

without bearing any ill-will towards the United States, but entertaining, on the contrary, a very sincere admiration of their progress, I may be permitted, as an Englishman, to observe, that it cannot suit our interest to see their line of coast extended as far South as the Rio Bravo del Norte, which would bring them within three days sail of Tampico and Veracruz, and give them the means of closing at pleasure all communication between New Spain and any European power, with which they might happen to be at variance themselves.

I shall beg leave to refer my readers to the Appendix for any farther information that may be desired respecting Texas; and return at once to the Western Coast, in order to close my account of the Northern frontier, with some details respecting Sōnōrā and Cīnālōā, which will not, I hope, be found devoid of interest.

For these I am indebted almost exclusively to Colonel Bourne, whose extremely curious journal I annex at full length in the Appendix. (Letter C.) I have likewise made use of the information which he has been so obliging as to afford me in order to rectify in my map the numberless errors committed in all former publications respecting Sonora; and I hope that I may by this means be enabled to throw some light upon the real character of a country, which, though little known in Europe, or even in Mexico, can hardly fail, in the course of a few years, to acquire great and permanent importance.

Colonel Bourne entered Cinaloa, (to the South of Sonora, properly so called,) by its Southern boundary, the river Cañas, or Bayona, (it is known by both names,) which separates the State of Sonora and Cinaloa from that of Guadalajara, or Jalisco. From thence he proceeded to Rosario, the first mining town of importance in the Southern part of the State, and the depôt for the port of Māzātlān, from which it is distant twenty-five leagues. Rosario contains a population of 6000 inhabitants; Māzātlān, though rising into importance as a port, consists entirely of huts, composed of mats, hides, and palm-leaves, all the principal merchants connected with the East India trade having their residences at Rosario, or at the Presidio of Māzātlān, (nine leagues inland,) where the climate and water are better than the immediate vicinity of the port.

At Mazatlan, Colonel Bourne, whose object was to inspect the mining districts in the North of Sonora, (300 leagues from Rosario,) embarked for Guāymās, in lieu of performing the journey by land, where he arrived after a tedious passage of fifteen days. The voyage does not usually exceed eight.

Guaymas is situated in latitude 27.40 North, about the middle of the Gulf of California, and both Mr. Glennie and Colonel Bourne state it to be a magnificent harbour, capable of containing two hundred vessels, and sheltered from all winds by the lofty hills surrounding it, and by an island, which



leaves only a narrow outlet towards the gulf. The town did not exist before the Revolution. It now contains 3000 inhabitants, and 300 houses; some of which are in the modern style, and handsomely built. In 1824, when there was no custom-house in Sonora, twenty-eight vessels were lying in the port of Guaymas at one time, whose cargoes were of course introduced duty free.

The imports consist in Chinese, East Indian and European manufactures, brandy, paper, refined-sugar, cacao, coffee, and tea, &c. &c.; and the exports, in wheat, flour, beef, hides, furs, copper, silver, and gold.

The heat in summer is very great, yet the town is healthy, and neither the Vomito, nor the Cholera Morbus are known: the most serious inconvenience experienced by the inhabitants is the want of water, which is brought from wells three miles inland.

From Māzātlan to Guaymas the navigation is neither intricate nor dangerous: there is much shoal water upon the Sonora coast, but that of Old California is bold and lofty, with deep water close in shore; and the islands, of which there are several in the gulf, are all high land, and visible at a considerable distance. There is, therefore, reason to suppose that, when the population of Sonora increases, as I am convinced that it speedily must, Guaymas will become the principal commercial depôt upon the Western Coast of New Spain; being much superior as a port both to Mazatlan,

and San Blas, and easier of access than Acapulco, to vessels from Calcutta or China; which, from the prevalence of particular winds in the Pacific, seldom make the Mexican coast to the South of Guaymas, and often steer as far North as Cape Mendocino, or San Francisco.

In the Gulf pearls are found in great abundance; they are mostly of a small size, and these are common in Mexico that they are worn by the lowest orders in the streets. But California, likewise, produces pearls of the very finest quality; nor do I know any part of the world where necklaces of greater beauty may be seen than in New Spain. The pearls of Madame de Regla, of her sister the Marquesa de Guadalupe, and of Madame Vélascó, are all remarkable for their size; and General Victoria is in possession of an oyster, recently sent to him from Sonora, which contains a single pearl not yet entirely detached from the shell, but perfect in all its parts, and larger, I think, than any pearl that I ever recollect having seen.

In 1825, a company was formed for exploring the pearl-oyster beds in the Gulf of California, and two vessels were sent round Cape Horn, provided with diving-bells and all the supposed requisites for the fishery. The management of the enterprise was entrusted to Lieutenant Hardy, R.N., who, after a great deal of trouble, succeeded in making an equitable arrangement with the Mexican Government as to the division of the profits; and proceeded to



Guaymas to take the command of the expedition upon its arrival. Unfortunately, it was but too soon ascertained that the heat and the rocky bottom together, prevented the diving-bell from acting at any thing like the depth to which the native miners were accustomed to descend. One damaged pearl was the result of the first cruize, which lasted six weeks; and after a second attempt, equally long and equally unsuccessful, the scheme was abandoned as utterly hopeless. No blame attaches to the gentleman entrusted with the management in Mexico: the fault lay in the principle, which was not properly inquired into here; and its failure may serve as an additional proof of the risk incurred by the application of new theories to the opposite hemisphere, where any miscalculation in the first instance must lead to disappointment, and may be attended with ruinous expence.

When I left Mexico, Lieutenant Hardy had not returned from the North. He was said to be wandering amongst the savage tribes of the Pimeria Alta, with whom he had contrived to establish a friendly intercourse; and he will probably in this way acquire a knowledge of a country hitherto unexplored by any white. A taste for such investigations has always been a remarkable feature in this gentleman's character. A few years ago, being out of employment, he took a passage on board a merchant-vessel to the vicinity of the Tierra del Fuego, (near Cape Horn,) where he was landed amongst the

Patagonians, with whom he remained a year and a half, before the arrival of another vessel enabled him to bring himself into communication again with the civilized world. It is supposed, however, that he is not influenced in his present excursion by mere curiosity, but by a wish to investigate the mineral treasures of the Indian country, which are thought to be very great.

From Guaymas, the road to the interior of Sonora lies through Pétic, a town of 8,000 inhabitants, situated in a plain near the confluence of the rivers Dolores and Sonora, thirty-six leagues from the Coast. The intervening country is level, and apparently destitute of water; the rivers from the Cordillera losing themselves in the sands between Petic and the Gulf; yet it is covered with herds of cattle and deer, and inhabited at intervals by Indians of the Seres tribe, of whose treacherous character Colonel Bourne's Journal gives some curious details. Pétic is the depôt for the trade of Upper Sonora with the Gulf. Its inhabitants, amongst whom there are a few foreigners, (three Englishmen, two Americans, and eight Biscayans,) are wealthy, and abundantly supplied with all the necessaries of life; the country around being remarkable for its fertility.

Fourteen leagues to the Westward of Pétic is the town of San Miguel de Horcasitas, upon the river Dolores. To the North of this town, the first ramifications of the Sierra Madre appear, abounding in



mines of silver, gold, and copper. A vein of the last is worked by Mr. Loisa, a merchant of Petic, who raises the ore at an expence of four dollars the quintal, and sells it, when conveyed to Guaymas by his own mules, for fourteen dollars; at which price it is bought up for the China market, where the copper of Sonora bears a high price, in consequence of the large proportion of gold contained in it.

From San Miguel to Ūrēs, on the Southern bank of the river Sonora, the distance is twelve leagues. The plain to the South of this town is one of the most fertile districts in the State; but to the North, the road runs along the banks of the river Sonora, confined in its course by two of the precipitous ridges which branch out from the great Cordillera and intersect the level country at regular intervals. These ridges preserve generally the same direction, (from North to South,) and run parallel with each other towards the Pacific, separated by the rivers Dolores, Sonora, Ōpösūră, and Bărispě, which fertilize the intervening spaces. In all these streams gold has been found, but in none so constantly as in the river Sonora, the mountains on either side being nearly perpendicular, and full of mineral veins.

After passing through the cañada above Ures, the town of Băbăcōră is found upon a Table-land, a little elevated above the bed of the river; it extends twelve leagues in a Northerly direction, and contains the towns of Conche and Sonora, with a number of

Ranchos and Haciendas. Eighteen leagues to the Eastward, again, is the town of Ōpösūră, situated upon the banks of a river of the same name, not laid down in any map, but which, after running over a great extent of country to the South-west, enters the river Yaqui a little above Onăbăs, in latitude 28.

The vale of Ōpösūră is divided from that of Băbiacora, or Sonora, by one of those parallel ridges which have been already described. It is about twenty-six leagues in length, and varies from one to four leagues in breadth. The population consists partly of whites, who have preserved the blood of their Biscayan ancestors in all its purity, and partly of Indians of the Opătă tribe, who, in Upper Sonora, compose nearly two-thirds of the inhabitants. They live in towns, and are completely civilized, being clothed after the manner of the whites, with whom they always unite against their barbarous countrymen, the Apăchēs; and such is the confidence reposed in them, that they are provided with fire-arms by the Government, and formed into militia companies, under the command of their own chiefs. The smiths, carpenters, and other artisans of the State, as well as the working miners, are found amongst these Indians, who are thus most valuable members of the community. They likewise furnish the Haciendas with a hardy race of labourers, many thousands of whom are distributed over the valleys of Băbăcōră, Sōnōră, and Ōpösūră, extending in a northerly direction towards Arispě,



(a town of 3,000 inhabitants, now the residence of the Commandant of the State,) and the mining district of Năcösărî.

The whole of this country is rich in every variety of agricultural produce, for besides wheat, maize, and barley, the sugar-cane grows in the valleys, with figs, pomegranates, peaches, grapes, and numberless other fruits; horned cattle, mules, and horses abound throughout the province, and may be purchased in any number, at about one-fifth of the price usually paid for them in other parts of the Republic; and to these advantages are added a most delightful climate, and the facility of a communication by water with the port of Guaymas, from which the towns of Babiacora and Oposura are only distant between seventy and eighty leagues.

Such a combination of favourable circumstances induced General Victoria, (himself a native of the North,) Don Pedro Escalante, (the Representative of the State of Sonora in the Senate,) and several other Mexicans connected with the Northern Provinces, to entertain the idea of bringing into activity, by the formation of a Company, some of the mining districts near Opösūră and Arîspe, formerly celebrated for their wealth, but abandoned during the great Apache war, in the latter half of the last century; when the Indian tribes upon the frontier, irritated by the hostilities of the Spanish presidial troops, made so general an attack upon the Northern Provinces, that all the isolated establishments were

broken up, and even the towns themselves preserved with difficulty.

For this purpose an association was formed, of which Colonel Bourne is a member, and in its name a number of important mines were "denounced" in the vicinity of Oposura, which was selected, as a central spot, for the principal establishment. Of these districts a very detailed account is given in Colonel Bourne's Journal. The most noted are Cerro Gordo, (South-east of Babiacora,) and the mines of Cobriza, San Antonio, and Dolores, (within a little distance of the same place; the mines of San Juan Bautista de Sonora, (situated upon a mountain eight leagues to the North-west of Oposura, which is crossed in different directions by fourteen veins, all distinctly pronounced,) and those of San Pedro Nacosari, and Churinibabi, (to the North and North-north-west of Oposura).

In all these districts the depth of the mines is inconsiderable, their former riches acknowledged, and the causes by which their working was interrupted, known. The advances necessary in order to bring them into activity are small, for in fact it is more remittances of quicksilver and mining stores, (which must be sent round Cape Horn to Guaymas,) than money, that is requisite. No unreasonable expectations are entertained by the Mexican proprietors, and no onerous conditions proposed: while their respectability and influence in the country are the best possible guarantee to the adven-



turers that their operations will be conducted with good faith, and can meet with no interruption.

The success of the enterprise appears to me unquestionable; and regarding as I do the prosperity of the mines of Mexico, as intimately connected with that of our own trade and manufactures, I should think it a subject of just regret, if, after embarking so eagerly in speculations, of which nothing certain was known, capitalists should not be found to engage in one, the result of which can hardly be regarded as doubtful.

I am aware that many of the statements contained in this, and the preceding books, respecting the mineral riches of the North of New Spain, will be thought exaggerated. They are not so: they will be confirmed by every future report; and, in a few years, the public, familiarised with facts, which are only questioned because they are new, will wonder at its present incredulity, and regret the loss of advantages which may not always be within its reach.

I am willing to hope, however, that my present undertaking may have the effect of directing the attention of many of my countrymen to a field, the importance of which has been hitherto but little suspected. Many of the facts detailed in the preceding pages are known in Mexico only by persons immediately connected with the part of the country to which they relate, but by them they are unanimously confirmed.

It may be asked, how a territory, possessing such vast natural resources, can have been reduced to the state of comparative poverty in which it now lies? The cause is simple. The precious metals do not in themselves constitute wealth, and as long as all communication between Sonora and the rest of the world was prohibited, except through the medium of the Capital, (Mexico,) and the port of Veracruz, they could not even be employed as a means of obtaining the produce of European industry, which they now command. The inhabitants, forbidden to avail themselves of the harbours upon their own shores, without quicksilver, (so essential in mining processes,) and without a mint, (the nearest was that of the Capital, 600 leagues from Arispe,) thought little of the mineral treasures by which they were surrounded, and devoted their whole attention to the cultivation of those, upon which their subsistence and comforts depended.

Their Haciendas, their flocks and herds, horses and mules, constituted their only care; and no portion of Mexico is richer than Sonora in these: but even at the present day, in many of the larger towns, money is unknown: and sales are effected by barter, the produce of the Interior, (as silver bars, gold dust, hides, or flour,) being exchanged for the imports of Guaymas, and Mázatlán at Pētīc, or Rosārīo, Ālāmōs, and Cosālā. There is no mint, as yet, nearer than Durango or Guadalajara, and until an establishment of this nature be formed, the



circulating medium will of course continue very small: but the exports of the precious metals in bars and grains to Calcutta and Canton are very considerable; the intercourse with India and China being already more frequent than that with any of the Southern Provinces of the Republic.

The inhabitants, who are frank and cheerful in their manners, industrious, brave, and hospitable in the highest degree, will soon learn to turn the advantages of their present position to account. From their former enemies the Apaches, and other savage tribes, North of Arispe, and the Presidio of Fonteras, (latitude 31,) they have no longer any thing to apprehend, for their enmity was always directed against the European Spaniards, who were obliged to avail themselves of the intervention and influence of the Creoles in order to obtain a cessation of hostilities.

The Apaches are said to be an independent and high-minded race, averse to all the arts of civilized life, excellent horsemen, skilful in the use of the lance, and formidable marksmen with the bow and arrow. They do not possess fire-arms, and are fortunately too distant from the frontiers of the United States to obtain a supply, (as the Comanches have done on the borders of Cohahuila and Texas,) from the lawless traders, who precede the advance of civilization across the wilderness. They require little beyond the undisturbed possession of their hunting-grounds, in which they were continually molested by the Spaniards; and as the Creoles already possess

ten times as much ground as they can possibly require, there is little reason to fear an interruption of the good understanding, which at present prevails.

I shall close my observations upon Upper Sonora with one more remark. Although there is no part of the country in which there are so many Creole families of pure Spanish descent, or where old Spanish names so continually recur, (as Moreno, Rodriguez, Fernandez, Espinosa, &c. &c.) Sonora has proved itself to be quite as decided as the Southern and Central Provinces, in the cause of Independence. A great number of the young men who joined the Insurgent armies in 1810, were natives of the North, sons and nephews of the most respectable landed proprietors of the Internal Provinces; and General Victoria himself, whose real name is Fernandez, although he has been induced by the general wish of his countrymen to retain that which he adopted during the war, was, as I have already stated, a native of Tamásulá, where his family possessed considerable property. If there are particular spots, (as Alamos, or Rosario,) where other feelings with regard to Spain are thought to prevail, it is because they are in the hands of old Spaniards, who form, wherever they congregate together in any numbers, a little isolated knot, whose dislike to the present order of things is as evident, as it is innocuous.

The road from Arispe to the Villa del Fuerte, the capital of Cinaloa, runs nearly due South about one hundred and twenty leagues. The principal towns