

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07091-1 - Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico
in the Year 1826: With some Account of the Mines of that Country: Volume 1

G. F. Lyon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

RESIDENCE AND TOUR

IN

MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

Arrival at Tampico—Pueblo Viejo—Lake—Easter Festival—
Gambling—Lancasterian School—Dinner-party to the Ge-
neral—Ball—Manners—Altamira—Fort—Duties—The
Mira—Miseries—Ascend the River Panuco—Ranchos—
Petroleum—Village of Panuco—Obsidian Fragments—
Figures of Terra Cotta—Remains of ancient race of In-
dians—Rains—Tanjuco—Ride to San Vicente and San
Juan—Return by the River San Juan—Feast of Ascension
—Description of the Towns of Tampico.

HAVING been appointed one of the Commis-
sioners for the Real del Monte and Bolaños
Mining Companies, I left England on the 8th of
January 1826, in the Company's brig Perseve-
rance, taking under my charge a large party of

VOL. I.

B

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07091-1 - Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico
in the Year 1826: With some Account of the Mines of that Country: Volume 1

G. F. Lyon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

artificers intended for the mines of Real del Monte and Bolaños.

My reasons for undertaking an employment of this nature in a time of profound peace, and at a period when no expeditions of enterprize were going forward, cannot be interesting to the public. I therefore avoid detailing them: and although on my outward passage I wrote some few remarks on Madeira and Jamaica, to divert my thoughts from all I had left behind, it would be equally unnecessary for me to publish them; those places being already too well known to the general reader to require further description.

On the 9th of March, having crossed the Gulf of Mexico, we struck soundings near midnight, and on the 10th saw, from the mast head, the coast near Tampico*; indistinct and low, while in thirty fathoms water. Shoaling to twenty-five fathoms, we then saw the loom of the sand-hills from the deck,

* I mention the soundings on approaching the shore, as they may be important to seamen; although I have more fully described the river Panuco and its Bar, in some notes in the Appendix.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07091-1 - Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico
in the Year 1826: With some Account of the Mines of that Country: Volume 1

G. F. Lyon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

BAR OF TAMPICO.

3

at a distance of about eighteen miles; and having in the afternoon distinctly made out the Bar, we ran for it; and when in six fathoms, a pilot launch came out in answer to our signal guns. The pilot at first refused to take so large a vessel * over the bank,—probably to enhance the value of his services; but he was ultimately persuaded to do so: and we safely passed this impediment, which in charts and books of pilotage is described as being so dangerous. On this day, however, the passage was perfectly smooth, and the break of the sea on the shoal points which bounded it, could scarcely be said to exceed a ripple. Nineteen feet and a half was our shoalest cast,—a most unusual depth,—and the *Perseverance* was said to be the first vessel drawing above twelve feet of water which had ever crossed this continually shifting barrier †.

We had no sooner anchored in the river Panuco, off the little cluster of huts at La Barra, than a crowd of all descriptions of men, women and chil-

* She drew twelve feet and a half.

† See notes on the Bar.—Appendix No. I.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07091-1 - Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico
in the Year 1826: With some Account of the Mines of that Country: Volume 1

G. F. Lyon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

dren hastened on board; and the Custom-house officer, accompanied by a dirty, ragged, ill-looking man, who was styled Captain of the Fort, seemed fully disposed to give us some trouble: but wine and cakes distributed to their families, and cigars to themselves, effected wonders; and at sunset I was permitted to accompany the captain of our vessel to the town of Pueblo Viejo, at which the Comman-dant resided. Night soon closed on us, and we rowed for above two hours, against a strong cur-rent, up a stream of half a mile in width. The sound of our oars aroused the large cranes, herons, egrets, and innumerable other birds from their rest, and they fluttered in blind confu-sion across the surface of the stream; while my-riads of fire-flies were flitting amongst the dark mangroves which dipped their closely woven branches in the water. Tree-frogs and crickets, which abound here, almost deafened us with their shrill thrilling notes; and to add to the delightful novelty of my first evening in America, we were hailed in our own language from an invisible boat,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07091-1 - Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico
in the Year 1826: With some Account of the Mines of that Country: Volume 1

G. F. Lyon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

by a gentleman who, suspecting us to be strangers, offered to pilot us to the town. We soon reached the house of Mr. Robertson the American Consul, to whom we were consigned, and met with a most kind reception. Seeing that we were tired, hungry, and wet with the heavy night dew, he obligingly supplied all our wants, and provided us with beds in his office;—but sleep was quite out of the question. Dogs, pigs, and restless cocks which began crowing at midnight, would in themselves have been sufficient to banish rest from a stranger; but at about 1 A. M. of the 11th, a storm of rain, thunder and lightning set in with great fury, and in a few minutes actual rivers were rushing through the town. This was a severe “Norther,” and we were rejoiced at having entered the river, as, had our vessel anchored outside, it would have obliged her to make an offing, and many days might have elapsed before she could have reached the port again.

In the forenoon I waited on the Commandant, for whom I had dispatches, and then presented to

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07091-1 - Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico
in the Year 1826: With some Account of the Mines of that Country: Volume 1

G. F. Lyon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

the Director of the Customs and the Alcalde, the letters of introduction with which I had been favoured by D. Vicente Roccafuerte, charge d'affaires for Mexico, in London.

The Commandant obligingly assured me that "everything he had was at my disposal;" the Alcalde begged me "to believe that he was my servant;" and the chief of the Customs having "kissed my hand, and entreated that I would lay my commands on him," then proceeded to throw some impediments in my way. Mr. Robertson very kindly hired a windowless room for me in one of the most respectable houses in the place, the mistress of which was better known by the name of the Gachupina (a term of reproach applied to European Spaniards) than by her proper appellation of Doña Francesca.

This lady, who had the reputation of being rich and cleanly, was quite distressed at not having time to whiten my room; but two Indian girls were instantly set to work to wash the earthen floor and make me comfortable. My landlady was all polite-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07091-1 - Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico
in the Year 1826: With some Account of the Mines of that Country: Volume 1

G. F. Lyon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

PUEBLO VIEJO.

7

ness, and I clearly saw that she entertained no mean opinion of her own good breeding and address.

She was generally allowed to be one of the most respectable ladies of Tampico; and although a certain Don Antonio, who assisted in taking care of her shop and her fair self, was by no means her husband, she piqued herself on her irreproachable character, and the high estimation in which she was held on account of her wealth. Her age might have been about forty-five; her person was fat; and when in her morning costume, which consisted of a shift tied round the waist with a string, and with a cigar in her mouth, her whole figure was particularly attractive. This charming person and I formed an interesting picture every morning at about six o'clock, as she stood leaning over a little wicket which kept the pigs, dogs, cats and poultry from coming out of the yard into my room. While we cosily smoked the cigars with which she favoured me, I drew in lessons of Spanish, by conversing with her, and listening to con-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07091-1 - Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico
in the Year 1826: With some Account of the Mines of that Country: Volume 1

G. F. Lyon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

stantly repeated assurances that she was an “old Spaniard” and a woman of sense, although, in common with nearly all the native ladies of the place, she did not possess the accomplishments of reading and writing.

In the evening, the Commandant and his wife, with some officers of the garrison, paid me a visit at the Consul’s house, where his sister amused the party by playing on the piano-forte; and a host of half-naked natives soon crowded round the door and windows, which latter at Tampico have no glass, and seemed highly delighted with the music; some of the children remarking with astonishment, that the Señora “read a book” while playing.

When the visitors retired, I adjourned to my own room, that I might endeavour to sleep,—but it was all to no purpose. At my outer door stood a pig-sty, containing three old sows,—mothers, to my misery, of a numerous progeny, which had been separated from them in order to forage in the odorous streets. The moanings and cries in every tone to which the voice of sows can be modulated,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07091-1 - Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico
in the Year 1826: With some Account of the Mines of that Country: Volume 1

G. F. Lyon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

PUEBLO VIEJO.

9

were answered with interest by the young pigs; for, being too large to creep through the bars to their parents, they solaced themselves by squealing throughout the night. To add to this, the dogs, of which every house has several, barked without interruption.

March 13.—On rowing down to the brig we saw five or six alligators (which are more generally distinguished here by the names of “Lagarto” or “Cayman”) in the water, and others basking in the sun on shore. I landed opposite to one of these in a little creek, and crept cautiously through the high reeds to get a shot at him: when just as I had reached the water’s edge and was preparing to fire, a very large one, on which I had nearly trodden, awoke from his slumbers, and plunged into the water, frightening the other sleeper, and not a little startling me, one of these creatures having very recently killed a woman. On returning home I shot a beautiful rose-coloured spoonbill, and an egret, both of which birds abound here.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07091-1 - Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico
in the Year 1826: With some Account of the Mines of that Country: Volume 1

G. F. Lyon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

March 14.—At the new town of Las Tamaulipas (about three miles to the northward of Pueblo Viejo, and in a different State,) I experienced great difficulties with the Custom-house officers, who would do nothing towards clearing the vessel. Their only working hours at any time were from 9 A. M. to 1 P. M., after which period no entreaties could induce them to move. Even in the very small portion of the day set apart for business, if a cock-fight was to be held, if gambling engaged them, or if they were lazy, duty was very quietly deferred until the morrow, when in all probability the same excuse would be again offered; and as in this land of liberty and equality scolding these people would only make them worse, patience is the best policy, and is one of the greatest blessings which a traveler in the Republic of Mexico can possess.

I this day killed an alligator, but he sunk before I could take firm hold of him. One of our party, however, was more fortunate, and procured a small one of six feet in length.

On the 16th of March I dispatched a party of the