

## CHAPTER VIII.

Cape Mendocino—San Francisco—Visit to the Mission—Monterey  
—Islands on the Coast of Lower California—Excursion on Cerros  
Island—Mazatlan—Tepic—San Blas.

ON the 14th of September we made Cape Mendocino, a remarkable promontory, with several detached rocks off it. On the 17th we anchored, in a thick fog, thinking the place to be Bodegas, but on landing found it to be merely a spacious bay inside Punta de los Reyes, that point bearing west of us. It is a good anchorage for at least nine months of the year, and from it San Francisco can be approached easily.

On the 18th we ran into the Bay of San Francisco, about which we had heard and read so much; but we were disappointed. A harbour it can hardly be called; rather an inland sea, into which three large rivers, the Sacramento, the San Joaquin, and the Tale fall. These cause rapid tides and numerous shoals, so that its depth of water is not commensurate with the extent of the bay. On the banks of the Sacramento and San Joaquin there is much fine land, but not equal to the speculator's hopes. The

Sacramento, the Colorado of California, and the southern branch of the Columbia, are believed to have their source about the same spot,  $110^{\circ}$  or  $111^{\circ}$  W.,  $41^{\circ}$  or  $42^{\circ}$  N., in the Rocky Mountains. The entrance of the Sacramento is twenty miles to the northward of Yierba Buena. The anchorage of Yierba Buena is perhaps the best in the bay; it is free from the irregularities, rippings, and overfalls which the strong tides cause in the other parts. The passage up to it is also free from these annoyances; it has however the fault of having no fresh water, nor does the supply seem abundant even for shore consumption or irrigation. The Bay of San Francisco, from its depth in some places, and its extreme shallowness in others, is in a great part unavailable, while the bar off its mouth, with the heavy swell so frequently upon it, renders egress and ingress often dangerous.

We anchored in Yierba Buena cove, where we found the U.S. corvette Portsmouth, of twenty-four guns (sixty-eight pounders) and 1320 tons. Our arrival seemed to cause surprise, and we were at first mistaken for the Erebus. A lieutenant came on board, with the news that the Americans were in possession of California, and that several of the officers and men of the vessel were on shore engaged in organizing parties for the defence of the country.

Some of us paid a visit to the Mission of San Francisco. The junction of religion and civilization appears at first sight to promise much, and to be what every well-disposed mind would desire. Like many other theories, however, its application has proved to be impracticable. Nothing could be imagined more philanthropic or more

worthy of success than the plan of these establishments; but their failure, which has arisen from a variety of causes, has been lamentable and complete. The very shadow of their former fame has passed away, and it may almost be said that injurious instead of beneficial effects have been the result.

About twenty houses were scattered about the plain, and the only sign of activity witnessed was a bullock being brought in. The road to the Mission was fatiguing and monotonous, and led through thickets of low trees and deep sand. The surrounding country was far from being picturesque; we saw it moreover under sad auspices—ruinous, dirty, and about to become the abode of the Mormonites. The church of the Mission, a slovenly, ill-built edifice, decorated in a tawdry, unpleasant style, common in the poorer churches in Spain and Italy, was still in repair. The houses intended for the Indians were of the meanest description—mere mud hovels, with only one apartment, but disposed regularly in ranges and streets. These were for the married couples; those Indians who remained single were locked up in a quadrangle, formed by the houses of the superior, the priests, and officers of the establishment. The church, the factories or workshops, and the prison, everything was carried on within itself; carpentering, weaving, blacksmith's work, were all pursued with success under the auspices of the industrious, pains-taking Padres. However, the confinement in which the Indians were kept, and a solitary life, were usually found so irksome, that few of them continued long under lock and key; they soon acquiesced in that state of passive obedience, which it was the aim

of the institution to establish. That the fathers did not go beyond appears to have been their great fault, the rock on which their system struck. We found the house of the superior in the possession of some Mormons, who had arrived in great force: they are a peculiar sect, with sensual maxims, but apparently, as long as they can exist in plenty, disposed to be harmless.

At the time of our visit the gold had not been discovered, and San Francisco was extremely dull. One evening, however, an American whaler, the *Magnolia*, of Boston, gave a ball, and all our young people went to it; and judging from the numerous little anecdotes and incidents which were afterwards told of that ball, they must have enjoyed themselves very much. There was a very motley company, and gin was in great request. One of the officers asked a mother if she would permit him to dance with her daughter. "How can you dance with her when she doesn't know your name?" was the reply. "Whiffiz is my name, Madam." "Here, Betsey," said the mother, "here's Whiffers wants you." And off the pair started.

On the 22nd we made all plain sail out of the Bay of San Francisco. The wind was fresh, and it was not until the afternoon that we succeeded in working out against it. A heavy swell as usual was on the bar at the entrance, and as several whalers were departing at the same time, it was an exciting scene. The swell and the breeze accompanied us until the following day, when we were off Monterey. The *Pandora* went in to obtain a letter left by the Admiral. She found the U.S. frigate *Constitution* there, and the Americans in full occupation of

the place. Monterey resembles Callao and Valparaiso, being an open roadstead, exposed to the northward, and having a mere bend in the coast for its southern extreme. Nevertheless it is considered safe, as the north-west winds, though sending a heavy swell into the bay, do not blow home, and when at all fresh cause an effect which makes vessels ride easy at their anchors; but, as on this coast generally, the great danger is from the south-east gales, which occur between November and April, and usually give warning of their approach by heavy dark clouds, swell rolling in from the southward, and pouring rain. On these indications ships immediately slip and run to sea, and they are sometimes five or six days before they are able to return. Fortunately, though sufficiently so to require a sharp look-out, these gales are not of frequent occurrence. The town of Monterey is at the south extremity of the bay, protected from the southward by Punta Pinos. Under the Spanish rule and that of the Mexican Republic, it has never risen from obscurity. It remains to be seen what the more enterprising and energetic American will effect.

On the 26th we spoke a Mexican brig, which was bound to San Francisco, and was fifty days from Mazatlan. She did not express any alarm at the war, but we heard afterward that she fell into the hands of the Americans, and was used by them as a transport vessel. They probably paid for her, as their principle was not to offend or irritate the people more than they could help. The war was for an object against the Government; had the Americans made it a war of races, their end would have been frustrated, whatever might have been their

temporary success. After we had parted company with the brig, a dense fog came on so suddenly that we lost sight of the Pandora, which was rather annoying, as Mr. Wood was with us employed upon the charts. However, after an hour or two's firing, ringing the bell, and beating the drum, we got a glimpse of the vessel, and put him on board. These fogs are peculiar and frequent on this coast, continuing sometimes for several days in succession.

On the 27th we fixed the position of John Begge's reef in  $33^{\circ} 22' 0''$  north,  $119^{\circ} 44' 0''$  west. This dangerous rock has deep water round it, and lies to the west-north-west of San Nicolas Island, one of the groups which line the Californian coast in this latitude. We also surveyed San Nicolas, San Clemente, and the Coronados Islands. The Pandora went into San Diego, the Herald remained off the low, arid, and uninteresting shores. The land had a denuded aspect; neither lake nor river gladdened the eye. The only object to enliven the scene was the mission of San Diego. The building resembled that of San Francisco, but, as far as could be ascertained with our glasses, it had more pretension, and the church tower was higher. The village, or houses of the Indians, however, did not cover the same extent of ground.

On the 2nd of October we were enveloped in a thick fog; all at once it cleared off, and we found ourselves close to the barren and lofty Coronados, a group composed of three islands. We anchored off the southernmost island: this, though the most fertile, only produces grass and low shrubs, which, like everything else at this

season, were dried up and withered. By barometrical measurement, the highest peak of the island was found to be 575 feet above the sea. On the top we caught three rattle-snakes and a tarantula; the former were very fierce, darting at everything placed near the glass vase in which they were confined. The length of time these reptiles existed without any sustenance was remarkable; one continued not only alive, but as fierce as when first captured, for eight months afterwards. The northern Coronado is a mere rock; Mr. Hill however got to the summit, and found it as sharp as a camel's back, with hardly room to place the theodolite. Seals abound on the rocky shores, and the Americans often detach their boats from their vessels, establish fires in the island, and shoot down these animals in vast numbers, boiling down the blubber ready for the ship on her return.

On the 11th the weather was most beautiful—a mild balmy air in the finest climate in the world; but on shore there was not a shrub, not a blade of grass to rejoice in. About noon we anchored off the steep rugged Cape Collnett, named after a navigator and lieutenant who, in the year 1790, commanded a trading vessel, the Argonaut. This promontory is a remarkable point, something like the South Foreland, or Cape Dunitri in the island of Gozo. A bay runs up from it to the north-east, in which landing might be effected. The mission of San Tomas is placed four miles inland.

On the 14th we were close to the double-peaked island of San Martin, a most barren and desolate spot, apparently an extinct volcano. The rocks were swarming with seals; we had never seen them in greater

abundance; and their howling, shrieking, and barking rendered them most unpleasant neighbours. The position of the island is in lat.  $30^{\circ} 28' 0''$  north, and long.  $115^{\circ} 57' 0''$  west; the right peak is 567 feet high. On the 15th we anchored off the shallow port of San Quintin, which is distinguished by five remarkably regular peaks some miles inland. Rabbits, hares, quail, curlew, sandlings, the mackerel, smelt, and crayfish are abundant, and give San Quintin, though a poor port in other respects, a good name on such a desolate coast as that of Lower California.

On the 22nd we passed San Geronimo Island, finding the channel between it and the mainland five miles broad, and on the 25th anchored under the east coast of Cedros or Cerros Island. This island presents extraordinary features, looking as if some deluge had swept the low lands, leaving them smooth and level as a newly-made road. "Cerros" is certainly the most appropriate appellation for the place; it is a mass of hills piled on hills; and although here and there groves of cedars are met with, yet they are hardly in sufficient numbers to give a name to the island. Wild goats are abundant\*. The extreme dryness of the atmosphere is remarkable. We found two graves of the year 1819; one of John Brown Sinclair, who was drowned when belonging to the Harriet, the other of Justin Finch, of the Shakspeare, both London ships. The head-boards were of slight

\* Mr. John Goodridge, surgeon of the Herald, discovered in this island a curious cactus, which, on being submitted to Prince Salm-Dyck, the best authority in these matters, was called *Mamillaria Goodridgii*, S. Dyck. Afterwards this rare species was found at Guaymas, Gulf of California, but the specimens died before reaching England.



deal, yet the wood was undecayed, and the inscriptions were quite legible. The bay of the island was surveyed, and its position proved to be long.  $28^{\circ} 3' 0''$  north, lat.  $115^{\circ} 11' 0''$  west (south point).

Two of the officers ascended to the summit. "The march," says Mr. Henry Trollope, "was rugged and more fatiguing than we had anticipated. In going up, hardly a drop of water could be found, though occasionally traces of where it had been were observed; in coming down we struck upon a ravine with a stream in it, which in many places was four or five feet deep. If we had had sufficient daylight we could have followed it to the sea, where it might have proved serviceable for shipping. The sides of this watercourse were lined with beautiful shrubs, and even trees, which formed a pleasing contrast to the utterly desolate and barren nature of the surrounding country. The stream had nearly led us wrong. It appeared to wind round to the west side of the island. Expecting a change in its direction, we followed it until sunset surprised us, well-nigh exhausted, at the edge of a precipice which we could not descend. We were obliged to climb up the side of the ravine, and fortunately were able to distinguish the ship at the anchorage before darkness had set in. Though the way was still rugged, we had now a more level space. The sight of the sea and vessel had renewed our strength; but we were thoroughly tired, and whenever we stopped to rest we were asleep almost immediately. Awakened by the coldness of the night air, we trudged on again, and when we reached the beach we were still upwards of three miles from the ship, and it was ten o'clock before

we arrived on board, thoroughly fagged out. Unfortunately we had with us no compass nor barometer; but a rough trigonometrical measurement gave the height of the island 2500 feet."

Having left Cerros Island, we anchored on the 2nd of November in the fine harbour of Magdalena Bay, where the Herald was refitted. The country adjacent was barren and devoid of water, but the shooting parties were very successful with hares and curlew. Abundance of bass, mullet, a sort of skipjack, and silver fish, were caught in abundance; several turtles and a shark were also taken. On the 11th we made Cape San Lucas, the extreme point of the Californian peninsula, distinguished by patches of sand-cliffs close to it, and several detached rocks resembling the Needles in the Isle of Wight. On the following day we entered the port of Mazatlan, and found that our letters were at San Blas, and that the Palinurus transport was in the bay with stores and provisions for us.

Some of us had seen Mazatlan in 1832. Venado Island, with its green and rocky cliffs, the downs dividing the chain of fresh-water lagoons from the sea, the Morro, with the white cottages and the bright beach beyond, were still there; but Mazatlan itself was no longer a rural village, but a commercial town, full of busy merchants and bustling traders: the apathy of the indolent Creole was supplanted by the activity of the English, the German, the French, and the American. Mazatlan is not a good port; it is no more than a bay, entirely open east-by-south to southwest, with shallow water in every part, and vessels of

any size have to lie two or three miles from the town. In the centre of this open anchorage Captain Beechey found a rock having only eleven feet of water upon it. The port however is less unhealthy than San Blas ; and between November and June—the months when it is advisable to be on this coast—south-west gales are unknown, and invigorating land and sea breezes prevail.

The town was full of soldiers, who talked as if they intended to repel any attack the North Americans might be inclined to make. This boasting however was not borne out : a few months afterwards the place fell almost without a struggle. The fact is, there is no public spirit in Mexico. The strife of parties has so utterly broken up all nationality that the mass of the people would be glad to receive any strong government that would afford them protection and security for life and property.

On the 21st of November we sailed for San Blas, having on board as passengers Mr. Romaine and Mr. Macnamara. The latter, a Roman Catholic priest, had the intention of founding in California a colony of Irishmen, who would swear fealty to Mexico, and resist the further encroachment of the Americans. This project nearly forestalled the occupation of San Francisco by the United States, and would in all probability either have led to the establishment of an Irish colony, or compelled the British Government to occupy the country.

San Blas is pointed out by the high peak of San Juan, upwards of 6200 feet high, immediately over the town ; but the Rock of the Sea, Piedra del Mar, a steep white mass 130 feet high, with from ten to twelve fathoms of water all round, and situated ten miles west of the an-

chorage, renders the approach to San Blas remarkable. There is also another rock, Piedra de la Tierra, similar in shape, but smaller, about two-thirds of a mile from the land. On the 23rd we dropped our anchor off the old town. Mr. Romaine and Mr. Macnamara landed immediately, and a courier went up with them to Tepic to bring down our letters. In thirty-six hours he returned with the long expected communications from home, and what joy they caused must be left to those to imagine who are blessed with kind friends. "As cold water is to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."

Tepic is the second town of importance in the state of Jalisco. In 1836, says Captain Beechey, it contained 8000 inhabitants, and in the rainy season the number is much augmented by the influx of visitors. It stands in a plain nearly surrounded by mountains, and is 2900 feet above the sea,—in itself, one would think, a guarantee against any amount of insalubrity, which some attribute to it. Tepic is only twenty-two miles in direct distance from San Blas; by the road however, which is tedious and fatiguing, it is fifty-six. San Blas, although now ruined and deserted, still retains many marks of ancient grandeur. The houses are solidly built of stone, but the town has long been in a state of decay, and the rise of Mazatlan has thrown it altogether in the shade. In the days of the Spaniards it had an arsenal and dockyard; the remains of the rope-walk and a store-house are still to be seen; but its day is gone by, and nothing in its situation appears to render it desirable that it should again emerge from obscurity.

We shifted our berth for the purpose of watering from

the Santiago, upon which San Blas is situated. Through a path in the woods we rolled our casks into the stream, and took in our supply speedily, not however without considerable fatigue and a terrible conflict with the mosquitoes. From this part of the coast there was a beautiful walk into the town about two miles distant, which, though steep and rugged, was arched over with a dense canopy of leaves, and keeps out the sun. We could only pity the indolence of the natives, who with such an avenue almost formed by nature could suffer it to remain in such an inconvenient state.

We departed on the 27th, standing to the south-west, between the islands Tres Manas and the main. On the following day we were off the Bay of Bandieras, between Cape Corrientes and Corvetena, a place of some interest as the scene of one of Dampier's skirmishes with the Spaniards. The sea-breeze was neither regular nor strong, but we managed to creep along at the rate of fifty miles a day, with the sight of the shore to enliven us. On the 1st of December we fixed the position of a remarkable headland, near the unhealthy river Manzanilla, a white mass of rock something like Arica Head, making it lat.  $18^{\circ} 49' 0''$  north and long.  $104^{\circ} 23' 0''$  west.