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TRAVELS IN THE FREE STATES

OF

CENTRAL AMERICA.

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TRAVELS IN THE FREE STATES

OF

CENTRAL AMERICA:

NICARAGUA, HONDURAS, AND SAN SALVADOR.

BY

DR. CARL SCHERZER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1857.

PREFACE.

THE encouraging reception given by my countrymen to the "Studies of the Republic of Costa Rica," a joint production of my esteemed friend and colleague, Dr. Moritz Wagner, and myself, has induced me to offer the results of our observations in our subsequent wanderings through the States of Nicaragua, Honduras, and San Salvador. As, however, the present volumes bear my name only, it is necessary for me to state that the immense and disproportionate accumulation of purely scientific material, the detailed description of the geological features of Central America, of new species of plants and animals, meteorological observations, hypsometric

measurements, &c., made during our journey, induced Dr. Wagner to devote himself exclusively to that portion of the subject, leaving to me what was more adapted to the general reader. We sometimes also found it desirable, for the purposes we had in view, to separate; and the description of some of the towns on the west coast of Nicaragua, which he only visited, as well as of the terrible catastrophe of the destruction of San Salvador, of which he was an eye-witness, have been furnished by him.

It has been my object in the following volumes, besides furnishing a faithful account of the States and their inhabitants, to point out the great advantages offered by these magnificent countries to trade and emigration, and to show that there exist in Central America tracts of measureless extent, in which prudent and industrious European settlers may not only secure a prosperous and healthy material existence, but maintain their nationality, and remain in commercial and

political relation with the land of their birth. However welcome may be to a scientific traveller the idea that his inquiries and observations have tended in any degree to advance the cause of knowledge, it is certainly no less satisfactory to be able to point out to our poor countrymen, driven from their homes by the pressure of social evils, the parts of the earth which will offer him an ample reward to his industry and patience in a secure and honourable subsistence obtained without any risk to health; and I have therefore kept this purpose steadily in view.

In conclusion, I beg to offer my thanks to all friends in the countries described who kindly afforded me assistance in the prosecution of my task, and to express a hope that the susceptibility of the Hispano-American may not find any cause of offence in my plain speaking. A traveller making his observations public is not like a portrait-painter, who may, out of complaisance

to a sitter, bestow a few of the skilful touches by which a defect may be concealed or even turned into an agreeable peculiarity; he is rather like a surgical operator, who must sometimes unavoidably give pain, but does so with the view of effecting a cure.

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NICARAGUA, HONDURAS,

&c.

CHAPTER I.

THE WORLD'S HIGHWAY.

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THE most animated scene of the great Westward movement now going on in Central America, is that presented at the narrowest part of the Isthmus, between Chagres and Panama. The great steamers of the Pacific Ocean, and those of various sizes that form the line between New York, New Orleans, and Chagres, are perpetually coming foaming and panting to the coast on

either side, but they remain at those bad anchoring grounds only just long enough to pour out their crowds of passengers, and take in another living cargo bound for the opposite direction; exchanging Californian travellers, hurrying eagerly towards the Land of Gold, for Californian travellers, who, not so often rich and satisfied as wearied and disappointed, are once more turning their faces eastward.

But in addition to these two classes, the Central American Isthmus serves now as a world's bridge for wayfarers proceeding in other directions, and almost the whole of the passenger traffic to the western coast of South America now takes this route. Cape Horn, with its freezing horrors and its everlasting storms, sees few travellers, except actual sailors; for they must be very poor or very patient passengers who would not prefer the brief torments of the Isthmus and a deck passage, to the intolerably tedious navigation round the southern point of America; and many whose ultimate destination is Australia, China, the Philippines, or some of the islands of the Southern Ocean, cross this narrow neck of land, proceed to St. Francisco or Lima, and seek there the means of transit over

the broad Pacific. The difficulties of this land passage, of which so much has been said, are now in a great measure obviated by the completion of the railroad; and the only disagreeable features of the journey consist in the landing and re-embarkation, especially on the side of the Pacific, where the surf is so violent that the vessels have to anchor at a considerable distance from the coast, and in stormy weather it is often impossible to embark for days together.

In the years 1852 and 1853 the Vanderbilt Transit Company made great profits, though the number of passengers by the Isthmus of Nicaragua scarcely amounted to the half of those forwarded by the Panama Company; and in spite of the political disturbances in Nicaragua, the concourse continued, until Walker and his Free Bands arrived from California, and the democratic party of Leon gained possession of the Government, and declared the contract of the Transit Company null and void. Before this many travellers had only taken the route by Nicaragua when they could get no passage in a Panama vessel. The steamers employed on that line were not of sufficient capacity for the moving multitude they were intended to con-

vey; for the Isthmus passengers were estimated at 10,000 a month, of which 7000 went by Panama; and notwithstanding this formidable rivalry, the Vanderbilt Company did extremely well up to the year 1855.

The best points of view from which to observe this tumultuous migration are, after the ports of Chagres and Panama, the two harbours of the San Juan del Norte on the Caribbean Sea, and San Juan del Sur on the Pacific; and especially Bahia de la Virgen, or Virgin Bay, on Lake Nicaragua, where meet the two opposite currents of this stream of wanderers.

Formerly the plan was so arranged that a few hours after the magnificent steamers of the lake had landed their passengers at La Virgen, the countless throng of Californians, with their pack-horses and mules, came rolling in like a tide. The spectacle lasted but a few hours — at most not more than a day; — but very striking and picturesque was this brief and sudden meeting of active energetic men from all the regions of the earth. What other corner of the world could present to the artist such groups of romantic-looking figures, some so glowing hot with fervid passion that they almost seem to

emit sparks ; some hard, cold, rugged as rocks, and others again worn and old, and decaying before their time under the effects of the hardships and reverses of their stormy existence ? What work might there be for a confessor in La Virgen could these men be induced to pour into his ears the story of their past lives, their sins and sufferings, and in many cases adventures more wild and terrible than ever haunted the imagination of a Hoffman or a Eugene Sue, and life histories of fearful serpent-like fascination !

Some vague hints of this kind may be gathered on the decks of the ocean steamers of this line, as they glide majestically over the blue glassy surface, escorted by dolphins and sharks, and bearing frequently among their freight still more hateful biped monsters. When the tongues of the latter are set in motion by whiskey, and the want of something else to do, there arises a jargon of many languages, English, German, Spanish, French, and Chinese, in which curious adventures, reminiscences, and hopes for the future, are interchanged by white, yellow, brown, and olive-coloured passengers ; and some who look on in gloomy silence, or with a sinister smile, might, perhaps, have still more startling

life episodes to relate than any of the others ; but they open not their mouths, and therein, perhaps, they do well. One cannot look into heart and brain, to know what thoughts and feelings are working there ; but those features, where every fierce passion has ploughed deep its traces,— those keen, restless eyes that flash like dagger points beneath the bushy eye-brows, — do set one upon forming conjectures.

People are not very fastidious on the Isthmus concerning their acquaintance and company, or very inquisitive as to who their neighbours may be ; and the public authorities are not at all in the habit of asking inconvenient questions about the antecedents of their visitors. So that no crime has been committed on the spot, a man may be guilty of the whole catalogue, and yet go free as air. The world's passage is open alike to the just and the unjust ; to honest men, and villains of every possible variety ; and he who has provided himself with the requisite amount of dollars has nothing more to fear. And yet, thoughtlessness, or the love of gossiping, or perhaps the gnawing pangs of conscience, do often induce criminals to disclose their past deeds ; but no one interferes with their liberty

in consequence, or troubles himself about such revelations: indeed, the frankness of these gentlemen sometimes gains them friends and comrades amongst those whose biographies exhibit similar little spots of rust.

An American, six feet and a half long, of stern, energetic, and gloomy physiognomy, came with us in the steamer from New Orleans to San Juan del Norte; and when he had drank enough to make him talkative, he confided to one of his fellow-passengers—a Swiss, whom he had known in Kentucky—that he had murdered his wife out of jealousy, and that he was taking a trip to California on that account, as well as to satisfy his thirst for gold. The Swiss, who had a still more unfavourable expression of face, though he was not so communicative, seemed quite attracted by this little anecdote, and joined company with him immediately, as did also another American from Texas, an Irishman, and a German.

We met the party again on the Sarapiqui river, in the interior of the country, and could not help travelling with them to San José, as they had hired mules from the same owner. Each of these gentlemen carried a rifle, a revolver,

and a long knife; and if their looks did not belie them, had not always carried them merely for show. As they journeyed together, they perhaps found comfort in some mutual outpourings of the heart concerning their past lives; but we heard only the confession of the Kentuckian, who, as I have said, did not find the above-mentioned fact in his history act at all to his disadvantage.*

It would, however, be a great mistake to suppose that all, or even the majority, of the Isthmus passengers were runaway thieves and great criminals: most of them were such as pass very well in the West for gentlemen, and could not be said to be more than "smart;" a predicate that is thought rather complimentary than otherwise, and merely signifies a sharp fellow, who knows how to overreach another without committing any gross fraud; who has a stout, roomy conscience, but can make dollars without

* I met this uncomfortable American some months afterwards in the primeval forests of the Cordilleras. He was always gloomy and silent, and groaned so in his sleep that it was painful to hear him. Before I left Costa Rica a fever had carried him off at a saw-mill on the west coast, where he was working as a day labourer.

bringing himself within reach of the law. A certain Herr C——, for instance, whom we met in Nicaragua returning from San Francisco, was a good specimen of a “smart man.” He was by birth a German, but had been many years in California, where he had carried on the various professions of gold-digger, innkeeper, apothecary, physician, night watchman, and horse dealer; but as all these speculations had, sooner or later, turned out unfortunately, and the dollars were becoming extremely scarce, he bethought himself to shave his head, put on the cowl and habit of a Capuchin monk, and set up as itinerant confessor among the gold-diggers of Spanish origin in the side valleys of the Rio Sacramento, his black beard, and his familiarity with the Spanish language, being excellent qualifications for the office. There was plenty of work for a confessor among the gold-diggers, so that he had quite a rush of penitents, and he was liberal of absolution, though rather strict about the fees of his holy office, and would only receive them in gold. This “dodge” was at that time new, and therefore extremely profitable; but it was afterwards spoilt by competition.

Competition is indeed, in the West, a terrible

power, which the weak find it very hard to struggle against, and which occasions in commercial life a lateral pressure more painful than a bureaucratic pressure from above; but also, it must be confessed, acting as a much stronger spur to industry. To return, however, to Herr C——. Having made a pretty little sum as father confessor, he became a cattle dealer again, and then, somehow or other, got rid of his money once more; whereupon he resolved to take his leave of California, establish himself on the Isthmus, and levy contributions upon passengers as a hotel-keeper; and to that end, as part of his stock in trade, he provided himself with a handsome wife, who was, like himself, of a speculative turn and fond of travelling. But how many Californians fought for her pretty face, or in general how the worthy pair fared after that time, I cannot undertake to say. I should not be at all surprised to hear that he became an officer of high rank in General Walker's army.

I might furnish many similar biographical sketches from my experiences in the Isthmus, or from that of others; but I shall probably make myself more useful, if, leaving those anecdotes as promising materials for romance writers, I give,

apropos to the last-mentioned phase of Herr C——'s chequered life, a word of good advice to emigrants to California, and other travellers to the various countries and stations on the Pacific. In the two San Juan harbours, as well as in Virgin Bay, Chagres, and Panama, let them avoid as much as possible all inns and houses of public entertainment. They are actual dens of robbers, haunted by rogues of all varieties, whose smallest offence is that of poisoning their guests with bad adulterated drinks. The very best of these hotels and boarding-houses carry on business in the most fraudulent manner; and I believe there would be no injustice in giving strangers a similar general caution against nearly all the tradesmen, artisans, and labourers settled on the Isthmus, who are mostly the foulest scum and dregs of their respective classes in North America and Europe.

La Virgen, or more properly Bahia de la Virgen, lies on the south-western shore of Lake Nicaragua, where the two streams of travellers from opposite directions meet; but in spite of its favourable position it is a wretched little place; and though founded in 1851, when the Vanderbilt Company was formed, does not

yet count more than half a hundred huts and sheds roofed with pantiles and palm-leaves, and about a dozen stores and public-houses, which form a street extending in a south-westerly direction from the lake. The most deplorable of these houses, which have nothing to offer their guests but the over-peppered dishes of the American kitchen, bad spirits, matting hammocks, and billiards, bear, nevertheless, the sounding titles of Washington Hotel, Jackson House, Lafayette Hotel, &c.; for the heroes of American history must, it seems, like other heroes, often serve to entice people to their ruin. The most tolerable among these fleecing establishments was, in 1854, the one called Transit House, where you paid a dollar for each meal and another dollar for the privilege of passing a sleepless night in the hanging mat, where mosquitoes in the wet season, and other small tormenting demons in the dry, never failed to share your couch.

Yet what a beautiful situation has this La Virgen, with its lake panorama, and the twin giants Omotepec and Madeira rising from the noble expanse of water into the blue tropical sky! There is something in the scene that

reminds you of the Bay of Naples, and certainly without being at all inferior to it; for neither Vesuvius nor any of the extinct volcanoes of Italy can be compared with these mountains for stately symmetry of form. As an island, too, Omotepec, with its gorgeous tropical vegetation, bathed by the clear bluish-green waters of the lake, is more picturesque than either Capri or Ischia.

The native population of this island had probably, in former days, its own caciques, like the districts on the outer shores of the lake; but fine populous cities, such as Utatlan, or the capital of the Aztecs, have never existed in Nicaragua.

Along the shore of Lake Nicaragua, to the north of La Virgen, lie a number of scattered huts inhabited by a rabble of Indians and half-Indians, called Ladinos; and as the wandering colonies of the white race are followed everywhere by rats, flies, and bugs, so the Yankees bring in their train to the Isthmus a swarm of biped parasitical animals, who live on what falls from American pockets. Porters, mule-drivers, thieves, women of bad character, alight and settle here alone or in groups; for it is easy

to settle in a country of warm, equable climate, where comfort and luxury in domestic arrangements are unknown, and therefore undesired. A rancho is built in a few hours with six stakes and a roof of palm-leaves, and few of the natives have any other dwellings than these, by the side of which the most paltry of American houses look like palaces. The furniture, too, is on an equally economical scale. A hanging mat, made of aloe fibres, serves for a bed, and costs only six reals (about half-a-crown); or an ox-hide spread on the ground, with which many are content, still less; and if a man is hungry he can generally find some bananas, mangoes, or coconuts in a neighbour's garden, or get a maize tortilla given to him if he beg for it in the nearest habitation. The forest begins at only a few yards' distance from La Virgen; and though it has not here the majestic primæval character of the forests of Guatemala and Costa Rica, it is thick and luxuriant enough to serve for a shelter for much rascality, as well as for a Paphian bower for the tender but transitory loves of the Californians with the brown Circes of the Nicaragua Lake.

Few who for any purpose seek refuge in its

shades have to dread any interference of the police. In the neighbouring state of Costa Rica it used to be said that the roads were so safe, and the population so honest, that a child might cross from one ocean to the other, with a golden crown upon its head, and fear no molestation. If so, it was wonderfully different from La Virgen, so near its frontier, for there no one dares to move without being armed; and further to the north-west, in the direction of Pueblo Nuevo and Leon, the danger from banditti and highwaymen is said to be still greater. When, on the second day of my stay in La Virgen, I took my fowling-piece and pistols, and went on an excursion into the woods, I met in the loneliest spots many half-naked, unpleasant-looking fellows, who wore their gleaming *machetes* without a sheath; and instead of stepping timidly on one side, as the wild Indians are accustomed to do in such cases, they looked impudently in my face and saluted me with "Good morning, Sir; how do you do?" in English, and spoken in very good parrot style. I had been advised not to enter into any conversation with these gentlemen, and to keep an eye upon my weapons, and I did so; but fortunately for me the Nicaraguans are not

usually more brave than they are honest, and have an amazing respect for good fire-arms. They regard with especial awe the bold spirits and strong sinews of the Californians, as well as their bowie-knives and revolvers; and a single one of the bull-dogs of Ohio and Kentucky is often a match for a whole troop of these "Cuyotes" of Spanish America, who, like their relations, the jackals, seldom attack any but sleeping or decaying victims. As long as the stranger shows the steel teeth that he carries, and keeps his eyes about him, he may generally be considered pretty safe from murderous attacks on the Isthmus, in spite of the treacherous character of the population, though Californians who have allowed liquor to steal away their brains, do sometimes disappear without leaving a trace behind. In these cases they have probably been first enticed into the snare by some dusky Judith, and the body, after the pockets have been emptied, has been thrown into the lake, where it has been welcomed by the caimans. Walker's sharp practice has, however, very nearly put an end to adventures of this sort — at least, so say the reports of American "Correspondents from Nicaragua." Thanks to the wholesome severity of the General's pro-

ceedings, the security of life and property has been once more established.

One cannot avoid feeling respect for the energy and practical genius of the Americans, when one casts a glance at the fine plank road connecting La Virgen with the harbour of San Juan del Sur on the Pacific Ocean, the three fine steam-vessels that there await the traveller, and generally the means provided for the transit of three thousand passengers a month, all since 1851. In consideration of these things one may forgive them their indigestible dishes, their adulterated brandy, and even the shameless extortions of their hotels. You think of these injuries, too, more mildly, when you find how quickly you can escape from them.

During our brief sojourn the Transit Company had been buying up about two hundred horses, with a view of conveying the passengers in carriages across the neck of land between the lake and the ocean; and in most things there is a tendency to rapid improvement: the new world is urged forwards incessantly by the spur of competition, so that whatever anyone's natural disposition may be, the comfortable easy stagnation of thought and action, in which people

often vegetate in our quiet bureaucratic country, becomes an impossibility. The republican institutions and restless energies of the Anglo-Americans are carrying them on at a pace to which the Spanish-Americans, Indians, and mixed races of the South are not equal ; and they must inevitably be beaten in such a struggle, sooner or later.

In 1854 such an acceleration had been effected in the means of transport across the Isthmus, that the whole passage, including the stoppages at various points, was reduced to five-and-twenty hours. Still further improvements, however, gave hopes that it might be shortened to sixteen, although, it is true, exceptional cases occurred, in which it took twice or three times as long ; namely, when any accident happened, or when the water in the San Juan river was so low that the little steamers grounded, or so high that they could hardly make head against the current. But when neither the elements nor American carelessness opposed any obstacles, the little vessels bustled in and out up the windings of the river pretty briskly, and twice as fast when they were going in the opposite direction with the returning Californians.

It is, I have said, a curious spectacle this sudden brief encounter between two crowds of bold, active, enterprising men, rushing past each other in opposite directions, but nearly all engaged in the same pursuit, namely, that of dollars. Those coming from the East, from the great seaports of the Union, are mostly shipwrecked adventurers of all classes, often the quintessence of "smart men" going to seek their fortune again in California, and speculating upon large profits and quick returns for a very small amount of labour. More or less, perhaps, they are all indulging in mere illusions; but without illusions how could there be that love of wandering that prevails as an epidemic all over the North American continent? It is the fatal gift of the Oriental Prometheus that has been inherited by the men of the West; but after all, what would have become of the history of the human race without some of that "blind hope" that the Titan planted in the breast of his children?

After a short stay at the port of San Juan del Norte, our steamer commenced its westward journey, and the marvellous productions of the equatorial zone began to unfold themselves: the tree-like ferns; the mighty palms, with their

crowned heads; the luxuriant bananas; the merry, chattering parrots; the diamond gleam of the humming-birds, darting with the swiftness of arrows from one bank to the other; the countless ring-tailed monkeys, leaping and sporting about the tops of the trees, curiously peeping at the steamer, or screaming and darting away in terror; and, lastly, the detestable grey caimans, which the rush of the paddle has waked out of their afternoon's nap on the sand-banks. But all these new and strange objects attract but slightly the attention of most of the passengers, absorbed as they are in thoughts of their own affairs, in dreams of the yet uncertain future, or, it may be, in dark remembrances of the past.

At Castillo a few hovels have been put up near the river's bank, and here you land and breakfast. A little way further on, where your progress is stopped by some batteries, you have to disembark, and proceed a short distance by land to avoid some rapids, and then you embark again on another steamer. At Fort San Carlos, where the real river San Juan begins, you change vessels once more, and find yourself in a steamer of a much larger size. The voyage now proceeds with greater rapidity, and you soon enter the

great lake, and pass the islands of Pajaro, Sapote, Chinecaste, and the larger group of Soltiname, all of volcanic origin, but which do not, like the two great volcanoes of Omotepec, show signs of energetic action having gone on for hundreds of years. Past this island, too, rushes the panting steamer; and then such a glorious landscape opens upon the sight, that even these men, who seem to have scarcely any sense of natural beauty, are startled into momentary admiration. The feeling, however, is very transitory, and the fixed brooding eye again rests upon the western shore which we are rapidly approaching, and where a spectacle of a different kind is awaiting us.

There stands the throng of wayfarers from the Valley of the Sacramento, and from the waves and storms of the great ocean, impatiently expecting our arrival.

And a most motley crowd they are! Americans, Germans, Irishmen, Frenchmen, Mulattoes, Negroes, Spanish Creoles, Chinese, &c. Keen glances are exchanged, a few brief salutations and shakings of hands, and a few eager questions: "What's the news from New York — New Orleans — Havannah? How goes business? Any

new annexation?" These are the questions of the passengers from the Pacific when they do not happen to meet with acquaintances, in which case of course there are private inquiries to be made concerning relations and friends. On our side the queries are, "What's doing in San Francisco? How's business? Is the gold still growing out of the paving stones?" &c.

It often happens that in consequence of some accident there is a delay here, and time for more circumstantial questions, and, it may be, also for a few sighs of disappointment; but every returning traveller seems to have looked at this world of the West through the spectacles of his own good or ill fortune, and the state of the pocket often determines whether the country and the people they have left are to meet with praise or blame.

Those who have made their fortunes are usually mild in their judgments; but those who have found their hopes and plans frustrated, pour out a whole flood of bitterness upon men and things on the Sacramento. The valley of the golden river is a type of the infernal regions, and the great city of San Francisco, from one end to the other, a mass of fraud and wicked-

ness, deserving of no better fate than Sodom and Gomorrah. Were the "fire and brimstone" at the command of the speakers, they would certainly not be sparing of them.

The groups of natives in this harbour present a very different picture from that of the travellers. They have a most vulture-like appetite for news; and Indians and Ladinos, half or entirely naked, come thronging round us as soon as we land, to the horror and scandal of some American ladies from Boston and Philadelphia, devout and dollar-loving, but without the æsthetic training that might enable them to look with calm, artistic admiration on the display of masculine strength and beauty in these brown athletic forms, with their arched chests, well-formed necks, and faultless limbs, that would certainly have gained approval in the Roman circus. The faces that accompany these fine figures, are, it must be owned, mostly very ugly; and there are among them some frightfully deformed objects, and mongrels of all races, who pick up a living by bringing bananas, cocoa-nuts, and mangoes to the travellers, or by acting as porters and boatmen. There are plenty of brown damsels, too, with their raven hair twisted carelessly round

their heads, or floating free in the Bacchante style, and gold or mock gold ornaments on their high, somewhat too full bosoms, which they display with a liberality far exceeding even that of our ball costumes. They are by no means timid or retiring in their deportment, and make formidable attacks on the pockets as well as the hearts of gallant Californians. But the signal bell sounds: one crowd of passengers hurries on board the steamer; the others find what accommodation they can in waggons or on mules, that are to transport them to the shores of the Pacific; and the animated scene is over, which, however ugly some of the individual features and minor details may be, is certainly on the whole a grand and exciting one to those who reflect on its significance to the present time, or its bearings on the future.

CHAP. II.

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF NICARAGUA.

Boundaries. — Variation of Surface. — The Cordilleras and the Western Volcanic System. — The great Basins and Lakes. — The River San Juan and its Significance. — Nicaragua as a World Passage. — Its Vegetation and Zoology. — Natural Character of Nicaragua, as compared with Costa Rica.

THE Free State of Nicaragua which under the Spanish rule formed a province of the general captaincy of Guatemala, constituted, after the liberation, one of the five states of the Federative Republic of Central America. The Federation was dissolved in 1839, and since then it has been declared an independent republic, though with a somewhat uncertain boundary. The province of Guanacaste, on the south side, which formerly belonged to it, is now regularly incorporated with Costa Rica; and the right, to the southern shore of Lake Nicaragua and of the

river San Juan, is in dispute, though *de facto* in possession of Costa Rica.

These regions are, however, mostly quite uncultivated and almost impenetrable forest wildernesses, of no value whatever to either state; so that it has fortunately not been thought necessary to resort to arms to settle this Boundary Question, and both parties have contented themselves with reserving their rights.

The state of Nicaragua finds itself in a somewhat similar position with respect to its eastern boundary; for the Indian chief of Bluefields, whom England has lately decorated with the title of King of the Mosquito country, and acknowledged as an independent sovereign, claims the whole strip of coast from the mouth of the Rio Escondido to the mouth of the San Juan, and extending inland to the north-eastern slope of the Cordilleras.

But in that direction, too, the country consists of an untrodden forest, or one in which certainly no Spaniard ever set his foot, and which is practically of no value at all; and the real point in dispute is the possession of the important harbour of San Juan del Norte, at the mouth of that river. The Spaniards, it is certain,

never troubled themselves about the sovereign rights of the Mosquito Indians.

According to the present position of political affairs, we may take for the southern boundary of Nicaragua the river San Juan, the southern shore of the great inland sea, and the wooded ridge that crosses the narrow isthmus from the mouth of the Sapoa river to the Gulf of Salinas; the Pacific Ocean forms an uncontested boundary line to the west; on the north-west Fonseca Bay separates it from the republic of San Salvador; and towards Honduras its frontier line is formed by the little river Negro, and the more considerable Escondido, which rises in the highlands of Segovia and falls into the Caribbean Sea; the Cordillera, with an uninhabited forest wilderness, makes a somewhat uncertain limit for the narrow space between the sources of these two rivers. The territory of the state of Nicaragua extends, therefore, from 10° to $13^{\circ} 18'$ north lat., and from $84^{\circ} 40'$ to $87^{\circ} 30'$ west long. (from Greenwich); its superficial extent is roughly estimated at 35,000 English square miles.

From this position the country, it will be seen, belongs entirely to the equatorial zone;

but climate and organisation are here, as in the other states of Central America, greatly modified by the conformation of the ground. Nearly one-half of the above-mentioned area consists of mountain land, of an elevation varying from 2000 to 7000 feet above the sea, and the climate of this region is mild and healthy. The larger portion, including the two great lakes, is mostly flat, but rising in some parts as much as 1500 feet, the limit of the hot country where the cacao-tree still prospers. All the towns are situated in this portion. The essential difference of character in the soil of Nicaragua and the other states of Central America is this predominance of plain and hollow; whilst in the other four by far the greater part is mountain or steppe country. Most of the towns and villages in these states lie in a temperate region.

The prevailing direction of the Cordilleras is from south-east to north-west, but they throw out spurs in opposite directions, and the lakes near the south-western declivity form two deep basins, probably of the same date as the elevation of the great trachyte range. As far as the district of Segovia the Cordillera consists of a single chain; but further on it divides into two branches, of

which one follows a northerly direction through the most unknown part of Honduras. The prevailing stone of the highest range is the variety of trachyte called andesit, and which is mostly found in the form of boulders in the lake basins. The steeper declivity of the mountains here is to the south-west, the gentler towards the north-east, as might be supposed from the configuration of the country; but whether they present towards the Mosquito territory the same prevailing form of steppe and terrace land as in Guatemala and Costa Rica is at present unknown.

The two mountainous provinces of Segovia and Chontales have fine highland valleys with a healthy climate, but none of the elevated table lands which, in the other states of Central America, offered the Spaniards such favourable opportunities for settlements. The height of the Cordilleras seldom exceeds 5000 feet; and the imposing cones which speak of volcanic eruptions are only seen on the coast region near the Pacific. In the province of Chontales, the granite, with beds of gold quartz, makes its appearance for a considerable extent, and is probably the continuation of the granite range that passes through Guatemala and Honduras. Specimens of this

quartz were brought to us at Granada by gold-seekers who had just come from Chontales.

The most remarkable peculiarity of Nicaragua, and the feature which chiefly distinguishes it both from the other states of Central America and from Mexico, is the extensive hollow basin, lying almost parallel with the great mountain range, and with its two lakes stretching to the centre of the country, the lakes being fed by the numerous small streams that flow from the south-western declivity of the Cordilleras. The English engineer Bailly, who visited the country for surveying purposes, and to ascertain the most favourable points for a passage, estimates the length of Lake Nicaragua at about 100 miles, and its greatest breadth at from 40 to 45 miles; its height above the Pacific he gives at 128, and that of Lake Managua at 156 feet. The deepest part yet sounded is forty fathoms, the average depth being from eight to twenty fathoms. North-east winds prevail on these lakes the greater part of the year, and in storms the action of the waves is violent, irregular, and often dangerous to shipping, especially in the neighbourhood of the islands, which are exceedingly numerous. They are of volcanic origin,

and probably of various structure, some being of trachyte or basalt, and of a conical form ; others real volcanoes with distinct craters. They seem mostly to belong to the most recent geological epoch, and not to that of the formation of the great central range. The largest of these islands, that formed by the twin volcanoes Omotepec and Madeira, has evidently been the theatre of a long-continued eruptive action. It is extremely fertile, covered with the most luxuriant vegetation, and was at one time thickly peopled, though at present only inhabited by a few hundred Indians.

The summit of the Omotepec is 5100, that of Madeira 4190 feet high. The island of Zapatero, lying north of Omotepec, consists of a single formerly active volcano, whose crater is found at an elevation of 1900 feet. This island is not now inhabited, and it is uncertain whether it ever was ; but it was probably of some importance with relation to the religious festivals and sacrifices of the natives, as there still exist on its surface some large stone idols. Further still to the north lies a group of many little islands called *Los Corales* ; and in a southerly direction the Soltiname islands form the most remarkable group.

The lake is tolerably well supplied with fish, amongst which a rather dangerous one, called the freshwater shark, is not unfrequently met with. Caimans are still more common, but seldom more than ten feet long, and they are not as much feared as the sharks. Crustacea are very scarce, and molluscs seem to be entirely wanting, — we have never, at least, been able to hear of a single shell being found on the shore, — a deficiency that may perhaps be ascribed to the absence of chalk in the neighbouring mountain ranges.

The single means of effluence for this great inland sea is that formed by the river San Juan, whose length is estimated by Bailly at ninety English miles, and which is the only river of America that really breaks through the Cordilleras. Unfortunately it presents both shallows and rapids, which considerably diminish its value as a channel of communication ; but one part of it could be turned to use in the proposed ocean-canal ; and the direction of this watery highway has been plainly enough indicated by Nature, though, doubtless, the assistance of human art and industry is indispensable before so grand an

advantage for the commerce of the world can be obtained.

There is much in the physical character of Nicaragua to indicate that it has been specially destined to become a neutral passage and highway to a great free trade market for the nations of the earth. The harbour of San Juan del Norte is certainly not the best that could be imagined, but it is the best that can be found on the Atlantic side ; on the Pacific, Nicaragua possesses Salinas Bay, and San Juan del Sur, both good, as well as Realejo, and the magnificent Gulf of Fonseca ; which, as a natural harbour, scarcely has its equal in the world, and might afford a secure refuge for the greatest merchant fleets. This wealth in harbours alone appears to me decisive of the question as to the superiority of the Isthmus of Nicaragua over that of Panama for the world passage, since the latter has no good ports on either ocean. Another important advantage is possessed by Nicaragua in its abundant supply of fresh water, and its vast lake will undoubtedly be of immense significance to the future civilisation of these regions.

The description that had been given us of the splendid exuberance of vegetation in Nicaragua appeared to us exaggerated; for though we traversed the whole western region, from the frontier of Costa Rica to Fonseca Bay in the north, we could nowhere discover the paradise we had been led to expect, though here, if anywhere, it must be found. This is the most cultivated district, and here are the chief towns. The finest cacao grows here, and here the loftiest palms raise their feathery crowns; but the wild vegetation does not attain the same gorgeous exuberance as in some parts of Costa Rica; the forest trees do not reach the colossal height of those of Sarapiquí, nor do their trunks exhibit a gorgeous variety of decoration from parasitic plants, like those of the declivities of the Andes, between San Miguel and Costa Rica. The soil of western Nicaragua is from January to April much parched; the grassy carpet of the small forest savannahs is burnt up; and though blossoms and gay-coloured fruits are never entirely wanting on the trees and shrubs, there is nothing to compare to the paradisiacal luxuriance of the same season in the beautiful valley of Revantazon. There the flowers never disappear from the shrubs

and mountain meadows; the earth is always moist, the temperature that of a soft, warm May; and a never-ceasing perfume exhales from trees, which, like their prototypes spoken of in Genesis, are "pleasant to the sight, and good for food."

The aspect of the landscape between the Lake of Nicaragua and the Pacific is rather tame. The underwood consists mostly of bromelias, agaves, and cacti, which indeed alone give it its tropical character; but above these rise only trees of mediocre size and ordinary appearance. The most common fruit in the forest is a kind of wild pine-apple, of a greyish-blue tint, which is found in many places. Among the largest trees the most striking are a lofty species of mimosa, with broad spreading branches and delicate feathery foliage, the ceiba or silk-cotton-tree, and a very thick-trunked cedrela; but lofty palms, *pandanaceæ*, *musaceæ*, and *scitaminaæ*, are as scarce in these woods as the giant mahogany-tree, or the still more colossal *volado*. The magnificent tree-like fern with its elegant crown is entirely wanting, and the aspect of the woods here did not inspire the feeling of awe with which we entered for the first time beneath the solemn and stupendous shades of the Sarapiquí forest,

and saw before us, in their grandest, mightiest development, the vegetable wonders that we had known only by feeble diminutive specimens in conservatories. The foliage here is not so dense but that a sunbeam can now and then force its way through it; indeed, the woods between Rivas and Granada, and Managua and Leon, are so light, that there was sun enough to be almost intolerable to us German wayfarers as we passed through them. Lianas, bauhinias, vignonias, and passiflora are found here, as well as many hundred species of climbing and creeping plants, and those noble kinds of parasites which neither droop mournfully nor cling fast to the old trunks, but develop themselves at their summits into beautiful bouquets and vases; but there are not so many species, nor are the specimens on so grand a scale, as in the east side of Costa Rica.

Still less are you here reminded of the noble and varied mountain scenery that strikes you so forcibly in Cariblanca and Desengano; and the dry volcanoes of Nicaragua lack the charm of those foaming cascades which, in the Cordillera of Costa Rica, dash down the dark green mountain declivities into giddy depths below. No such spectacle as that of the magnificent arch

formed by the Rio de los Angelos, as it rushes over into one of the most picturesque ravines of the Andes, can be seen here ; and you miss the terrace-like formation which is so favourable to the effect of a landscape, — such, for example, as that of the valleys of Turrialba and Angostura (the projected German colonies). Where the rushing current of the Revantazon has worn itself a bed in the deep trachyte rock, there rises on the terraces an amphitheatre of richest vegetation, tree above tree, wood above wood, in beautiful and imposing masses, to which there is nothing to compare in the region between Lake Nicaragua and the Pacific.

On the other hand, the cultivated flora of Nicaragua is in many parts richer than in Costa Rica. Not only are the rigid forms of the cactus, which make a living impenetrable fence round many of the *haciendas*, here more colossal and massive in their growth than elsewhere, but there are to be found in the plantations many of the noblest kinds of palms. The cocoa-palm is nowhere to be seen of statelier form, or richer with heavy fruit. The yellow gleam on its green leaves, and especially on their tops and on the leaf-stalk, makes this tree recognisable for a con-

siderable distance. The stem is rugged, like that of most palms, but not set with long spikes like the Cuyol-palm, so that the Indian boys easily climb up them; and the masses of nuts, which are sometimes seen hanging down at the same time with thick bunches of blossoms, are so enormous, that you wonder how the stalks can support such a burden. The cocoa-palm is generally regarded as a littoral tree, requiring a salt and sandy soil; but we found it in the interior of Nicaragua taller and richer in fruit than even on the Gulf of Nicoya. But whoever wishes to see the cultivated plants of Central America in all their grace and glory, should visit the Indian village of Nindiri, between Masaya and Managua. Here the landscape is darkened by no gloomy primeval forest, while the sparkling waters of the crystal lake give it freshness and animation; and all around the village extends a park-like plantation of the most beautiful productions of the tropical flora. There are orange-trees of almost incredible size, certainly little, if at all, inferior to that of our limes, and superbly laden with their golden fruit, — single trees being known to yield a harvest of above ten thousand; citron and lemon-

trees are on the same grand scale ; and the dark green leafy mango produces its fruit of the finest flavour, and in such enormous quantities, that no one ever gives himself the trouble to pick up what falls, but leaves it for the pigs and fowls.

A still greater rarity for the northern stranger is the crowned papaya (*Carica Papaya*), one of the most elegant trees of the equinoctial zone. In the form of the crown, as well as the trunk, it bears considerable resemblance to the tree-fern ; its leaves form a beautiful diadem at the top of its tapering trunk, and its longish fruit hangs by short stalks, not from the boughs, but from the trunk itself, beneath the leafy crown. The flavour is much like that of the melon. Here is also the milk-tree, with its blue spherical fruit, so sweet and refreshing to the taste ; the butter-tree, the flavour of whose fruit is quite peculiar, and cannot be compared to any other ; and the cacao, which flourishes best under the shade of the banana, and bears a dozen of its aromatic kernels in one large pod. The coffee-tree appears here as a small, but very pretty shrub, with shining pointed green leaves, and dark red berries, in which the renowned beans

are enveloped in a sweetish, jelly-like substance, and are always found in pairs. All these are to be seen at Nindiri.

The pine-apple is planted in rows, and covers the gardens of the Indians with fruit of enormous size and exquisite perfume, so that the most fastidious epicure of the Restaurant Véry or Véfour might envy the naked Indian of Nindiri his dessert. The latter would certainly regard many of the specimens, for which so high a price is paid at the Palais Royal, as poor little sour abortions, not worth eating, and good only for pigs; but even the finest pine-apples are inferior to the *anone*, decidedly the most delicious fruit of tropical America. The tree is insignificant in appearance, and sometimes found growing as a mere hedge-plant; the fruit is about the size of an apple, with a smooth green rind, peculiar scale-like elevations, and a flavour that is really incomparable. The Indians of Nindiri do not, however, estimate it so highly, but prefer the egg-shaped golden or scarlet fruit of the Mauritius palm, which is more farinaceous and nourishing, and scarcer here than the *anone*.

The soil and climate have in this district endowed the poor Indian with a wealth of fruit

such as no European horticulturist and no imperial conservatory can emulate; and the best that is placed upon royal tables in our quarter of the world, is but like that with which naked Indian boys pelt each other, as ours do with snowballs at the same season.

Single plantations of these fruit-trees are to be found in the environs of all the towns, and in the haciendas of Nicaragua; but such an astonishing abundance of them as is seen in all directions at Nindiri, I have seen nowhere else. These gardens are defended by a colonnade of perpendicular six or nine-sided cactus pillars, often twenty feet high. Humboldt has compared them to organ pipes, but they are sterner and more massive in appearance; we should rather liken them to the columns with broken capitals in the ruins of Palmyra, but that instead of appearing in scattered groups, they are here drawn up in close rank, stiff, dark, and unmoveable, like the grenadier guard on the Petersburg Parade.

Above these sturdy keepers of the Indians' enchanted gardens, rises the banana, the indispensable tree to the inhabitant of the tropics, and even to the Indians; but its delicate green colossal leaves are all torn by the north winds,

and the tree itself is not so tall and handsome as in the moist regions near the coast of Costa Rica. Above these the cocoa-palms raise their crowned heads, their feathery foliage waving softly in a gentle breeze, but their heavy masses of nuts keeping up a tumultuous rattling in storms.

The animal kingdom is not so abundantly represented here as in Costa Rica. The small stag (the *benaos*), which in Miravalles and Guanacaste is often met with in pairs, and sometimes seen flying in troops across the savannahs, is very seldom found in the wooded plain between Rivas and Realejo; but the American lion, the tiger-cat, the tapir, the wild hog, and an animal much resembling the jackal of the old world, and called the *coyot*, are all occasionally seen near the shores of the lake. Ring-tailed monkeys are common; and the racoon, the armadillo, the opossum, the sloth, and the agutis, keep the hunter busy, if he does not disdain such small game; while the most lovely little squirrels, with fine long-haired and prettily marked fur, rejoice the eye of the lover of the animal creation.

Birds are numerous here, as in most lightly-wooded regions, and generally of gay plumage.

The large, beautiful woodcock, the peacock, the gigantic crax-alector, with its plumed head, and some others, are less numerous and noisy than in the forest of the Sarapiqui; but you have better opportunities here of observing the movements and habits of life among tropical birds.

As the trees are of a very moderate height, the scarlet, crimson, and blue macaws, the cockatoo, and small green parrots, approach near enough, especially in the mornings and evenings, for the sportsman to get a shot at them, whilst in the woods of the Sarapiqui they are often quite out of range. The gay toucans, the magnificent curucui, the chatterer, the woodpecker with its purple crest, the yellow-tailed Montezuma bird (*Cassicus Montezuma*), whose voice resembles the creaking of a bough in the wind, all these, and many other kinds of birds, are seen in the woods of Nicaragua in the dry season, as well as flocks of pretty turtle-doves, the smallest of which are not bigger than a thrush in the vicinity of the towns.

In this season all animals are chiefly found in the districts near the lakes, which they approach from all directions; and great troops of apes of

various species scramble up and down the rocky wall above the water, a dangerous promenade even for them. In the immediate neighbourhood of the lake the vegetation was still wonderfully fresh in the month of February, and the shrubs and trees clothed with gay flowers to their very summits; while the small, nectar-sucking humming-birds were buzzing about among the blossoms, the gleaming splendour of their wings far exceeding that of the finest orchidaceæ.

One of the largest, most beautiful, and most common of these colibri, the *trochilus rubineus*, with the green metallic lustre on his wings and back, and his ruby gleaming throat, often approaches you curiously to within a few yards, and seems to contemplate you attentively while he keeps himself poised for a few seconds in the same spot; and near these charming little creatures in the air and among the flowers, you see in the lake the abominable alligators, often of terrific size, floating, like logs of wood, on the top of the water, though with only the head and a part of the scaly armour of the back rising above the surface. More than once I have seen the humming-birds, while hovering about the water-lilies that rose out of it, alight upon the

back of a crocodile as if it had been the trunk of a tree.

The delight in nature — the kind of sentimental interest in beautiful scenery — of which we now hear so much, is, according to a great German poet, entirely a product of modern times, of which antiquity had no conception. The Greeks, according to Schiller, felt no more emotion in the description of a beautiful landscape, than of a shield or a weapon; and without entering into the question as to how far he is justified in this assertion, we may feel pretty sure that much of the enthusiasm manifested by tourists at celebrated spots,—the Rigi, in Switzerland, for instance, where the good folks are piped out of their beds by the Ranz des Vaches to witness a sunrise according to the rules in such case made and provided,—is a very artificially manufactured article indeed, and greatly dependent on fashion. In Central America we have seldom found that the sight of the glorious scenery around them awakened emotion enough to stop the complaints of travellers concerning bad roads, ants, mosquitoes, heat, sand, flies, and the other plagues that flesh is heir to when travelling in tropical regions; and it must be

admitted that, to enjoy the beauties of nature in these countries, one must submit to a good deal of personal discomfort. But, thank Heaven, none of these things could destroy or materially abate the delight of my Vienna friend or myself at the sight of such an enchanted garden of creation as was here opened to us, for example, at Nindiri; and whoever has a mind for such enjoyments may turn his steps this way with the certainty of receiving gratification, but we warn him that he cannot behold the spectacle without paying the price of admission.

CHAP. III.

Rivas, or Nicaragua, and its Inhabitants.— The Cacique Nicaragua.— San Jorge.— Don Tiburcio Chaparia and the New Testament.— Recent Changes.— Situation of Granada.— Population.— The Lake Shore.— The Volcano of Mombacho.— Aspect of Granada.— The Clergy.— Social Life.

THE town of Rivas, or Nicaragua, which the North-American condottiere Walker made his head-quarters during the spring of 1856, and which has become the seat of the new democratic government of the Republic, lies only four leagues north of Virgin Bay. It was the scene of the bloody contest that took place between Walker, in person, with his North American bands, and the troops of Costa Rica. The town consists of an agglomeration of six or seven Indian villages connected with each other, in the centre of which lies the real city of Nicaragua. The three principal of these villages bear the names of Obrajo, Potosi, and Buen-Ayre, which, with their lovely gardens of lofty

cocoa-palms, dark green mangoes, shining yellow bananas, citron, lemon, orange, and cacao-trees, encircle the actual town with a superb garland of tropical vegetation. The houses are low, one-storied, and spacious; and the town is said to stand upon the very spot where Gil Gonzalez Davila, the Spanish discoverer of the country, found the residence and capital of the mighty Indian cacique Nicaragua, whose name has been given to the country.

The population of Rivas is estimated at 12,000, of which about 7000 are Indians, the remainder Ladinos, Sambos, and other hybrids; but in the time of the cacique the country in general was much more thickly peopled, as well as more flourishing than it is now: and it is a question not yet solved where the people obtained all the gold of which the Spaniards found them in possession, and of which the cacique very good-naturedly gave a large quantity to the newcomers, who, in return, liberally presented him with a linen shirt, a piece of silk, and some holy water. The gold found in the country now is chiefly gold-dust from the district of Chontales, concerning which there were many wonderful tales told in 1853, but which have since all died away.

It would be difficult to find now among the Indians so intelligent a person as this cacique Nicaragua is said to have been, for he puzzled the Spaniards considerably with his questions on the causes of day and night, the origin of the world and of the first man; how the soul could exist without a body, and what it could occupy itself with, &c. The only thing his descendants take much interest in, is the gold of which Nicaragua seems to have thought so little. In agriculture they have scarcely made any advances beyond what had been made by their ancestors in the sixteenth century.

As long as the Vanderbilt Company continued undisturbed its transport of passengers across the Isthmus, the people of Rivas and the neighbourhood made great profit by the sale of provisions and all kinds of tropical fruits; but since then the whole department has suffered much from the fines and exactions of Walker and his bands. In this beautiful but unfortunate country the right of the conqueror is as little contested as that of the condor among birds; and he makes as free as he pleases with the purses and throats of his neighbours, until he himself gets an idea

of some other right than his own by feeling his rival's bullet in his body.

After a two hours' ride through pretty light woods from Virgin Bay, we reached the little harbour of San Jorge, also on the shore of Lake Nicaragua. It is an extensive village, and may be regarded as a sort of suburb to Rivas ; in the middle of it is a white church in the Byzantine style, and among the houses it is mostly easy to distinguish those of the two races, Indians and Ladinos, by which it is inhabited. The huts of the Indians are roofed with palm-branches, and even the walls consist of plaited palm-twigs, through which the air passes freely ; but the Ladinos, who though morally inferior to the Indians are more active and intelligent, build their habitations in a more solid style, with clay walls and roofs of pantiles.

It happened to be Sunday when we arrived, and the brown inhabitants had on their cleanest shirts, and were crouching in groups about the square before the church and at the doors of their houses, some of them playing upon the Indian guitar. The village of Buen-Ayre almost joins San Jorge ; and we rode for more than an hour in the direction of Granada, between the

most beautiful gardens and plantations,—cacao-trees, papayas with their crowns of jagged leaves, bananas with their immense bunches of fruit gleaming golden beneath their vast and shining leaves, orange-trees far larger and more fruitful than in North Africa, lofty groves of the cocoa-palm, mangoes, sapotes, anones, and many other delicious fruits of the equatorial zone rising above the living hedges of cactus and agave, whose sharp thorns keep off the cattle more certainly than the best North American fence.

The excessive heat of the day forced us to enter one of the haciendas, denominated “El dulce nombre de Jesus,” in which modest little habitation we met with a friendly reception. The proprietor, Don Tiburcio Chaparia, was deeply engaged with a book when we saluted him, and begged his permission to seek a shelter from the heat for some hours beneath his hospitable roof. As it was a very unusual thing to see a Ladino reading with such profound attention, we afterwards begged to look at his book, and found to our surprise that it was a New Testament, in Spanish and English, which he had bought for a trifle from an American in Virgin Bay. To our question whether he did not fear

to read a book that, though holy, was forbidden by his Church, he smiled, and said their priest did not trouble himself about what people read, or whether they read at all, provided only they went to confession once a year and paid their church-rates punctually. He seemed to be interested in what he was reading, but could not give us any very clear account of the impression made on him.

This planter was an opulent man. He possessed more land than many a nobleman among us, and his garden was perfectly gorgeous with its wealth of fruit; but his house was in such a simple and rough style, as many of our poor would be almost ashamed of. The verandah was supported on rough stakes; the single large room was furnished with chairs made of pieces of cow-hide stretched over wooden frames clumsily joined together; and along the whole length of the room were ranged the never-failing hammocks of agave fibre, in which people here will lie swinging themselves for whole days without ever speaking and scarcely moving a muscle.

We got into a long conversation with Don Tiburcio concerning the past and present of Nicaragua; and he described to me with much

eloquence how everything was changed since the Americans had come into the country, and since the Transit Company had established themselves at Virgin Bay. The first effect had been a great change in the value of money and the prices of provisions, the results of which for the hacienda proprietors had been both good and evil.

The produce of their land brought four-fold what it had done, but the wages of labourers had risen in equal proportion. A *real*, or about sixpence, a day had been formerly the customary wages, and they were now four, or, in the time of the cacao harvest, often much more. On the other hand, there was now a sale for such things as mangoes and cocoa-nuts, which formerly had been of no value at all.

In the cool of the evening we continued our journey from Rivas to Granada, passing as before through light woods, much less grand and imposing in their character than those of Costa Rica. We met many Indians walking singly and on foot to the market of Granada, and carrying bundles on their backs; but even the smallest Indian boy was never without his gleaming machete. We crossed on our route only a single slender stream, which takes its rise among

the low coast hills, and soon falls into the sea. The want of water is much felt during the dry season in this western country, and in many villages we were obliged to buy the well-water for our mules. The reception of strangers in these regions is not always very hospitable; and, with the exception of Realejo, Granada, and the stations of the Transit Company, there is not an inn in the whole country.

Granada lies on the north-western shore of the great Lake of Nicaragua. It is not the most populous town, but the richest, and by its position the most important in the republic. Since the reign of Walker it has lost its almost exclusive privilege of choosing the members of the government from its own patrician families,—a privilege that was divided between it and Leon; but it may console itself with the reflection that its rival has fallen far lower in power and prosperity, and certainly has no very enviable fate under the rule of the ex-Prussian cornet, Bruno von Nazmer.

Under the Spanish dominion Granada was more wealthy and prosperous, but not more populous, than at present. At the beginning of 1854 it counted nearly 15,000 inhabitants, and

the number would in all probability have increased if the country had enjoyed the peace that was hoped for after the conclusion of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty; but the terrible civil war that broke out with the revolt of the town of Leon, and the incursion of the democrats from Honduras, has occasioned Granada more suffering than all the anarchy and party struggles of preceding years. Chamorro, the unfortunate president, threw himself into the place with his defeated army, and defended himself with barricaded streets and barred-up houses, like a jaguar at bay, against double the number of democrats. Steel, lead, and fire did their work in the streets; many lives were sacrificed, and many opulent families escaped to the lake, where Chamorro, with the aid of some Indians from Chontales, and his large vessels, still maintained the superiority. The Vanderbilt Company, with its steamers, remained strictly neutral; but some Americans from the States fought on both sides, and Chamorro engaged at a high price the services of some Californian riflemen, who did him good service by killing many of his rivals by well-aimed shots from the roof of the parish church. But Walker's arrival subsequently de-

cided the affair in favour of the democrats, and gave a fresh impulse to the emigration from Granada. The foreign merchants are said to have all left the place, or been ruined.

The situation of Granada is not so picturesque as it has sometimes been described; it stands neither close to the lake nor at the foot of the volcano of Mombacho. The low-lying eastern part of the town is a quarter of an hour's walk from the water side, and separated from it by a sort of marshy wilderness in which only a few insignificant plantations of bananas, palms, and sugar-cane appear as oases; but it is peopled by swarms of pretty wild turtle-doves, which, as well as the harmless carrion kite, flutter about as confidently among human dwellings as sparrows do with us.

The wide arch of the bay forms the harbour, which is protected towards the south-east by a group of volcanic islands, called the Corales, whose picturesque masses of stone are draped and wreathed with luxuriant vegetation; but towards the north it is quite open to the winds. Large vessels, as for instance the steamers of the Transit Company which come here twice a month, anchor at a considerable distance on the

cast side of the bay; and only the Bongos, or great flat canoe of the natives, can enter the actual harbour.

After a prevalence of easterly winds, the water of the lake near the shore is impregnated with a mass of decaying vegetable matter, which gives it a dirty appearance, and probably generates the miasma which, in connexion with other causes, produces the dangerous intermittent fever that sometimes rages in the town, and still more in the cottages near the lake. Probably it was for the sake of a healthier situation that the Spaniards, under Hernandez de Cordova, built their houses at some distance from the lake; they would not purchase a commercial advantage at the price of health.

The mountain of Mombacho, which rises at a league south of Granada, is an isolated, burnt-out volcano, of the form of an irregular truncated cone, the outline of which has some resemblance to the island of Capri in the Gulf of Naples. Even in the dry season its summit is usually veiled in clouds, which, floating up and down under the action of the wind, give it the appearance of a smoking crater. A dense tropical forest clothes it from the base to the summit, and

would render the ascent very difficult without the additional hindrance of the poisonous snakes and tigers that abound in it. It is, however, far less fear of the snakes and tigers than simple laziness that has prevented the people of Granada from making the attempt. Its height appears to be about 4000 feet above the level of the lake, but no trigonometrical measurement of it has ever been made. From attentive observation of its summit with the telescope, we inferred that considerable changes had taken place in its original form, and that the old crater had fallen in.

Granada is one of the oldest of the Spanish settlements in Central America, and was founded by Hernandez de Cordova in 1522, shortly after the discovery of the country by Gil Gonzalez Davila. Its central position was well adapted to facilitate the communication between the two oceans, and probably led to the settlement of the Spanish colony.

The Irish missionary, Thomas Gage, who visited it in 1665, describes it as having handsomer houses than the capital Leon; and the merchants as rich and enterprising, carrying on an active trade not only with the neighbouring states of Honduras, San Salvador, and Guate-

mala, but also with Carthagena, Panama, and the harbour of Peru.

He mentions having seen caravans laden with indigo and cochineal, and another with a large quantity of silver for the treasury of the King of Spain. He also maintains, however, that he saw in the harbour large ships that sailed direct to Carthagena, and even to Spain. But it is not possible to believe this, as Granada can have had no other water communication with the Eastern sea than by the river San Juan, which is so full of shallows and rapids, that even the smallest American river steamers with their little draught find difficulties in the navigation, and the flattest of them cannot pass the *raudales*.

Of the city of Granada itself there is not much to be said ; the suburbs have a deplorable aspect, and are inhabited by a poor and dirty mongrel population. The interior of the town is regularly built, and, like all old Spanish towns, has a certain grand solidity of character in its architecture, but little that is graceful or pleasing. The houses are of only one story, with very thick, strong walls, and spacious courts and galleries in the Moorish Andalusian style ; and many of them have now a very ruinous appear-

ance. They seem to have been entirely neglected since the time when Central America threw off the Spanish yoke; and whatever may have been gained by that movement, there have certainly been no advances in public security, peace, or prosperity. All the churches and public buildings date from the Spanish time: from the former the valuable ornaments have all disappeared; and though their altars still display abundance of gilding, the massive gold has found its way into revolutionary hands.

In general, all that has been done since the Liberation has a poverty-stricken make-shift aspect, and seems only intended to serve a temporary purpose; and it may be doubted whether, without the infusion of the more vigorous elements from the North, the country could even maintain the shadow of political existence.

Among the various races by which it is peopled, the pure Indians form the most industrious, useful, and respectable portion of the population. In the towns they are mostly day-labourers; and those resident in the neighbouring villages provide the market of Granada with maize, fruit, fodder for cattle, and some trifling productions of their industry. These Indians all exhibit in

their features the well-known type of the South American races, except that they are of a somewhat lighter complexion. Unfortunately, though they are peaceful and well disposed, they are very timid, apparently incapable of intellectual progress, and chiefly animated by two passions, namely, hatred to the Ladinos, and love for brandy.

The Spanish Creoles, though their number scarcely amounts to 1200, still retain all the advantages of wealth and political influence, and they exhibit a decided mental superiority over the other races, however corrupt and degraded in other respects. The president of the state, the ministers, generals, and officers of rank, magistrates, priests, ambassadors, and almost all official persons, are Creoles; that is, of Spanish descent; or, at least, endeavour to pass for such, and carefully conceal the smallest mixture of Indian blood that may have polluted the pure Castilian fluid.

The Creoles of Nicaragua struck us, nevertheless, as less purely Spanish than their neighbours of Costa Rica, and their Castilian sounded less genuine than that of San José and Cartago. Among the opulent inhabitants of Granada the

French fashions have also of late years replaced the simple national costume, though not so entirely with the women as with the men. The high, equable temperature of the climate makes a light and easy costume indispensable; and the ladies in Granada appear in their ordinary domestic life with arms and neck bare. The tight-fitting fashions of Europe would be, one would suppose, intolerable here; and yet some fair ladies of patrician families have condemned themselves to this torture. The propaganda of the fashions makes many more converts than that of religious faith, as may be seen in Central America as well as on the Bosphorus.

The daily life and occupations of the Creole population may be described in very few words, for human life under the tropics is as simple and uniform as organic nature is varied and manifold. The higher classes of Granada are far more morally corrupt than the lower, though their corruption is covered with the varnish of Spanish courtesy. The long-continued exhausting, tyrannous colonial rule of Spain, the recent thoughtless and profligate proceedings of the Central American demagogues, the ever-recurring horrors of revolution and civil war, the rage of parties, the rivalry of towns, the anti-

pathy of races, and the more private forms of envy, hatred, and malice, have acted most injuriously upon the character of Nicaragua; and the paroxysms of anarchy which occur about once every three years have often changed it for a time into a very slaughter-house. In these times no life or property was safe, and no one ever left his home without being well armed.

The people of Granada, like all New Spaniards, prefer trade, and especially petty traffic, to any other occupation; but as they are in the highest degree untrustworthy in business, and no reliance can be placed on their word, every undertaking of European merchants in connexion with them must be at still greater risk than even in Mexico. In addition to matters of trade, political party intrigues, the struggle for places, and what selfish use may be made of power when gained, form the sole daily topics of conversation. Granada was in the first year succeeding the Liberation democratically disposed; but has frequently changed her political colours since then, and, when I was there, had lately been the focus of the aristocratic or conservative party, whose leader, in 1854, was the well-known President Don Fruto-Chamorro.

Another of the regular employments of the

Granada people, and one of their predominant passions, is gambling, and especially the betting on cock-fights; but some little time also is taken up by religious ceremonies, the clergy being more powerful and influential, but also much more corrupt, than in Costa Rica. Singularly enough, too, they generally incline to the revolutionary or democratic party, especially in Leon, where most of the patrician families are devotedly attached to it. The masculine population of Granada is not very devoutly disposed, but mostly leaves the church-going to the señoras and señoritas, of whom a dozen may always be seen kneeling on the flags of the church for one caballero who shows himself there. In other matters social life is here, as in most of the other towns of the country, in the highest degree tedious and insipid. Whoever is not compelled by hunger to work, swings himself the greater part of the day in his hammock, smokes paper cigars, which even the ladies do not disdain; gapes through the always open windows at the blue tropical sky, and enjoys in perfection the state of do-nothingness which passes here for life. The exertion of the brain is in Granada dreaded even more than that of

the muscles. The ladies have, indeed, within these few years begun to play a few waltzes and polkas on the piano, or perhaps some very easy pieces out of Italian operas, though this custom is of European introduction. But people read nothing, not so much as a romance or a newspaper, and think as little as possible; and their conversation consists only of vapid and insincere conventional commonplaces, which are a disgrace to the noble Castilian language in which they are uttered by these degenerate descendants of the conquerors of America.

CHAP. IV.

Travelling in the dry Season.—Its bright, and its shady Side.
 — Massaya. — Indian Weddings. — A Town without
 Water.—Proposed Remedy.—Prosperity of the Place.—
 Managua and its Lake.—Matiares. —A Colony of Apes.
 — Filial Attachment in a juvenile Ape. — Nagarote. —
 Pueblo Nuevo.—Vegetable Pillars.

THE month of February falls in Nicaragua in the midst of the *Verano*, or dry season, and offers to the traveller who wishes to become well acquainted with the country, the inestimable advantage of being able to make all his rambles and excursions under a clear sky, and on firm ground. This at least is the case in the western part of the state, where the forest is not dense enough to intercept the sunbeams. Wandering naturalists or hunters, if they can bring themselves to disregard the attacks of the *garrapatos*,—a kind of tick or flea of various sizes which swarm in the bushes, and delight in an opportunity of having a bite at a human skin,—

may follow their several pursuits with advantage during the verano; and the game generally crowd towards the spots where some little runnel of a brook still affords them the refreshment of water. Mules and horses, too, get less fatigued in this season, when they have not to toil through mire and pools in their woodland path; though it is true that they do not find the abundant green food of the rainy seasons, but have to content themselves often with the dried stalks of Indian corn, which is all the Indian *ranchos* afford. They do not indeed always afford that without obvious unwillingness; and one has to give both hard *reals* and good words, both "love and money," to obtain even a very scanty supply; for their laziness generally hinders them from planting more than is just sufficient for their own consumption. This want of fodder for horses and mules during the dry season, is a great hindrance to military operations; and between the months of February and May, when it is scarcest, the passage of troops becomes almost impossible.

In Granada we had hired mules for our journey to Managua, and, in spite of all our care and caution, were after all cheated by the Ladino; for

though, short as the distance is, we were to pay him four piastres each for them, he sent us only wretched, tired animals. Our first station was to be at Massaya, one of the smallest but most industrious, peaceful, and prosperous of all the towns of this much agitated and unfortunate republic of Nicaragua, in which the elements of revolution and anarchy appear as inexhaustible as the combustible matter beneath its volcanic soil.

The town lies on a small but elevated plain, consisting almost entirely of tuffa and the deposit from old volcanic eruptions, mud and ashes alternating with beds of lava. The soil is uncommonly fertile; indeed this light tuffa is a real blessing, for even in summer, when rain is entirely wanting, the sprouting, blossoming, and ripening of plants goes on. The maize, which is just carelessly thrown into the ground, returns five hundred fold, and there are three harvests in the year. The green shoots of the banana may be almost seen to grow, and it bears fruit in nine months. Cacao-trees and tobacco, too, flourish wonderfully; and the town, with its industrious and harmless population, would seem most delightfully situated if it were not for the scarcity of water, which can only be obtained from a lake

lying 1200 feet lower, and which is merely the filled-up crater of a volcano.

Massaya is the most cheerful-looking town in Nicaragua: the streets are broad, airy, and planted with trees; the houses low, as they commonly are in this country, in most cases for fear of earthquakes; but the climate and the abundance of space favour this mode of building even where, as in Massaya, there is little danger, as the safety valve of an open active volcano is found in the neighbourhood. The walls of the houses here are thick and solid; the roofs of tiles; and many have verandah and balconies towards the street. Those of the opulent Creoles frequently possess spacious courts and galleries supported on pillars, and many remind you of the style of those in Andalusia. The Indian inhabitants of the suburbs and surrounding villages, seldom adopt this Spanish mode of architecture, but content themselves with poor cottages without verandahs, or even with open ranchos. In such a climate as this, there is no great anxiety about how you are to be housed; and if Massaya exhibits more approach to what we call comfort than most of the other small

provincial towns, it is merely from its greater industry and prosperity.

The preparation of the hanging mats, or hammocks, is here carried on on a large scale, as well as the plaiting of coloured mats for various purposes, and the manufacture of the ordinary palm hats, and of shoes, saddles, coarse cotton cloth, and a variety of less important articles, including *dulces*, a sweatmeat in the form of jelly, from a fruit called toronja, which is a good deal like guava jelly. Particularly good tobacco is raised here, and many cigars sent to various foreign countries as well as to different parts of Nicaragua; and articles of European manufacture are seen here oftener than anywhere else in the country.

The most remarkable building is the church, which is in a mixed Byzantine and Gothic style of architecture, with a massive quadrangular steeple. It stands in the middle of the square that serves as a market-place, where, when we were there, hundreds of Indians were offering for sale the productions of their gardens, especially the most delicious fruits, and also an incredible variety of *sweeties* of all sorts, in which the people greatly delight. From early morning,

even before sunrise, there was a constant clamour going on before the doors of the church, as some Indian weddings were being celebrated to the accompaniment of loud but melancholy music, and the firing of a mortar. The ceremony is got through pretty quickly: the bells ring; the priest gives his blessing; the Indians pay; and then the bridal pair return to their *pueblo*, where they eat a few sweetmeats, take a sip of brandy, and then go about their ordinary business. The Spanish Creoles and Ladinos, however, celebrate their weddings with more pomp and show, and on leaving the church fire off rockets, and continue their feasting and jollification half the day.

The Indian women appeared to be almost all day long employed in climbing up and down the steep and difficult path to the lake with their water pitchers. We visited this lake several times, and met crowds of them on the path cut in the precipitous volcanic rock down which also a great number of horses, mules, and cows were being led to water. Below, on the margin of the lake, were hundreds of brown women, occupied in getting water or washing their clothes; but the scenery around was indescribably wild and

solemn. Vast andesit rocks rise abrupt and perpendicular from the bosom of the lake; and the barren grandeur of the stony wall is only occasionally relieved by the tropical vegetation which here and there has forced its way through the clefts and hangs its trailing lianas and bauhinias over the crag; and by the gambols of the ring-tailed monkeys that scramble up and down to drink; for the animals, too, suffer much from the prevailing want of water. That of the lake has a peculiar taste, but is said not to be unwholesome.

Since the Americans have begun to concern themselves about this almost forgotten isthmus country, a plan has been formed for relieving the people of Massaya from the everlasting toil and trouble of this water-carrying. Two French merchants who have been settled here for twenty years, issued, in November 1851, a prospectus of a company "*por la distribucion del agua en la ciudad de Massaya.*" It was to be started with a capital of 80,000 piastres in 8000 shares; a steam-engine to be sent for from France; and the town to be easily and abundantly supplied.

In this prospectus the population is taken at from 20,000 to 25,000, and it is calculated that

at least 4000 women and children are daily employed in the laborious and unhealthy occupation of fetching water from the lake. The quantity they obtain is said to be on an average about 12,000 *cantaros* (the cantaro is about five gallons); and the company undertakes, with the aid of the steam-engine, to draw 64,000 cantaros, and to deliver it at the rate of sixteen cantaros the real. It is assumed that under these circumstances the consumption of water would be greatly increased, and that with a daily receipt of 500 piastres a very satisfactory prospect would be afforded to shareholders; but so many obstacles have arisen to the actual execution of the plan, that for the present there seems little hope of the poor Indian women being released from their weary task of carrying heavy water pitchers on their heads up a height of 1200 feet.

With the exception of this sad inconvenience of the want of water, this mountain plateau, on which both Massaya and the before-mentioned beautiful village of Nindiri are situated, must be regarded as a very favoured district. Lying from 1000 to 1500 feet higher than Granada, it is cooler and probably healthier; and with a good road to the capital, which is but

twelve miles off, and to the lake, it would find a ready market for the numerous productions which its rich soil brings forth in unusual quantity and excellence. The far greater prosperity and comfort of external existence in Massaya, seems even to have awakened something of the taste for the beautiful which is generally so strikingly deficient in these countries. Some of the better sort of Indian houses, where the manufacture of the swinging mats is carried on, have arranged the kind of rope-walk required for it into beautiful regular avenues of banana, orange, or mango-trees; and others have made a neat and tasteful arrangement of their pieces of ground, and surrounded them with cactus hedges.

Nindiri lies about three miles north of Massaya, and the space between them is nearly filled up with haciendas and pueblos. The road leads through the same light forest; but as, at the time of year when we passed through it, the water had become scarce, most of the animals had forsaken it, and it seemed lonely and dull. Even a bird was very rarely seen. The town of Managua, which we reached after a moderate day's journey, lies on the southern shore of the lake to

which it gives its name, and is said to have 10,000 or 12,000 inhabitants. Its distance from Massaya is about eight leagues, or twenty-four miles; and it forms the centre of the level lake district extending eastward, without interruption, to Lake Tipitapa, and westward to Matiares.

In the year 1854 it was the seat of government, and the President Chamorro kept here the nucleus of the armed force with which he threatened the lovers of revolution in Leon.

We took up our quarters in the hospitable mansion of Don Hyppolito Prato; and his wife, a stately, portly dame, played her part of hostess with much decorum, and with a sort of geniality not common among the New Spaniards. The house was large and clean, and the spacious court planted with oranges, bananas, and pine-apples.

In spite of the strong sea breeze that was blowing from the north-east, the atmosphere in Managua was hot and dry. At eight o'clock in the morning the thermometer stood at 82° Fahr., and by noon it had risen to 96°. I went down to the lake to get a bath, and found the thick-looking, yellowish-green water violently agitated

by the wind, though the waves were not so high as in the more extensive Lake of Nicaragua. The shore consists of beds of tuffa and conglomerate, in layers of from a foot and a half to two feet thick; it is an alluvial formation, containing remains of still living species. The mountain ranges to the north and east have not a picturesque outline, and the ridge of the Cordillera does not rise above 4000 feet. The declivity of the mountain towards the lake is sometimes wooded, but in other parts naked and rocky; and the promontory of Childepe, about a mile off Managua, projects into the lake in a bold and striking form.

Four arched headlands rise about 2000 feet above the water, the last approaching the volcanic form and truncated, but showing no crater, and with no appearance of having ever been in action. On the shores, too, I found none of the heaps of pumice-stone so common in Nicaragua, and not a trace of shell-fish, though in fish of other kinds this great fresh-water lake abounds. I even saw caimans of eight or ten feet long, though not quite of such terrible appearance as Thomas Gage describes, floating on the surface of the water; and they were so still, that if I had not

distinguished with my telescope their scaly armour, I should not have known them from logs of wood. There were great numbers of herons and turtle-doves drinking at the brink of the lake, and a crowd of women and girls washing; they were mostly Indians, and naked to the waist, with their hair hanging down: a little way off there were some young men bathing.

In the low mountains south of Managua there are several small basin-shaped lakes, the largest of which, that of Nihapa, about two leagues off, is the crater of an ancient volcano, and it has on its rocky walls some of the old Indian sculptures. These lakes (except one which is salt) are full of fish, and are much used by the inhabitants for washing and bathing. None of them seem to have any mode of effluence, and they are mostly very deep.

The journey from Managua to Leon lies through what is supposed to be one of the most dangerous districts in the country; but I travelled it safely in company only with a single Indian, who led my two beasts of burden. During the first day we passed through dry woods, at a short distance from the shore of the lake; and when the path approached it, and

there was an opening in the forest, we caught glimpses of some fine volcano scenery on the north-west, but otherwise the landscape was extremely monotonous. The lofty and still active volcano of Momotombo forms here a vast regular cone of beautiful proportions, only inferior to Omotepec; its greatest breadth is from south-west to north-east; its summit is cut off, but no smoke was visible from its crater when we saw it.

At Matiares I found some poor quarters for the night in the house of a mulatto woman, who gave me a scanty supper of eggs and chocolate, for which she made me pay a Spanish piastre.

The place had a small garrison on account of the robbers that haunt the neighbouring forest, as well as to serve as a guard to the convicts who work here at road-making, chained two and two together, with heavy fetters on their ankles. There were more Ladinos and Sambos among them than Indians; some of them with terribly deceitful and murderous-looking faces.

The mulatto house swarmed so with vermin that, in spite of the gale that was blowing, I left it in the middle of the night, and lay down on the ground wrapped in a blanket, which did not however protect me from the

clouds of dust that the north wind brought with it. My Indian slept quite soundly in spite of the fleas, the *inguas*, and the roaring of the storm, and would not even have been up in the morning in time to load the mules, if I had not waked him.

When he had given them some water, we set off in the direction of Pueblo Nuevo, where the plain passes into a hilly country consisting of horizontal alluvial beds, and rising to about 300 feet above the sea. The character of the forest was the same as that we had passed on the preceding day, and the voices of the turtle-doves were saluting the rising sun in plaintive tones. My journal mentions, as the only phenomenon that struck me, the appearance of a colony of monk-apes: they are the least timid of all the species; but yet even they usually retire at the sight of a human being, though not in such hurried leaps as their relatives the ring-tailed monkeys, nor with such abominable howls as some other species. This time, however, they remained sitting quietly on the ceiba-trees, and looked with apparent satisfaction at the biped and quadruped wayfarers as they passed. There was an old surly-looking

fellow (probably the patriarch of the family), and about twenty younger members, partly grouped about him on the same tree, partly on some neighbouring ones, where some of the most juvenile swung themselves about and chattered at us: and there was an elderly lady with a young one on her back who gave a screech or two, and flung some twigs from the tree, to express either astonishment or anger at the sight of us.

That these apes did not rush away as usual, may perhaps be attributed to the phlegm and love of repose of the aged head of the family, who appeared to suffer from some of the infirmities natural to his time of life, and did not like to be disturbed; or it might be that this tribe was accustomed to the sight of men, and to not being disturbed by them. I felt considerably tempted to shoot the old she-ape, in order to make prize of her young one; but my Indian, who noticed my movement with my gun, begged me not to do it, saying the flesh of these creatures smells unpleasantly, is very tough and bad to eat, and that, moreover, a particular curse rested upon the hunter who shot one of this white-headed race. He can

never get any large game for a whole year, but is sure to miss them if he is ever so close. Whilst my brown companion was thus pleading the cause of the ape family, there awoke in me a certain remorseful recollection that combined with his advocacy to incline me to compassion.

In the valley of the Rio Jesus Maria, on the western side of Costa Rica, I once shot a mother ape, who, when falling mortally wounded from a tree, threw herself upon her breast as if, it seemed to me, she was anxious even in death to guard from damage the poor little hairy fellow that was sitting upon her back. It was not hurt, and I took it with me to the rancho in which I and my companion were at that time living. But all my caresses, and the best banana food I could get for it, never enabled it to get over the aversion it seemed to have for me. It could not, apparently, forgive me for the slaughter of its mother.

Between Nagarote and Pueblo is the district especially haunted in war-time by hordes of banditti. Nagarote is a wretched Indian village of mud huts thatched with palm-straw, and

where the very dirty and repulsive-looking inhabitants would sell us neither eggs nor milk.

Pueblo Nuevo is a larger place, with perhaps a thousand inhabitants of mixed Indians and Ladinos. A few Creoles live here too, and, as usual, are the owners of the shops and of the cleanest houses.

One peculiar ornament of the place consists of the enormous cactus pillars, of from twenty to thirty feet high, which enclose the courts and gardens. No production of the tropics, not even the cocoa-palm, is so new and strange to the northern visitor as these. Looking at them from a little distance, he may really take them for artificial columns; for it is only at about the height of twenty-five feet they become slender enough to wave slightly in the wind. They form the very best fence for property that can be desired; and if they could be transplanted to the olive gardens of Italy and Provence, the proprietors might save the expense of their walls and the trouble of their array of broken glass. For the latter, nature has furnished the cacti with a most efficient substitute in the sharp thorns, four or five inches long, with which she has provided

them, and which might enable them to defy the boldest "fence-breaker" of the North American prairies. I must own, however, I never saw these vegetable columns of such size and strength as at Pueblo Nuevo.

CHAP. V

LEON.

Situation of the City.—Modern and ancient Freebooters. — A Democratic Bishop. — Leon in the Year 1665. — A luxurious Life.— Mahomet's Paradise.—The Cathedral of St. Peter.—A Church turned into a Citadel.—Indian Bishops. — A Bird's-eye View of Leon.— La Merced Recoleccion. — Subtiaba. — The Population of Leon.— The Indians. — Cruelties of the Spaniards to the Natives. — Man-baiting. — The Hispano-Americans, and the Expiation of their Offences.

THE former capital of Nicaragua lies in a hot, but beautiful and fertile plain, between Lake Managua and the Pacific Ocean, not far from the celebrated volcano of Marabios, from which the fiery subterranean powers have so often burst forth in unrestrained fury. The regular plan on which the city is built, and its broad streets, come upon you rather as a surprise, and preserve to it, even in its decay, some trace of its former grandeur. It covers more ground than the city of Havannah; the houses are low but spacious, and surrounded

with courts and gardens. From its foundation by Hernandez de Cordova in 1523 to the present day, Leon has played an important part in the history of Central America; and no town, not even the unfortunate Granada, has suffered more from political catastrophes. The freebooting expedition of Walker, and the last revolution got up by Castellon against Chamorro, though the causes of much mischief, were still only trifles compared with the piratical attack of Dampier in 1685, in which he burnt the churches, convents, and palaces; or the horrible scenes of the civil war of 1823, which began with a night of St. Bartholomew. The numbers of magnificent buildings, half or entirely in ruins, testify to these things as well as to the former magnificence of Leon; but its greatness has passed away for ever with the establishment of the independence of Central America; the tocsin of freedom has been the knell of its glory.

The most furious passions of faction have raged in its streets, and the well-known bishop Don Jorge Veteri y Ungo, the head of the democratic party, a man of great energy, and the most eloquent agitator of the country, used to go into the pulpit armed with sword and pistols,

and, in the sacred aisles of the cathedral, urge the people to an attack on the rival party.

Thomas Gage, the renowned traveller and missionary before referred to, the only observer who in 1665 had ever succeeded in penetrating into the country in defiance of the gloomy suspicion of the Spanish rulers and of the Inquisition, relates wonders concerning the magnificence of the capital of Nicaragua, and the life of luxurious pleasure led by its inhabitants in sight of the threatening volcano. It was, according to him, a land flowing with milk and honey, where life was all enjoyment; a city of stately houses with elegant verandahs; of gardens filled with exquisite flowers and fruits, where pleasure was the only pursuit of the voluptuous inhabitants, who shunned every kind of labour, and left to others the toil of commerce for which it was so advantageously situated.

This city was, with one exception, the most important in the vice-kingdom of Guatemala, and the seat of the provincial governor, of a numerous nobility, and of a still more numerous clergy. A large portion of the revenues and taxes flowed towards it; and the rich Spanish landowners, who forced the natives to work harder for them

than the West Indian planters ever did their negroes, settled at Leon, where they formed a privileged caste, and wasted in revelry, in their haciendas, what the groaning Indians earned for them by their toil under the burning sun.

The mode of life customary in Leon obtained for it the appellation of "Mahomet's Paradise," which, it must be owned, sounds like a mockery to the present poverty-stricken population, who, but for their bananas and beans, might have died of hunger in the recent revolutionary times; and when you stand in its desolate streets, in which no sound of carriage-wheels, and scarcely that of a horse's hoof, breaks the gloomy silence, it is hard to believe in its former luxury and splendour.

Its palaces, the bishop's only excepted, are lying in ruins; whichever way you look, you see signs of the dreariest neglect and decay; and the few inhabitants that are to be seen usually pass each other in gloomy silence.

The cathedral of Leon, which stands in the great square in the middle of the town, is considered the most important piece of architecture in all Spanish America. It was only completed in 1743, had taken thirty-seven years in build-

ing, and is said to have cost 5,000,000 of Spanish piastres. It is in the Renaissance style, massive and imposing, but somewhat heavy in its effect. That it has withstood the power of all earthquakes for above a hundred years may be regarded as a sufficient proof of its strength and solidity; and it has also been subjected to other trials, for in every revolution cannon have been directed against it. They have done it but little damage, however; and as for musket-balls, they have not much more effect on it than hail-stones. Even the great conflagration of 1823—when the partisans of the two factions ran about the streets, setting fire to churches, palaces, convents, and private houses—did but blacken a little the massive walls of the cathedral; and it has served as a citadel, and its terraced roof been planted with cannon in all the civil wars. The interior of this cathedral has been described by both Stephens and Squier the American resident, and the latter has given a tolerably good drawing of it.

An extremely beautiful panoramic view of the town and country round is obtained from this terrace. The eye ranges to the west over Chinandega and Realejo to the blue expanse of the

Pacific world of waters; northward, the view of the Gulf of Fonseca is intercepted by the volcanic range of the Marabios, extending from the giant Momotombo, near Lake Managua, to the volcano *el Viego* (the Ancient One), but separated by a plain from the Cosequina group. Between these two colossal cones, the extremities of this remarkable volcanic range, rises the beautiful peak of the Telica; and the whole range is distinguished from those of Costa Rica and the southern part of Nicaragua, by its baldness, its volcanic activity having been probably much more recent. Rugged, wild, and rent, its declivities, covered with lava, have hitherto resisted all the crumbling influences of the atmosphere; and in 1849 there was an eruption from one of these volcanoes, which was witnessed by Mr. Squier, and of which he has given a most picturesque description; but no one of the nine showed any signs of activity in February, 1854.

The Indian town of Subtiaba, which was in existence when the country was first discovered, and is still inhabited by a pure native population, is close to Leon; and, indeed, forms a part of it, though it has a separate municipal government. It has a large church, regarded as, next to the

cathedral, the finest in the country; and the Indians are not only more religious, but more civilised than in any other town of Central America. Here, at the time of the Spanish conquest, resided the mighty cacique of Nagrando, and a spacious temple with idols stood in the place now occupied by the church of *La Merced*.

The monk Fray Francisco de Bobadilla, so often mentioned in the history of this country, and who was animated by so fiery a zeal for the propagation of the faith, burnt the temple, destroyed the idols, and, by the combined influence of persuasion, threats, and holy water, induced the cacique, with 40,000 of his subjects, to be transformed from "idolaters and children of the devil" into good baptized Christians.

The present population of Leon is about 20,000,—one-third of what it was under the Spanish rule; and even if that of the neighbouring Indian villages should be included, it could not be made to amount to more than 30,000. Among these there are not at most more than 1500 persons of pure Spanish descent, and they do not, as in Granada, occupy themselves with commerce; indeed, the trade of Leon has either gone altogether to ruin, or withdrawn itself towards

the sea-coast, where a Hamburg mercantile house and some English ones have established depôts of goods, though they are not secure from plunderers in times of revolution. The Ladinos are more numerous than Indians in Leon Proper, as the latter are chiefly gardeners and tillers of the soil; and they supply the market abundantly with the vegetables and fruits of the tropic zone, especially bananas, pine-apples, and water-melons. All foreigners settled here, and persons acquainted with the country,—in particular the British Consul, Manning, who has lived in Nicaragua for thirty years, and traversed it in all directions,—agree in the opinion that the Indians of the plain of Leon are the best part of the population; the most peaceful, industrious, and honest. The noble *Toltek* blood would seem to have remained purer in them than in others, with less mixture of the *Chichemek*; their complexion is much lighter than that of the Indians of Rivas, who bear a very indifferent character among the native races. The Indians mostly remain passive in the civil wars, and take no part in the strife unless they are compelled by the military chiefs, or excited by agitation from the pulpit.

This part of Nicaragua was at the time of the Spanish conquest particularly populous and well cultivated; the native towns were not so large and magnificent as in the kingdoms of the Quichés and Aztecs, but the inhabitants were considerably advanced in civilisation, built themselves neat palm-huts as well as temples, and formed under their caciques regularly organised communities; but inhuman treatment by their white conquerors has enfeebled their minds and diminished their numbers, even more here than in Peru and Mexico. One of the most faithful chroniclers and an eye-witness of the condition of the Indians under Spanish rule, was the noble Bartolomeo de las Casas, bishop of Chiapa, who visited the province of Nicaragua and its capital in the 17th century, and has described the terrible tyranny exercised over the natives by Pedrarius Davila.

The Indians, without distinction of age, sex, or rank, were compelled to perform the services of slaves for their Spanish masters. Grey-haired old men, women and children, nobles, and even caciques, had to labour almost day and night in tilling the ground, building haciendas, carrying heavy loads of timber, &c., to the harbour.

Thousands sunk under the cruel fatigue they had to undergo, and the number of them transported as slaves to Panama and Peru is estimated by Las Casas at half a million. The pen shrinks, he says, from describing the barbarous tyranny of the governor and his tools. The smallest excuse was thought sufficient for cutting down an Indian, whether man or woman: if their contribution of corn were not punctually delivered, or if any part of their labour was not performed to the satisfaction of their masters, they were immediately condemned to death. The chronicler Oviedo relates instances of inventive cruelty in this Davila that even surpass the deeds of Pizarro.

In 1528 a circumstance had occurred that afforded some ground of suspicion against the Indians. The treasurer, Alonzo de Peralta, had, in company with some other Spaniards, gone on an excursion from Leon to some of the Indian villages of the plain, and had not since been heard of. All attempts to discover the murderers failed, and thereupon Davila sent his soldiers to seize seventeen caciques of the surrounding country; and, though there was not the slightest evidence against them, the monster condemned

them to the most torturing death he could devise.

They were to be brought to the public square, and, in the sight of the people, *torn to pieces by dogs*. This spectacle took place on the 16th of June, 1528, and the Spaniards, accustomed to the horrible exhibition of their *auto-da-fés*, came in crowds to witness it. By way of improving the entertainment of the spectators, the tortures of the Indian princes were to be prolonged in the manner of the bull-fights (another means of training the people to cruelty), and each of the princes was provided with a stick to keep off his assailants as well as he could. At first four or five young dogs were let loose on each, and against these the Indians defended themselves; but just as the unfortunate sufferers thought they had gained the victory, half a dozen older and more experienced bloodhounds were urged into the arena, and in a few moments they had seized the caciques, dragged them to the ground, and torn them to pieces. All the seventeen perished, and their bodies were left on the place for the dogs to devour.

The actual perpetrators of these crimes often escaped punishment (in this life, at least), and

preserved their health and their appetite unimpaired by the stings of conscience. These chivalrous, devout miscreants of Castile, who never neglected to repeat their evening prayers upon the cross of their sword-hilts before lying down to rest, did not always meet with the fate of a Pizarro or an Antonio Peralta. Their lives, which had been a series of alternate ferocious crimes and sensual indulgences, were frequently closed in the odour of sanctity, not unattended by the consolations of the Church. But great historical misdeeds are sure to be visited on the nation guilty of them, if not on the individuals; and this Spanish-American race of tyrants and oppressors seems to have been cursed by the incapacity of learning any other mode of acquiring wealth than that of robbery and murder. They never understood the art of association and co-operative labour; their descendants, the Creoles, are constantly becoming poorer and poorer, and the last lingering prestige of their former greatness is now passing away from them. In Guatemala, the first city of Central America, an Indian chief is now the lord and master, before whom the posterity of the proud Spaniards have to crawl in the dust. In

Nicaragua, San Salvador, and Honduras, half-Indians have made their way into the offices of state; and but for the natural privilege of the superiority of the nobler white race, the Creoles would probably have altogether disappeared. That they are rapidly declining is obvious; but a storm is threatening them from the north that may bring their fate to a speedier termination. The unamiable, but incomparably bold, energetic, and active nation that has carried its republican banner in triumph from the Hudson to the Valley of the Sacramento, is not unlikely before long to drive the progeny of the Spaniards with little ceremony from their blood-stained inheritance. After having clipped off considerable portions of Mexico, they are now making a similar attempt on the Isthmus of Central America, and using as the instrument for this purpose the scum and refuse of their great cities, the bands of Filibusters, who may be regarded as the Cossacks of North America, and whose chief strength lies in the word *annexation*. More powerfully and more irresistibly will these attempts be repeated by the increase of their navigation and the extension of their trade across this world's passage; and most of all by

their superior genius for colonisation, in which art the warlike conquerors from Castile and Andalusia were mere bunglers. How, then, is it possible for the sloth and corruption of their offspring to stand against such a tide as is now rolling in on them? But the pure Indian race being peaceful and industrious, an agricultural and not a hunting nation, like the tribes of North America, may not improbably continue to vegetate under the rule of the new conquerors for hundreds of years after the Creoles of Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, and San Salvador have been swept away.

CHAP. VI.

THE STATE OF NICARAGUA.

A District in ill Repute.—An unpleasant Meeting.—Company on the Road.—Riverado Pelon.—An edifying Conversation with the Commandant of Leon.—Attempt to visit the Volcano of Marabios frustrated.—A Protest, that shares the Fate of most Protests.—Persons who cannot be drowned.—An Advantage of the Democratic Party of Leon.—The culpable Loitering of the Natives, and the Seven-Leagued Boots of the Yankees.—Common Instruments to a noble Purpose.—Chinandega.—The Harbour of Realejo.

THE district between Managua and Leon passed, when we were in the country, for one of the most insecure in Nicaragua; and the part of the road between Matiares and Pueblo Nuevo was especially distinguished in this respect. The most worthless part of the population—the refuse of the Ladinos and Sambos, the sweepings of the revolutions and civil wars—haunted it continually; and most of all when, by the fierce

strife of parties in Leon and Granada, anarchy was established *en permanence*.

Partisans of both sides, cowardly hirelings who deserted from one to the other, vagabonds and professional thieves from the towns and "pueblos," and others who had just discovered that robbery was an easier employment than working all day in the haciendas,—all this good company was to be met with in abundance in the years 1853 and 1854, under the administration of Chamorro, who would sometimes draw the reins tight, and make an effort to establish order, and at others employ as his political agents the most notorious rogues in the country, and bestow on them his civil and military appointments.

Before leaving Costa Rica, a fortunate little state which has maintained quite an exceptional position among the New Spanish republics, we had been warned of the character of the neighbour state. "In that low, hot country on the other side of Guanacaste," said the German Dr. St——r (who now holds an important position in St. José), "you will learn to prize the one you are now leaving. Here, you know, a child might pass in safety with a golden diadem from one

sea to the other; in Nicaragua the calf is not safe in the cow. Whenever you see two men standing together on a lonely road, take my advice, and cock your pistols. Distrust everybody, from the highest officer of the republic to the lowest *peon*. He who will not rob you openly will cheat you secretly, or overreach you in some way, you may depend upon it."

The Doctor knew both countries well; but he had been unlucky in several speculations in Nicaragua, and this may very probably have given a touch of bitterness to his judgment concerning it; though I have heard the same thing from others who could have had no such bias. You do really find a wonderful change in character as well as physiognomy when you cross the wooded range of uninhabited mountains that separates the two countries.

At dawn of day, on the 26th of February, 1854, I left the village of Matiares in company with a single Indian, and took the narrow path across the wooded heights in the direction of Pueblo Nuevo; and, with my preconceived ideas on the subject, was rather startled to meet suddenly at a turn of the path a half-naked Indian, with his gleaming machete uplifted, but

whether with hostile intent, or only with the peaceful purpose of cutting from the tree some fodder for his cow, I could not, in the dimness of the forest, see clearly enough to determine. My hand went to my pistol; but when the Indian saw the gesture, he struck his knife into the ground, and made me a peaceful salutation. He did not, however, seem surprised at my suspicion, perhaps because in this district travellers are usually suspicious; and, after my guide and he had exchanged a few words, we proceeded quietly on our way.

Half a mile before Nagarote the hills, which are of alluvial formation, sink very low; a slender little stream is seen winding through the bottom of the ravine; and on the right, between the trees, you see the blue gleaming mirror of the Managua lake. On the bank of the stream were standing four Ladinos armed with knives, of course, but otherwise also of very doubtful aspect; and, mindful of the warning I had received, I took my double-barrel from my shoulder, and laid it ready across the neck of my horse, calling out at the same time some words in a loud tone, as if I had some companions behind. The Ladinos looked at me with a

sullen expression, and without making any salutation; but they saw that my gun was pointing in their direction, and the banditti of this country, who can seldom muster any but very poor firearms themselves, have, as I have said, a great respect for a good double-barrel. They drew a little aside, and began to talk and gesticulate to one another; and in the meantime I and my guide were making the best of our way past them. At a point where the road rose a little I turned and looked back, and saw that the fellows were still standing on the same spot. I asked my Indian guide what sort of people he took them for; and he answered, "*Muy mala gente* — very bad people!" and I noticed that he had all the time kept his hand on the hilt of his machete.

We had passed the greater part of the road to Pueblo Nuevo, the woods had become lighter and were varied by little dry savannahs in which stood some scattered Indian huts, and I was just thinking I was now safe from any risk of an adventure, when I heard the sound of a horse's hoofs behind me, and immediately afterwards a salutation of the rider—"Buenas tardes, caballero—Beso sus manos." The phrase was ut-

tered, with a sort of grinning civility, by a man who had the most decidedly villanous countenance that I had ever met with in the country. He was a Sambo (a cross between the Indian and the Negro) of the name of Riverado Pelon, and no less a person than a captain in the service of the President of the republic, whose acquaintance I had had the honour of making a few days before on the road between Nindiri and Managua, when he was in the suite of a staff officer of rank. The audacious though sinister expression of the man's face had forcibly struck both me and my travelling companion on our first meeting.

He was now, however, full of compliments and civilities, and wished, he said, to travel to Leon, whither he had been sent by the President, in my company. He thought that, to avoid the heat of the day, we should do well to travel in the night; and he promised that at Pueblo Nuevo, whither we were going, he would procure me fresh horses and a good supper; and, according to the custom of the country, all sorts of amiable and flattering expressions accompanied the proposal; but all the while he was uttering them, a certain sneering, mocking look was never

absent from his face. I received his civilities very coolly, and tried all sorts of ways to get rid of him, but to no purpose. If we rode fast, so did he;—if we loitered, he held in his powerful horse to keep us company.

At Pueblo Nuevo it was inevitable that we should alight at the same posada, and then I informed the disagreeable fellow in very few words that I declined his proposal and would not travel in the night; for my suspicion of him had been further increased by a conversation he had had with two armed horsemen just before we entered the village.

As it was not yet late, and I heard the cry of birds close at hand, I could not resist the temptation of a ramble in the neighbouring woods: so, taking my gun, I set off, having first placed my luggage and my pistols in the apartment of the landlord, where I considered them safe, as, even in this land of rogues, they usually would have been. As soon as ever I returned, however, I perceived that my pistols were gone; and on examining my carpet-bag, I found that it had been broken open, and several articles stolen from it. My host declared he knew nothing of the matter, but admitted that Riverado Pelon,

with whom he was personally acquainted, and whom he had taken for a friend of mine, had been alone in the room. Some of the neighbours, it appeared, had seen him mount his horse and ride away with my pistols in his girdle.

The question was now, what was to be done? This impudent theft, in a house, excited some indignation even here, where highway robberies are mere matters of course. The alcalde of the place was fetched, but he did not give us much assistance; I therefore had a written statement of the affair made out, and properly attested, and the next day rode off as fast as I could to Leon, where Colonel Flores was then acting as Commandant.

The only German who, to my knowledge, was then residing in the city, was a Dr. Theodore Wissmer, a physician and apothecary; and to him I first turned for counsel. Fortunately, he attended the Commandant in his medical capacity, and now immediately went to him and informed him of the robbery. Señor Flores, however, replied that he had no power over Riverado Pelon, who was certainly a very dangerous man, but in the personal service of the President, Chamorro, to whom in various party struggles

he had rendered essential service as spy, agent, recruiting officer, &c. ; and lately, in particular, when he had obtained a number of false witnesses to make a declaration upon oath, against some heads of the opposition, and so afforded the President a pretext for banishing them from the country.

“ Advise your friend,” said the Commandant, “ not to meddle with this man ; and to think himself very lucky that he was not stripped of everything he had.”

Upon being informed of this curious magisterial advice, I went to the Commandant myself. After the exchange of the usual salutations and polite phrases without the smallest real meaning in them, I produced my English letters of recommendation, and laid them before him ; and then the following conversation began :—

“ A countryman of yours has been telling me that you have had a disagreeable adventure with Riverado Pelon. My dear sir, I am excessively sorry. This Pelon is indeed a most thorough villain !”

“ Yes, Commandant ; and I hope that you will help me to obtain justice and to recover my property.”

“ I regret very much that that is out of my power. This Riverado Pelon is a most dangerous man; he is closely connected with all the cheats and robbers in the country; and, moreover, he is now travelling on private business for the President.”

The Commandant looked me in the face as he said these words; and as he could, without much difficulty, perceive my disgust, he added, soothingly :

“ It is a hard case, indeed, that we have to spare men of this sort because we have need of them. Yes; this Pelon is certainly a most notorious rascal, an arch villain—in a word, a Sambo!”

“ But surely,” I exclaimed, “ the President will not take under his protection a common highwayman, who plunders an unoffending stranger recommended to his government? I have witnesses to prove the truth of my accusation. Will you not at least send for them and examine them?”

“ Ah! you seem to have very little idea of what the revolutions have made of us and our poor country. Every means and every instrument is considered good if it will serve party

purposes. This Pelon has made himself useful to the President, and so he does just what he pleases. You had better take care that he does not get you murdered, for all the bad fellows in the country are at his command. Here, in the city of Leon, indeed, I can protect you ; but my power does not extend a pistol-shot beyond it."

I threatened that I would seek the intervention of the British consul.

"It will not avail you anything," said the Commandant, drily. "If we have not ourselves power to punish thieves, what do you suppose a foreign consul can do? Be patient, and submit to circumstances. If you stay much longer in our country you will find that you must do so. These accursed revolutions have upset all law and justice, and it will be long before we can undertake to put down robbers, or even to do without their help. Once more I advise you to have patience. Do not irritate this Riverado Pelon ; and when you leave Leon, don't let any one know in what direction you are going. I dread this man myself, but he is useful to the President. I tell you there is no greater brigand in the country. He is a Sambo!" (*No hay*

un mas grande ladron en este pais. Es un Sambo!)

After this, it was not of much use to think of prosecuting my complaint any further; but I remained some days in Leon, in hopes of being able to make an excursion to the volcano of Marabios. My landlord, however, an old Spaniard, and an honest man, to whom I had mentioned the affair of the robbery, came to tell me, with much anxiety, that he had seen Don Riverado Pelon in earnest conversation with the owner of the mules that I had hired, and on this account it was thought prudent for me to renounce my design. I resolved now to leave Leon quite quietly, engaged other mules, and at midnight set out in the direction of Chinandega; but I must own I did not breathe quite freely till I found myself on the soil of San Salvador, where public affairs were at that time in a tolerably tranquil state, and there was consequently more private security than in Nicaragua. From San Salvador I wrote, by the advice of the Prussian vice-consul, M. Hornmeyer, to the President, Chamorro, giving him the history of the affair and demanding justice and compensa-

tion. But I took nothing by my motion, and never had any answer to my letter.

General Chamorro had, it is true, enough business on his hands just then; for he was expecting at the same time an invasion from Honduras, and an insurrection in Leon. When it took place he was shamefully beaten in the first onset, and fled to Granada, where he defended himself for five months in barricaded streets, until he was at length overpowered by his rival Castellon. Riverado Pelon had met his fate some time before, or so at least I was told by a merchant resident at Chinandega, whom I met half a year afterwards at the house of Mr. Wyke, the British chargé d'affaires at Guatemala. The villain had fallen into the hands of Castellon, who, without further ceremony, had him hung.

It does not appear, from the facts I have related, that the members of the democratic party of Leon were at all superior in point of morals to their conservative rivals, although Mr. Manning, who knew the country well, maintained that they were; but at any rate they did not seem to entertain the same virulent hatred of foreigners. They coquetted, indeed, with North America, though

certainly only for the purposes of their own selfish ambition; and when the sanguinary civil war seemed to be going against them, it was they who called in the aid of Walker and his Filibusters.

There can be no doubt that the plans pursued by the Americans for the extension of their dominion and their principles are often subversive of every national right; but if ever the principle of the end justifying the means (which has been adopted by others as well as by them) could be admitted, it would be here, where a country which by its position, its structure, and its wonderful natural endowments, might be one of the first in the world, has been made by the Spanish race, who have possessed it for three centuries and a half, little better than a wilderness and a den of thieves.

Of Chinandega, which I reached on the first evening after leaving Leon, I have little to say. It is a large, straggling town, with about 11,000 inhabitants, and with more trade than any other in the country, except Granada. The harbour-town, Realejo, three leagues off, seemed likely to rise rapidly when the Californian transit took this direction; but it has declined since the

route by Virgin Bay and San Juan del Sur has been adopted in preference. It has at present a population of about a thousand persons, in two hundred houses and huts; and some English merchants, a Hamburg one, and some speculative Spaniards, Italians, and Frenchmen, have established themselves here, as well as a German medical doctor. Some of the houses are handsomely built with upper stories and galleries; and in a rather desolate-looking square stands a church, in the Moorish style, said to have been built in the sixteenth century. It has a very decayed appearance; its walls are dirty, and even sooty; weeds are shooting up high over its vaulted roof; and its high altar is placed in a low, dark niche. Outside the door is an inscription in English, in large letters, requesting foreign visitors, when they enter it, to "take off their hats, and refrain from smoking, or any other indecorous behaviour;" a caution probably intended for the Californians. It is unfortunate for this town that the marshy nature of the coast prevented its being built close to the sea; and it is, in fact, almost a league from the real harbour.

CHAP. VII.

POLITICAL CONDITION, AGRICULTURE AND TRADE.

Effects of Party Strife.—Financial Distress.—State of Education.—Of Agricultural Production. — Culture of Cacao and Tobacco.— Ornamental Dye and Building Woods.—Breeding of Cattle.—Mines and Metals.— Gold Mines of Chontales.—Coal.—Lead.—Copper.—Trade in Exports.—Imports from Europe, North America, &c.—Realejo.—San Juan del Sur.—San Juan del Norte, or Greytown.

SINCE the day of the declaration of independence, Nicaragua has scarcely enjoyed a moment's tranquillity ; its political authority and its trade have declined, and the morals of its inhabitants and their circumstances have alike deteriorated under the blighting influence of internal strife.

What makes the matter worse is, that the struggles which have rent this beautiful country have been no contests for principle — no battle for freedom and the right ; but miserable squabbles between the inhabitants of Leon and Granada for the privileges of government and the

upper hand in the state. The Leon party, indeed, calls itself the *Ejercito democratico*, and justifies its proceedings by the pretended violation of popular rights on the part of its rivals, who profess more conservative principles: but the one has no more real zeal for liberty, than the other has for law and order, and the objects of both are alike selfish; and, as might be expected, the struggle has less the character of a national movement than of a petty family quarrel, in which the mean and envious tendencies of the New Spaniards are unpleasantly manifested. Few of them have any notion of true freedom or patriotism; but nobody likes to have any other than one of his own relations for the head of the state, or that any other town than the one he was born in should become the seat of government, and enjoy the material advantages appertaining to that position. This political narrow-mindedness and egotism will afford a key to many of the deplorable events of which Central America has been the theatre almost ever since the Spanish rule was thrown off: one town has envied another, one village owed a grudge to its neighbour on account of certain advantages to which it deemed itself entitled. The citizens of

Leon and Granada, of San José and Cartago, of Tequigalpa and Comayagua, of San Salvador and San Miguel, of Guatemala and Quisaltenango, have been continually engaged in a series of little duels; and where the flames of envy, hatred, and malice have not broken out into open war, they have offered perpetual obstacles to every kind of improvement.

In no one of the five states did this mean jealousy display itself in a more openly hostile and invidious manner than in Nicaragua; and its idle, quarrelsome, and passionate population seems now to have acquired quite a taste for the disorder, lawlessness, and excitement of civil strife.*

* The melancholy political condition of Nicaragua cannot be better described than in the words of one of its own ministers, in a report made to the Chambers in 1853. "*Nada existe,*" he says, speaking of the numerous treaties made with the other Central American States, "*nada existe sino la experiencia de nuestra disgracia, pero una experiencia ciega que solo alienta personalidades y localismos miserables, en donde vemos en pugna un hombre contra otro, una contra otra familia, un pueblo contra otro departamento, y con tal eterogenidad de intereses jamás podra formarse de extos elementos un estado.*"—Report presented to the Legislative Chambers of Nicaragua, February 16th, 1853.

When we visited Managua, the then seat of government, in the beginning of 1854, Don Frato Chamorro had been President for nine months, and by great energy and the most unsparing severity had maintained tranquillity for an unusual time. From the conversation we had with him we were led to entertain some hopes that the future might have better things in store; but before four months more had passed, the President was engaged in a furious civil war; all intercourse between the two capitals, Leon and Granada, was cut off; trade was completely stagnant; the roads were unsafe from the crowds of deserters; and the prospects of peace and a stable government were more remote than ever.

It was after the death of Chamorro that North Americans were for the first time seen among the combatants; and, what was a very curious circumstance, and of mournful augury for the cause of freedom, they were fighting on *both* sides, and frequently opposed to each other.

Another main cause of the critical condition of Nicaragua is the shattered state of the finances, which were, during the last session, in such confusion that no report at all was laid before the Chambers. The chief sources of revenue are

the duties on exports and imports, the monopoly of gunpowder, stamps, and spirituous liquors, and the sale of foreign wines. The two latter, it appears, are always more productive in proportion to the increase of distress and immorality among the people — a consideration in itself sufficient to point out their unfitness for a source of profit to the state. They were in 1854 farmed out to two brothers, mulattoes, resident in Granada, who had paid a high sum for the privilege, but had ample means of making themselves amends.

From these sources of revenue the whole expenditure of the state has to be defrayed, in addition to the interest on the public debt; and as they are often found insufficient for these purposes, the debt is constantly on the increase. The capital of the country is too small, and there is too little patriotic feeling, for any attempt on the part of individuals to free the state from its dilemma; no credit is any more to be obtained from foreign countries,—indeed the foreign creditors are becoming pressing for the liquidation of existing claims, — and it does not really appear how, without a sacrifice of national independence, this beautiful Nicaragua can save itself from the

abyss into which party spirit, selfishness, and the indolence of the masses have plunged it. In this extremity the only hope appears to be in the United States.

“The need is great, and the *Yankees* are near!”

It can hardly be supposed that, in the state the country has been in for many years, there should have been much done for education. There are two universities, at Leon and Granada, of which the first has a library of only 1500 volumes, the other no library at all; and the instruction afforded in them is stated, in a report of the minister of the interior in 1853, to be extremely defective. The expenses are defrayed partly from old endowments, and partly by a fee of twelve dollars a year from each pupil; but, from the scantiness of the receipts, the professional chairs are very badly filled, and the institutions are falling more and more into decay and discredit, so that many of the more opulent families prefer sending their sons to graduate at Guatemala. Besides these two universities, as they are called, there are, in the whole republic, sixty primary schools for

boys, with a total of 2800 pupils; about a hundredth of the population. There is no attempt in these schools to teach anything more than reading and arithmetic, and in some few cases writing, but this is on account of the *expense* of writing materials. Female education is, of course, in a still more deplorable condition, and there are not more than five girls' schools in the whole country. After the abolition of the convents in 1829, Morazan devoted a great part of these funds to the purposes of education, and for a time it seemed to be making rapid progress; but this progress was soon checked by the miserable party quarrels, and the money diverted to other purposes.

There is, perhaps, scarcely a people on the earth that has obtained so small an advantage from the wealth bestowed on it by nature as the people of Nicaragua; and were it not that the earth yields spontaneously most of what is necessary to life, the majority of the inhabitants would probably, before now, have died of hunger. One would suppose that a country uniting within itself many of the advantages of two hemispheres, and whose soil is of the most exuberant fertility, must at

least have been able, in some one branch of culture, to attain surpassing excellence, and thereby have promoted national as well as individual prosperity; yet the fact is, chiefly in consequence of the everlasting political disturbances, that its agriculture is declining, that its production of corn is scarcely sufficient for its own consumption, and that even its foreign trade, notwithstanding the splendid geographical position of Nicaragua, is rather retrograding than advancing.

Ten years ago the yearly produce of indigo in the lowlands of Chinandego, Leon, Rivas, and Granada, amounted to 750,000 lbs., and it was sold at a dollar a pound. Now most of the indigo fields are lying waste and desolate. In the *Departemento Oriental*, including the capital Granada, is the greatest amount of agricultural activity; and since this department has become the seat of government, besides being the first in point of intelligence, more attention has been paid to statistical details than elsewhere. It is indeed the only part of the country where people seem to know anything at all of the amount of production and consumption, or of the state of the population; and even for this, I must, in the absence of more recent authentic details, have

recourse to a statement drawn up in the year 1847 by the then prefect, Don José del Montenegro, and which was obtained for us by the kindness of the fervent patriot Dr. Pedro de la Rocha of Granada.

It is very indicative of the state of national economy in Nicaragua, that in its richest, most populous department, extending over more than 2810 square leagues, the capital employed in agriculture only amounts to 600,000 dollars, that invested in land to 232,000, and in trade to 450,000. Cattle-breeding employs 900,000, but this is very trifling in comparison with the immense extent of land devoted to it. Of the 208,700 *fanegas** of maize raised, 177,000 we find are consumed in the department as well as 19,000 head of cattle, which would give about forty pounds of beef yearly for each person; but the consumption of the villages is very much less, so that the greater part must be reckoned to the town.

Of foreign cotton the calculated consumption is twenty-five ells for each individual. This statement, however, refers, as I have said, to the

* The fanega is 6 cwt.

condition of the country ten years ago; there has been no public document of the kind since, and trade, agriculture, and industry have alike languished under the blighting influence of war and civil discord.

Corn, rice, sugar, coffee, cotton, cacao, tobacco, are mostly grown only for home consumption, and the export trade has no advantage from these articles, though they might be made rich sources of national prosperity; and almost as little use is made of the immense riches of the coast districts in medicinal plants, such as sarsaparilla, vanilla, ipecacuanha, rhubarb, tamarinds, &c., which nature seems almost to force on the people's acceptance.

The cacao (*Theobroma Cacao*, Lin.), which was found in the country by the Spanish conquerors, and among all cultivated plants requires the greatest and most equable warmth, is grown, for the most part, only in the low, marshy districts, and does not occupy more than 3000 manzanas of land.* The most favourable situation for it is in the Palmas district, and what is called the *Consecuit* territory. There are not in the whole

* The manzana is equal to two English acres.

country more than forty-five or fifty cacao plantations, each containing on an average 40,000 trees, so that on the whole there may be reckoned about 2,000,000 of fruit-bearing cacao-trees. They are seldom more than twenty feet high, and between every two there is planted a tree of about sixty feet high to protect them. This is called the *Madre Cacao*, and the three trees together a *casa*. About 500 of these *casas* stand on a manzana of land.

The cacao-tree bears at seven or eight years old, and goes on for forty or fifty years, yielding three harvests a year,—the first in January, the second in May, and the third in September. Each tree gives about thirty pounds of nuts at each harvest, worth in money seven or eight dollars. The numerous oval pods often contain as many as sixty nuts, and a single labourer can do all that is required for the care and cultivation of a thousand trees.

The usual market price of cacao here is, for the *cajuela* of twenty-five pounds, twenty reals; or for sixty nuts, "twelve handfuls," fivepence-farthing. About two acres of land planted with cacao-trees are, or were, worth 1000 dollars. The bulk of the cacao produced in Nicaragua is consumed in the

state itself, and only a small part finds its way to San Salvador and Costa Rica. In bad years, indeed, the home demand sometimes exceeds the supply, and it has to be imported from Guayaquil; but the use of coffee instead of chocolate is beginning to prevail in this country. In many families it is now taken as the first meal in the morning, and after dinner, and chocolate only at luncheon and supper.

The lower class of people have also another use for the cacao-nuts; they make them serve as currency, one nut being considered equal to the fortieth part of a medio. In small trading transactions they are so regularly employed as money that you sometimes see scarcely any other in the fruit markets, so that in Nicaragua it is literally true that money grows upon the trees.

Next to cacao, tobacco is the most important article of cultivation; it is of excellent quality, and yields two harvests in the year; for the first the seed is sown in May and reaped in August, and for the second sown in October and reaped in February. The most considerable tobacco plantations are in the neighbourhood of Masaya, where, it is calculated, there are 15,000,000 of tobacco plants; and also near Matagalpa, where

the exact quantity is not known. A thousand plants yield, in the two harvests, between 250 and 300 lbs. of tobacco. Fifteen hundred plants may be cultivated on a manzana of land, but the planter has to pay to the state a tax of five dollars for every thousand.

Of this article, also, little more is raised than suffices for home consumption.

The most valuable exports of Nicaragua consist, not of those things that human industry produces with the help of nature, but of what nature produces altogether, without requiring any exertion from man; for instance, dye and ornamental and other woods; which are principally obtained in the neighbourhood of the west coast; the English house of Manning and Co. is at the head of these undertakings. About 150 tons of mahogany, Brazil, and other useful and valuable woods, are yearly shipped at the two western ports of Nicaragua, as well as some horned cattle and hides. Ten thousand head of cattle are sent annually to the neighbouring states of San Salvador and Costa Rica; but the price is extremely variable, and can scarcely be reckoned at more than 300,000 dollars. Of hides, the yearly export

from Nicaragua is about 30,000 ; and the price of an ox-hide weighing from seventeen to twenty pounds, is three reals, though in retail trade a dollar is sometimes charged. For tiger-skins a dollar is the regular price.

Of the precious metals very little is obtained in Nicaragua, and the few hands devoted to mining would be better employed in the cultivation of the ground in a country where the actual is so very far behind the possible production. The most important works of this kind are the silver mines of Matagalpa and Dipilto in the province of Segovia ; the gold mines of Santa Rosa de Venci, twenty-four leagues north of Leon ; and those found in the province of Chontales in 1849, the produce of which has been so ludicrously exaggerated by American speculators that it may be well to give a few particulars concerning them.

The mines of Chontales lie about 50 miles from the sea coast, 114 north-east from the town of Granada, and 36 from Lake Nicaragua. The mining region extends over an area of about 80 miles, and lies 1500 feet above the Atlantic Ocean ; and the richly-wooded mountains that enclose it rise 1000 or 2000 feet higher. The

metal is found in quartz, red sandstone, and slate; but the works are not carried on systematically, but by a crowd of adventurers who go rummaging almost at random in the bowels of the mountain, of whose riches such fabulous accounts have been spread in order to entice labour to the district, and so increase the value of land. In 1854 there were about 300 men at work here: they came chiefly from the mines of Honduras in the hope of higher wages, and were a motley crowd of North American, Irish, French, and German vagabonds, who used to go digging to-day here, to-morrow there, and consuming in the evening what they had earned during the day. The population attracted to this lonely mountain district in search of gold does not, however, altogether amount to above 600 persons; while the Indian population of the province of Chontales amounts to 10,000, who maintain themselves almost exclusively by hunting and fishing. There are also forsaken Indian villages and banana plantations to be seen in various parts of it, that indicate its having been at some period far more populous than it is now; and it is known to be one of the most anciently settled parts of Nicaragua.

Up to March, 1854, no gold from Chontales had ever found its way into commerce, nor had any chemical analysis been made of the metal contained in its stone; but at that time some specimens were brought that appeared so extraordinarily rich and productive that a regular gold fever broke out in Granada, and there was a rush to the district of all who could by any means manage to travel the twelve leagues, while new speculators arrived every day from the United States, and set about forming joint-stock companies. It was calculated that every hundredweight of ore would yield three ounces and a half of pure gold; but when the matter came to be looked into in cooler blood, the result was found to be very different. A government commission was sent to the district to make some more accurate investigations, and it then appeared that in Chontales, as elsewhere, all is not gold that glitters. In the vicinity of these gold mines some beds of anthracite coal were discovered a long time ago by Dr. Firmin Ferrer, the president of the first court of law in Granada. They are, by water, eight leagues from Granada, but only half a league from the lake,—a circumstance that may render them valuable,

should it appear that the quality of the coal is, on the whole, better than that of the first specimens, which were mostly taken from the surface.

The great hindrance, however, to the profitable working of the mines of Chontales, is the want of well-informed miners, as well as of good roads and sufficient capital.

In the Departement Oriental and the province of Segovia there are several more or less productive lead and copper-mines, and amongst them one in Jalaquima (province of Segovia) which, according to the accounts of the natives, must consist almost of pure masses of native copper. This information was confirmed to me by educated residents, and amongst others by Don Liberato Abarca in Matagalpa, from which I conjecture that at Jalaquima, as well as at the Iron Mountain, and Pilot Knob in the Lake of Missouri, a part of the ore is found in the shape of boulders on the surface. In the environs of Teustepet, gold, silver, copper, and also precious stones, such as jasper and opal, have been found, but nothing whatever has been done towards a systematic working.

The foreign trade of the country is carried on

by the ports of Realejo and San Juan del Sur on the Pacific side, and by San Juan del Norte, called by the English Greytown, on the Caribbean Sea; but we have not the means of giving any exact statement of the total amount of the imports and exports of Nicaragua. From such data as we have, it would seem that it did not, for the east and west coast together, exceed about 2800 tons, and a value of 250,000 dollars. The imports, in manufactured goods, wine, &c., are stated to amount to 350,000; and this statement, on account of the *ad valorem* duty, may be reckoned as at least one-fourth less than what it really is; but the entire foreign trade would not give a value of above a piastre and a half for every inhabitant.

Costa Rica, from the judicious choice of its chief article of cultivation (coffee), carries on more trade with foreign countries than any other State of Central America; and there the individual share amounts to ten piastres.

The commerce of Nicaragua is distributed amongst the different nations of Europe in the following manner:—

Great Britain sends calicoes and other manufactured cottons, hardware, lead, gunpowder, &c.

France—Silks, printed cottons, wines, liqueurs, jewellery, and fancy goods.

The United States—Soap, stearine candles, brandy (of inferior quality), and gunpowder.

Spain—Paper, silks and ribbons, wine, oil, and spirits.

Germany—Glass, wax, furniture, wines, and steel.

Italy—Paper, oil, silk, and liqueurs.

Columbia—Cacao and straw hats.

The British goods make up two-thirds of the value above quoted, and only England and Germany send articles of general consumption. The French goods, which are chiefly luxuries, are used only in the largest towns.

The port of Realejo is not visited in the whole year by above five-and-twenty ships, which come chiefly from Chili and Peru, and often do not unload more than the half of their cargoes. The arrivals at Greytown are still more inconsiderable, and the goods sent there are, for the most part, only those of great value and small bulk, which can bear the high freight of the steamer, or which, perhaps, cannot bear a long sea journey. The chief trade is carried on between San Juan del Norte and Granada, on Lake Nicaragua.

But, although Granada is the most important commercial town of the republic, the continued political disturbances have rendered it extremely flat. The exports are almost confined to hides, dye-woods, and bullion, in return for which hardware, silks, and manufactured cottons are received.

During our stay in Granada, in the early part of the year 1854, one of the most important of the German mercantile houses was about to move to Costa Rica on account of the decline of business; others were reducing their establishments; and, as an additional proof of the decay of trade, of the various American hotels that existed here at the time Mr. Squier wrote, no single one is left; and the small steamer which at that time kept up a regular communication with San Carlos (on the lake), twice a month, has now ceased to run regularly, and only makes an occasional visit.

The port of Greytown is made use of by the United States and England for the transport of goods, for which there happens to be, in one or the other market, a great momentary demand, and for which the route by Cape Horn would take too much time.

It is, however, a great error on the part of Baron Alex von Bulow to maintain, as he does

in his work on Nicaragua (p. 276), that the coffee produced in Costa Rica, and the manufactured goods imported into that state, are likely for the future to go by San Juan del Norte; and then, on the basis of this entirely erroneous assumption, to calculate its commerce for the year 1848 as already amounting to 2,371,000 piastres.

Costa Rica can open much more secure and advantageous channels of communication on its own territory, and save the dangers and inconveniences of the navigation of the Sarapiquí river, as well as the double shipment of an article so liable to be damaged by damp, or perhaps actual wetting, as coffee.

Since San Juan del Norte has become in some measure an English port, and received, in honour of the governor of Jamaica, the name of Greytown, the custom-house of Nicaragua has been removed to the fort of San Carlos on Lake Nicaragua. According to a communication made to me on the subject by the Minister de la Rocha, it yields a revenue of from 45,000 to 60,000 dollars to the state *, which, with an *ad valorem*

* According to Mr. Squier, it was 100,000 in 1848.

duty of 28 per cent., gives a yearly traffic of about 200,000 dollars.

The importance of the port of Greytown depends, however, far less on the merchandise than on the passengers that pass through it on their way to the Pacific and California. Twice a month come two North American steamers, one from New York, and the other from New Orleans, as well as an English mail steamer, and these together bring 800 or 900 passengers, and generally take back 500 or 600 from the South Sea. The passenger traffic of Greytown, therefore, amounts to above 40,000 a year.

The passage of the Isthmus between Greytown on the Atlantic, and San Juan del Sur on the Pacific, occupies on an average twenty hours, and is generally preferred by Californian passengers to the Panama route. Should a shorter and more convenient passage between the two oceans be opened by means of a railroad from Fort Caballo on the east of Honduras to the Gulf of Fonseca on the west, a distance of only 165 miles, which might easily be done in eight hours, Greytown would soon sink back into its former insignificance, as it has neither a salubrious position nor a good maritime one, and it is

hardly likely that the natives of the country would overcome their unparalleled sloth so far as to make any exertion in its behalf.

The only chance of arresting the progress to decay of either Greytown or the Nicaraguan trade, would be the predominant influence of some foreign nation, or the execution of the long talked of projects of connecting the two oceans by means of canals communicating with the Nicaragua Lake. The last condition, however, probably depends upon the first, namely, the possession of Nicaragua by a Northern race. Without that, it is doubtful whether the project will ever be fulfilled.

CHAP. VIII.

Tipitapa. — Reports of Robbers. — San Benito. — A powerful Argument. — Scarcity of Water. — Rio Assesse. — An Accident. — Noon-day Rest. — An unpleasant Ride. — A Night in a Forest Hut. — Poverty and Sickness. — The Poor of Central America and the European Pauper. — A travelling Saint. — Itinerant Images of Catholic Saints in Nicaragua and Costa Rica. — Medical Consultation. Awkward Journey through the dark Forest. — Arrival in Matagalpa. — The Prefect of the Town. — Singular Night Quarters.

AT an early hour on a spring morning I set out from Santiago de Managua, to travel in a north-easterly direction through Nicaragua, and afterwards traverse the state of Honduras. Early as it was the thermometer already showed 75° Fahrenheit; a perfectly calm atmosphere made the heat still more oppressive, and the sky was as clear as if no such thing as a cloud existed. Even the sensitive people of Managua will not complain of the "*fresco*" to-day, I thought, as I began to

defend myself against the sun as well as I could by putting on a pair of blue glass spectacles, and opening a great white linen umbrella. As the day advanced the heat, of course, increased, and by the time we had reached the village of Tipitapa, at one o'clock, it stood at 93°. It has often surprised me that, with such a burning temperature as this, cases of sun-stroke (*siriasis*) are much more rare under the tropics than in northern countries, the United States, England, or even in Germany; and yet the poorer classes of natives as well as foreign settlers, move about freely at all hours of the day, often with not so much as a covering on the head to protect them from the fierce rays of the sun. Possibly it may be attributable to the greater difference of general temperature in the North rendering the nerves more susceptible.

The natives never complain of anything more than a headache, or in the worst cases they have an attack of fever, when they have been bathing, according to their custom, in the lake in the hottest hours of the day. When they do suffer in this way they always lay the blame on the water. But during several years' residence in tropical countries, we never knew one instance

of siriasis, nor ever heard it mentioned as at all a common occurrence.

Tipitapa is an extremely poor negro village of about 300 barefoot inhabitants, lying eight leagues to the north of Managua ; but poor and small as it is, it is well known, even in the civilised world, on account of the river of the same name which flows past the village at a short distance from it, and, as it forms the natural connection between the two lakes Nicaragua and Managua, would, in case of the canalisation, become of great importance. There is indeed a general belief, among the educated classes in the country, that these two lakes formed at one time an inland sea which some recent convulsion has divided by piling up vast masses of rocks and earth between the two, leaving merely the Tipitapa river as a connecting link.

At the part where this Tipitapa river (some times called the Panaloya) is crossed by a half-decayed wooden bridge, just at the entrance of the province of Segovia, it is about 150 feet broad, and from two to three feet deep ; and forms a fall of sixteen feet which has much resemblance to the Camerons Falls in Western Canada.

The bed of the river is full of boulder stones and masses of rock, and has a wild, foaming, agitated appearance, that even the luxuriant green vegetation, bursting out of the chasms of the rocks on its banks, can scarcely soften. At the foot of the western end of the bridge gushes forth a hot sulphur spring, that mingles its health-giving vapour with the fresh cool water of the stream.*

While I was resting during the hottest hours of the day in the wretched rancho of a poor negro family, and having my animals strengthened by a good feed of Indian corn for the fatiguing journey before them, the people, who always come crowding round a stranger, watching with childish curiosity his smallest movements, informed me that, on the preceding night, twenty soldiers with an officer had passed their village in pursuit of some robbers, "*algunos ladrones*, supposed to haunt the neighbouring forest, and who made the road to Segovia ex-

* According to Capt. Bailly's survey, the greatest length of the Tipitapa river, from where it leaves Lake Managua to its mouth in Lake Nicaragua, is sixteen English miles; its fall seven feet per mile; and its depth, in the rainy season, from six to twelve.

tremely insecure. The always pale visage of my servant turned to a still more ashy hue at this intelligence, and I had already been informed that it was quite common for servants in this country to leave travellers and their baggage to shift for themselves on the least appearance of danger. The news made less impression on me than it would otherwise have done, because I had found out by experience in the course of my travels in this part of the world that a very considerable deduction might always be made from the accounts of the natives ; who from love of exaggeration always like to put everything in the strongest possible light. I had heard, for instance, a great deal about the numerous tigers said to infest the lonely districts connecting the eastern part of Nicaragua with the north of New Segovia ; but though I had the greatest wish to take part in a tiger-hunt, it was never my luck to see anything more of that animal than his dried skin. Thieves and bandits were now the bugbear instead of tigers ; and though I had by no means the same desire to fall in with a specimen of the biped as of the quadruped monster of the woods, I could not help thinking

that, considering the feeble and cowardly character of the native races, an encounter with Nicaraguan robbers must be a very different adventure from an attack of banditti in the old world,—the Abruzzi or the Hungarian Bakony Wald, for instance. In the tropical primeval forest, with its soft, enervating atmosphere, its vast solitudes uninhabited except by a few scattered Indians, business must be uncommonly flat for a bandit, and there can be no possibility of getting up any grand exploits like those of a Passadore or our Rinaldo Rinaldini.

I rode till a late hour in the evening over measureless sandy wastes of barren soil, that looked still more barren and desolate than usual in the then dry season. Thorny mimosas, the crippled, leafless, but useful calabash-tree (*Crescentia*), the tree-like cactus and ananassa, or wild pineapple (*Bromelia pinguin*), the leaves of which, being four or five feet long, are used for ropes and whips, and to plait into wallets or even swinging mats,—these were all the objects that presented any variety to the eye. At length we reached San Benito, a lonely farm or hacienda at which, in the dearth of public houses of entertainment, travellers on foot or horseback stop to

pass the night without much ceremony of asking leave.

But however hospitable and patriarchal this custom appears at first, it loses something of its charm when you find that you are rather endured than welcomed, and that a corner of damp earth under a roof, or, if the hosts are extremely amiable, a piece of a stiff cow-hide for a couch, is all the favour shown you. Food as well as cooking utensils you are expected to bring with you, and your animals can during the greater part of the year find plenty of food for themselves, so that the hospitality of the establishment is not very severely taxed either for man or beast. Should the traveller have occasion to make any further claim upon it, he expects to pay twice the worth of whatever is furnished to him. I found myself in a case of this kind in San Benito. The long drought had so withered up all the grass near the house that a very sorry prospect of refreshment was afforded to my poor exhausted mules, and the danger of their being stolen was too great for me to allow them to be left to wander about. In the absence of the proprietor of the hacienda, I therefore begged the *Mandador* or steward of

the farm to let me have a small quantity of the stock of maize which was laid up in wooden bins in the dark, dirty sitting-room ; and as I knew from former experience how little I could count upon a willingness to accommodate me, I offered at once exactly double the market price, namely six reals, or 2s. 7½*d.*, for a *medio* (fifteen pounds) of maize.

Advantageous as my offer was, however, it met with a decided refusal from the steward, who denied that they had any maize.

I mentioned that, by the accidental opening of one of the bins by a maid-servant, I happened to have seen that they had ; and then he alleged that he was not justified in disposing of it in the absence of the proprietor. As the discussion went on a long time without my seeing any prospect of its coming to a close, I thought I would try and work upon the patriotic feelings of my opponent, and produce the official document with which I had been furnished by the government of Managua, recommending me in the most earnest manner to all civil and military authorities as well as landed proprietors (*todos los autoridades civiles, militares y de haciendas*). But neither the reading of the state document in

my most impressive manner, nor the exhibition of the President's own signature, nor even of the grand state seal, had the least effect upon this impenetrable steward. What was to be done? Neither my hard cash nor my soft persuasions were of any avail, yet I was firmly resolved that my poor mules should not starve through the night if I could help it. I bethought myself therefore of another method. I suddenly drew from my girdle my American five-barrelled revolver, and advancing to the bin, declared I would have the corn whether he liked it or not. This was the right way of doing business with my pleasant friend: he immediately agreed to let me have the quantity I required, though at three times its fair price; and the joyful neighing of my hungry mules as the beautiful yellow food was shaken down before them, sounded very much as if they were exulting in the defeat of their hard-hearted adversary.

It is rather melancholy, though, to find that in Central America this little northern machine has more power than the most stringent commands of the government of the country.

Soon after this incident, the *Mandador*, having apparently noticed the title of *Dr.* given to me

in the government paper, came and begged me for some medicine for his sick wife; and after I had made him give me as exact an account of her condition as possible, I gave him a box of pills for her. In this same hacienda I met with an elderly lady, the owner of an estate in Segovia, who had been to Granada with a large quantity of skins for sale, and was now returning with a heavy purse and twenty-one beasts lightened of their burden. She had with her a young, very sickly-looking little daughter, and a great number of servants who, each armed with a sharp machete, kept watch among the animals as they wandered about at night to seek for food.

Neither her wretched couch upon a few hard boards in a dark closet, nor the many other inconveniences which a feminine traveller must have felt severely, could conquer the old lady's good humour, nor quell her desire to gossip; and I had no sooner taken a stearine candle out of my saddle-bag, and begun, by this glimmer of civilisation, to note down some meteorological observations in my journal, than her curiosity burst forth at once into a torrent of questions. In the conversation that followed she made some observations that

would not tend to give a very high idea of the intellectual culture of the ladies of Central America. When we talked, for instance, of the newly-discovered gold and coal mines in the district of Chontales, that had made such a great sensation, she said she did not wonder at people trying to get the gold, but what in the world could they want with coal? I endeavoured to explain to her its great value as fuel,—as affording the means of light and warmth, and she exhibited the utmost astonishment; she had had no notion, she said, that it could be burnt. “Well, one did live and learn!” Her knowledge of geography was no less striking. When I spoke of the probability of a war between Nicaragua and Costa Rica for the possession of the province of Guanacaste, she said she “could not see how the government of Costa Rica could expect to have it, seeing it lay so *near to Nicaragua* ;” and, therewith, she seized, doubtless in absence of mind, my stearine candle, and walked off with it to her room, leaving me to go to bed in the dark, or with such light as I could get from a moon half covered with clouds.

The night was mild and pleasant; but as, at nine o'clock, the thermometer still stood at 84°

Fahr., I hung my swinging mat in the open air between the wooden pillars of the veranda, and the gentle rocking of this canvas bed soon transported me to the romantic land of dreams.

The next morning our way lay across sun-burnt, stony, sterile tracts of very scanty vegetation. It seems strange to complain of drought in a country so abundantly supplied with water as Nicaragua; but this part of it possesses few great rivers; and when in the dry season the little brooks and mountain-streams dry up, the traveller may journey for ten or twelve hours without being able to refresh himself or his horse with a single draught.

It is probably to this circumstance that we may ascribe the fact of the country having remained almost entirely uninhabited, and, for the same reason, it does not seem likely that it will ever attract many settlers.

In the afternoon we came to the Rio Assesse, and this was the first running water that we had met with during the whole day's journey. We found here a bivouac of men and cattle who were reposing under the cool shade of the trees along the river's bank; for whatever may be the incon-

venience of travelling in the dry season (from December to May), it is the only one in which it is possible to cross this wilderness without danger from storms, or from the rivers overflowing their banks, and the traveller finding his advance checked by a morass.

This, therefore, was the time of year when we might expect to meet the most passengers; yet we met but this one party all the way, though there were considerable numbers of cattle being driven to pasture in the province of Guanacaste.

The ride across these stony, arid tracts, where the thorny mimosa and the leafless calabash-tree formed almost the sole representatives of the vegetable world, is in itself tedious enough; and it was rendered still more uncomfortable to me from my having had the misfortune to fall from my mule (which was frightened by the sudden opening of my umbrella), and not only to strain my right hand, but to break my last thermometer—the last out of five that I had had at the commencement of my journey, but no one of which was now in a serviceable state. My servant, too, had been so careless as to let my medicine chest fall upon the stony ground, and thus occasioned the loss of some valuable fluid

medicines, though fortunately my aneroid barometer and some other instruments remained uninjured.

I had not yet got over my vexation at these various disasters, when we reached a lonely hut in the forest, denominated San José de Tamarinda, where, at least, we found water enough to make some coffee, which, with biscuit, always formed my principal food during these journeys.

The sun was still shining with a tremendous glare upon the white sandy ground; but I had the mules saddled, and we set forward again in order to reach Chicoya, if possible, before night-fall. The road was said to be tolerably good, the distance not immoderate, the district and the people *muy sano*; so we rode on in good spirits once more into the dreary, sultry desert. Evening came on, however,—it grew quite dark, and still we saw no signs of the desired village; and we soon perceived that, either through ignorance or design, the people had deceived us, and we should have to pass the night in the open air. We looked anxiously in all directions, and in a thicket at no great distance, on one side of our road, we could distinguish some small watch-fires that announced the presence of men. We also observed

that a light would sometimes pass for a considerable distance from one to the other, from which we inferred a connection between these various posts of the nocturnal bivouac. We would gladly have sought these people in order to gain information concerning our distance from the village: they might be harmless and honest cattle drivers; but, on the other hand, they might be dangerous villains; so, all things considered, we thought it most prudent to remain quiet, and not seek any nearer acquaintanceship with the doubtful group.

Sometimes we passed through a bit of the primeval forest in which the moon, instead of serving us as a pilot, only threw an occasional broken gleam on the fantastic forms of the trees, that served but to confuse us the more. The honesty of my servant, also, I had had no means of ascertaining; so I thought it most prudent to let him go on first, and ride slowly after him with my double-barrel laid ready across my saddle-bows. We went on thus till ten o'clock, when my attendant recollected that several years ago, when he had come this way, there used to be a solitary dwelling in the wood, where travellers, benighted, or overtaken by a storm, so

that they could not reach Chicoya, generally stopped and waited for morning. We turned aside, therefore, into a narrow, overgrown path, that led into the depth of the forest; and after groping our way for a good while, found ourselves before the door of a large wooden building. All round was profound silence and gloom; but we knocked at the gate, which was fast locked and barred. After a time a hoarse female voice asked what we wanted: my servant then mentioned my name,—said whence we came, and that we had been overtaken by the darkness, and wished to find a shelter till morning dawn.

At last the door was opened, and, a dried piece of pine-wood serving for a torch, I entered the room—a wretched-looking place with mud walls, and a wooden bench and a dirty, ragged swinging mat for its only furniture. The next room, which was the sleeping chamber of the whole family, looked less empty certainly, but not less wretched. These various possessions were suspended by strings from the ceiling; a few old wooden troughs stood in a corner; some provisions of the worst kind were put by in a niche, whence their smell betrayed their presence; and on some rough boards that served for beds lay

the various members of the household, male and female. An old withered, nearly naked woman, with a deeply furrowed face and snow-white hair, who appeared to be the head of the family, raised herself from her rough couch, and offered me a cigar. She then told me that the sick man, who lay moaning near her, was her son, who had been ill for several days of a violent fever; and she asked what could be done for him. A sister of the patient, too, came with a sorrowful, sympathetic face, and begged me to give her brother some medicine. No sooner, however, had the bystanders, or rather *by-lyers*, perceived that I carried with me a well fitted up medicine chest, than every individual member of the family became afflicted with some complaint, for which they solicited medical assistance. The young daughter as well as the infirm old mother complained of the most various and extraordinary maladies; the mother evidently thought that poverty and old age were diseases that might be successfully prescribed for, and the daughters were full of faith that a dose thus hastily administered by a passing traveller would put to flight, once and for ever, the consequences of the hardships and privations of their forest life

The Indian corn harvest had, in consequence of the locusts, entirely failed this year, and the poor inhabitants of this forest dwelling had been obliged to subsist exclusively on black beans and the milk which a very thin cow yielded once a day in very small quantities. They begged of me a little rice, as a delicacy of which they had long been deprived; and when on the following morning I gave my mules a few handfuls of the maize I had brought with me as a more nourishing diet than what they could get here, the poor people carefully picked up the few cobs left by the mules, in order to cook them for the sick man. They did not, however, appear at all conscious of how much they were to be pitied; for the poor of Central America have the immense advantage over the proletaries of the North, that they are ignorant of the comforts and luxuries they are compelled to dispense with. The knowing their wants and being unable to satisfy them is the chief cause of suffering to the mass of the European poor.

At the first dawn of day I wished to set out again, and endeavour to make up for the time I had lost; but one of my mules was missing, and it was not till after a long search we found it going

quietly home. My servant, it seemed, had not fastened its forefeet together carefully enough; and the mule, probably not at all admiring a country where fodder was so scarce, had resolved to trot back to the place it came from.

Towards seven o'clock we got clear of the woodland habitation which bears the odd name of Calabassa, and proceeded towards the Mestizo-village of Chicoya, two leagues further. There were plenty of the tree-like cactus along the road; but their short, clumsy forms were by no means so ornamental to the landscape as the lofty columnar species seen in the Indian villages and haciendas of the west coast, and between Granada and Managua.

A little further on we met a man with a mule which bore rather a curious load, namely, a carved and painted wooden figure of St. Sebastian packed up in a cow-hide, with which he travelled about from village to village, offering to the faithful the advantage of saying their prayers and bringing their requests before it. I asked my servant what kind of fee was demanded for the service of the saint by his owner; and the answer was, he takes all you give him (*el coje todo*): for a journey through such heat as this,

he will have fowls, eggs, meat, tortillas, cigars, candles, soap, and bananas offered to him.

At the time when churches and chapels were only to be found in the great towns, there arose a custom of taking the figure of a saint out of the parish church or the chapel of some speculative Christian, and carrying it from hamlet to hamlet to allow solitary settlers, who could not do without some representation of the divinity that they could lay hold of, and the consolation of kneeling and pouring out their hearts before it,—a very rude form of religion doubtless, but one that in certain states of culture, or non-culture, appears indispensable to the edification of the multitude. Now, however, when there is a church to be found in every village, and where the sound of the peaceful bells may be heard from one to the other, this carrying about an object of devotion in a box—as Savoyard boys do their monkeys—and showing it in the same way for money or money's worth, appears an odious abuse, painful and humiliating to all Christian feeling. It is kept up probably because it serves as an easy mode of gaining a livelihood for men who are not fond of work. They derive a very tolerable income from the offerings made to their strolling

saint; for it is hardly necessary to say that all the eggs, hens, tortillas, cigars, bananas, and medios, offered at the shrine of the saint, find their way into the wallet of his owner. The government of Costa Rica has very properly forbidden this practice, and ordered the saints back to their respective abodes; but in retired villages and at solitary houses it is not yet discontinued.

We happened ourselves once to be witnesses of a religious festival connected with this practice, when we were staying at a lonely farm, on the road to the port of Punta-Arenas, on the 28th of December, 1853.

A certain Don Pedro Aralla, who inhabited a hermit-like dwelling in the forest, had shortly before purchased a Saint Caralampius for five pesos in cash; and on the saint's fête-day invited the settlers from the surrounding mountains to pay him a visit. In a little indigent-looking room a sort of canopy was contrived of red and white cloth, beneath which on a wooden box, also covered with white drapery, stood two wax figures, scarcely a foot high, which I believe to have been originally meant to represent the Saviour and the Wandering Jew. They were

surrounded with flowers, and four wax lights stuck into the necks of as many broken bottles stood before them, whilst, for still greater splendour, three coloured pocket-handkerchiefs hung from the ceiling in the style of flags. Wooden benches were placed all round, and in a corner of the room hung some pieces of smoked beef and bacon, but there was no other furniture. When I entered, the room was already full of women and children, ranged as closely as they could sit on the benches, whilst the men stood about in groups, and some grown people and children were kneeling before the wax figures and repeating prayers. Two half-naked negroes, one playing a violin and the other a guitar, sung one of the Gregorian litanies to a lively waltz tune, and were accompanied by the women in a hoarse chorus. Then an old woman chanted a prayer; and after that, came a merry dance without any religious *libretto*; while, as a further symptom of festivity, shots were repeatedly fired out into the darkness of the mountains.

From time to time some pious Indian would approach Saint Caralampius, who, as my hostess informed me, was famous for his miracles, and deposit upon a plate, placed just before the

figure, cigars, candles, money, &c. ; and at rather longer intervals the hostess would go round with a bottle and glass, and refresh the company—men, women, and children—with a dram. Afterwards came more dancing, and then, by way of winding-up, a supper of fowls and cakes. The guests, on such occasions, seldom “go home till morning ;” but I cannot undertake to say at what hour they retired this time, as I had gone to bed, being much fatigued with my journey. We never saw anything of this kind during our stay in Honduras or San Salvador ; but in the republic of Guatemala, where bigotry and superstition have again gained a firm footing—along with the Jesuits—these painful exhibitions are not uncommon.

Towards nine in the morning we reached Chicoya, an extremely poor village, on a river of the same name, and with about 500 inhabitants, chiefly subsisting by agriculture, though the sandy soil does not seem very inviting for that occupation. The ground is stony, and all around on field and hill are blocks of porphyry and boulders, containing quartz crystals,—indications of the approach to a mineral region. We crossed, in the course of the day, the beds of several

streams, but the water was so entirely dried up in them that they looked more like flinty roads than water-courses. Sébako, where we stopped to rest at noon, is just as deplorable-looking a place as the preceding. Some banana plantations in the neighbourhood looked very poor and scanty, and, I believe, not so much from the want of heat and the now considerable elevation as from the barren, stony nature of the ground. It is strange that in a country where millions of acres of the most fruitful soil are still lying waiting only the hand of the cultivator to reward his industry with a threefold harvest, such sterile tracts should find settlers to expend their labour to so little purpose; and at the time we passed through it, when the locusts had devoured most of what it did produce, the distress was doubly severe. Even in the larger villages we could procure neither tortillas nor eggs, milk nor meat; and the inhabitants were living entirely on beans, sugar-cane, roasted bananas, and other fruits and roots, either cooked or raw.

Whilst I was resting for a little while under the shade of a giant mango-tree, waiting for some coffee, an old blind man came tottering towards me, led by a little half-naked Indian

girl, and begged for some medicine. The news of the arrival of a stranger (a most uncommon occurrence in these solitudes) had run like wild-fire from hut to hut; and as he had repeatedly heard me called *Dr.* by my servant, he came to solicit the favour of a "little powder" to cure his blindness of twenty years' standing,—so boundless is the faith of these people in the power of physic!

We had now to climb the side of a great mountain, and the vegetation began to assume a more northern character. The blocks of porphyry also became more numerous, and large tracts of the ground had an ochre-like tinge. Here we were again overtaken by the darkness before we could get to any place of shelter; and, moreover, our little caravan was drenched by a torrent of rain as we rode through a tract of dark, dense forest, in which we could not see any one we met, till they were close upon us, and were very often obliged to dismount and grope our way, drawing the mules after us.

Towards nine we reached Matagalpa, thoroughly tired out; but, as I had a letter of recommendation to the prefect, I thought it best to proceed at once to his abode. Most of the

houses we passed were already dark, and the doors closed; the Prefect, too, was gone to bed, and we had to stay knocking and making whatever noise we could, for a considerable time, at the door of his small shabby house, before we could get any answer. At last, the door was opened, and a little thin man, of very dark complexion and curly hair, in the lightest possible night toilette, advanced towards us with a mixture of Indian pride and negro vanity in his bearing, and taking the letter from me, disappeared again without in the least concerning himself about our drenched condition, or making any attempt to direct us to some more comfortable place of sojourn. The wretched habitation occupied by the Prefect, who was apparently a bachelor, offered indeed small prospect of accommodation, so I could only beg him earnestly to let us know, as soon as possible, where we were to go to. Thereupon, he threw a scarlet mantle over his nearly naked brown shoulders, and said he would show us to the Cabildo, and have the "*Sala de la Municipalidad*" opened for our accommodation.

The Cabildo is in New Spain the town hall, or law court of a village, in which all official busi-

ness is transacted, and which also serves for a guard-house and a prison. From the want of regular inns, the half-covered corridor before it is generally chosen as the resting-place for all kinds of wanderers, who pass the night there on straw mats that they bring with them, and have their several packages disposed about them. The opening of a closed apartment of the Cabildo, however, is a favour shown only to mounted travellers who come with recommendations. When the Prefect mentioned the "hall of the municipality" as the place destined for my quarters, I rejoiced privately at the prospect; not that I was novice enough to expect anything like European comfort, but I thought I should find at least a clean, decent, well-closed lodging. I was therefore somewhat disagreeably surprised when the door of the "sala" in question was opened,—indeed it was already half open, for it was nearly off the hinges,—and I entered a large but dirty, mouldy room, with the plaster falling from the walls all round, and where there was nothing to remind you of its official character but a raised place in the middle, with a wooden railing to separate the spectators from the magistrates. At the lower end of the hall was a long table and

a wooden bench on which a man lay stretched out asleep. When we entered with a light, he started up as if frightened, and then, wrapping his blanket round him, he remained sitting in an upright position staring at us. I learned subsequently that he was a prisoner not yet brought to trial, who, on account of the bad construction of the prison, had been lodged in the building which the hospitality of Matagalpa assigned for the reception of the "stranger from the Danube."

Some barefooted soldiers afterwards, by order of the Prefect, brought in an empty bedstead, upon which I constructed, with my blankets and carpet-bags, as luxurious a bed as circumstances would permit; and the official persons who installed me in these quarters had no sooner retired, than I began to enjoy the repose of which, after my fourteen hours' ride, I had much need. My servant stretched himself on the brick floor and slept soundly, as did the before-mentioned prisoner. But the rats did not seem to be in the same need of rest as the other occupants of the "sala," and continued the whole night very active in the pursuit of business, or pleasure, among the decaying beams and rafters of the

roof. The door, it appeared, could not be fastened from within; and to prevent its swinging open with every gust of wind, it had to be barred on the outside, so that I myself might be considered a prisoner as well as my fellow lodger.

CHAP. IX.

THE INDIAN TOWN OF MATAGALPA AND ITS
ENVIRONS.

Physiognomy of the Town. — Population. — Climate. — Cultivation. — Prices of the Necessaries of Life. — Excursion to the Gold and Silver Mines of the Environs. — Don Liberato Abarca. — San Ramon la Leonesa. — A North American Doctor. — El Ocote. — La Luna. — Monte Grande. — Ucalca. — San Pablo. — The cultivated Lands of Matagalpa and Northern Emigration. — Generous Intentions of my New-Spanish Companion Don Liberato. — Medical Visit to the Prisoners in the Cabildo. — A dying Murderer. — Medical Experiment on an Indian Convert under Sentence of Death. — The Result and the Fee. — Some of the most remarkable Diseases. — Aversion of the Indians to Inoculation. — Terrible Ravages of Malignant Small Pox among the Natives. — A humane Hint for cloistered Nuns. — Cutaneous Diseases and Hooping Cough. — Travelling Doctors. — Practice first and Study afterwards.

THAT Matagalpa was one of the earliest settlements in Nicaragua, is all the information the natives can afford the inquisitive traveller concerning this interesting Indian village. Neither from any public document nor from the most

aged inhabitants could I obtain even the date of its foundation. It has had to struggle through three revolutions; all of them bearing less of a political character than the more odious one of a war of *caste*, and it is still bleeding from the wounds it received in the last Indian insurrection of 1846 and 1847. Many houses that were then set on fire, are lying as heaps of ruins; and others, that the occupants were compelled to abandon, exhibit, though still standing, a yet more mournful image of decay and desolation. With such memorials as these the town of course has no very cheerful aspect, and the church is a clumsy, ugly, mean-looking building, without a clock, so that when the sun does not shine the sexton is often much puzzled when to ring the Ave Maria bell. It is astonishing, indeed, how few clocks are to be found in Central America! While with us the poorest peasant's hut in the Black Forest is not without such a convenience, the most opulent of the inhabitants of the Isthmus often do not possess one, or even so much as a silver watch.

The population of this place, in spite of all drawbacks, amounts to above 24,000, mostly pure Indians, with a few trading families, who fled to these mountains on the first breaking out of the civil war in Leon. The disposition of the

Indians has latterly become very pacific, and if the white population ever have any cause to fear them it is their own fault. The native races are too degenerate and enfeebled by long oppression for the smallest probability of a general rising; and it appeared to me a very significant fact that among the thousands of Indians here, I could not find one who had any knowledge of his mother tongue. All spoke Spanish; and though at first, when Indians even of more than seventy years of age professed their inability to translate a few words into their native dialect, I thought they were dissimulating, I was afterwards convinced it was not so. I myself offered them a considerable sum as a reward for this service, and the Prefect promised a full-blood Indian prisoner the remission of his punishment; but to no purpose. The Indians living on the northern coast, however, still speak the language of their forefathers, the Caribbee.

The generally unfavourable impression made by the town of Matagalpa is strikingly contrasted by the beauty of the country round. Situated in the midst of a magnificent fertile hill country, about 3000 feet above the level of the sea, with a fine climate which will admit

of the favourable cultivation as well of the northern cerealia as of the fruits and other plants of the tropics, its mountains are covered to their summits with Indian and other corn, its lowlands with sugar-cane, coffee, and tobacco, while its natural savannahs afford, the whole year through, the richest pastures for cattle. Of the temperature I could not, unfortunately, make any accurate observations, on account of the accident to my thermometer; and it has never occurred to the most intelligent of the inhabitants of Matagalpa to make any observations of the kind. To judge by the very deceptive test of personal feelings, I should say that the climate has much resemblance to that of San José in Costa Rica, where the average for the year is 67° Fahrenheit. There are three harvests of Indian corn,—of other kinds only two,—namely, in September and February, the respective seed times being in May and October; there is no perceptible difference in the quality of the corn in the two harvests, and the yield is in general twenty-fold. In ordinary seasons the *cajuela* of corn, a measure of twenty-five pounds weight, is sold for five reals (rather more than two shillings English), but in seasons of distress like that of

1854, it may probably rise to ten. Of the quantity of corn land at present under cultivation we could not obtain even an approximate statement, nor were any more exact data to be had concerning the breeding of cattle, also an important branch of industry here; but of the cheapness of living in this mountain district some idea may be formed from a milch cow costing only from ten to fourteen dollars, and beef being sold at less than threepence a pound.

The working of the gold and silver mines is not now carried on on such a large scale as formerly, nor are the mines so productive; yet mining still forms an important occupation for the people of this country. The mines of Matagalpa were discovered in 1808, but did not attract the attention of large capitalists till 1814. At that time more than two hundred men were employed in the mines, and the yearly produce was calculated at 80,000 piastres. The produce is now not more than one-fourth of that amount, and there are not more than sixty workmen; a stoppage of many of the works and dismissal of the men having followed the sudden death of the well-informed and enterprising Englishman, Mr. Richard Painter, whose

exertions here had been attended with so much success, and of whom many of the inhabitants retain the warmest recollection.

I visited the most important mines of Matagalpa, in company with Don Liberato Abarca, formerly chief of the department, but now living in the most complete retirement among the mountains. He is an intelligent and warm-hearted patriot, whose acquaintance was extremely valuable to me.

We rode over fine, rich, cultivated land, and then across some savannahs, stretching out in their wild luxuriance further than the eye could reach, and came upon the first mines about two leagues south-east of Matagalpa, where the richness and abundance of the vegetation evidently declines. The greatest mining works begin at San Ramon; and the utmost that has ever been obtained from them amounted to thirty-three pounds of gold, equal to a value of 5000 dollars. To obtain this much, 12,000 hundredweight of quartz had to be got from the interior of the mountain, and crushed. The tools and mining apparatus are perhaps the most primitive now employed in any quarter of the world,—consisting merely of a crowbar and an iron hammer,

with a wooden crushing machine, made in the country ; and the whole process is quite independent of the discoveries of modern technical chemistry. A workman's wages at these mines are little more than from ten to fifteen pence a day with his food ; and an ounce of gold costs—or did cost—fifteen dollars. Almost the whole produce of the mines has to be carried on mules to Granada, and is there exchanged for provisions and various articles of commerce.

The second mine that we visited was that of La Leonesa, the property of the very well-known American, Dr. Sigo, who, after a career of the most extraordinary vicissitude, has at last settled in Granada. In this mine a perpendicular depth of 270 feet has been reached, and three galleries opened, one below the other, though with seventeen or eighteen feet of solid earth between them. These works also, however, were stopped for want of capital ; but as the American Doctor aforesaid has now succeeded in making good a claim for 20,000 dollars, as compensation from the government of Managua for nine months' imprisonment,—a claim in which he has been powerfully supported by Major Boreland, the Minister for the United States in Central

America,—there is a prospect that the mining works of Leonesa will shortly be resumed with energy and with all the advantages that modern science can afford. I heard, too, during my stay in Matagalpa, that several North-American capitalists propose to undertake the working of the gold mines.

In all these mines the descent is made, not with ladders, but by means of thick trunks of trees with notches cut in them for the feet; and in this manner I descended several hundred feet into that of Ocote, at present worked by my friendly companion Don Liberato. The mineral veins usually run from north-east to south-south-east, and, according to my barometrical observations, most of the mines lie on the same level as the town of Matagalpa.

At a distance of about a league from San Ramon lie the gold mines of La Luna, and further on those of Monte Grande, Ucalca, and San Pablo, none of which appear to me productive enough to justify the expending any great amount of capital upon them. The same sums laid out upon the land would yield incomparably richer and more valuable returns.

As we rode back to Matagalpa, across an im-

measurable extent of fertile but uncultivated ground, the conversation naturally turned on the advantages that would accrue to the country and the people from an immigration *en masse*. It would rejoice one's very heart to see these glorious fields peopled with thriving farmers, and a church and a school-house rising in every village. Don Liberato also was impressed by the great material and spiritual benefit that an immigration of northern races might afford to his country's future prospects; but he appeared to have a sort of intuitive dread of the Yankees, and was greatly inclined to prefer European settlers. "I am determined, if this gold mine turns out well," he said, "to send to Europe four of the cleverest young men I can find, and have them educated at my own expense in all the most useful branches of practical science. What a happy thing it would be for my dear native country to have some really well-informed agriculturists, chemists, and engineers among her people! Ah! only let my gold mine bring me some profit, then we shall see!" This expression of patriotic enthusiasm delighted me, and, at the same time, I must own, put me to shame, for I should never have expected it from a Nicaraguan. But Don

Liberato was born and brought up in Leon ; and whatever we may say of the unquiet, revolutionary spirit of that old town, it is certain that its inhabitants are distinguished above the rest of their countrymen by intellectual activity and liberal tendencies.

It was late in the evening when we got back to Matagalpa ; but late as it was, I found there were some patients waiting for me. Several prisoners, accused of robbery and murder, were awaiting their sentence in that very Cabildo where I was lodged, and separated from my "Municipal Hall" only by a passage. They had been for some time suffering from illness ; and hearing of the accidental presence of an "*intelligente*," desired the benefit of his advice. I had the prison opened ; for who could tell whether it might not be advantageous to myself to make some acquaintances among gentlemen of this profession, considering how often I rambled about alone in the woods ! and I found, in a perfectly dark, gloomy dungeon, without any means of ventilation, about fifteen men, some of them lying wrapped in a few coarse rags on the bare stones, and some dragging themselves painfully about with fetters on their hands and feet. Most of

them were rude, strong-looking fellows, on whose features their bloody trade was pretty legibly written, in addition to the suffering occasioned by their dreary confinement, and the privation of the fresh air and free movement of their forest life. Some were affected with inflammation of the eyes, others with various diseases of the stomach and intestinal canal. In one corner, stretched upon a stone bench, with a dirty blanket thrown over it, was something that I took for a dead body; but I was told it was a condemned murderer, who was ill of a fever. I threw back the blanket, and saw an old Indian, with perfectly white hair, writhing and moaning in a paroxysm of his malady. Unfortunately, unlike most of his race, he could speak scarcely any Spanish, so that we could have but little communication; but it was evident that confinement and neglect would be likely soon to complete what old age, fever, and seemingly mental suffering had begun. Truly, one knows not what punishment may await such a sinner in the future, but he had certainly had no trifling foretaste of it in this dark, damp dungeon of the Cabildo of Matagalpa. When I left the prison, however, promising to send some medicines that I thought

likely to be beneficial, I could not help feeling some doubt whether I was not myself culpable in thus endeavouring to prolong by medical assistance, perhaps for years, lives that disease might otherwise have speedily cut short, and thus, it might be, becoming a kind of accomplice in their future misdeeds. I sent my pills and powders, nevertheless; but I must own, if I could have got at some medicinal plants of the country, the effects of which I wished to ascertain, I should not have had many scruples of conscience in administering them experimentally to these patients.

In the course of the next day the gaoler came to inform me that my remedies had had the best effect, and that his company were all very lively, *très allegre*; and he also inquired, in the name of the prisoners, the *price* of the medicines I had sent.

I replied that the only acknowledgment I required for my services was, that if they should ever happen to meet me in a lonely part of a forest, under circumstances favourable to the exercise of their peculiar profession, they would have the kindness to let me go on my way unstabbed.

The news of my successful treatment of the guests of the Cabildo soon spread over the town; and since there was not a single physician resident at Matagalpa, I was soon overwhelmed with patients desirous of consulting me; and though these visits took a great deal of time, and were certainly rather troublesome, they gave me an opportunity I might not otherwise have had, of informing myself concerning the special diseases of the country. One of the most interesting in a medical point of view, though one of the most disgusting, is the leprosy, which is frequently met with among the Indians, and may in most cases be attributed to uncleanliness, bad food, and a dissolute way of life. I heard of several cases, during my stay in Matagalpa, in which it had made terrible ravages, and occasioned some not altogether groundless fears of its infecting the whole neighbourhood.

Those who were suffering from it were greatly emaciated, and covered with eruptions and tumours that caused acute pain on the slightest movement; and the unfortunate creatures thus afflicted were lying, as they had been for many months, upon hard boards, without the smallest medical assistance. In the worst cases I tried,

with the necessary caution, a solution of arsenic, and washing with diluted creosote, as well as some preparations of mercury; and at the same time I made a most determined attack on the Prefect, urging him by every humane and sanitary consideration to let the patients be better attended to, and to have some bathing-tubs procured at the public cost, so that they might have the benefit of a daily lukewarm bath. On the following morning I had the pleasure of learning that some humane citizens of Matagalpa were about to carry out my proposal; and, whatever may have been the ultimate result of cases so very doubtful, it is certain the baths must have had a beneficial effect and have tended to alleviate pain.

Another disease, fearfully destructive among the Indians, is the small-pox (*la viruela*), and chiefly from the cause that very few of the native inhabitants are inoculated, and even those who do resort to this means of prevention will not adopt vaccination unless compelled. I saw two Indians, who had come to Matagalpa from a neighbouring hamlet, bringing with them malignant small-pox; and by the time they had been a few days in the town, the disease had developed itself in its most horrible form. One of these

Indians, who was a porter in the house of a tradesman, I found stretched out on a bare wooden bench, with just a piece of cloth thrown over his sore, bleeding, half-naked body. It was a most painful sight; and moreover the little naked children of the master of the house, and their companions, were running continually, at their play, in and out of the room, which was very damp though full of draughts. It may easily be supposed that under such circumstances a single case may occasion the infection of a whole town; and one cannot but be mindful, in witnessing these things, of the blessings of civilisation, which open to the unfortunate the doors of the hospital, and afford them the benefit of medical advice and attendance in clean, well-aired rooms. Oh, you pious nuns of my own country, if you would, when you wish to renounce the world, but come to these quiet mountains, instead of shutting yourselves up within the cold, dreary walls of your convents, what blessings might your lives become to the poor sick Indians, instead of wasting away, as they do now, in mournful and unprofitable seclusion!

The leprosy has been mostly confined, hitherto, to the Indians; but other forms of cutaneous dis-

ease are common among the Ladinos, and are also, in a great measure, attributable to immorality, uncleanness, and neglect. I have met people who had been languishing for seven years under malignant eruptions of the skin, who had never subjected themselves to any systematic medical treatment. Among the children I found hooping-cough prevailing like a pestilence over the whole province, and I have been assured that an enormous number of infants fall victims to this epidemic from the sheer ignorance of their parents.*

Such a melancholy condition of public health in a country with so salubrious a climate forces on the observer the question of how these things might be remedied, where, for the greater part of the population, the benefit of sound medical advice, as well as of a good druggist, is still unattainable, and where suffering humanity has to help itself as well as it can with old women's de-

* The mode of procedure at births is no less stupid and barbarous, and costs the lives of many infants ; but as the details on the subject are not well adapted to general readers, we reserve them for some future occasion, when we may have to speak of the hygienic condition of Central America.

coctions, or the yet more dubious mixtures of the travelling quack. To show what curious attempts at doctoring themselves, the settlers on these mountains sometimes make, I may cite the following anecdote:—A German immigrant, who had settled in a village in Nicaragua, brought me, one morning, a plant, called by the natives *Contrayerva* (on subsequent examination it proved to be an *Aristolochia*), and boasted to me of its wonderful healing properties. “You see,” said he, “I was taking a walk in the forest one day, and I saw this plant, and I thought, perhaps, it might be good for the stomach, so I pulled it up and ate the root. Two days afterwards I felt very ill, and vomited for hours together, and was violently purged; but after it was over, I felt all the better.” The natives of Costa Rica and Honduras do, indeed, use this root of the *contrayerva* as an aperient; it does not usually take effect for two days, but they say its operation is accelerated if they take some brandy with it.

To put an end to these bold attempts of every man becoming his own physician, as well as to restrain, as far as possible, the destructive doings of the itinerant quacks, I should propose that in

every place where efficient medical help was not to be procured, medicine chests, containing an assortment of the most generally useful medicines, should be fitted up at the public expense, and given into the hands of the clergyman or schoolmaster, for gratuitous distribution to the poor; whilst the former should be at the same time furnished with some popular medical handbooks, that might serve them as a guide where no better was to be had.

The maladies of most frequent occurrence in tropical countries are by no means of a complicated kind, and may easily be reduced under three or four principal heads; and a man of any intelligence, especially if he had some little taste for medical study, might easily make himself master of the general modes of treatment for the diseases he would be most likely to meet with. For this reason, indeed, many a man, who, in Europe, would hardly have been thought fit to be a dresser at a hospital, has here gained considerable reputation and a lucrative practice.

In the state of Costa Rica, I was acquainted with an American who, with an extremely superficial smattering of medical knowledge,

though with much boldness and versatility, had practised as a physician for nine months with brilliant success, and then gone back to Philadelphia to study, or, as he said, to look about him a little, at the Clinical Lectures. I myself saw a fee of 300 piastres paid to this man for a visit to a fever-patient, the daughter of a rich landowner, about a day's journey from his residence. This, I must own, however, was rather an exceptional case.

By the plan I have recommended of entrusting the parish priest with the parish medicine chest, his influence would be increased in the most honourable manner; he would become the guardian of the bodies as well as the souls of his parishioners; his previous habits of study would afford him great advantages for this new vocation; and were he an active and intelligent man, it might often happen that he could render important service to medical science by the discovery of plants yet unknown to the pharmacopœia.

CHAP. X.

JOURNEY TO TOTOCALPA.

Northern Vegetation. — Inodega. — Cheerful Aspect of the Place. — Another Quack. — The Priest asks Medical Advice.—A Benediction for a Fee.—Beauty of the Environs of Inodega.— A peculiar Kind of Hunting. — A musical Band of Robbers.—Arrival at San Rafael. — A Murder and its Consequences. — Old Don Miguel Lansas. — Historical Details concerning San Rafael. — How a Village arises in Central America. — Delay of our Journey. — Political Conversation with Don Miguel. — His Views upon Louis Napoleon. — A Catholic Mode of finding a Mule. — A good Catholic, but a bad Servant. — The Mule really appears again. — Dangerous Consequences. — Farewell to Don Miguel. — An Adventure. — The Valley of Jales.—The Hacienda of Bromadero. — A Scale of Vegetation. — Palacaquina. — An importunate Family. — Totocalpa. — Central American Indians and German Peasants.

A RIDE of two hours from Matagalpa, mostly on an ascent, brought us to the lower limit of the fir region, which, in Nicaragua, is at the height of 2500 feet. The thermometer showed (at eight in the morning on the 10th of March) only 62° Fah-

renheit; and magnificent pines stretched their green shady arms out over us, alternating with oaks which were draperied in a wonderful manner with Tillandsias, but appeared to suffer from the exuberant growth of these parasites. The highest point we reached that day was 4000 feet; but there, as it was then one o'clock in the afternoon, the thermometer stood at 75° Fahrenheit.

Towards three we reached Inodega, one of the prettiest, pleasantest villages I have ever seen in Nicaragua, with neat white cottages, roofed with tiles, and indicating a certain amount of opulence in the inhabitants, who are about 3000 in number, and mostly engaged in agriculture.

The valley in which the village is situated offers in its rich and smiling vegetation a striking contrast to the mountains around, and firs, pines, and oaks, all children of a northern clime, flourish in happy proximity to the golden-fruited orange-trees, the bananas, and tall sugar-canes that display their superb foliage in the village gardens. I alighted at a kind of little inn, where, in one of the rooms, I saw a billiard table, and the parish priest, a robust-looking man, in his shirt-sleeves, with a cigar in his mouth, playing a game of skittles with an old parishioner, whilst

a number of neighbours, seated on wooden benches around, looked on at the game with great interest.

My entrance caused a momentary interruption, but I had no sooner taken a seat near the Alcalde to whom I had brought a letter from the government, than it went on again as briskly as before. Shortly afterwards there came up to me an elderly man in a dazzling white jacket and trousers, and a black glazed hat, worn somewhat in nautical fashion, who, sitting down on the bench beside me, asked me, in rather broken Spanish, whether I was an "*estrangero*." I replied in the affirmative, and now learned from him that he was a New-Brunswicker, born of English parents, and, though formerly a seaman, had been for some years turning to good account a few medical notions that he had picked up, and practising as a *curandero*, the name given to a number of quacks scattered about the country to distinguish them from the more regular disciples of Esculapius. They proceed, of course, in a tolerably hap-hazard fashion with their patients, but enjoy, nevertheless, an amount of confidence not always accorded to more educated practitioners.

Don Jorge, as my new acquaintance was called here, had just now a few very serious cases on his hands, and begged me earnestly to come and visit them ; though not, it seemed, so much with a view of asking my opinion concerning the method of treatment he had adopted, as to increase his influence with his patients, by showing them that his plans were approved by a traveller of respectability.

Don Jorge had not exactly adopted the convenient and pleasing method of the ingenious Frenchman who used to carry about with him a bunch of prescriptions, and let his patients choose among them and please themselves ; but his system, too, was beautifully simple. Aloes and calomel, opium and bark, constituted nearly his whole pharmacopœia ; and those patients who did not die, and yet were so obstinate as not to get better upon these remedies, had to submit to be rubbed all over with cayenne pepper, and swallow a bitter decoction of some native herbs, to which the doctor ascribed a special healing power.

I had but just returned from my walk through the village with Don Jorge, when the priest, still in his shirt-sleeves, and with the billiard cue in

his hand, came to me, saying he wished to speak with me alone. We entered a little, dark adjoining room, and the padre began a very candid confession and minute detail of his corporal sufferings and infirmities, adding, as he leaned on his billiard cue, that there was, unfortunately, no regular physician in the village, and that "one did not like exactly to trust to the discretion of a mere village barber. People did talk so, and the world was so corrupt and censorious." "Ah, Padre Cura," said I, as I went to get from my medicine chest what I thought would meet his case, "it is a wicked world indeed; nobody knows that better than you. You often find, I dare say, that your spiritual medicines do not take much effect upon it." I obtained, in return for my box of pills, the benefit of his reverence's paternal benediction; and I thought, perhaps, I might have need of it, for I had now six leagues to travel over a lonely unpeopled tract, and through dark forests that bore by no means a good character.

Soon after we had left Inodega, the valley, before somewhat narrow, opened into a wide prairie of the most beautiful emerald green, stretching as far as the eye can reach, and the

whole country became indescribably lovely. I rode over the soft carpet with a feeling of the most exquisite enjoyment, wishing that, like Joshua, I could make the sun stand still, that I might continue to feast my eyes upon the colour of the grass. The sun, however, did not pay the least attention to my wishes, but, on the contrary, left me quite suddenly in complete darkness; the change, always rapid in tropical countries, being rendered more abrupt and striking from our having entered a long tract of dark oak-woods, in which we could not distinguish the path without the utmost difficulty. As we could not see ten paces before us, too, we were obliged to be on our guard against a sudden attack from banditti, the danger of which was of course increased by the darkness. The moon rose soon, however, and afforded us a faint glimmer of light; and in spite of the many robber stories we had heard, we met no one but a naked Indian hunter, who was driving before him a black ox tied to a long cord, in whose broad shadow he could conceal himself, the better to surprise the game. I do not remember that I ever saw this peculiar mode of hunting pursued elsewhere.

As we approached the little Mestizo village of San Rafael, and were riding over a piece of open meadow-ground faintly lighted by the moon, we all at once became aware of the presence of seven or eight men, who drew up near a little patch of bushes, and silently let us pass. A boy among them was mounted, but the others were all on foot; and one had a violin, another a flute, and another a bass viol hanging over his back, so that they appeared to be itinerant musicians returning from some village; but as there was, with the exception of San Rafael, no village for many miles round, nor even the smallest farm, I could not help wondering what they could be doing so quietly in that lonely place.

Towards ten o'clock my servant knocked at the door of old Don Miguel Lansas, the only white settler in the place; and although my guide, who was an attendant of the law court at Matagalpa, was personally well known, the door was not opened without the greatest caution, nor till after we had pushed in, through the small aperture afforded us, several very earnest letters of recommendation. The dread of robbers appeared to be very great at this place; and this was not surprising, as only a few weeks before a

band of them had broken into the house of one of the oldest and most opulent of the inhabitants, who was lying sick in bed—murdered him, and fled with the plunder of the house into the neighbouring forest. The villains, it was discovered, were inhabitants of the village; and the impression made by this discovery was so great, that many families left the place altogether. When the murderers fell afterwards into the hands of justice, I found that among them were some of those very fellows whom I had exerted my medical skill to cure in the Cabildo of Matagalpa, and I was now enjoying the hospitality of a relative of the victim of the very villains whom I had restored to health!

Late as the hour was, and though, when we arrived, the little family had been all asleep, they were soon busy boiling and roasting as if it had been noonday, and in half an hour I found myself sitting down before a number of smoking savoury dishes. Even Don Miguel himself, who had been born under the Spanish rule, and was eighty years of age, left his bed and came to sit with me. He seemed, indeed, so delighted to see, after so many years of solitude, a stranger once more under his roof, with whom he could

gossip to his heart's content, and pour out his store of reminiscences, that he quite forgot the lateness of the hour and my weariness: and, with the indifference to sleep common at his age, I believe he would have talked on without stopping till the next morning, if my involuntarily closing eyelids and confused answers had not reminded him of the necessity of adjourning our debate.

San Rafael lies about 5000 feet above the level of the sea, and contains 300 families. It was founded about thirty years ago by a padre, who settled here with a view of forming a parish; for, with the spiritual office of the priest in Central America, a worldly speculation generally goes hand in hand. It appears, in a certain point of view, a praiseworthy thing to collect a number of settlers, previously living isolated and scattered about the mountains, into a village congregation, and watch over their religious and moral welfare; but private interest has some share in these undertakings. In a settlement of a colony of this kind, it is very easy for the priest to obtain a good deal of land on very advantageous terms, and so increase the value of his living tenfold. But, whatever private mo-

tive the priest of San Rafael may have had in making the settlement, it is certain he has chosen well for those who have followed him, and placed them on a magnificent spot, affording every condition of happiness and prosperity,—a healthful invigorating climate, a rich soil, an abundance of water, which even in the dry season keeps the ground green and fresh, and, in the neighbouring woods of pine and oak, an almost exhaustless supply of fuel and material for building. I had already prepared to take my leave of my good old host, and pursue my journey, when my servant suddenly entered my room, and informed me with consternation that one of our best beasts, the large grey “matcho,” was missing. According to the general lazy custom, it seems the animals had been left to wander about at liberty, without the precaution being taken of fastening the forefeet together, by which they would have been prevented from moving to any great distance. I sent out Indian boys in various directions, promising a good reward to the finder, and even despatched an extra messenger back to Inodega; although, even if it should have set out in that direction, it did not seem likely it would ever have got there, as nothing could

be easier than to steal it in the forest. In the meantime I undid some of my packages, and sat down quietly by the side of my venerable host, who seemed, in the solitude of his life, almost pleased at the accident which had delayed my departure; and we had a long social chat, in which memory, that spiritual telescope, brought the remotest events of his past life suddenly near and clear before his eyes. He told me a great deal about the condition of the country and of the people under the old Spanish government; of the flagrant injustice with which both colonists and Indians were treated; of the heavy taxes the natives had to pay to the crown of Spain; and he asserted, that, however trade might have suffered by the change, the condition of the mass of the people was greatly improved, and the position of the Indians at least physically ameliorated. They were no longer oppressed and persecuted; they had made some steps towards civilisation; and in fact had fairly, in contact with it, forgotten their mother tongue. As yet, however, Don Miguel thought there was no evidence of moral or intellectual improvement; and he believed he could trace a decline in their numbers during the last fifty years, in con-

sequence of the "plagues,"—a collective name bestowed on small-pox, cholera, hooping-cough, and other apparently contagious diseases.

We talked upon many different subjects,—French politics, English poetry, and German prose; and on none of these subjects was my old settler of San Rafael uninformed. He had read Lord Byron's poems; knew all about Silvio Pellico and the Fortress of Spielberg; and also that, among other changes, French fickleness had now at last turned towards an Emperor. He asked me whether this was really the same Louis Napoleon who had been no very long time ago a prisoner at Ham; and who, before he entered on the Imperial line of business, had offered himself as provisional director to a company formed for connecting Lake Nicaragua with the Pacific. "Ah," exclaimed the old gentleman, "that man, with his name, his wonderful energy, his comprehensive, far-seeing plans, would have been more likely than any other to carry into execution the great undertaking that has been planned for three hundred years! What a pity that his project was not at that time more warmly supported; that he did not exhibit then the same bold self-reliance and decision that he afterwards

manifested in the *Coup d'Etat!* Would he not have rendered better service to humanity and freedom, as well as to his own lasting fame, by uniting the two oceans than by placing himself in his present autocratic position in the Tuileries?"

With my recollections of Paris, I could not help glancing involuntarily round, during this conversation, to see that there were no *mouchards* within hearing; and it was a relief to think that it was carried on in a lonely farm in the highlands of Nicaragua, with a vast ocean between us and the French police.

We afterwards talked a great deal of Silvio Pellico, his prisons, Italian freedom, and lastly of La Hungria and its recent heroic struggles, for which Don Miguel seemed to entertain a warm sympathy; in short, his whole character and mode of thought formed a rather surprising and agreeable phenomenon to meet with in a remote forest of Central America. In this venerable crumbling ruin of a man still lived much of the fire of poetical enthusiasm and youthful chivalry of feeling!

Evening came on, and still there was no news of my runaway mule, so my servant, Pantaleon, resolved to play his last card, and light two

candles in honour of Saint Antony, in order that this saint might interfere and cause the lost animal to appear to him — or to some one else. Saint Antony, it seems, is supposed here to have quite a speciality for recovering things that are lost. Pantaleon now begged from our host a pair of tallow candles, and after placing them before a little wooden image of the Virgin, he lit them, and exclaimed, "Appear! Appear! Appear!" Then he knelt down and said a few paternosters, in which the eldest daughter of the house accompanied him in a hoarse voice. After this he seemed to make himself quite easy; and after lighting a cigar, smoked it, lolling against a richly laden orange-tree before the house, leaving the matter of the lost mule in perfect confidence to Saint Antony.

I thought, myself, it would have been as well if he had taken the trouble to tie the mule's legs, and then we need not have troubled the saint; but the sequel probably convinced Pantaleon, who did not care much about the delay of my journey, that his was a much better as well as easier mode of proceeding.

Late in the evening came a *Commisario*, a sort of village magistrate, from a neighbouring set-

tlement, to pay us a visit. This official personage was in an easy costume,—namely, in his shirt-sleeves, bare-footed, and without a hat; but in the course of conversation the loss of my mule was mentioned; and then it appeared that he had met a mule answering the description, and, on closer inquiry, no doubt remained that it was my lost “matcho.” Thereupon the Commisario offered, for a fee of a dollar, to go and catch him; and he departed accordingly for this purpose, taking with him a long rope.

I learned afterwards that the mule had been born at Jales, the village towards which he had been trotting when he was seen; so perhaps it was only a fit of home-sickness, and the desire to revisit the scenes of his infancy, that led him to desert me. Pantaleon glorified himself prodigiously at this indisputable evidence of the trouble Saint Antony took with his affairs, and he became, consequently, more careless and lazy than he had been before. It was so easy to find again anything that was lost, that it seemed not worth while to take care of it.

It is certainly the shady side of this comfortable doctrine, that it offers the people so many easy methods of escaping the consequences of their faults.

When, on the following morning, I at last rode out of San Rafael, and bade farewell to Don Miguel, the eyes of the good old man were glistening with tears. It was the first time I had ever seen such evidence of emotion in a Nicaraguan. He should not soon forget, he said, the 12th and 13th of March, which we had passed together; it was so long since a son of European civilisation had found his way into this valley, and probably, as long as he lived, he would never see another. He remained a long time standing at the door, as our little caravan climbed the eastern hill; and I turned once more to wave adieu to him with my handkerchief, from the top of the height, before we descended into the valley, and I lost sight of the venerable old man. Worthy Don Miguel! I too shall remember the 12th and 13th of March, for the cordial reception I met with under your hospitable roof, as well as because they are important days in the history of my country!

The road to the valley of Jales led over steep mountain ridges covered with oak and pine. On the declivities we saw many of the trees draped with the grey beards of the *Tillandsia usneoides*, which gave them a strange and

melancholy aspect. It is surprising that this parasitic plant, which is found here in immense quantities and when dried has a great resemblance to horse-hair, has never been made an article of export, or at all events employed, in the country itself, for the purpose of making softer and more comfortable beds. But, like many other treasures of nature found here, which might render the most essential service in domestic life as well as to the healing arts, the *Tillandsia* is left to wither and rot to no purpose in the lonely forests of Segovia.

There were many dangerous passes in the road which reminded me of the wild ravines of the Sarapiquí, in the state of Costa Rica; but gradually the thick woods, through which we had been riding for some hours, opened out and showed us a beautiful valley of the richest verdure, with a few cane cottages scattered about it. This was the valley of Jales, and on the whole road we had seen only two Indians who were going the same way. Although they walked faster on foot than we were able to ride, and had besides frequently the advantage of being able to take a short cut, they always waited at the spots where the foot and horse-

paths met, and stood still to let us pass them. This is a common custom with Indians, and does not so much proceed from respect, as from a kind of distrust that still clings to them at the sight of a white, and makes them like to keep their eye upon him.

A mounted Indian, who showed us the way to the next settlement, begged me to alight for a moment at his dwelling, — a little woodland hut close to the road, — in order to see his aged father who was ill, and to give him some medicine. I willingly complied with his request, and entered a close, dark place, in which a lean old man, leaning on a thick stick, tottered towards me. An old woman and several cinnamon-brown daughters, who were also mothers in their turn, and had little children in their arms and at the breast, now made their appearance, and gathered with eager curiosity round my medicine chest, from whose multifarious contents I was preparing a medicine for the old man.

They seemed to delight in looking at my pill-boxes and vials, and thought, I suppose, that they would be greatly the better for some of their contents; so, when I was preparing to continue my journey, one after another came up to me,

and complained of headache, or stomachache, or cough, or some ailment or other, and begged for "*un remedio.*" In these poor forest settlements, where sometimes a numerous family will be living together in one close, dirty room, sleeping upon skins on the damp earth, having for weeks together no nourishing food, but living wholly on fruits and roots, maize and beans, and where they do not so much as know of the existence of laws of health, far less think of observing them, it is not wonderful to find people unwell. Most of their diseases are attributable to bad diet, colds, or unhealthy ways of living; and as they very seldom take any medicines, the effects, when they do, are proportionably rapid and powerful. It is a great pleasure for a traveller in these countries to be provided with the means of alleviating the sufferings he meets with, and to feel how often he can earn the hearty thanks of forlorn fellow-creatures, who look up to him almost as to a superior being. In such cases he truly goes on his way rejoicing.

Although the dry season had now lasted more than four months, the vegetation was still fresh and green in the valley of Jales. The frequent showers that fall in these valleys — surrounded, as

they are, by lofty mountains, and themselves lying 3000 or 4000 feet above the sea level — are, probably, the occasion of this perpetual verdure; and one cannot pass through this luxuriant wilderness, and witness the abounding fertility of Segovia, with its blessings of threefold harvests, without thinking sorrowfully of the many thousands of destitute, care-worn labourers and artisans who, in European countries, are stretching out their industrious hands vainly imploring work. What an enviable existence might be theirs, could they but be transported in a body to these fruitful lands, where they might enjoy all the advantages of tropical nature without its drawbacks! What a delightful health-giving change would it be for them from their close unhealthy workshops to the fresh sweet air of the highlands of Segovia!

But only the emigration of a whole body of people together—an emigration in which they might preserve their language, their religion, the manners and customs of civilisation; in which their children might be educated, their sick cared for, and in which the community should have the management of its own affairs—would be likely to be productive of such happy consequences. A single emigrant would

perish;—he would fall a victim to a struggle with nature and circumstances, which require united strength and co-operative efforts to be contended with victoriously.

After we had passed two wretched hamlets, and ridden for a considerable time along the side of the river Jales, which flows through the valley, we reached at length the hacienda of Bromadero, as the owner of this farm was named. We had hoped to get as far as Deraillié; but the weary steps of our mules and the rocky character of the ground deterred us from making the attempt. The inhabitants of the little settlement were already gone to rest,—no light was to be seen in it, and no voice heard; but when my servant had knocked for some time at the closely-barred house door, a half-naked mulatto came out with a piece of burning pine in his hand, and pointed out to us a kind of lumber-shed where we could pass the night. It was, however, so full of vermin and dirt that, in spite of the threatening appearance of the clouds, I preferred hanging my mat in the open air, under a dilapidated corridor. A few young negresses, somewhat disgusting from the disorder and filth of their garments, soon made their appearance,

and with one hand carrying a water-jug, and the other scratching their woolly heads, proceeded to an adjoining hut, where was the kitchen, and very willingly lit a fire and helped my servant to get some supper ready; but if they had been rather less nasty, I should have felt more thankful for less service.

On the following morning the owner of this hacienda accompanied me to Deraillié, the next settlement, about three leagues further, to which he happened to be going on business, and spared me thereby the trouble of getting another guide—but not the guide's wages; for, when we were about to separate, he held out his hand quite confidently to receive payment for his service. Even tolerably opulent natives of this country are, as a rule, extremely covetous, and like to be paid for the smallest attention they show to a stranger; though they have no sort of scruple in asking him to render them the most important services without fee or reward.

The way to Deraillié offers great variety of scenery, and the rapid succession of vast cold mountains and warm valleys, produces a most striking change in the vegetation. You ride for a long time through forests of oak and pine, with

scarcely any underwood, and then suddenly descend into a region of palms and sugar-canes, of the sensitive mimosa and the tree cactus, of aloes and wild pine-apples. At some points the northern flora meets the tropical fairly face to face; and one cannot help thinking the banana and the sugar-cane must feel surprised to find themselves standing close to the oak, the fir, and other hardy children of a rougher zone. There are not many spots on the earth that could afford such a spectacle of vegetation; but the showers which here maintain its freshness, do not seem to refresh any lower level than 2000 feet. Below that, the savannahs have a withered, burnt up aspect; trees and shrubs have mostly lost their leaves; and the slightest breath of wind raises clouds of dust that show there can have no rain fallen for months. All nature is parched, arid, and athirst.

We stopped for a siesta at Palaequina, a rather large negro village at the height of about 4000 feet; and, while I alighted at the house of the Alcalde, I sent my servant on an exploring expedition, to see what prospect of dinner the place afforded. But although there were in it above 7000 inhabitants, I could get no meat,

nor even maize — nothing, in short, but a few spoonfuls of boiled black beans, which a half-naked negress brought me in a gourd; that was all that could be had for any amount of “love or money.” Even when the Alcalde came home, and I showed him the great state seal of the letter with which I was provided (he could not read it), my situation was not at all improved; in fact it was considerably deteriorated, for, instead of being allowed to take my rest in my mat which I had hung up before the house, I was besieged with applications for medical assistance. The Alcalde had caught sight of my medicine chest, and he came to beg for some plaster for several tumours; scarcely had I complied with his request before there advanced in succession his wife and his daughter and a workman in his employment, and then several female neighbours who all began to worry me with the wildest questions about what was good for this, and that, and the other. Most of the affections they described were of an unpleasant nature, arising from abominably dirty habits, or gross sins against temperance, &c.; and I could not help thinking, during my interviews with these patients, that it would be a very good thing if the

first article of the constitution of Nicaragua, instead of stipulating for any political rights, had provided that every citizen should take a powerful aperient, an emetic, and a cleansing bath.

I distributed a considerable portion of pills, powders, and plasters among the inhabitants of this house; but I was not much surprised to find them nevertheless, when I went away, demanding half a real for a gourd full of black beans which had been furnished to me. The proceeding was quite in harmony with what I had noticed before of the people of New Spain.

On the way to Totocalpa we again ascended into the region of coniferæ, and with the oaks and pines came a fresher and juicier vegetation, and a cooler and moister atmosphere.

The boundary line of the summer showers is here so sharply drawn that it is impossible to overlook it. Up to a height of 1500 feet the winter or rainy season is very short, and the greater part of the year is extremely dry; but at 4000 feet it rains at short intervals the whole year through, and this difference in the amount of moisture occasions, of course, a most striking variety in the vegetation.

Between Palacquina and Totocalpa the mineral

region begins; the ground assumes a rocky character, and all along the road you see masses of porphyry, granite, and quartz. Totocalpa is a village of 800 inhabitants, mostly pure Indians, who, however, have quite forgotten their native language, and speak only Spanish. Their huts are built of canes, and thatched with palm-leaves; the church is the only large building, and even that has no clock-tower, but on each side of its simple portal rises a tall, stately cuyol-palm, which, seeming to pierce the very heavens, forms an ornament that many a grand cathedral of Europe might envy.

The Alcalde, after I had read the government letter, was friendly enough to allow my hammock to be hung up before the mud edifice in which he resided, and to make no objection to my coffee being prepared at his fire. No single man of these official persons to whom I had been recommended could read or write, and the amount of respect they entertained for the authority of the government was pretty well indicated by the kind of reception they gave me. When I asked the Prefect of Matagalpa whether the President's letter of recommendation did not make every other unnecessary, he answered, "Ah! the Pre-

sident is a long way off. The nearest authority is always the best."

There was a great scarcity of provisions here, as in all the villages we had passed for many days. We had become accustomed to do without eggs, milk, butter, meat, bread, &c., but here we could not even buy any cheese, salt, or tortillas; and the locusts had destroyed so much of the maize that the people liked to keep what little they had for themselves, and would scarcely part with it at any price. We had got through Borden's excellent meat-biscuits many days ago*; so I was obliged to content myself this evening with coffee and black beans, not without making a resolution for the future to lay in a better stock of provisions, and that not merely when I was passing through the uninhabited regions of this country, but even when travelling in its most populous districts.

* We found this admirable invention of the greatest service to us while journeying through the wildernesses of the Cordillera, and I cannot too much recommend it to all travellers proceeding to any region remote from civilisation. It is a kind of concentrated essence of meat, one pound of which is equal in power of nourishment to five of fresh meat; and it may be used either in a solid form or as soup, an ounce of the meat-biscuit being sufficient for a pint. What we had was made in New York by the inventor, Mr. Gail Borden, 84. Williams Street.

Whilst I was swinging in my airy bed and making myself as comfortable as circumstances would permit, I could hear through the open door a conversation that the Alcalde was carrying on with several of the villagers who were squatting on the earth round him. They were talking about the locusts and the next maize harvest, but very few of them seemed to have more to say than "*Si, Senor,*" or "*Comẽ no,*" which may be translated by "Of course." If you listen to the talk of the most unlearned German peasants, as they sit on the bench before their door, or over a glass of beer at their village ale-house, you will often notice, through all their ignorance, gleams of strong intelligence and sound judgment; but in these countries the range of ideas in this class is narrow indeed.

They not

The New Spaniard does not know the twentieth part of the words in his language, and does not use the tenth part even of those that he knows; and he is characterised by a slothful unwillingness to think, which is sometimes attributed to the enervating influence of a tropical climate; but I should myself rather ascribe it to the degeneracy of race.

CHAP. XI.

JOURNEY TO DIPILTO.

The Indian Village of Ocotal. — Padre Bonilla. — A Meeting with the Saint of Mosonte. — The Saint talks Politics, and declares himself decidedly for the Russians. — What this Saint wants to be really a Saint. — Further Journey. — The Silver Mines of Macoeliso. — Misericordia. — Santa Rosa. — Las Animas. — Dolores. — San José. — Guadalupe. — Decrease of mineral Riches. — Dipilto. — Honorina Leclerc. — Humanising Influence of a Parisian Woman in the Forest Wilderness of Dipilto.

FROM Totocalpa to the village of Ocotal the way is tolerably straight. The country looked withered and burnt up; aloes and tree-like columnar cacti were the most numerous and striking representatives of the vegetable world, some of them being from thirty to forty feet high, with stems a foot or a foot and a half in diameter, and frequently hung round with parasitical plants.

I made a sojourn of several hours in Ocotal, a settlement of 600 inhabitants, founded in 1841 ;

but neither its pleasant situation, its pretty, clean-looking, tile-roofed houses, nor the special industry of its inhabitants induced my delay. I was attracted by a sublimer object,—by nothing less, namely, than the sight of a live saint, renowned here as the “Santo de Mosonte,” but otherwise known as Padre Bonilla, a personage who really does seem to have many claims to his holy title.

From one end of the republic to the other I had heard his name mentioned with love and reverence by men of all classes and parties, and I had a great wish to make acquaintance with him, and express the esteem and respect which I really felt for his character. This was an object that seemed to me worth a few hours, or even days. Padre Bonilla is the vicar of a poor little settlement in the mountain solitude of Mosonte, where he resides, as I was told, in a hut about as big as a bird’s nest, and in a state of true saintly poverty and privation; and from time to time he issues from his cell to go the round of all the villages within his district, to preach and assist the faithful in the religious exercises prescribed by the Catholic Church.

I rode into Ocotal on a hot March morning, and, going to the Cabildo, inquired my way to Mosonte; but the persons to whom I addressed myself could not sufficiently express their wonder that anyone should want to go to this poor, out-of-the-world, little Indian village, and advised me, if I had not really any special business there, for the sake of my mule, if not for myself, to give up the thoughts of climbing that narrow, rugged, rocky path to a perfectly uninteresting colony of about 300 poor Indians, and go rather to Dipilto, the last mountain village in the state of Nicaragua. Thereupon I explained that my sole purpose in visiting Mosonte was to see the saint of that ilk; and I then learned, to my great satisfaction, that he was now making one of the pastoral circuits I have mentioned, and was at that moment in Ocotal, and in a house close at hand. I immediately left my servant to take charge of my effects, went straight to the house in question, and found the padre, in a little room almost destitute of furniture, engaged in conversation with some people of the national dark brown complexion; and I had no sooner introduced myself, and presented the letter to him with which I was provided, than he welcomed me

most cordially, and begged me to take a seat on a little wooden bench beside him.

Padre Bonilla is a little thin man with silvery white hair, and face almost as white, with an expression of much Christian kindness, but of no great amount of intellect. He wore a black, priestly habit, but his general toilette showed very plainly his habitual contempt for the vanities of the world. I had hoped that, from his position and his relations with the people, he would be able to give me much interesting information concerning the religious state of the country, and especially of the Indians, and I endeavoured therefore to turn the conversation in this direction; but the good padre did not often catch a traveller from Europe, and he was eager to hear news of the state of public affairs, and to talk of the Turks and the Russians and the Holy Places of Jerusalem. He was warmly in favour of the Russians, and thought it was scandalous to leave those sacred relics in the power and under the protection of an infidel.

I endeavoured to convince him that the war of the Russian emperor against the Turks was really an unjustifiable one, and that the religious motive assigned was, in reality, nothing more

than a plausible pretence to attract the sympathies of Christian nations. But it was not possible to make the ambition and covetousness of a Russian intriguer intelligible to the verdant simplicity of the saint of Segovia ; and while the churches of London and Paris were resounding with supplications for the success of the allied arms, the vicar of Mosonte was every morning sending up fervent prayers to Heaven to bestow its benediction upon the Russians, and a more worthy guardian for the Holy Places of Christendom than the barbarous and unbelieving Turks.

To think that European politics should thus pursue one into the depths of the forests of Central America ! Here had I approached the peaceful abode of Padre Bonilla with the purpose of holding with this experienced man a long conversation upon the country and people of Nicaragua, and now for two whole hours we did nothing but dispute about the Russian war ! But this is no uncommon experience. A traveller from Europe may be of use to the people of less advanced countries in his intercourse with them, by helping to sow the noble seeds of civilisation ; but he will himself generally have to trust rather to his own observation and direct

inquiry for what he wishes to know, than to any voluntary communication on their part.

I left the vicar of Mosonte accordingly, not much wiser concerning the state of the people than I had been when I went to him. Even of the Indians, amongst whom he had lived for twenty years,—of their manners, customs, and traditions,—he could tell me little more than that the brown children of the mountains had lived in peaceful intercourse with the Spanish races till they had nearly forgotten their native tongue without having acquired any other. The good priest was the spiritual and temporal adviser of his flock, their consoler and helper in all seasons of distress; but he had never made their intellectual and moral condition the objects of any special study, nor dreamed of searching out the causes of their present wretched condition with a view to guiding them towards a better path for the future. The state of the Indians evidently grieved him; he devoted all his powers to endeavouring to secure the welfare of their souls, and every penny he could get to the alleviation of their physical sufferings; but he never thought of searching in their past history for the origin of these miseries, nor of

looking forward to consider the future temporal prospects of the race.

To the believing people of Nicaragua a man of such exemplary life, of such Christian benevolence, and such boundless self-devotion, could not but appear as a saint; but a more rigorous judgment, while honouring, as it must, his pure and virtuous character, cannot but regret that his noble moral qualities were not combined with more intellectual vigour, and that he had not that zeal "according to knowledge," which, in these mountains, might indeed work wonders.

Seven leagues north-west from Ocotal lie the silver mines of Macoeliso. They yielded a rich abundance of metal in former years, and afforded employment to numerous hands; and the present owners of the mines seem to have their mouths watering as they talk of the former wealth of Misericordia, from which the owners in three years dug out a fortune of 1,000,000 dollars,—150,000, once, in three months.

The mines which have yielded the most from their first opening in 1813, are (after the above-named Misericordia) those of Santa Rosa, Las Animas, Dolores, San José, and Guadaloupe. Their produce, however, has materially dimi-

nished of late years, and they have been less diligently worked, especially since they came into the hands of an American Mining Company, who, after expending more than 7000 dollars upon machinery and the introduction of a more systematic management, have been compelled to abandon them for want of funds and of a more encouraging result for their labours.

A great deal of mining activity prevails in Dipilto, the last town of Nicaragua towards the Honduras frontier, which you reach from Ocotal by a most lovely ride of three hours through fir and oak-woods.

I found here a hospitable reception in the house of a Frenchwoman—a Madame Honorina Leclerc, who, in consequence of the revolutions, had lost a fine estate in Honduras, and had taken refuge with the small remnant of her property in this little quiet frontier town of Nicaragua, and while endeavouring, with the help of the representative of her nation, to prosecute her claims, maintains herself and her family by keeping a little shop of a most miscellaneous assortment of articles. She seems to have reconciled herself with true French equanimity to this vicissitude of fortune; measures out pennyworths, where

she formerly counted only by ounces of silver ; and, by her sound sense and humane disposition, makes herself both useful and respected among her neighbours.

She is a lady of about fifty years of age, of rather stately and by no means unattractive exterior, with delicate features faded by time and care ; but fine blue eyes—clever Paris eyes—whose youthful fire neither time nor care have been able to destroy. In all affairs of the little community her advice is asked, and even the first Alcalde does not disdain to profit by the counsels of the experienced Frenchwoman. To her zeal the place is chiefly indebted for its possession of a church, and in her own little dwelling she gives instruction to a number of the Mestizo girls in reading, writing, and needlework.

When sorrow or sickness visits any home, the friendly offices and consolations of Madame Leclerc, herself in many ways a sufferer, may always be relied on ; indeed she seems, perhaps from a stronger fellow-feeling with them, to prefer the society of the unfortunate to that of the happy. Should the law just now going on concerning her affairs be decided in her favour, she will probably leave the desolate mountains of

Segovia, and return to France with her family, — an event which, on her account, I cannot but cordially desire; but the inhabitants of Dipilto will probably only become sensible, when they have lost her, of the full value of her judicious counsels and quiet though active benevolence.

CHAP. XII.

DIPILTO AND ITS SILVER MINES.

The Mountain Village of Dipilto.—Don Francisco Paguaga. —Excursion to the Mines.—Scenery.—The Produce of the San Rafael Mine.—Probable Produce of all the Mines of Dipilto.—A Serenade.—A Night Bivouac in the Fir-woods.—Critical Situation.—Biped and Quadruiped Murderers.—How New Spaniards look Danger in the Face.—Cerro Colorado, the Frontier of Nicaragua.—The Highland Glens of Segovia as a Place of Settlement for Emigrants.—Statement of a German Settler concerning Wages at Home and Abroad.—The Future.

DIPILTO was founded in 1839 by some fugitives from Honduras, who, while their country was rent by party strife, sought a refuge among these mountains. Their preference for the occupation of mining found here great encouragement; they discovered the silver mines; and those who had hoped for nothing more than a temporary asylum, found themselves induced by the strongest motives of interest to take up their permanent abode here. Other emigrants were soon

attracted to the place by the reputation for mineral wealth that it had acquired; and such a number of houses were built in this narrow mountain ravine, that the little town could hardly be further extended without the removal of various physical obstructions. Dipilto has, at present, about eighty houses roofed with tiles, and above 300 inhabitants who are all dependent on the mines. It is most beautifully situated among fir-woods; and a fine stream, which even in the dry season would have sufficient power for industrial undertakings, goes foaming along through the bottom of the valley.

In July, 1844, a tremendous waterspout destroyed one of the most productive mines of Dipilto, and proved a most serious calamity to the infant settlement. After the lapse of ten years it has not entirely recovered the effects of that one hour's fury of the elements; and as both the means and the energy are wanting to begin new works, or restore the devastation occasioned to the old, the operations are limited, as at Macoeliso, to a very few mines. The principal owner and one of the first founders of the settlement was Don Francisco Paguaga, who came here as a poor fugitive, but has now, by his un-

wearied perseverance, amassed a considerable fortune. He accompanied me one morning to the mines best worth seeing, which lie about half a league from the town, between two narrow, steep mountain ridges. After crossing the stream by which the valley is watered, you climb up the sides of some immense mountains, until the houses of the settlement and its church are seen lying far below at your feet like a flock of sheep and a shepherd. Our mules carried us to the highest point, where a magnificent panorama lay before us. One of the most remarkable peaks was of a conical form, and was named by my companion the volcano of Dipilto; but it is clothed to the very summit with woods, shows nowhere any trace of former eruptions, and appears to me less like a real burning mountain than one of those trachyte cones which are of frequent occurrence in Central America, and which generally pass among the natives for volcanoes.

At a height of 4000 feet we came at length to the mine of San Rafael. Although it has been opened only three years, a perpendicular depth of 150 feet has been attained, and ten horizontal subterranean galleries formed of more than two leagues in extent. We descended into the shaft

by means of trunks of trees placed in a slanting direction, with notches cut in them for the feet, and visited in succession all the galleries. The slightly granulous sandstone, which the miner here meets with, lightens his work at first, but renders the subsequent operations more difficult and tedious than with harder stone. Don Francisco goes quite systematically to work, according to all the rules and laws of modern science ; but, unfortunately, he has not the means to procure the most valuable machines. The principal and most productive veins in these mines run from east to west. The ore is put into bags made of skins, and carried to the surface on the backs of naked Indians, who can usually take as much as 150 pounds at a time. Their wages are excessively low, considering how severe the labour is, for they do not receive, on an average, more than two reals, or tenpence-halfpenny a day ; and even their Major Domo, or Captain, not more than from six to eight.

The produce of silver varies extremely. In general, it is considered to be from three to six ounces from twenty-five pounds of ore ; but sometimes the same quantity of ore will yield as much as twenty-four ounces. The silver is mostly found

united with lead, copper, or gold, but only with the first in sufficient quantity to pay for the separation. Of gold, not more than twenty ounces have been obtained from 25,000 pounds of the rock. The value of the raw silver is here 9 dollars the mark (8 ounces); that of lead, 8 or 10 dollars per cwt. The former is taken to the eastern seaports of Honduras and exchanged for English cotton goods, Spanish and French wines, and other European productions. I could not obtain an exact account of the present produce of all the mines of Dipilto; but in the four years, from 1851 to 1854, inclusive, they did not produce altogether more than 208,000 ounces,—no very large amount for that time.

In the night before I left Dipilto, I had a pleasant surprise. Being somewhat tired with my preparations for the journey of the following morning, I had gone to bed early; but I had scarcely fallen asleep before I was aroused by merry music close before my door. I looked out in perfect night *negligée*, and beheld, to my surprise, Don Francisco, one of the most distinguished citizens of the little town, scraping away valiantly at the fiddle, in company with two friends who, with guitar and bass viol, were

making a combined attack upon some Austrian music ; the worthy fellows having come to give me a *Stündchen*, or musical serenade, after the fashion of my country. I threw myself hastily into my garments, and went out to thank them for their kind attention, and praise the skill and precision with which they had executed some really difficult concerted pieces. The three musicians stood there in a circle in the narrow, silent street, and worked away with right good will, the moon shining down on them, the stars glittering, the silent woods listening ; and I listened too, until at last I thought it would be indiscreet in me to remain any longer, as I might induce them to prolong the concert more than they desired ; so, thanking them most heartily for their kindness, I withdrew to my chamber ; but their good-natured perseverance was not so soon exhausted ; and when I fell asleep again, the sweet tones of my native melodies were still sounding in my ears.

On the following morning we rode up to the mountains of Honduras, accompanied by a guide on foot. The higher we climbed, the more familiar and home-like the scenery became ; it lost almost entirely the solemn luxuriance of the tropical character, and assumed, in its vegetation.

forms that reminded me of the fir-woods of my German native land. The trees of the forest were no longer woven and matted together into green arcades, but stood light, free, and open; the underwood had almost wholly disappeared, and slender pines and firs, with a few scattered oaks, were the prevailing species.

Dipilto is the last village of Nicaragua which the traveller finds on his way to Honduras. Enormous tracts of country in this direction are still entirely uncultivated and unpeopled, and for days together you ride between mountain ridges, along narrow and, even for a mule, rather dangerous paths, and, as far as your eye can reach, see nothing but green mountains and pine-woods.

As we were not able to reach even the few lonely huts on the *Cerro Colorado*, which form the boundary line between Nicaragua and Honduras, we had to make up our minds to pass the night in the forest; but in order that we might not have to dispense with the first necessary,—water,—we continued our journey in spite of the increasing darkness, till we reached a stream called the *Río de las Vueltas*, which, as its name signifies, winds with countless turnings through

the mountains. It had become so dark that we could not see a single step before us, and I had to dismount and allow myself to be led by the native guide, like a blind man; till, after stumbling and groping our way for about half an hour, we reached at length the mountain stream.

Our mules were now taken to graze on a bit of rich pasture (though not without having their forefeet tied); dried wood was gathered in the forest; a famous fire made, over which the water was soon merrily bubbling and hissing; and after our meal my attendants lay down before the fire, while I suspended my hammock between two lofty pines. Towards ten o'clock the moon rose, and the scene, which, when lit only by the glare of our fire, had been somewhat gloomy and confined, at once became bright and extensive. The immense mountain ravine in which we were lying was now plainly visible, with all its varied and whimsical forms of vegetation. At the top of the mountains, pines 200 feet high stretched their green arms out to each other like enchanted lovers; nearer the river, where the vegetation was richer, the silver light of the heavenly lamp showed us trees and shrubs in the gayest parasitical decoration; and there

was more of a poetical charm about the whole scene than about any that I had ever noticed in the forests of Central America. I was so struck with its beauty that I lay long in my hammock gazing at it with delight, and without the least inclination to go to sleep. My companions, too, continued for a long time to gossip about many things, and especially about the dangers which they thought we were exposed to in our lonely night bivouac.

“As to robbers,” said Bernardo, the guide, “we don’t need to be afraid of them; they have made all the villains go soldiering at Tegucigalpa; but the tiger, that’s the worst: he can’t be put into an uniform, and he’ll come sometimes and have his murderous teeth in a fellow’s bones before he can wake up.” “We must take great care,” said lazy Pantaleon; and therewith he pulled his thick brown blanket higher up over his ears. Gradually they became silent, and dropped off, though they had had a plentiful allowance of coffee, which, I must own, I had made particularly strong to prevent their being quite too sleepy. But it seemed to have had very little effect on their Central American nerves; and they looked, as

they lay there, considerably more like slumbering bears than watchful attendants. The night passed, however, without the smallest accident or danger; and, in fact, I began to feel almost angry, that after so many wanderings in wild tropical forests, amidst semi-savage Indian races, I had never met with so much as a single adventure, either with tiger, serpent, anthropophagic native, or terrible horde of robbers, though of all these piquant things I had read, as occurring to other travellers; and I could not tell whether to ascribe the difference of our experiences to their taste for embellishment, or to my own particular ill-luck.

At five o'clock we broke up our encampment; the moon still stood high in the heavens, and its pale disk mirrored in the clear river, while the pines on the tops of the mountains were kindled by the first rays of the rising sun. Two hours afterwards we crossed the Cerro Colorado, the natural north-western frontier of the states of Honduras and Nicaragua; but not the smallest sign by human hand indicates the commencement of a new territory; and had not my guide called my attention to the fact, I should have had no idea that I was now entering the third of the

Central American republics that I had visited, and the one which, wild as things look at present, has perhaps the finest prospects for the future. In the rude state of nature in which the greater part of Central America is still lying, people trouble themselves very little about an exact definition of a boundary; and even natives of Nicaragua have mentioned to me the silver mines of Dipilto as belonging to the state of Honduras, whilst in reality they are a long day's journey from it.

Before leaving Segovia and these magnificent highland valleys, we may say a few words upon the prospects this state offers to emigrants. Although the richest and most favourably situated portion of Central America, it is only on its mountain terraces that it presents a desirable field for emigration; for the largest and most luxuriant portion of its lowlands must, on account of the unhealthiness of the climate, remain closed against Northern races. When, therefore, we hear of the advantages offered by Nicaragua for colonisation by European or American emigrants, we must remember that these advantages are only to be found in the highlands of Segovia, in the north-western part of the territory, where there are indeed splen-

didly fertile valleys, and from which a communication with the east coast might easily be effected. Here, at a height of four or five thousand feet above the ocean, in a most delightful climate, perfectly adapted to the European labourer, most of the cerealia of the North will flourish, whilst in the lower parts the sugarcane, the coffee-tree, and the banana will yield a rich harvest. The valley of Jalapa, about five days' journey from the east coast, and high enough to permit the residence of northern Europeans without injury to their health, is, perhaps, for the variety of its productions, the most astonishing spot in Central America; and yet it is still for the most part uncultivated and uninhabited. Here and there certainly you meet with a scattered Indian hut or two; but the indolent occupants live mostly by hunting and fishing, or by whatever kind nature will bestow upon them without the slightest exertion of their own. By means of the Escondido or Segovia river*, which, from Cucurica (six days' journey

* It is a peculiarity of this country that the rivers generally bear the names of the places they flow past, so that they sometimes change their names five or six times,—a practice that of course occasions much confusion.

from Matagalpa) to its mouth in the Caribbean Sea, is navigable for the greater part of the year by large canoes, an advantageous intercourse might be opened with Bluefields; and by the Wanks river*, which rises in the mountains in the neighbourhood of the town of Segovia, and flows with a north-easterly course to Cape Gracias á Dios, where it falls into the sea, a second and more northerly connection with the Atlantic coast might be established. This route would, besides, offer the advantage of an already existing little port, named Coco, situated at the navigable end of the river, whence the Indians do at present keep up a petty traffic with the coasts, which they reach in five days with their canoes, often very heavily laden with all kinds of fruit.

I will not here go into any more detail concerning the natural productions of this district, since I can refer the reader to the chapter devoted to the agricultural condition of Nicaragua; but I must repeat that, for emigration to afford the benefits that may be anticipated, it must be conducted systematically and on a large

* There are at present three rapids in this river; but they might be removed with little trouble, and the channel made navigable even for large vessels.

scale. A body of people going together afford each other support and encouragement, present a more imposing force to the natives, and are likely in a thousand ways to prosper where a single emigrant would perish. The unfortunate result of the attempt at colonisation made at such a considerable expense at St. Thomas, must be attributed to the very injudicious choice of a place of settlement, and not to any want of thoroughly healthy as well as fertile emigration fields in Central America; perhaps, also, it may be in a great measure ascribed to the circumstance that no judgment was exercised as to the persons sent out, nor were proper arrangements made for their reception.

In the highlands of Segovia are many immeasurable tracts of the most fertile savannahs, where the settler would have none of the severe and unhealthy labour of clearing forest land, and where he may reap the fruits of his industry within the first year. A sufficiently numerous colony might there maintain itself in perfect independence, and its intercourse with the east coast maintain its manners and customs and its language unaltered: but it must not, as at St. Thomas, consist of a jumble of honest people

and vagabond adventurers, of infirm proletaries and mere loungers, healthy, indeed, but lazy. Active men, able and willing to work, and to devote their chief energies to agriculture, could not, by all the laws of social economy, or by the evidence of experience, possibly fail, with such a climate and such a soil, to become eminently and rapidly prosperous. With light labour, and without any manure, they might count on their two, or sometimes three, harvests in the year, whilst at home they have often difficulty enough to get one. The wages of labour, too, are here higher, though the labour is far less severe, than in many parts of North America, to which emigrants from my country are apt to turn with such high expectations.

I remember a stout, honest countryman from Upper Silesia, who had engaged himself to work in a saw-mill, coming to me one morning with a handful of gold and silver (about 40 florins), and crying out joyfully, "See, I've got this for a month's work! Why a man might work a whole year for as much in our place at home, and have to get himself clothes into the bargain." The expenses of clothing, it may be observed, fall very lightly upon his class here, since a very

slight and airy costume indeed is thought sufficient for decorum, and is certainly sufficient for comfort.

Two years have now passed since I visited Nicaragua, and since then it has been the theatre of important events. A bold, adventurous American has seized the reins of government*, for they have been only nominally left in those of the feeble Patricio Rivas, and the present political condition of the country might render it unfavourable to emigration; but the disturbances and struggles now going on will doubtless soon give place to a more orderly condition of affairs, and the protection of American laws, and the encouragement of American enterprise, will in all probability materially assist the efforts of any settlement that may be founded there. The morning star of Northern civilisation is rising in splendour over the tropical sky; may it be a star of hope for my emigrant countrymen!

* At the time this was written it appeared highly probable that the attempt of General Walker would be successful.

CHAP. XIII.

PROJECTS FOR THE CONNECTION OF THE ATLANTIC
WITH THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

The Isthmus of Tehuantepec.—Lake Nicaragua.—The Isthmus of Panama.—The Isthmus of Darien.—Boca del Toro.—The Railroad from Puerto de Caballos to the Gulf of Fonseca, in the Pacific.

MARTIN BEHAIM, the simple geographer of Nuremberg, appears to have been the first who suggested the possibility of a natural connection between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. So at least it is stated in a memorial presented in 1517 by the Portuguese Magellan to the Court of Valladolid, in which he makes an offer of his services for the discovery of such a connection; and it was by following out Behaim's suggestions that the great navigator, three years afterwards, really did discover the Strait that bears his name, and reached the Pacific in safety by that route on the 28th of November, 1520.

This passage, however, was soon perceived to be too long and dangerous to be used with advantage for the voyage to Asia ; and in the year 1523 Charles the Fifth addressed his celebrated letter to Ferdinand Cortez, in which he earnestly recommends the search for a nearer and less expensive way to the "Indian land of spices," and of some more direct passage from the eastern to the western shores of New Spain.

In 1551 Francisco Lopez de Gomara, one of the oldest historiographers of America, in his work on the Two Indies, mentions three points by which the union of the two oceans might, as it appeared to him, be effected without any very formidable difficulties ; and, after the lapse of three centuries, these points are still considered as the most favourable for such an undertaking.

Cortez seems to have given the preference to that of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec ; Davila to that of Lake Nicaragua ; and Pizarro to that of the Isthmus of Panama ; but ignorance and superstition retarded the execution of these gigantic works, at the time when Spain possessed the resources, the power, and the energy required for their successful completion ; and an author of the period, Padre Joseph de Acosta, in

his "Historia Natural de Indias," seriously dissuades his countrymen from such a "presumptuous" undertaking. "Certainly," he says, "the vengeance of Heaven will overtake those who dare attempt thus to amend, with human hands, the wise arrangements of Providence upon the earth." In the reign of Philip the Second, the last spark of the enthusiasm that might have led to such exploits became extinguished; and the project for the junction of the two oceans was thenceforth nothing more than an idle hope, the realisation of which was reserved for a freer and more active people. Since those long forgotten times, however, many men of note, of various countries, have devoted their efforts to the solution of a problem of interest to all the nations of the earth. Travellers, engineers, political economists, learned men in various departments, even monarchs, have occupied themselves with this important subject, and given the result of their inquiries to the world in writings varying in bulk from the slenderest pamphlet to the elaborate work in several robust volumes.

The King of the Netherlands sent a commission in 1829 to Guatemala, to enter into negotiations concerning the formation of a canal; but these

negotiations were unfortunately interrupted by the revolution of 1830.

In 1844 the Nicaraguan government attempted to renew them with the King of the Belgians, but failed in consequence of some political occurrences. In 1846 another was set on foot between Senor Marcoleta, Chargé d'Affaires for Nicaragua at the Belgian Court, and Prince Louis Napoleon Buonaparte, then a prisoner in the fortress of Ham. The canal was to be called the Canal Napoléon de Nicaragua, but the project proceeded no further than the publication of a pamphlet, bearing the Prince's initials*; and with respect to the numerous writers on the subject, it may be stated generally that they are far more successful in pointing out the obstacles to be overcome, than the means of overcoming them. The projects formed may be divided into two categories: those which propose a direct connection of the oceans by means of a canal, and those which contemplate only an indirect communication by a railroad; the former being, of course, greatly the most desirable.

It would be far better that a ship should

* See Squier's Nicaragua, vol. ii. p. 216.

be able to sail at once from Bremen or Liverpool to Canton, than have to unload its cargo on the east coast, and require another vessel to be in readiness to receive it on the west. We will therefore mention first the canalisation projects as the most desirable and important.

If we glance over the comparatively narrow strip of land extending from the Gulf of Tehuantepec to that of Darien, and joining North and South America, the first point that appears by its structure to favour the plan in question is at the north of the Isthmus, south-eastward from Vera Cruz. This is the spot pointed out by Ferdinand Cortez in his letter to Charles the Fifth as the *Secreto del Estrecho*. The plan consisted in the attempt at connecting, by means of a canal, the river Guazocoalco, which falls into the Atlantic, with the Chimalaga or Chicapa, which issues in the Pacific. The length of the canal would, according to the survey of Captain Wylde made in 1850, need to be 198 geographical miles. To the government of the United States belongs the merit of having first thoroughly examined the ground as well as of having published the interesting results of its investigations ; and an American joint-stock

company was formed some years ago for carrying this plan into effect ; but it brought forth nothing but a prospectus, though it does not appear that any doubt has ever been thrown on the feasibility of the project.

The next proposal was for making use of Lake Nicaragua, in connection with the San Juan on the east, and one of the esteros, or small rivers, falling into the Pacific on the west. Here the ground has been thoroughly and repeatedly surveyed, and the possibility and even comparative facility of execution, as well as the smaller cost, made pretty clear ; but as the elaborate details furnished by the English officer, Capt. John Baily, are probably already familiar to all, in any part of the world, who are interested in this great undertaking, we shall content ourselves with citing some of his most important data.

The level of Lake Nicaragua is 121' 6'' above the Caribbean Sea, and 128' 3'' above the Pacific Ocean. It is 95 miles from north to south, and 30 from east to west ; near the shores 12 feet deep, 270 in the middle ; and on an average, from 30 to 60. The course of the river San Juan is in a south-easterly direction from the Lake to the Caribbean Sea, and is, with all its windings,

79 English miles long. The water-shed separating the waters of the Pacific from those of the Atlantic, rises here to 615 feet above the sea level, and the geological structure of the ground is chalk, slate, and clay. All the plans for the canalisation of the Isthmus of Nicaragua take the San Juan river as the entrance from the Atlantic, but they differ considerably as to the best outlet on the Pacific. Three solutions of the problem are proposed; and the one to which, in the most recent time, the preference appears to be given*, proposes to pass by the Tipitapa river from Lake Nicaragua to Lake Managua, and thence by the Estero Real into the Gulf of Fonseca,—a total length of 254 English miles, but of which only 194 would be real canalling. But the various joint-stock companies which have been started to carry out this project, though under the most favourable pecuniary conditions, have all been dissolved as quickly as they arose; and to this day there is no other communication than the mixed land and water one before described, and which has been forced into existence by the daily

* According to Mr. Squier's magnificently got-up work, *Travels in Nicaragua*.

increasing numbers of the passengers from North America to the Californian gold fields.

What a prospect of advantage would be offered to the country, to travellers, and to commerce by the establishment of a direct water communication, may be imagined by those afforded by the present most imperfect and indirect one, in which, after having changed two or three times the wretched little steamers that bring you up the San Juan, you have to be dragged upon the hard backs of poor, tired mules to the Pacific shore, and thence forwarded by a half unseaworthy vessel to San Francisco. It is a route that costs much time and much money, and occasions much discomfort, and yet 3000 persons pass this way every month.

The American Atlantic and Pacific Ship Canal Company, which entered into a contract with the Nicaraguan government in 1848, undertook to complete a canal from the San Juan to the Pacific within twelve years, in consideration of which it was to enjoy the emoluments of it for a term of eighty-five years, besides the cession of some fertile tracts of land, and other important privileges; but in the meantime it has gradually changed its character and become the

present Transit Company; and it makes such splendid profits by carrying the Yankees to California, by the route I have described, that it seems to have entirely forgotten the original purpose of its formation and the obligations it entered into.

The survey for the canal— which, according to the tenth clause of their agreement, was to be made within the year from its ratification—is now, after the lapse of eight years, not even begun; and the Nicaraguan people seem to have very little idea that it will ever be, by this Company. Great as its receipts are, too, it has not even paid regularly the stipulated sum of 10,000 dollars to the Nicaraguan government; and when, in February, 1854, we spent some weeks at Managua, at that time the seat of the government, Don Fruto Chamorro, the then President, distinctly declared that the agreement with this American Transit Company was, on account of its non-fulfilment of the conditions, null and void; and that the navigation of the lake, as well as the traffic between the two oceans, was about to be offered to public competition. The government of Nicaragua wished only to levy a toll of

two dollars a head on passengers across the Isthmus.

Notwithstanding all the advantages in prospect, however, the execution of these plans may still be long delayed, from the insecurity of the political condition of the country. A work which even Yankee energies cannot expect to complete in less than ten years, can only be undertaken in a condition of public security and peace; and this essential condition is still entirely wanting in Nicaragua.

The cutting through the Isthmus, from Chagres to Panama, was thought for a long time the best mode of solving the problem. The distance (by Garella's measurements) was estimated at only 76,540 metres; and the cost, on the same authority (that of an engineer sent by the French government), was taken at nearly twenty-nine millions of dollars. But subsequent inquiry has brought to light so many new and formidable obstacles that the canal project has been entirely abandoned, and that of a railroad taken up. Of this we shall speak further presently.

There is one point that appears particularly favourable from the circumstance that here the

chain of the Andes is entirely broken, and disappears from the Isthmus for a considerable space. This is the tract between Port Cubica on the Pacific, and the mouth of the Atrato River on the Atlantic Ocean.*

As early as 1504, the natives of the province of Choco pointed out this route to Alonzo Martin de San Benito, one of the companions of Balboa, as the shortest by which the shores of the Pacific could be reached ; and the passage was actually effected by Balboa in a canoe which he found in the Gulf of San Miguel.

In the year 1788, as Humboldt was informed, an active-minded priest of the Indian village of Novita, in the province of Choco, had induced

* The meritorious engineer and geographer, Colonel Augustus Codazzi, in Bogotá in New Granada, who must be regarded as a great authority on the local practicability of the various projects for an oceanic canal, regards the line between Chagres and Panama as the only possible canal line, and even gives it the preference over the route of the San Juan de Nicaragua. The Isthmus is here narrower than anywhere else, and the elevation nowhere more than 150 feet; but neither on the one side nor the other is there any good secure harbour, and only the construction of a costly artificial one could protect the eastern settlements from continual inundation.

his parishioners to dig a little canal, which, in the rainy season, was navigable for small canoes; and a communication being thus formed between the Rio Atrato and the Rio Noanama, the Indians used at that time of year to pass with their canoes laden with cacao-nuts from sea to sea, a distance of ninety-five leagues.

From the more close investigation made by Captain Cochrane in 1824, it appears nevertheless to result, that the cutting of a canal for vessels of all sizes through the valley of Naipipi is opposed by almost insurmountable obstacles, and that the progress from one ocean to another would, at this part of the Isthmus, demand a considerable expenditure of time; but an English Company, bearing the title of "Promoters of the Atlantic and Pacific Union," are still continuing their inquiries into the practicability of this route, namely, between the Rio Atrato and Port Cubica.*

Another line proposed is in a more north-

* According to Chevalier, the Pacific Ocean at Panama is 1 met. 7 centim., according to Lloyd 9 met. 4 centim., higher than the Atlantic. In either case the difference of level does not appear to be considered an insurmountable obstacle.

westerly direction, between the Gulf of San Miguel and Cape Corrientes, taking advantage of the Rio Savana; but the latest intelligence we have received on the subject did not seem to favour this plan. The reports of Captain Prevost, of the English war steamer "Virago," were extremely unsatisfactory.

He proceeded from Panama to the neighbouring Gulf of San Miguel, and as far as he could up the Rio Savana, and on the 7th of January, 1854, this officer had advanced with great difficulty, and the loss of four men (killed by the hostile Indians), to the northern range of the Cordillera in the vicinity of Port Ecosais, and there convinced himself of the impracticability of the undertaking in this direction. In the beginning of 1854 a party of daring Americans, supported by their government, undertook an exploring journey in the Isthmus of Darien, with the intention of determining the most eligible route for a ship canal. They had not studied any correct map; they had not the smallest knowledge of the resources of the wild country into which they were about to penetrate; yet the bold wanderers plunged at once into the wildernesses of Darien, followed the course of several

rivers, and believed at length, after several weeks of toil and hardship, that they were approaching the Gulf San Miguel on the Pacific Ocean. It was soon found, however, that this was a mistake; and the terrible discovery was then made that they had altogether missed their way, and that they were, without a guide and without food or help, lost in the lonely primeval forests of the Cordillera. The majority of the party died of starvation, but a few, amongst whom was Lieutenant Strains, the commander of the expedition, made their way back, after indescribable sufferings, to the village of Yavisa on the east coast, the bodies of those who had died on the road having served to sustain a little longer the lives of their almost dying comrades.* The terrible result of this attempt has been thought to afford one more proof of the impossibility of making a ship canal through the Isthmus of Darien.

Of all the routes above described, that by the Isthmus of Nicaragua, with its numerous lakes and rivers, certainly seems to offer most advantages; and it is much to be desired that the efforts of all who are anxious for the completion

* See Harper's Magazine for March 1855. New York.

of this great undertaking should be concentrated upon this point, instead of being dispersed to little purpose over several others. The interest that the commercial world at large has in the execution of this project, increases daily with the increased necessity for a more rapid vent for merchandise; and with the increasing emigration to the west, the pecuniary advantages of a quicker mode of transit become more and more obvious. The United States of America have, perhaps, of all countries, the most to gain by a junction of the two oceans for the voyage from New York or Boston to the Oregon territory—a distance, by Cape Horn, of above 21,000 miles, and of many months' duration—would be reduced to one half the length, as well as to the same proportion of the danger, by which the colonisation of that magnificent territory is so greatly retarded; and no less advantage is offered to the United States by the plan in question for their commerce with China and the Philippine Islands, as well as for their political influence in the islands of the Pacific. More than 8,000,000 of men who inhabit the shores of the Pacific, and are now separated by a four or five months' journey from the northern States of the Union, would be thus

brought to within thirty or forty days, and thereby their consumption of North American productions greatly increased.

With respect to the cost of the proposed canal through the Isthmus of Nicaragua, the great difference in the estimates of scientific and practical men sufficiently shows the difficulty of making even a tolerable approximation to the truth. Baily takes it at 29,650,000 dollars, above 6,000,000*l.* sterling; Stephens at from 20,000,000 to 25,000,000 of dollars; Squier at even 100,000,000. Michel Chevalier, in a very learned work on the Isthmus of Panama*, calculates the probable cost at from 150,000,000 to 200,000,000 of francs, and thinks this sum would be well laid out upon it by the governments of France, England, and America, to secure, it might be, the blessings of peace, and, with them, peace itself.

For the gradual liquidation of the debt, the celebrated French economist proposes a toll of ten francs per ton on every ship passing through the canal; so that if two thirds of the shipping of

* "L'Isthme de Panama. Examen historique et géographique des différentes directions suivant lesquelles on pourrait le percer, et des moyens à y employer." Paris, 1844.

the Pacific, with a tonnage of 1,200,000, should pass that way, there would be a yearly revenue of about 8,000,000 of francs. These dues do not appear too high, when it is considered that the dangers of the stormy Cape Horn would be thereby avoided, the voyage immensely shortened, and the rates of insurance of course be proportionably reduced.

We have before stated our opinion that the advantages offered by a ship canal would greatly exceed any that could arise from an indirect communication by railway; but as long as the direct route does not exist, the establishment of a more rapid and convenient mode of transit than that now in use would be a very valuable substitute; and the benefits of the various lines—some only projected, some in the course of completion—deserve to be pointed out. We will therefore mention the routes which, to those whose opinion is chiefly to be relied on, seem most likely to meet the end in view.

The first place, of course, belongs to the line now actually completed across the Isthmus of Panama, between Aspinwall and Vaca del Monte. This undertaking has been in the hands of a North American Company since 1839; and

although the murderous climate and the want of funds have several times interrupted the works, the line is now open along its whole length, — $48\frac{1}{2}$ miles, — and is therefore the first actual connecting line between the two oceans. The cost of construction has been 4,500,000 dollars, or about 91,000 per mile. The geographical position of this line is, however, very unfavourable for travellers to the North, and its excessively unhealthy climate makes it most disadvantageous for settlement; so that it may be anticipated that this line will suffer considerably whenever any competition shall arise. This is evident indeed, already, by the mass of travellers to California choosing the route by Greytown and San Juan del Sur, which, with all its defects and inconveniences, leads through a mostly healthy country.*

A railroad across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was once determined on, and by this the voyage from England to San Francisco would be

* The annual passenger traffic between the Atlantic States and California, in both directions, is estimated at about 150,000. Of this number about one third goes overland by the Western Prairies, and the remainder by Nicaragua and Panama.

shortened by nearly 7000 miles ; while passengers from New Orleans would save 10,000, and those from New York 11,000 miles. In 1846 the Mexican government granted to an American, named Joseph Garay, the right to construct a railway across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec ; but he, finding he could not form a company, sold his right to two Englishmen, Messrs. Manning and Mackintosh ; they subsequently made it over to another American, of the name of Hargous ; and he, in his turn, resigned it to a company formed in New Orleans.

But after the right had thus passed into the fourth hands, the whole matter was brought into dispute by the Mexican Congress of 1851 ; and almost at the same moment another company of mixed Mexicans and foreigners was formed, under the guidance of an American of the name of Sloo, which received permission to make the railroad, and commenced its operations in 1854, proposing to complete them within four years. But this undertaking also has been since at a standstill for want of sufficient funds and of confidence in the political stability of the country.

A third railway project was to unite the magnificent Gulf of Boca del Toro on the

Atlantic, with the Golfo Dulce on the west coast.

The French Consul, General Lafond, and subsequently an English joint-stock company, made great exertions to get this plan into operation; but it failed, not so much from local difficulties as from ignorance of the country and the want of business-like management. There are, nevertheless, but few parts of the Isthmus that present so many advantages, either for transit, or for the establishment of a great European colony. The country is elevated, healthy, uncommonly fertile, and possessed besides of great mineral riches; the rivers which cross it in all directions are mostly navigable for many leagues inland; and the many valuable kinds of wood growing in its forests might be easily conveyed to Boca del Toro, one of the finest and safest harbours of Central America, and thus brought within the range of European commerce.

A fourth point of transit, which has attracted much attention from American and English speculators, is that part of the state of Honduras which lies between Puerto de Caballos on the Atlantic, and the *Sacate* or Grass Island in the

Gulf of Fonseca. The Isthmus is here, by geometrical measurement, $147\frac{1}{2}$ miles broad ; but the railroad would probably need to be as much as 165 in length.

Persons not well acquainted with the locality doubt indeed of the possibility of executing this railroad project on account of the mountainous character of the country ; but the two great river-valleys offer such advantages that there was even some idea of constructing a canal upon this line.

The road is to proceed from the north, along the valley of the Ulloa river to its source, about a hundred miles inland, and then to follow the course of the Goascoran, which, sixty-five miles further, falls into the Pacific Ocean. During the rainy season,—that is, from the beginning of May to the end of October,—both the Ulloa and the Goascoran are navigable for fifty miles by steamers ; and the construction of a “ plank road ” for the intervening space will, even before the completion of the railway, greatly accelerate the communication between the two oceans. The ascent from Puerto Caballos to the Pass of Rancho Chiquito is about 2400 feet, or $24'$ per mile ; the fall towards the Pacific is $37'$ per mile.

The valley of the Ulloa is generally about fifteen miles broad, but in one place it narrows to half a mile; and the line must cut through the northern Cordillera, either in the neighbourhood of Rancho Chiquito or Guajoca, about fifteen miles south-west of Comayagua,—two mountain passes, which, as we have ascertained by our own experience, present much fewer obstacles than have been overcome in most of the railways of England and Germany.

The country which the line has to pass through is healthy and elevated, the ascent beginning rather abruptly on both shores. A hundred miles inland there are extensive oak and pine woods; but nearer the sea the flora assumes a more tropical character, and mahogany-trees, cedrelas, and dye-woods of various species are most prevalent.

The cost of this line is estimated at six millions of dollars, and, according to the agreement entered into with the government of Honduras, it is to be completed within eight years. For every year of delay, beyond this term, the company—amongst which are several distinguished commercial houses of New York and London—must pay a penalty of 50,000 dollars. For the

construction of the rail, 2000 labourers are to be brought from China, and landed on the Pacific shore; and 2000 more imported from the Canary Islands to begin the work on the Atlantic side.

During our stay at Comayagua, the capital of Honduras, in 1854, the measurements were begun at several points; and a railway contractor, named Miller, had arrived from New York, on the part of George Law of that state, who has gained fame and wealth by executing various works of this kind on a grand scale, and who has proposed to enter into a contract for the whole of the Honduras railway.

The concessions made by the Honduras government to the North American contractors are extremely liberal. They are to have 600' (200 *varas*) of land on each side of the line along its whole length, and 4000 *caballerias** of rich forest as a free gift, besides 5000 *caballerias*, at a fixed price of twenty dollars the *caballeria*, which also need not be paid in cash, but, if they please, in shares; and in addition to many other privileges,

* A square *vara* equals an English square foot; *caballeria*, 128 English acres.

each one of the first thousand workmen who likes to settle as a colonist, is to receive seventy acres of fertile land as a present from the government. The privileges of the company are to continue for seventy years from the day of the opening of the railway.

The government of Honduras asks, in return for all these concessions, no other direct advantage than a tax of a dollar a head for every adult traveller who shall cross the Isthmus.

Perhaps no similar undertaking has been begun under more favourable auspices than this railroad from Puerto de Caballos to the Gulf of Fonseca; and its history will form no uninteresting chapter in the account of the various attempts to effect a junction between the two oceans.

CHAP. XIV.

HONDURAS.

Discovery and first Settlement. — Separation from Spain. — The Islands belonging to Honduras in the Atlantic and Pacific. — Physical Character of the Country. — Plateau, Rivers, &c. — Laguna de Yojoa. — Gulf of Fonseca. — Sacate, or Grass Island. — Tiger Island. — Seaports on the East Coast. — Roatan.

HONDURAS was discovered by Columbus in 1502, during his fourth voyage to the new continent; and having not yet renounced all expectation of finding a natural westward passage to the “land of spices,” he sailed along the whole coast, as far as the Isthmus of Darien; whilst his son Bartolomeo landed at what is now called Cape Honduras, and on the 17th of August took solemn possession of the newly discovered country in the name of the King of Castile. The name of Honduras is derived from the numerous shallows that gave so much trouble to the first navigators who landed on this coast.

For twenty years afterwards the country

seems to have remained entirely unnoticed; but in 1525 Las Casas founded the town of Truxillo, afterwards raised by Paul the Third to an episcopal see; expeditions were made into the interior by various Spanish settlers; the country advanced rapidly towards prosperity, and in the beginning of the following century it possessed several large and flourishing cities. But under the continually increasing pressure of the Spanish colonial rule, this prosperity was of short duration; the Indian population declined with frightful rapidity from famine, disease, and the cruelties of their taskmasters; and history has scarcely preserved the record of any remarkable event concerning Honduras until its final liberation from Spain in the year 1821. From then till 1839 it remained as one of the Federal States of Central America; but when, after repeated attempts and many disinterested efforts of individual patriots, it was found to be impossible to preserve the political unity of the Isthmus countries, Honduras constituted itself an independent state with the boundaries that it had formerly had as a Spanish province—an area of about 39,000 square miles. It is in extent the third state of Central America, and

is bounded on the north and east by the Bay of Honduras and the Caribbean Sea, with a coast line of 400 miles; south by Nicaragua; south-west and west by San Salvador and Guatemala. It possesses on the Gulf of Fonseca a coast line of 60 miles; and the islands of Tigre, Sacate Grande, Gueguensi, and Exposition.

The large island of Roatan, in the Caribbean Sea, also of right belongs to Honduras; and the claim made by England of a part of the eastern coast for a certain improvised sovereign, called the King of the Mosquito Land, does not appear to have any solid foundation.

Honduras has in general a mountainous character; the Cordillera, or Watershed as it is called, by which the rivers of the Atlantic and Pacific are separated, intersects the country in a south-easterly direction; and from this principal chain numerous branches are thrown off towards both oceans. The elevation of this chain may, with the exception of single peaks, be taken at an average of 6000 feet, but the inhabited parts of the country at not more than 3200; and, therefore, not more than half the height of the great plateau of Mexico. The

valleys of the Ulloa and the Goascoran, as we have already stated, notwithstanding the generally mountainous character of the country, afford great facilities for the construction of a railroad connecting the two oceans—a fortunate peculiarity in the structure of Honduras, which is of incalculable advantage for the future agricultural and commercial development of the country, and the realisation of its most valuable capabilities. It is so much the more important on account of the obstructions by which the navigation of most of the rivers is impeded. Unlike the magnificent watery highways of the North, by which a cheap and easy communication can be maintained with the most distant parts of the Union, and which have exercised so great an influence on the development of trade and civilisation in the United States, the rivers of Honduras can in most cases be navigated only to a short distance from their mouths; although several are above a hundred, and the Ulloa three hundred miles long. The progress of steamers or vessels of a large size is opposed by shallows, rapids, and the uncertain supply of water; and only four out of the ten rivers, namely, the Ulloa, the Roman, or Aguan, the Wanks, and

the Goascoran, are likely to be of any importance to the future commerce of the country. The Ulloa receives several tributaries, and forms at its mouth a very imposing-looking stream; traversing one third of the Honduras territory. The Roman, or Aguan, rises in the mountains of Sulaco, and falls into the Caribbean Sea to the eastward of Truxillo; its entire length is about 120 miles, and it flows through Olancho, one of the most fertile departments of the state, and exuberantly wealthy in all natural productions. Should it appear, on a more thorough investigation, to be more navigable than has hitherto been supposed, the consequences may be of inestimable benefit to this naturally gifted district, which needs only the means of disposing of its abounding treasures.

The Wanks, or Segovia river,—called in different parts by no less than seven different names, and which during the greater part of its course forms the natural boundary between the states of Honduras and Nicaragua,—is the largest and longest river of Central America. It rises in the mountains of New Segovia, in the extreme north-west of Nicaragua, about fifty miles from the Gulf of Fonseca, and flows with a north-easterly course into the Caribbean

Sea. Its entire length cannot be less than 350 miles, but the rocky nature of its bed, and its numerous rapids, permit its navigation at present only in small boats ; from my own personal observations, however, as well as from the communications of well-informed natives, I believe it would not be difficult to render it serviceable for larger craft.

The Choluteca, renowned for the superb scenery of its banks, and their wealth in precious woods, rises in the Lepaterique mountains in the lofty plain of Comayagua, and, after a course of 150 miles, falls into the Gulf of Fonseca, which also receives the Goascoran. This river is only seventy-five miles long, but, with a little assistance from art, it might be made navigable for twenty-five miles, as far as the pretty little town of Goascoran. Its chief importance arises, as I have said, from the facilities its basin affords for a railroad, which might run from its source to its mouth.

Honduras possesses only one freshwater lake, the Laguna de Yojoa, or Taulebe, and this is a very insignificant one compared with those of Nicaragua and Guatemala. Lying apart from all traffic, and surrounded by precipitous mountains, it is but little known even to the

natives; its length is considered to be about twenty-five miles, and its breadth seven or eight; but no scientific measurement of it has ever been made. From its northern extremity flows a small river that falls into the Ulloa.

Honduras is especially favoured in the possession of its harbour towns on the Gulf of Fonseca, itself, as is well known, one of the finest natural harbours in the world. Its entrance, eighteen miles across, is guarded on either side by a giant volcano, and groups of the most picturesque islands lie scattered about on its bosom. Some of these islands belong to the republic of San Salvador, and some to Honduras. The largest of the latter is the Sacate, or Grass Island, which is about seven miles long and four broad; in its southern part are mountain peaks rising to as much as 2000 feet in height, and it is particularly celebrated for the excellence of its pastures. An offer was made by two Americans in 1854 to purchase this island, and it did not then seem improbable that the government of Honduras would sell it, with 8000 head of cattle, for 28,000 piastres; but I have not been able to learn since whether the sale was effected. This island is intended to form the western terminus

of the projected railroad, and the station buildings are to be erected upon it.

The most important island of the group, however, though not quite equal in extent to Sacate, is, on account of its situation, the Tiger Island. It is of a perfectly conical form, and rises 2500 feet above the sea: on its eastern side lies Amalapa, the most important staple place of Honduras on the west coast; and though it does not now contain more than a thousand inhabitants, it promises, as the resources of the country develop themselves, to become the first port of the Pacific between San Francisco and Valparaiso. By means of Amalapa, Honduras already entertains commercial relations with Valparaiso, New York, Liverpool, Bremen, and Marseilles. Its chief exports are dye and ornamental woods, tobacco, sarsaparilla, hides, and bullion. The indigo comes from the neighbouring state of San Salvador, but I shall have occasion to speak further of the trade of Honduras in a subsequent chapter. The seaports of Honduras on the east coast are numerous, but no one of them is so finely situated as Amalapa on the west. The chief of the former are Omoa and Truxillo, which still keep up commercial correspondence with Belize, Havannah,

New Orleans, and New York, though their intercourse with Europe has, of late, on account of the politically disturbed state of the country, almost ceased.

Northward from the mainland of Honduras, and forty or fifty miles off, lie, in almost parallel direction with the coast, a number of islands, which, by the excellence of their harbours and their fertility, must become of great value to the country to which they belong. Roatan, or Ruatan, the largest and most populous, is thirty miles long, and, at its broadest part, nine miles across. It is capable of growing most of the tropical productions, and has now 1700 inhabitants, though in 1843 it had but 80; in a cultivated state it would maintain with ease 15,000. The majority of the settlers are free negroes, fine athletic figures, who have come here from the island of Grand Cayman. They, as well as a few mulattoes who are mingled with them, live chiefly by the culture of the soil, fishing, and turtle-catching; and they keep up a tolerably lively trade with New Orleans, Belize, and some places on the coast of Honduras, with their bananas, cocoa-nuts, and pine-apples. In 1854 twenty-one vessels, laden with fruit and vegetables, left Ruatan for New Orleans. Another

island called Guanaga, or Bonacca (nine miles long and five broad) lies about fifteen miles north-east of Ruatan; and there are three others of a smaller size, which, though they bear separate names, may almost be regarded as portions of Ruatan, as they are connected with it by rocky banks. They are equally distinguished for fertility and magnificence of vegetation. In many parts of Honduras, indeed, the people seem hardly in need to work at all, but only to stretch out their hands to the nearest tree as they lie swinging in their airy beds, so abundantly does nature furnish all that they require; cattle, too, are in some departments so numerous and so cheap that the poorest can obtain meat and milk every day. If this state has hitherto remained one of the least prosperous of Central America, the fact can only be attributed, strange as it seems, to the gold and silver mines it contains, for the exaggerated notions the people entertain of the riches of the mines, and their preference for that kind of occupation, have had very injurious effects upon the cultivation of the land. As little as possible has been done for it; and the time and attention that would have been far better bestowed upon agriculture, have been wasted in an irrational hunting after metallic treasures.

Of late years, when the country has been desolated by war, the people have suffered severely for this neglect; their maize fields, too, have been laid waste by locusts, and the mines have scarcely yielded enough to enable the workmen to obtain a subsistence from them. It has been precisely in the mining districts that the greatest distress has prevailed: indeed many of the mines have had to be abandoned; and out of a hundred scattered over the state, there are now not more than twenty at work. No kind of industry suffers more from war and political disturbances than mining, and this is doubtless one reason of its present decline in Honduras; but the inadequate produce of the mines has also had a large share in causing it. A better system of management would make them yield more; but under no system, I believe, would they yield enough to have any material influence on the prosperity of the country, as most of them are exhausted.

The mining districts of Honduras extend chiefly over the departments of Tegucigalpa and Gracias; and the places where silver mines are worked are Yuscaran, Corpus, Colaol, Cedros, St. Lucia, St. Barbara, San Antonio, Malacate, Merendon, and Los Encuentos. The silver is

commonly found in connection with iron, lead, and copper, and occasionally with antimony; but the lead only is in sufficient quantity to yield any considerable profit.

I have visited most of these mines; and after collating a great number of statements concerning their yearly produce, and checking them by my own observations, I believe I am not far from the truth when I say that all the gold and silver gained in Honduras does not exceed an annual amount of 400,000 piastres. The gold mines are indeed entirely abandoned, and what little gold is obtained is from the rivers; but concerning the wealth of these rivers there has been the grossest exaggeration. A man cannot by his utmost exertions gain more by washing the sand than an ounce and a half of gold in a month, the value of which would be about twenty-four piastres.

I remember once, when I was in Tegucigalpa, seeing an Indian come to sell to a merchant there a little bottle of gold dust, which was the fruit of a month's pretty hard work; and he sold it for seventeen piastres, and assured me he should have been particularly lucky if he had got more.

Besides the gold and silver ores, copper, iron,

platina, and coal are found in Honduras; and the opal mines, of which there are more than a hundred, are particularly interesting. The most remarkable are those of Grandique, twelve leagues west of Gracias. In former times opal was one of the chief articles of trade in the country, but this also has greatly declined; and, on the whole, it is probable that Honduras would be richer without her mineral treasures than she is with them.

The tales current of the enormous quantities of gold and silver obtained from these mines by the Spaniards, and a sort of morbid thirst for gain of this kind, occasion the culture of the soil to be almost entirely neglected, and has brought great distress on the country.

Costa Rica, where there are scarcely 200 people engaged in this occupation, is the most prosperous state of Central America; it exports coffee yearly to the value of a million of piastres, and has no national debt; yet the natural advantages of Costa Rica are in no respect greater than those of Honduras. The plants requiring a maximum of heat, such as cacao, indigo, &c., flourish admirably in the lowlands of Honduras, while sugar, coffee, and bananas will yield a rich harvest up to the height of 4000 feet; and

maize, beans, rice, tobacco, yuccas, yams, &c., can be cultivated with advantage up to a much greater height. The plateaus of Tegucigalpa, Intibucat, and Santa Rosa are adapted to the cerealia of the northern zone,—such as wheat, barley, rye, oats, and most European vegetables; and that upon a soil which never requires manure, and where half the work required in Europe will obtain double the harvest. The finest tropical fruits—including the most exquisite of all, the anona — prosper with an exceedingly small amount of care: the woods are filled with the most useful as well as precious kinds of wood, and the state possesses immense wealth in medicinal plants; and others, such as the caoutchouc, which are of great commercial value, and the systematic cultivation of which would yield large profits. Yet, with all these admirable endowments of nature, you see no progress in any branch of public economy; there are no practicable roads throughout the state, and the backs of mules and horses afford the only means of transport either for goods or passengers. Small indeed is the benefit the inhabitants have derived from the superabundance of blessings showered upon them.

CHAP. XV.

The first Village in Honduras. — Variation in the Character of the People, and its probable Cause. — A Bath in the Rio Grande. — Heaps of Stones for a Road. — Yuscaran. — Don Felix Sierra. — Costly Patriotism. — Demands made by France and England on the Government of Honduras for wilful Destruction of Property. — Climate of Yuscaran. — Religious Procession. — Divine Service. — Visit to the Silver Mines. — Malacate. — A Lesson in Geography. — Renowned “Good Nature” of Vienna. — Montserate. — A German Miner. — High Postages. — The Valley of Yeguaré. — San Antonio: its Population and its Mines. — First Aspect of Tegucigalpa. — Arrival. — A Mystification.

THE first sight we got of Honduras was not exactly calculated to give us a favourable idea of the beauty and fertility of the country, for after crossing the frontier from Nicaragua, we rode for a long time over a melancholy waste of sterile, arid ground, where the last trace of vegetation had been long since burnt out by the summer heat of several months.

Alanca was the first village we reached, and neither the place nor its inhabitants looked at all encouraging. We had eaten nothing since our last night's bivouac, and both men and animals began to feel a great inclination for breakfast. But though there are 200 people living here, we could get nothing to eat but bananas, which were certainly exceedingly cheap — namely, eight for a *copper* real. I was struck by a considerable change in the aspect of the inhabitants; they were smaller and more undersized, and had faces rather round than oval, a much darker complexion than the people of Nicaragua, with a tendency to woolliness in their hair. With this external change, too, came one no less obvious in their character and manners. If not exactly friendly, they did not look so much like robbers as the majority of the Nicaragua people, and were not like them armed to the teeth, but had at most only a knife, and that of less formidable dimensions than the *matchete*. Probably these differences may be ascribed to their nearer approach to the negro type, commonly accompanied by the more gentle character which so strongly distinguishes the Ethiopian race, and their descendants in the United States, from the

inflexible, reserved, fierce North American Indian.

As we descended into the valleys, and crossed with our mules the bed of the Rio Grande, seventy or eighty feet broad, the sun glared down upon us with such an oppressive burning heat, as I had never before experienced even within the tropics. The strong north wind that had been blowing, had entirely ceased even during our bivouac of the preceding night, so that we had been able to burn a wax candle as comfortably as in the best-closed room; and now, in the mid-day sun, the perfect calm made the sultriness almost unbearable. As soon as we had got to the other side of the river I made the little caravan halt; and in spite of the warnings of the guide, and his awful threats of carmans and fevers (*calenduras*), I resolved to have a refreshing bath. The numerous sharp flints in the bed of the river were indeed rather inconvenient; there was not water enough for a swim, and the calabashes made a poor substitute for the voluminous pailfuls that one gets dashed over head and shoulders in a good European douche bath; but, such as it was, the bath was an infinite refreshment nevertheless; and to my con-

tinual bathing I ascribe my immunity from fever, during my many journeys through low, hot, and unhealthy regions. The banks of the Rio Grande looked bare and desolate, for grass and leaves were all burnt up; and though this stream swells to a very considerable size in the rainy months, its bed was now in many places perfectly dry. The road became ever worse, stonier, and more sterile as we advanced to the mineral regions; and since the traffic either for goods or passengers is here extremely limited, neither government nor people appear to think it worth their while to attempt to mend it, so you go stumbling and scrambling along as well as you can, often over great heaps of rough stones; and you would certainly very little imagine, if you did not know it for a fact, that you were advancing towards the capital of a state opened to civilisation more than 300 years ago.

At a height of 2500 feet the first coniferae made their appearance, and the atmosphere became cool and pleasant; and when, towards six o'clock in the evening, we reached the little mountain town of Yuscaran, at 5000 feet above the level of the Pacific, we found ourselves in a climate that by its vegetation, as well as by its

refreshing coolness, reminded me of Western Europe. Yuscaran is built at the end of a high, narrow, oblong valley. The market-place is almost the only spot of level ground in it, and the houses rise abruptly on terraces on both sides, seeming to hang on the declivity of the mountain, and, with their white walls and tiled roofs, giving the town in the distance a peculiar and picturesque appearance. All around rise mighty mountains, of which the pine-clad Volcano de Yuscaran, as it is called, is the most conspicuous. In general, the country for many miles round is somewhat barren; and Yuscaran owes its foundation, as well as its former wealth, to the treasures that lay hidden under its surface rather than to what appears upon it; yet even here, upon the western declivities, where the sun acts most powerfully, the banana, the sugarcane, and the palm come to perfection.

We met with a most friendly reception in the house of Don Felix Sierra, who came here thirty years ago as an emigrant from Barcelona. The old Spaniards are in general far more hospitable to strangers than the natives of the country; and a European feels more at home with them, even though he may happen to come from the

opposite end of Europe. The common bond of European civilisation seems to be a stronger tie than any that connects him with the sons of the southern hemisphere.

Don Felix has a numerous family ; and his engaging children, with their dazzlingly fair complexions, large blue eyes, and fair tresses, contrasted strangely with the dusky skins and coal-black hair of the natives. He is married to a relation of General Morazan, and is one of the most opulent mine-owners in the place ; yet he devotes a corner of his house, which is situated on the market-place, to keeping a retail shop, and takes turns with his wife in dealing out ounces and ells of all sorts of goods. His political sympathies still evidently cling to his Castilian native country, and he is by no means convinced that Spain does not still possess power enough to recover her lost influence in America. The incessant political disturbances, and his relationship with Morazan, have occasioned much damage to his fortune, and he is now about to attempt obtaining from the government of Honduras compensation for the losses he sustained by espousing its cause when the opposite party was at the

helm of affairs. His goods were plundered, his house destroyed, and damage done to the amount of 40,000 dollars; but though his party is now in power, it has too many such claims made upon it to make it probable that Don Felix will obtain even a partial restitution. "What is the use," said poor Don Felix one day, in the fulness of his heart, "of belonging to a party, and sacrificing property, or even life, for it, when it can neither protect you from injury, nor make you any compensation when the injury has happened?" From these considerations he is thinking of retiring with his family to Granada; but it seems to me that he will gain very little by a mere change of place, and that he will find himself in precisely the same circumstances. Some foreign settlers, French and English, who have made similar claims on the government, have had their claims admitted; but this does not probably proceed either from the superiority of their claims, or from any wish to favour them, but from the occasional appearance of an English or French ship of war on the coast. An unfortunate German, who has no such imposing phenomenon to support his pretensions, and whose particular fatherland is seldom represented by

any person of more importance than a merchant's clerk, would most likely have still less chance than a native of getting his wrongs redressed.

Yuscaran contains about 6000 inhabitants, most of them negroes and Sambos, who all live, directly or indirectly, by mining. The climate is extremely pleasant; the thermometer, as far as I could learn from my own observations or those of others, never sinking below 64° , nor rising above 76° Fahr., the mean temperature of the year being 70° .

The day after my arrival was a Sunday, and, moreover, the festival of the patron saint, St. Joseph; and at a very early hour in the morning a procession, accompanied by ear-rending Indian music, moved out of the parish church, bearing with them a gaily decorated wooden figure of St. Joseph, as like a St. Crispin I saw in Matagalpa as one pea to another. It appears to me, indeed, that the same figure, with a change of costume, is made to do duty for a great many different saints. The priest followed under a crimson damask canopy; but the dignity neither of his position nor of his office prevented him from acting as master of the ceremonies on the occasion, and calling out his orders from under

his canopy about the arrangement of the procession, the ringing of bells, the letting off of fireworks, &c. The procession was followed exclusively by women, who wore a neat, pretty costume, with long red scarfs thrown over their heads. The interior of the church — which was built in 1779, and restored in 1835 — was gaily decorated with coloured hangings, and small banana and pine-trees, which seldom find themselves so close together; there was a well-trained choir of singers; and, in general, the musical service was so well performed as to remind me of the predominance of the negro character among the people, since negroes are much more susceptible to music, as well as more teachable, than the Indians.

In the afternoon there was a repetition of the whole affair, with the same red canopy, the same finery on the saint, and the female population following in the same manner. I must own that altogether the ceremony had rather an idolatrous effect.

The next day Don Felix accompanied me to several of the most considerable mines in the environs of Yuscaran. The period when they were first opened is not on record; but with the feverish thirst of the Spaniards for gold and

silver, it is not likely that the mineral wealth of Yuscaran could have remained long unknown to them; and many of the mines appear to have been worked for centuries. Five of them are now systematically worked; and, besides these, there are several smaller pits where individual "prospectors" are trying their fortune; but they are more productive of delusions than of dollars. Last year the metal obtained scarcely paid the working and the expense of transport. Several new shafts have been sunk, and horizontal passages opened, but as yet without any encouraging result; so that speculators have at last turned again to the old abandoned mines, of whose former fairy treasures such wonderful tales are told.

The Malacate mine, the oldest in Yuscaran, and which thirty years back was the most productive of the silver mines of the state, was, about seven years ago, taken by a company, who have expended great sums in clearing away the rubbish, by which the galleries were choked, in order to get to the principal vein. But after seven years of continued digging,—after penetrating 450 feet in a perpendicular, and 1800 in a horizontal direction, and after the expenditure of 35,000 dollars,—the point has not yet been reached

where the former miners left off working. The advance has been made in a methodical and deliberate manner; all the various subterranean galleries and passages having been lined with a mass of innumerable trunks of trees,—oak, pine, and two species called by the natives Chapero and Frijolillo. They are delivered at the mouth of the mine, in lengths of fifteen feet, and ready for use, for about three reals apiece. The company are continuing the works with undiminished courage, although they have not yet been rewarded for their perseverance. About a hundred men are employed in clearing out the rubbish, from which, though it was thrown away by the former miners as perfectly useless, metal to the amount of several thousand dollars has been obtained; but the large, handsome building in which this work is carried on, with its solid and excellent machinery, deserves to be employed to better purpose.

Another of the silver mines here, the Sanctissimo Sacramento, is worthy of mention, less for its productiveness than for the admirable perseverance of its owner, Mr. George Collier, an Irishman, who has been working it these sixteen years, though he has only of late possessed sufficient funds to carry on his

works on any other than the antiquated plan of the *Pateo*, as it is called, by which one half of the metal is left in the ore. In the course of the centuries during which the mines here have been worked, there must have been millions of dollars lost in this way. The insufficient water power is also a great hindrance, as the machines cannot be worked by it more than nine months in the year; in the second half of the dry season,—namely, from February to May,—the whole apparatus is brought to a standstill. The present entire produce of the Yuscaran mines is not estimated at more than 8000 marks of silver, or 72,000 dollars. The silver is mostly carried to Tegucigalpa or Granada; and the quantity of sea salt which is used in the mining works,—about 250 tons a year,—is brought from the coasts of the Pacific on the backs of mules, which make the journey in eight days, and will carry about 250 lbs. each,—a quantity sold at the mine for something over a guinea.

Mr. Collier (who is married to a niece of the former President of the republic) manages, by great personal exertions, the most exemplary order, and the introduction of various economical plans, to obtain a good income from his

property; but he confessed to me that the mines here are pretty well exhausted, and that there are neither the funds nor the practical knowledge to open new ones. Most of the mine-owners get only a bare subsistence from them.

When I went to Mr. Collier's house, I found him engaged in pointing out to his wife (who had been apprised of my intended visit) the country and the place I came from, on a large map of Europe that hung on the wall of his room, and trying to make her understand its enormous distance and the difficulties of the journey.

I believe it was the first time the lady had ever heard of our good city on the Danube, which we consider so renowned; and she may very likely have formed some curious ideas of what an inhabitant of Vienna might be like; at all events she seemed now quite surprised to see only an ordinary-looking mortal, without so much as an enormous moustache to distinguish him, enter her apartment and take a place beside her. Mr. Collier had been in Vienna, and had much to say in praise both of the place and the people; and the friendly things he said I had heard also from others; but I sometimes feel

vexed and ashamed that people can find nothing to praise in Vienna but our much-lauded "good nature," our fine public walks, and, moreover, our delicious *Mehlspeisen*, or puddings. Have we not philosophers, politicians, poets, artists, and other lions large and small? Are not our summers as warm, at any rate, as the English, while our winters are as cold as the North American? Are we not in Vienna, when public affairs are in question, allowed to speak just as little, and hold our tongues just as much, as in that newly-furbished Imperial city that all the world admires? Truly it is enough to make us feel as ill-natured as the most repulsive Yankee of the West, to hear of nothing but one's "good nature" everlastingly!

The third mine in the neighbourhood of Yuscaran that I visited, was that of Montserate, which belongs to an Alsace man of the name of Schäfer; it is the highest of all, and is situated on the steep declivity of one of the loftiest mountains. The works are now resumed, after having been interrupted for eight years; and the proprietor keeps about a dozen men regularly at work, though, as it happened to be Monday when I visited it, none of them were at work

then. This fashion of keeping Monday sacred to idleness, appears to prevail in all quarters of the world among the working classes.

The ore is found here, as in all the mines of Yuscaran, in combination with quartz, feldspar, and *Black Jack*; 2500 lbs. of rock give fifty-five dollars worth of silver, five of gold, and cost twenty or twenty-two dollars in workmen's wages. On an average about ten tons of ore are got out of the mine here every week; but a large portion of it is still lying under water, and the owner promises himself a considerable profit from this part. Mr. Schäfer had at one time gained a tolerable fortune by mining, but he lost it again by obstinate persistence in unfortunate diggings; and he is now trying his fortune a second time, while his family are in the north anxiously awaiting the result. As I have already said, the mine-owners in general are far from prosperous; we did not meet one who had grown rich in these speculations, and very few who had even got back the money they had sunk in them; and yet a population that has once become accustomed to this thankless, unhealthy occupation, down in the bowels of the earth, will mostly prefer it to the cheerful,

healthful, and in this country really more lucrative daily labour on its green surface.

Even at a very little distance from Yuscaran there is abundance of fine fertile land to be had, that would yield a rich return for the pains bestowed upon it.

At an early hour in the morning we pursued our way to Tegucigalpa; and it led us across giant mountains, so steep and rocky, that we were obliged to alight from our mules and continue the journey on foot. The vegetation consisted almost exclusively of *coniferæ*, amongst which a few oaks and other leaf-trees were mingled. At an elevation of 4000 feet there was a kind of palm, of from ten to fifteen feet high, with fan-like leaves, growing close to the gigantic pine which the natives call Guayape. We rode for a whole day through these dreary, lonely woods, without meeting a single human creature, and without even being enlivened by the sight of one of those robbers with which, according to M. Adolphe Marie, the imaginative Editor of the "Gaceta" of Costa Rica, the woods of Honduras are habitually swarming. There is a perfect stagnation of all intercourse with the neighbouring states in this direction; not even

any postal communication takes place, and any one who is compelled by business or family affairs to send a letter, must do so by a private messenger, who will be a month on the road. The postage of the letter also will, in this case, come to something above 4*l.* sterling.

In the afternoon we passed the rivers St. Clara and Yeguaré, and then rode in a slanting direction across the magnificent valley of the Yeguaré to the mountain of San Antonio. The valley is a league broad and six leagues long, encircled by green mountain walls, fruitful and finely watered, and would be admirably adapted for settlement, and for great varieties of cultivated plants; but at present it serves only for a pasture and sporting-ground for wild cattle. Towards evening, after a continual ascent of many hours, we reached at last the little town of San Antonio, which is curiously built on the two sides of a narrow, steep mountain ridge, so that a great part of it can only be seen when you have climbed to the summit. The silver mines of San Antonio are among the oldest in the country, but their wonderful productiveness seems to be merely a charming myth. In the year 1796 there were only seventeen huts here; but the place

now possesses 1200 inhabitants, and a handsome church and cabildo. The people are apparently, though not rich, in possession of competence, and might live very comfortably but for the destructive vices of drinking and gambling to which they are addicted. In the week they are chiefly occupied with cards, and the Sabbath is kept holy by devoting it to cock-fighting, as much as 500 dollars being sometimes lost and won on a Sunday afternoon.

The mines, of which there are twelve, are so close to the little town, that many of the miners can almost step from their own doors into the shaft. The richest veins of metal run from east to west; and three arrobas (75 lbs.) of ore yield from six to twelve ounces of silver, though the antiquated method of the *pateo* is still in use, by which so much is lost. "It is not metal that we want, but a good chemist," said an old miner with whom I was gossiping, as we sat together on a bench before his house door; but my own opinion is that a good chemist or mineralogist would only show the worthy people that their mines are exhausted, for all at this place taken together do not yield on an average more than 625 lbs. of silver—a value of 40,000

dollars—in the year. A project has been entertained, on account of the great declivity of the ground, and the damage done by the rains in winter, of leaving the present town and the mines also, and forming a new settlement in the valley of Yeguaré; and, should this plan be carried into effect, it is to be hoped many of the miners will change their mining implements for ploughs, and then they will soon learn that the cultivation of plants useful to man is a less ungrateful and less toilsome occupation than groping in the bowels of the mountains on the doubtful chance of finding a lump of metal.

From San Antonio to Tegucigalpa, the largest, most active, and most important town of Honduras, a distance of about eight leagues, the communication is by a very difficult mule path; but the toilsomeness of the way is amply compensated by the variety and grandeur of the scenery. We left San Antonio at a very early hour, and had not gone far before a brown, bare-foot citizen came running after me to ask me to turn back in order to visit an old woman who had the gout; but as I had been the whole evening before occupied with the gratuitous distribution of medicines to a crowd of sick per-

sons, I declined to comply with this request. Long travelling in these countries, and a more intimate acquaintance with the impudent importunities of the people, had done much to cure any hereditary German failing of soft-heartedness that I might have been liable to, and had given me much more skill in the art of saying "No" than I had before possessed.

For a considerable time our way lay through woods of oak and pine, from the green branches of which the Tillandsias hung down in profusion, like masses of grey hair. Towards eleven o'clock we reached the highest pass (*el Alto*), and here my aneroid barometer showed an atmospheric pressure of $23\frac{2}{40}$, with a north wind. From this point we got the first sight of Tegucigalpa, lying at the north-western end of an elevated valley, and with its stately church tower, and its pure white houses basking in the sunshine, looking very pretty. All round the town, however, nothing is to be seen but forest and uncultivated land, for which the industry of man has as yet done nothing; and you must draw entirely on your imagination for the heart-rejoicing picture of what it may one day become—how it would "blossom as the rose,"

should it ever be cultivated by an active, peaceful population. To the entire ignorance of Central America that prevails in Europe, as well as to the difficulty of the journey, and the political disturbances, must we attribute the seemingly unaccountable circumstance that hundreds of thousands of European emigrants, do not, when weary of the struggles of the old world, instead of exposing themselves to the toils and hardships of the rude climate of the North, seek an asylum in these blessed regions of abounding fertility and eternal spring, which hold out such a tempting prospect of reward to the lightest labour.

As soon as we had passed "el Alto," the path became a continual descent for six miles; and the vegetation gradually changed its rude, monotonous character, aloes, palms, mimosas, and bananas, now making their appearance. Towards four in the afternoon we rode into Tegucigalpa, a month after leaving Managua, though the distance is not more than 200 miles.

As I had intended to make some stay in Tegucigalpa, I had provided myself with numerous letters; and amongst others, to a certain Doña Nina Luisa, who had been spoken of as a

very hospitable person. To her house—or, I should rather say, her *warehouse*—I first directed my steps; and leaving the little caravan in the street, I entered a kind of milliner's shop, where we found a pretty-looking young person, who took our letters and disappeared with them into the interior of the house, but soon came back again, and requested us to enter a small adjoining room, only separated from the shop by a wooden partition. We were not a little astonished to find that, though it was still the broadest daylight, this room was almost dark, being hung round with dark curtains, and lit only by one wax candle. In the corner sat a priest in the dress of his order, who rose at our entrance; whilst an older lady, of perfectly European appearance, was busying herself behind an open curtain with something that, in the gloomy obscurity of the room, I took for a child's coffin. As soon as the elderly lady perceived us, she came towards me, shook hands with us in the most friendly manner like an old acquaintance, and begged me to be seated. She made a speech to me consisting of a few words of French, a few of English, and a few of Spanish; and then suddenly, as if she had forgotten

something, darted back to her mysterious occupation behind the curtain.

I availed myself of this pause in the conversation, to observe more closely the objects that surrounded me; and I then perceived that the supposed coffin was nothing but a daguerreotype apparatus, and that the mysterious occupation of Doña Nina Luisa was simply that of perpetuating the sallow face of the worthy padre for the benefit of posterity. I breathed freely again: instead of having to command, at a moment's notice, a great deal of sympathy, and produce my empty consolations to a bereaved mother, I had the pleasanter task of congratulating a clever and very gracious lady on the success of her artistic efforts. A lady artist, I may observe, is a most uncommon phenomenon to meet with in Central America; and the surprise was a very agreeable one. After the exchange of a few civilities, Doña Luisa offered to place her handsome house, which had stood empty since the death of her mother, at my disposal, and immediately had it made ready for my occupation. Before the evening, I was installed in it with bag and baggage, attendants, biped and quadruped, in the most comfortable

manner; and I must confess that the cheerful light in which men and things in Tegucigalpa afterwards appeared to me, and the pleasant recollections of it that I carried away with me, may be, perhaps, in some measure attributable to the glow of this cordial reception. So wonderful an effect has a first impression, that it is scarcely possible not to be influenced by it; it is a warm, genial sunshine that beautifies everything it touches; while a rude, unfriendly one,—such as is, contrary to the common opinion, more often met with in half-barbarous than in highly-civilised countries,—is like a raw autumn fog, darkening and disfiguring all objects, and distorting their just proportions.

CHAP. XVI.

TEGUCIGALPA.

Physiognomy of the Town.—The Cathedral.—The Church of Los Dolores.—The Bridge over the Rio Grande.—The Market Place.—The Population.—Advantages of Agriculture over Mining.—Trade.—Tone of Society.—The first Pianoforte.—A Central American Love Story.—General Morazan, the Pride of Honduras.—His Days of Glory and his Death.—Santos Guardiola, the Tiger of Honduras.—The Federation an Impossibility in Central America.

As earthquakes are far less frequent on the eastern than on the western side of the Cordilleras, where, on the Pacific coast, the great volcanoes lie ranged along like so many furnaces, people are not so much afraid in the highlands of Honduras of building tall houses and stately public edifices. The churches have lofty towers; and the courts of justice, as well as the dwelling-houses of opulent citizens, boast of upper stories and pretty balconies. Tegucigalpa possesses many handsome public buildings of imposing and graceful exterior;

and the cathedral, one of the finest monuments existing in Central America, was built in 1782, at a cost of 30,000 dollars, by a rich and liberal parish priest at his own private cost. The style of architecture is simple and noble, and the design of the external façade, of the principal aisle, and the cupola of the front towers, show a refined taste in art; but unfortunately the interior, with its coloured draperies, looking-glasses, gold spangles, tasteless carved figures, and coarsely painted features of saints, forms a glaring contrast to the simplicity of the building.

The tabernacle, on the high altar, is enclosed in a large silver pomegranate, which opens and closes again by a secret spring,—a spectacle which on Sunday draws crowds to look at it. The people of Tegucigalpa consider it the finest sight in the world when the pomegranate opens with a series of jerks, and the golden monstrance becomes gradually visible; but I did not myself find it very possible to be edified by the little paltry theatrical trick so utterly unworthy of the place.

There are four other churches in the town, which contribute much to its decoration, as do also the town-hall, &c., in the principal square,

and the fine stone bridge over the Rio Grande. The most remarkable church is that of Santa Maria de los Dolores, on account of its Moorish style and gaily painted façade; but here also there is much in the interior which is unworthy of the sacred destination of the building. On the principal altar, which is dilapidated and covered with dust, I saw empty wine-bottles made to do duty for flower-vases, without even having had the labels removed, which indicated their former purpose; so that they figured away as "St. Julien," "Sillery Mousseux," "Old Cognac," and "Double Stout."

The magnificent bridge was built in 1820, at a cost of 23,000 dollars, over the Rio Grande, which flows to the Pacific, and is navigable for nearly twenty leagues for small vessels. During the rainy season it sometimes rises to a terrific height. The market-place is unquestionably the finest and most interesting spot in the town, and presents a busy scene during the whole day; old and young assembling there to make their purchases, and close their bargains; but it is late in the evening that it has the most peculiar appearance, when the Indian women come with their various eatables for sale, and

spreading on the dark ground their fruits, chocolate, and hot maize cakes, kindle a pine torch to display their wares; while groups and pairs of loiterers are singing and gossiping on the steps that lead to the cathedral,—a swarm of miscellaneous wanderers arranging their night-quarters, with much lively bustle, in the corridors of the public buildings; and in the remoter parts of the square, which are dark, you see from time to time what look like will-o'-the-wisps, but are in reality Indians returning home and carrying pine torches to light them on their way.

Tegucigalpa, which was only founded about a hundred years ago, has at present 8000 inhabitants, living principally by trade and agriculture; although from the signification of the Indian name of their city, which is "Hill of Silver," one might have expected to find them treasure-diggers; and the prosperity of this fine town, in the midst of the general want, distress, and decay, is a strong proof that with the present deficiency in the means of communication, and the very uncertain amount of its mining wealth, it has done wisely to cultivate the rich surface of the soil rather than go

groping in the dark beneath it. During our journey in Honduras, in the spring of 1854, we found great distress prevailing from scarcity of provisions throughout nearly the whole state, from Yuscaran to the frontiers of San Salvador and Guatemala. Even the capital Comayagua, which is situated in a very luxuriant valley, was not spared; and though the visitation of locusts was in part the cause, the laziness and thoughtlessness of the country people, who never think of, far less provide for, the future, was a still more efficient one. It sounds, doubtless, oddly to speak of distress and scarcity of the necessaries of life, and in the same breath extol the great fertility of the ground and the manifold wealth of production in these gifted countries; but I have said enough of the circumstances that tend to neutralise those blessings, to reconcile the apparent contradiction. In Tegucigalpa, where the plagues of war are at some distance, and there is more agricultural industry, the locusts have not occasioned such terrible consequences, nor, indeed, any at all except a slight rise in prices.

As the greater part both of the domestic and foreign trade passes through this town, it will

represent, with tolerable exactness, that of the whole state. The metal gained in the various mines is usually brought here in a crude form, and either sold or exchanged for goods; hides, and other articles of export, go by Tegucigalpa to the ports on the east coast, and the foreign goods received in exchange for them also mostly pass this way; but the foreign trade has of late years greatly fallen off, from a deficiency in the articles to be sent in return for the foreign goods. While Baron Bulow, in his work on Central America (p. 295.), estimates the trade of Honduras at the value of a million of piastres, we could not find, from the information of the principal merchants of Tegucigalpa, that it exceeded 300,000, which would give about two piastres' worth for every inhabitant. The commercial navy of Honduras—if we can apply such a term—consists only of fifteen ships, of a united burden of 800 tons.*

* These are a few of the prices at which the goods are exported:—

1 ounce of Gold	17 dollars.
1 pound of Silver, from	17 to 18 „
An Ox-hide	1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ „
A Tiger, or other large Skin	1 to 5 „

Formerly, merchants here used to get their goods direct from England or Germany; but in the present stagnation of trade they find it more advantageous to obtain them by a more indirect route from Belize, and the ports of Omoa and Truxillo, whence they are brought by mules, in a month's journey. These animals will carry weights of from 250 to 300 lbs. each, and the freight costs from eight to eleven dollars.*

25 lbs. of Sarsaparilla . . .	2½ to 3 dollars.
1 lb. of Tortoiseshell . . .	3 to 3½ „
1 cwt. of Brazil Wood . . .	3 to 4 „
1 lb. of Tobacco, in leaves . . .	1 to 1½ reals, or from 5 <i>d.</i> to 7½ <i>d.</i>

* The harbour of Omoa, which is better known from the deadliness of its climate than for the extent of its commercial transactions, has only 500 inhabitants, and six foreign mercantile firms. Vessels mostly come to it in ballast from England and America, and take back mahogany, dye-woods, sarsaparilla, hides, &c. We had reason to think that the climate was not so fatal as it has been represented; but it is rather too much to find M. Du Puydt (probably with the view of serving the Belgian Colonisation Society) asserting its special salubrity.

Truxillo, the second port of Honduras on the east coast, has about the same number of inhabitants as Omoa, and only one foreign mercantile house. At both these ports

The trade of Tegucigalpa with the harbours on the Pacific is at present insignificant, but will attain great importance should the project of a railway between the two oceans be carried into effect. Trifling as is the trade of this town compared with what it might become, there is an appearance of cheerful activity about the place that indicates some prosperity. The houses are better built and more neatly fitted up than is usual in Central America ; and there are even the beginnings of luxury observable,—for instance, in the introduction of pianofortes, and other European musical instruments. The first piano made its appearance here in 1840, and the town now possesses nine ; and really when you consider what the roads are in this country, and that these easily damaged instruments have to be carried from the place where they are unshipped—240 miles—over countless mountains on *human* backs, it seems rather surprising that there should be so many. These instruments—though they are neither from Erard nor Bösendorf, and indeed only third-class pianos—will there is an *ad valorem* duty of 24 per cent. on all foreign goods.

cost, by the time they arrive at Tegucigalpa, from ninety to a hundred and thirty pounds each. They are, both in number and quality, quite sufficient at present to meet the musical requirements of the place, for a few waltzes or quadrilles are all that any one expects; and though the people are very socially inclined, the ladies seldom sing. My fair hostess, Doña Luisa, was, however, one of the exceptions; and she one day took down an elegant guitar from the wall, and sang a sentimental song with much feeling.

I soon saw that there was some association with this song that was very affecting to her, for when she had finished it, a few tears fell from her fine black eyes; she laid the guitar aside, saying, "Oh, those were happy times!" and then followed a long, sorrowful pause. Her younger sister Beatrice sat near her without speaking a word; and after a time Doña Luisa said, in a melancholy voice, "Did you like that song? It is by a countryman of yours." Yes, thought I, it is just such a sentimental affair as a German is likely to write. "I can never sing it," Doña Luisa continued, "without being affected; and yet I like to sing it. What odd creatures we women are!" The entrance of

some visitors prevented, to my great annoyance, the interesting communication I expected, and I should have liked some compensation for the uncomfortable situation I had been placed in. I was the more vexed at the interruption because I did not expect to find another opportunity of obtaining the lady's confidence; but it happened that I heard from another quarter the circumstances that made this song so affecting to her.

About five years ago, there came here a German artist, whose talents and agreeable manners procured him a friendly reception in some of the best families in the place, and he soon made acquaintance with Doña Luisa. As she had somewhat romantic tendencies, the acquaintance was not long in ripening into more tender regard, and the affair terminated in a wedding. The bridegroom had gained a good deal of money by practising as a daguerreotypist in Tegucigalpa, and he now made a tour through the states of Central America, pursuing the same lucrative branch of art with signal success, while enjoying the felicities of the honeymoon; and if that moon is a delightful one in the most cold and barren country, what must it be in such a love-breathing atmosphere as that of these tropical

highlands! But, alas for poor Doña Luisa, these joys were of short duration! At San José, in Costa Rica, some letters fell into her hands which brought a terrible change over the "spirit of her dream." They were from a rival, a complaining, forsaken *wife*; and Luisa's resolution was quickly taken: she quitted the unworthy deceiver instantly, and returned to her native place, whence she afterwards went to Havannah to learn the art of daguerreotyping, and by this pursuit gained enough to commence a business that now maintains herself and several sisters.

The faithless German has never since been heard of; but sometimes poor Doña Luisa takes the guitar from the wall, and plaintively sings "No me olvide,"—Forget me not,—in sorrowful remembrance of one who had little deserved her attachment. Romance and loving hearts are, it seems, to be found even in Central America.

Tegucigalpa was the birthplace of a man who has greatly influenced the fate, not only of his own country, but of the whole Isthmus,—of Francisco Morazan, namely, who was born here in 1799. His father was a creole of one of the French possessions in the West Indies, and his florid complexion and light blue eyes, as well as his

intellectual activity, plainly indicated his foreign origin. Brave and highly gifted by nature, he soon raised himself out of the subordinate position of a clerk and shopman in Comayagua, and ultimately to the highest offices of the state, which he filled with disinterested patriotism. In the year 1824 he became Secretary-general of Honduras, and afterwards President; and as he saw clearly that the five Central American States could only flourish and maintain their independence by the closest union, he was one of the chief promoters of the federation. An enthusiastic admirer of the institutions of the powerful Northern republic, he took it for his model in the organisation of his native state, but unfortunately often overlooked the peculiar circumstances of his country, and the far lower grade of civilisation at which it stood.

Political institutions to be beneficial must be suited to the wants of the people; it is of no use to attempt fitting the people to the institutions; and it was because he forgot this that Morazan's reform measures would not take root, but shared the fate of the liberal reformer himself, whose whole career became, by this fatal error, a series of sanguinary struggles and scenes of horror,

instead of the nobler exploits of which he was naturally capable. Never were the five states at such fierce enmity with each other, as when they were called the United Provinces of Central America.

It was under the influence of Morazan that the Code Livingston was introduced, with trial by jury, public schools on the Lancastrian system established, religious freedom decreed, and the convents abolished. But he did not stop here. On the night of the 10th of July, 1829, the whole body of the regular clergy, with the archbishop of Guatemala, who was said to have conspired against Morazan, were arrested and sent on foot to the port of Omoa, whence they were shipped in a schooner for Havannah. No less harsh and cruel was his conduct towards his temporal antagonists, and he shrunk from nothing that seemed likely to promote the ends he had in view. On one occasion, for instance, he invited the most distinguished and influential inhabitants of Guatemala, mostly members of the opposition, to pay him a visit; and, as they supposed it was for the purpose of discussing some affair of importance,—possibly a state loan,—they arrived punctually, and in the most elegant

costume. The adjutant who received them in the audience chamber, informed them that General Morazan would soon be with them; but, instead of the general, came a body of his soldiers who arrested them, and conveyed them immediately to a port on the Pacific, where they were compelled to embark in a vessel about to sail for Panama. As soon as they got out to sea, however, the involuntary passengers rose, and compelled the captain to change his course and take them to Mexico.

Morazan remained at the height of power for nine years, namely till 1839, during which period he was unwearied in his exertions for the consolidation of the federal system. But the termination of his legal presidency was also that of his power and of the federal government; and as his star declined, the number of his followers rapidly diminished; the conservative party preferred throwing itself into the arms of a half-barbarous Indian chief to accommodating itself any longer to his inconvenient innovations* ; and

* In August, 1835, the National Assembly, under the influence of Morazan, decreed a general mourning for the death of Jeremy Bentham, whose writings could be known

the once almost adored General Morazan was (on the 5th of April, 1840) compelled to fly with a handful of followers to the harbour of Libertad, embark in a schooner that was accidentally lying there, and escape to South America!

But the fervour of his patriotism was not yet quenched, nor was he cured of his political illusions; and in the April of 1842 he returned secretly to Central America; landed unexpectedly in the port of Calderas in Costa Rica; marched with a troop of followers against the capital San José, where, meeting with no resistance, he deposed the President Braulio Carillo, and had himself proclaimed provisionally in his place. So far all went on triumphantly. Morazan was not like Louis Napoleon, who made such a wretched piece of work of his invasions at Strasburg and Boulogne, that the whole nation regarded as an imbecile or a madman the ex-prisoner of Ham whom they have now made the sovereign of France. But the triumph of Morazan did not

only to a few of the most educated classes. The brown half-Indians of Guatemala fanatical Benthamites! One may imagine to what that must lead.

last long ; and the heads of the conservative party, less magnanimous than Louis Philippe's government, and more decidedly practical men, resolved to put an end to the dreams of the federalists and the possibility of any future invasion projects Morazan might entertain, by the effectual method of putting him to death. The most important towns of Costa Rica revolted against him, and with his handful of troops he could no longer maintain himself against the enemies who were pressing on him. After a heroic, and in the annals of that unwarlike people hitherto unheard of, defence, and an engagement in which, with 300 men, he maintained the conflict for two days and nights against 5000, he was taken prisoner, carried to San José, and there shot, on the 15th of September, 1842, at the command of General Pinto, and with a total disregard of all legal forms. One of his principal officers, Villa Senor, was shot at the same time ; and his secretary Don Miguel Saravia, a very highly gifted and hopeful young man, poisoned himself from grief at the death of his superior. I have often heard it asserted by natives of the country, that Morazan lost his life from want of sufficient insight into its true condition ; but I

am myself rather inclined to attribute his tragical end to treachery. There was a certain General Isidor Sachet, a Frenchman, whom Morazan had entrusted to proceed with 800 of his best men to the port on the Pacific; but with orders to return immediately when he should no longer be informed by couriers, despatched twice a day, of Morazan's position. Sachet, however, who was an habitual drunkard, besides having no remarkable character for bravery, as soon as he perceived, by the non-arrival of the couriers, that his chief was hard pressed, shipped himself and part of his troops on the Coquimbo, and proceeded to San Salvador, where the fugitives were received in the most friendly manner by the then President Malespin, and a military appointment bestowed on Sachet. Since the death of Morazan it is not so much by rival parties, as by the contending claims of individuals, that the states of Central America have been disturbed.

The town of Tegucigalpa is also the birthplace of another man whose name is well known in the history of his country, though with no credit to himself. Santo Guardiola, the terror—or, as he is often called, the Tiger—of Central America, first appeared in public, in 1844, as an officer of the

troops of Ferrara, the President of Honduras, in an engagement with the legion of Fonseca, the Grand Marshal of Nicaragua. He is by birth half Indian and half negro, of sound, vigorous frame, but otherwise appears to have inherited the bad qualities of both races. One need be neither a physiognomist nor a phrenologist to trace in his coarse features, and very unfavourable cranial development, the evidences of fierce passions restrained neither by principle nor understanding. I never spoke to Guardiola but once in my life, and events have passed over me since then, which have effaced many stronger impressions; but the dark image of that murderous Honduran has remained in all its repulsive distinctness. Actions are related of him so brutal as to be scarcely credible were they not confirmed by eye-witnesses. During a desperate attack on the town of Leon (on the 24th of January, 1845), in which the remnant of the Morazan or federalist party were defending themselves, Guardiola had cannon planted with orders to fire on his own troops if a single individual of them should give way. By this terrific threat he gained the victory, but his troops were cut to pieces almost to a man.

In the years 1853 and 1854 he led the almost undisciplined troops of Guatemala against his native country, in a bloody civil war in which brother was arrayed against brother, and father against son; and when Guardiola's soldiers were so worn out that they could no longer stand, he used, on the most trivial pretence, to have them shot. An Indian woman, who was lying sick in bed, complained to him of her sufferings; whereupon, thinking she might have some money or valuables concealed about her, he told her he had an infallible remedy for all such maladies, and, drawing a pistol from his girdle, shot her dead. His sensual excesses and crimes of another kind were no less atrocious; and he committed, in all his expeditions, the most shameful outrages on women. I have never found the accounts of both natives and travellers so unanimous as in the character they give this man; and yet, notwithstanding his evil fame, he still holds a high position in the army of Guatemala. But the President himself is by no means immaculate, nor are his victories or his life-long presidency unstained by innocent blood.

Tegucigalpa, though it often took part against him, still cherishes the memory of the high-minded Morazan, does justice to the excellence of his intentions, and mourns his tragic fate ; and the house where he was born, and many articles that belonged to him, are still respectfully preserved as national memorials. From the experiences of late years, however, very few people believe that his favourite idea of a Federation will ever be realised here. It is said, that, were Morazan himself alive, he would perceive the impracticability of this project, and probably advocate a hearty coalition with the great sister republic in the north ; and whoever is not biassed by national prejudice must, I think, perceive that in some plan of this kind is to be found the best prospect that can be obtained for this country, rent as it has been by perpetual civil war, and diseased to its heart's core. In proportion as the Anglo-American immigration increases, and the spirit of northern civilisation breathes over the beautiful regions of Central America, we shall probably see the soil becoming cultivated ; rivers made navigable ; roads, canals, railways opened ; the prosperity of every indi-

vidual inhabitant promoted; and this glorious region raised to the height of national and commercial importance for which its incomparable geographical position and the natural treasures of its soil have so well qualified it.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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