

CHAPTER XXII.

Communication by land and water—Commercial laws.

THE impediments to the internal communications are much greater. By land they are obstructed by precipices, swamps and dangers of every description; the more important the roads are, the worse is their condition, because, though constantly frequented, they are never repaired. Thus the most disagreeable are those which lead to the capital, and those from the Cauca to the Pacific, and from Panama to Cruces.

The expenses of carriage are for this reason, triple what they ought to be, so that these charges may be estimated at thirty-five per cent upon the goods sent from Carthagena to Bogota. They are counterbalanced, it is true, by the difference of measure, which is forty per cent in our favour and eight per cent for the English, when they sell according to the invoice price, because the same price is asked for the vara, as for the French ell, or for the yard.

Let the reader conceive roads, marked out by the rains, opened by earthquakes, hollowed out by torrents; the only mode of travelling in

them is on mules, and in some places on oxen, whose firm tread enables them to get out of the deep marshes where they sink at every step; in some parts even this animal is useless, and then recourse must be had to men, on whose backs you may travel at a small expence, notwithstanding the horrible sufferings of these poor people. It is thus that you traverse the Quindiu, and the Cordilleras which separate the Cauca from the Pacific.

All the royal roads have been cleared of the trees which obstruct the passage. For this important service we are indebted to Spain; it does not remedy a thousand other inconveniences of which we will give an idea.

In some places the mountains are so steep, that the most ingenious method which has occurred to facilitate the rapid descent, has been to make the road in a zig zag, and in several parts to cut steps which form a staircase as narrow and steep as some in those of our steeples; yet they must be descended on horseback.

At every step you meet with vallies, and in every valley, torrents. The communication between the two banks is formed by bridges made of two trees, across which are thrown fascines covered with a slight layer of earth. This rude work trembles and seems ready to sink, there is no rail, and, by a singular coincidence, none of these bridges are more than four feet wide. If

one of the rotten supports of these aerial bridges were to break under the horse's feet, the animal, in its struggles, would drag the rider into the abyss below, where he would perish on the pointed rocks. Yet such is the security arising from habit, that people pass over these frail bridges by night as well as by day, and without even feeling the least alarm at hearing the roaring of the waters falling from one cascade to another.

After passing these bridges we generally find marshy tracts; man endeavours to improve them with trunks of trees, but he generally fails.

It is inconceivable that, after twelve years' war, neither of the two parties should have made a military road. In fact, armies led by able chiefs against barbarous countries, either to penetrate into or to secure the possession of them, leave them as a consolation for the ravages which they have occasioned, roads and bridges which serve the purposes of commerce, to introduce in the sequel intelligence and riches. The wars which have taken place in the territory of Colombia, having been merely affairs of partizans, the rocks, the thickets of trees, the bad roads, served instead of forts, where the troops placed themselves in ambush; besides, soldiers without baggage, without a train, having only flying artillery, need only foot-paths to travel in; hence, therefore, it has been thought useless to widen those in Colombia. Morillo, however, has very much im-

proved some of them, particularly that which goes from Santa-Fè, by way of Cakesa to the Llanos, and that from the capital to the Magdalena. Occupied by the affairs of the war, this general neglected many others of the highest importance. For instance, the dangerous navigation of the Magdalena, would have been facilitated by opening to commerce a shorter and safer road by land, between Guarumo and Guaduas. The other made to the east of Bogota, by way of Choachi, would have afforded the means of travelling in three days to the banks of the Meta, whence it would have taken less than thirty days to reach the mouth of the Oronooko. Lastly, the third, rendered more practicable between the capital and the Zulia, would have enabled travellers to follow the road of the Cordillera which is always healthy.

The present government has become sensible of part of these advantages, and has, in consequence, specified in a licence, granted to a German, for the establishment of steam boats, that he should make a road from Guaduas to Guarumo. This plan is not, however, without difficulties, though all the ground belongs to Colonel d'Acosta, who is a friend to the improvements, which would lessen the obstacles; the difficulty lies in the choice of three paths, which now serve for the purpose of communication, and which will require infinite labour to form a more commodious road than those which at present exist.

These roads seem less frightful to those who have travelled by water ; however, the inconvenience experienced on the rivers, arises less from the sufferings you experience than from the men you have for companions.

The principal rivers which are navigable, or which have become so by the use of very light boats, are the Magdalena, the Oronooko, the Zulia, the Cauca, the Atrato, the Dagua, which falls into the Pacific, near San-Buenaventura, and the Chagres, which empties itself into the Gulf of Mexico. All these rivers present the same rude appearance, the navigation on them is the same, whence it may be supposed, that the description of the navigation on the Magdalena will answer that of the Oronooko and the Zulia.

It is by the Magdalena that the provinces of Neyva, Popayan, Mariquita, Antioquia, Santa-Martha, and Carthagena, communicate with each other. The breadth and depth of the river would allow large vessels to ascend it as far as Nare when the water is low, and as far as Honda in the rainy season. It is doubted whether they could go, as the champans do, as far as Neyva, because the latter employ twenty days from Honda to that place, and they too are towed.

The sand banks which obstruct and confine the river in many places, will doubtless greatly impede the navigation of large vessels, such as steam-boats, as is sufficiently proved by the acci-

dent that happened at Garapata, to a small boat from Santa-Martha, which was swamped by dashing against the trunk of a tree.

As for the banks which obstruct the navigation of the Magdalena, it would be necessary, in order to overcome this obstacle, to diminish the great canal of navigation, and to change it into a canal for commerce, for the multiplicity of its arms, fertilizing a great extent of country, renders its bed less deep, and, consequently, the navigation more insecure. Thus, at the place where the waters ought to be the most abundant, in consequence of the streams which flow into them from all sides, a prodigious quantity is lost by the drains which conduct them into the interior. Lastly, imitating the care which nature takes to clear the banks of the river, by various means, the axe should be used on its shores, which are overgrown with trees and verdure, and those trunks and rocks removed which it is often necessary to approach in order to escape the currents. The license granted to the owner of the steam-boats will be useful, and these vessels, when introduced by his care on the Magdalena, will render a voyage upon that river less frightful to a European, by affording him comforts calculated to lighten the fatigues of such a navigation. The establishment of steam-boats upon the Magdalena presents great advantages; they will hasten the period when the commerce and agriculture of the pro-

vinces of Cordilleras shall be improved by rendering that river the canal by which the rich produce of the bowels of the earth, and those of the soil shall descend towards the Gulf of Mexico, whilst the Oronooko carries those of the plains of Casanare and Guyana, to the Ocean.

The only craft employed on the Magdalena, are piraguas and champans. The former are generally employed by travellers, who are not much incommoded with baggage, and government couriers; they are only trees hollowed out with an axe; a piragua from sixteen to twenty varas in length costs two hundred piastres; it will not contain more than twenty loads.

Those which are engaged at Barranca, or at Santa-Martha, do not go beyond Monpox, and employ three days in ascending from the sea-coast to that town; and more than twenty, to go from thence to Honda.

Champans are employed in the conveyance of merchandize; they are boats of considerable size, about the dimensions of the fruit boats, used on the Seine in autumn; they are covered in with bamboos, to preserve the cargo from rain; this roof also serves the bogas as a deck, on which they place themselves to push the boat along with their poles. A champan usually carries a hundred loads, which, from Monpox to Honda, pay each ten piastres for freight. The crew of a champan, consists of twenty-four bogas, at the

rate of twenty piastres each. In addition to which there is the keep of the men, and the hire of the boat, which is about four piastres a day. It is frequently more than a month before they reach Honda.

These means of transport, are therefore very inconvenient and expensive, both from the time lost in passing the rapids of the Magdalena, and the idleness of the undisciplined bogas.

These men should occupy the last place in the classification of the human race. They are a mixture of individuals of every colour, who have retained nothing but the vices of their respective casts; when discontented with their passenger, they sometimes abandon him on the shore, and, flying into the woods, leave him in a state of the most cruel embarrassment.

The same boats, and the same men are found on the other rivers: if some of these present a more dangerous navigation than that of the Magdalena, there are others where less risk is run.

The Cauca, which traverses the western Cordillera, and waters its rich vallies, is only navigable as far as Carthagena, where the mountains contract its stream, and fill it with rocks and trunks of trees. If the rocks which obstruct its course lower down, could be surmounted, the importance of the Magdalena would be doubly increased, since it would receive by the Cauca,

its principal tributary, all the agricultural riches, which grow in wonderful abundance, from Popayan as far as Anserma. The Nare, which now forms the most direct communication between Antioquia and the Magdalena, would no longer be exclusively that of this province and of the river.

One of the most important roads is that which leads from Cali to the Pacific, by the way of San-Buenaventura; the route by land is so bad, that, in general, men are employed in carrying the loads; the river, which is afterwards to be descended, is nothing but a torrent so full of rocks, that life is risked almost every instant; the piraguas which are used here, are therefore very small, and lightly laden.

The Zulia is a magnificent stream, but of inconsiderable length, which flows between Maracaïbo and Cucuta,* whose commerce in cocoa is very great. This river will one day be the object of the improvements of a firmer and more enlightened government; some Englishmen, already anticipating its advantages, have solicited permission to establish steam boats upon it; but their offers have not yet been accepted.

The Oronooko, the finest river in Colombia, has its banks, like those of the Magdalena, almost desert; its navigation is likewise in the

* These towns are at a distance from each other of nine days' journey.

hands of rude and ignorant sailors. This river presents the double advantage of having a wide and deep stream, and of discharging itself into the Atlantic; this insures it a great superiority over the Magdalena obstructed with rocks, and which besides, discharges its waters into the Gulf of Mexico, so dangerous, both for the tempests which so often rage there, and the corsairs who conceal themselves in the immense archipelago by which it is bounded on the west, of which almost all the passages are in possession of the English. Who knows even if the Oronooko shall not be one day the only means of communication between the Ocean and the Cordillera?

The English, who let no opportunity slip of establishing their influence, have entreated a licence for ten years, in order to establish steam boats upon the Oronooko.

The Atrato concludes the list of the most important rivers of Colombia. This river was on the point of depriving Panama of a part of the commerce of the great Ocean. If the government, less embarrassed, had been able to effect the junction of the Atrato and the river San-Juan, it would have procured the country incalculable riches; but this public work having been intrusted to a person totally destitute of the necessary ability and information, gradually languished, and was at length abandoned.

It was thought in France that Colombia in-

tended opening a canal, to effect the communication of the two seas by the Isthmus of Panama ; but this republic is not sufficiently rich to undertake so expensive and difficult an enterprise. On the other hand the execution of it would be injudicious, as the territory might then be traversed without the necessity of asking permission from the government, and perhaps without paying it any duty.

The English have caused the practicability of this junction to be examined. The result of their observations is unknown ; it is presumed that they are interested in opposing the opening of a canal which might hurt their vast Indian establishments. The opinion of the natives is, that it would be easy to dig a canal for the passage of piraguas, but that it would be impossible to execute one sufficiently large to receive ships of burthen.

Such is the exact state of the routes and interior means of communication of Colombia. The roads are generally travelled with safety ; it is an observation greatly in favour of the inhabitants, that after so many civil wars, not a robber is to be met with ; travellers are rarely molested.

The inns are generally situated in places where there is water and grass ; and often there is nothing else. This is generally the case on the borders of the Magdalena, continually ravaged by the troops ; every where else, fowls, eggs, bananas, and

chicha, are to be procured. An ox's hide, or a mat, is the usual bed, rarely any other ; property is respected, although the doors are without locks or bolts. In what part of Europe could one leave the most valuable effects under no other protection but a bit of cord, and sleep alone, in the midst of forests, surrounded with objects calculated to tempt cupidity to the utmost? The present government has promulgated several laws, which it has thought may encourage the national industry. For example, it has reduced to two and a half per cent the duty to be paid by all foreign merchandize sold in the interior of the country, and to six per cent that which foreigners were to pay, who wished to sell their own goods. If a consignment be made to a merchant of the country, the duty is wholly taken off. In every case it is not paid till after the sale of the goods. The duty of anchorage is a half piastre per ton. The Colombian ton, like the French, is about twenty quintals.* This duty must be paid at the latest, ten days after the arrival of the vessel in port. The want of warlike stores has caused to be exempted from all duty, the shot, guns, and ammunition brought into the republic, and a diminution of five per cent upon the duties for all merchandize brought by ships laden with arms.

Lastly, to favour the progress of the sciences,

* About one ton.

they have exempted from all taxation, 1°, philosophical and mathematical instruments; geographical maps, printed books, engravings, pictures, statues, collections of antiquities, busts and medals.

2°, Agricultural instruments, plants and seeds, machines and instruments used in working gold, silver, platina, mercury, copper, and steel; those which may be employed in the improvement of the navigation of rivers, and the cotton and woollen manufactures; printing presses, gold, silver, and all the precious metals.

By other decrees, the introduction of foreign tobaccos has been prohibited, although they were at first allowed upon paying a duty of 50 per cent. The importation of foreign coffee, indigo, sugar and molasses is likewise forbidden, and, on the other hand, the exportation of platina and gold, either in dust or bars.

The coasting trade is exclusively reserved to the natives of the country. Foreigners can only convey from one port to another the merchandizes they have brought, and which are specified in their bills of lading.

The custom house code is reduced to two laws, one called that of exportation, the other of importation: this last was decreed the 2nd of August 1823; the following table includes all the details.

Statement of the Entry Duties.

MERCHANDISES.	Imported from the Colonies on board national vessels	Imported from Europe or the United States on board national vessels	Imported from the Colonies on board foreign vessels.	Imported from Europe or the United States on board foreign vessels.
Iron in bars.	} 17½¢ cent.	} 15 ¢ cent.	} 20 ¢ cent.	} 15 ¢ cent.
Sheet tin and copper.				
Paper.				
Medicines.				
Fishing tackle.				
Tar.	} 17½¢ cent.	} 10 ¢ cent.	} 22½¢ cent.	} 17½¢ cent.
Pitch.				
Cables.				
Cordage.				
Cotton stuffs.				
Woolen ditto.				
Muslin ditto.				
Umbrellas.				
Hats of Beaver, Cottou, or Silk				
Wax.				
Spermaceti	} 20½¢ cent.	} 20 ¢ cent.	} 25 ¢ cent.	} 20 ¢ cent.
Wines.				
Vinegar.				
Oil.				
Gold or Silver watches.				
Galloons				
Saddles or side saddles.				
China, European or Asiatic looking-glasses and glasses.				
Silks.				
Precious stones				
Curried leathers.				
Lace				
Handkerchiefs.				
Artificial flowers.				
Artificial feathers.				
Mirrors.	} 22½¢ cent.	} 15 ¢ cent.	} 27½¢ cent.	} 15 ¢ cent.
Perfumes.				
Essences.				
Indian Spices.				
Dried or preserved fruits				
Olives.				
Capers.				
Men and Women's shoes.				
Boots.				
Furniture.				
Ready made clothes and linen	} 25 ¢ cent.	} 17½¢ cent.	} 30 ¢ cent.	} 25 ¢ cent.
Copper utensils.				
Bronze.				
Steel.				
Tallow.				
Flour				
Salted meat and other eatables.				

All the merchandizes not included in this law, pay 25 per cent when they come from the colonies in national bottoms, and $17\frac{1}{2}$ per cent when they are brought from Europe or the United States in national ones. When, on the contrary, they come from the colonies in foreign bottoms, they are subject to a duty of 30 per cent, and 25 per cent when they arrive from Europe or the United States.

All merchandizes *drawn from Asia*, provided they are not from Spanish colonies, *pay a duty of 12 per cent when they come in national bottoms, and 25 per cent when they do not come direct from Asia*; when they do arrive direct from Asia in foreign vessels, they are taxed at 20 per cent, and 25 per cent when they do not come direct.

All articles drawn from the old Spanish colonies, and which are not the productions of the country, pay the same duties as the merchandize brought from the colonies; in the contrary case, they are considered upon the same footing as those which come from Europe, or from the United States.

The tariff of Carthagena serves as a model for the payment of all these duties.

The exportation act has placed:

Ten per cent upon leathers, cocoa and indigo, estimated according to the price current at the place.

Fifteen piastres per head for every mule and horse.

Twelve per cent upon every head of sheep.

The other productions of the country, which are not enumerated in the decree, pay 5 per cent, with the exception of coffee, cotton, brown and white sugar, rum, and building timber, these articles are exempt from duties for ten years.

Gold specie pays 3 per cent, and for the prevention of fraud, the duty known by the name of *supposed extraction* (*extraction présumée*), has been preserved; by this they are enabled to estimate, according to the merchandize imported, the quantity of specie which has gone out, and consequently to recover by this means the duties.

Every port of the republic may serve as entrepôts for all kinds of provisions and eatables brought from foreign countries, upon the word of the ship's master being given to export them into other neutral or friendly ports; this must be done within six months, under pain of paying the duties.