast of the Gulf of California up to the Cerro de Santa Clara, where the Indian lands South of the rivers Gila and Colorado commence. Beyond these again, the stripe, or belt of missions, composing New California, stretches as far as the Port of San Francisco, (in latitude 38,) and from thence, by Cape Mendocino, to the boundary line in 42°; while Old California occupies the Peninsula, forming the Western shore of the Gulf, which runs parallel with the Coast of Sonora, and terminates with Cape San Lucas and Cape Palmo, nearly opposite to Māzātlān.

Of New California little or nothing is yet known. Old California has been crossed since 1821 by a few

* Territorio, as has been already stated, means a district, or province, the population of which is not yet sufficiently considerable to entitle it to rank as an independent State.

foreigners; but the first authentic account that the world will receive of this part of the Mexican dominions will probably proceed from Dr. Coulter, a gentleman of great science and activity, now in the service of the Real del Monte Company, who intends, upon the termination of his engagement with the Association, to proceed to the North, and to employ two years in exploring the frontier provinces of New Spain. General Victoria, whose protection I solicited for Dr. Coulter in this arduous undertaking, promised to give him every facility. Indeed the Mexican Government has a direct interest in his success, for it knows nothing at present of its possessions to the North of Sonora, and has ample employment in the more Central Provinces for the few scientific natives, whose services it can command.

General Wavel, whose projects of colonization in Texas, where he possesses a large grant of land, are already before the public, has had the goodness to furnish me with a very detailed account of that province, which will, I believe, be found to comprise all that is at present known of the Eastern frontier North of the River Bravo.* The country appears to be rich in valuable produce, abounding in water, and possessing rivers of sufficient size to ensure to its inhabitants the benefits of internal navigation, which have produced so wonderful an effect, in the course of a few years, in the neighbour-

* *Vide* Appendix, Letter B.

ing valley of the Mississippi. Unfortunately for Mexico, these advantages have been duly appreciated by her neighbours in the United States. Some hundreds of squatters, (the pioneers, as they are very appropriately termed, of civilization,) have crossed the frontier with their families, and occupied lands within the Mexican territory; while others have obtained grants from the congress of Saltillo, which they have engaged to colonize within a certain number of years. By thus imprudently encouraging emigration upon too large a scale, the Mexican Government has retained but little authority over the new settlers, established in masses in various parts of Texas, who, being separated only by an imaginary boundary line from their countrymen upon the opposite bank of the Sabina, naturally look to them for support in their difficulties, and not to a Government, the influence of which is hardly felt in such remote districts.

In the event of a war, at any future period, between the two republics, it is not difficult to foresee that Mexico, instead of gaining strength by this numerical addition to her population, will find in her new subjects very questionable allies. Their habits and feelings must be American, and not Mexican; for religion, language, and early associations, are all enlisted against a nominal adherence to a government, from which they have little to expect, and less to apprehend. The ultimate incorporation of Texas with the Anglo-American States, may there-

fore be regarded as by no means an improbable event, unless the Mexican Government should succeed in checking the tide of emigration, and in interposing a mass of population of a different character, between two component parts, which must have a natural tendency to combine into one.

A proposal to this effect was, I believe, made to the President in 1826, by John Dunn Hunter, whose history excited much interest in this country a few years ago.

The correctness of the account contained in his book of his origin, and early adventures, is denied in the United States, and Hunter has been denounced, by their periodical publications, as an adventurer who imposed upon the credulity of the British public, by representing himself as the hero of a romance of his own creation. To me it appears that his crime has been the boldness with which he vindicated the rights of an injured, and persecuted race, to whom he devoted his life, and in whose service he was at last sacrificed. No one can have known him, for however short a time, without being convinced that, in whatever manner his connexion with the Indians may have originated, he was a real enthusiast in their cause. Upon every other subject his language was coarse, his appearance dull, and his manner totally devoid of energy and grace; but as soon as that chord was touched, his countenance lighted up at once, his expressions became forcible and picturesque, and where words failed him, (as they some-

times did from his imperfect acquaintance with the English language,) the eye, and even the agitation of the man, bespoke the truth of the sentiment, which he was labouring to express.

Hunter's object in visiting Mexico, (in as far as I could ascertain it,) was to induce the Government to assign a portion of the vacant lands in Cohahuila and Texas, to some numerous tribes of Indians, mustering in all nearly 20,000 warriors, who had been driven from their hunting-lands on the Missouri and the Mississippi, by the rapid spread of the population from the Anglo-American Eastern States. Retiring across the vast Prairies of Louisiana, and pursued, step by step, by that civilization, before which they fled, they entreated Mexico to grant them lands which they might call their own; and offered, if allowed to settle upon the Southern banks of the Colorado and Sabina, to take the oath of allegiance to the Government, to embrace the Catholic religion, to devote themselves to agricultural labours, and to defend the frontier against all encroachments. This favourable opportunity of acquiring a valuable addition to the population of the country was lost by that dilatory spirit, which, both in Spain, and its dependencies, has been the source of so many evils. Hunter left Mexico without having received any positive answer to his demands; and it is said that, in order to clear himself from the imputation of bad faith before the great council held upon his return, he advised the Indians to cross the frontier, and to

occupy the lands, the cession of which they had solicited in vain.

This proposal was approved of by some of the tribes, but rejected by others; and a very small body of Indians entered the Mexican territory with Hunter, who proceeded, in conjunction with a few American settlers, to proclaim the independence of Texas, under the name of Freedonia.

They were opposed by the Mexican Commandant of the Eastern Internal Provinces, (Don Anastasio Bustamante,) in conjunction with Colonel Austin, the chief of the flourishing establishment formed by the American settlers at the mouth of the river Brazos; and the Indians, on the appearance of so formidable a force, were glad to obtain terms by immediate submission. It is not known whether Hunter was given up as a peace-offering to Bustamante, or killed in some skirmish; but his head certainly fell into the possession of the Mexican General, with that of Field, a white man, who, like Hunter, had passed his life amongst the Indians, and was regarded as one of their chiefs.

As this event took place a very short time before my departure from Mexico, I was unable to acquire any information respecting it; nor am I aware of the changes, which Bustamante's vigorous operations in Texas may have produced. It is to be hoped that what has already taken place there will serve as a warning, and that the Government will henceforward pay some attention to this valuable possession; for,