

league or two nearer, would not generally exceed six weeks, and the freight would cost 30s. or 40s., instead of £5, a ton.

"It is, however, said that the nature of the country between San José and Matina is so difficult that a passable road for carts, such as is made to Punta Arenas, would cost an immense sum; and the continued rains that fall nearly all the year on the north-east coast render the climate so unhealthy that it would be difficult to induce the people to embark in such an undertaking on any terms. But the fine port of San Juan de Nicaragua is only about twenty leagues distant, while both Matina and Punta Arenas are twenty-five; and could arrangements be made with the state of Nicaragua, or should the British Government take possession of it in accordance with their claim so often repeated on account of the Moschito Indians, it would immediately become the only port of Costa Rica, as the country between it and San José is said to be very practicable for a good road, and it is decidedly the finest port on the north-east coast, tolerably healthy, and not above forty or fifty days' voyage from Europe by sailing vessels, and perhaps twenty by steamers. The largest coffee estates of Costa Rica are possessed by the family of Montealegre and Don Juan Moira. The principal of these I have examined; they appear to be very carefully and judiciously managed, possess good mills for cleaning and husking the coffee worked by water power, and annually produce upwards of 500 tons. The entire produce of the year 1846 amounted to about 3,000 tons, and it is expected that the crop of 1847 will exceed 4,000 tons, near which quantity it will probably continue till the population gradually increases, the labourers, as already mentioned, being barely sufficient for the present cultivation. As the value at the present average price in the English market of 50s. a cwt. will give £200,000, the produce of the district will appear pretty considerable for a petty American state, possessing only 80,000 inhabitants, and just emerging from a half-savage condition."

The Cochineal Insect.

"The cochineal insect having been introduced about twelve years ago, has succeeded beyond expectation, and Amatitlan has for several years been by far the most successful place for its cultivation.

"The cochineal insect is generally supposed to be indigenous to the country near Oajaca in Mexico, though some persons in Guatemala have attempted to prove that it is a native of that state. It feeds upon some few species of cactus. The varieties which have been tried in Central America are five, the 'penka beaver' (hedge cactus), which grows to a large size, the young insect readily attaching itself to the leaves, but the greater part is found to fall off before it is ready for gathering, and it was therefore only tried at the first introduction of the culture, but speedily abandoned; the 'penka amarilla' (yellow-flowering cactus), this species has a very large round-shaped leaf, sometimes as much as eighteen inches in diameter; the cochineal thrives well upon it, but is found to yield very small crops, and the plant becomes exhausted after the insect has been allowed to feed upon it for three or four years; the 'penka blanca' (white-flowering cactus), has a leaf generally about a foot long, four or five inches broad, and two inches thick, of a dark green colour; this species is much superior to the former sorts, and grows quicker than any other, but is found to become exhausted in five or six years, and the leaf growing exactly upright, the slightest shower of rain washes off the insect.

"The fourth kind is called 'mosote.' It has a bright crimson flower, the leaf being of the same shape, but rather smaller than the white flowered, and of a lighter green than the penka blanca; the growth of this variety is the slowest of all, but is found to give food to a much larger proportion of the insects, and to last many years longer than the other varieties. It is now universally preferred in Amatitlan, and in the best land a plantation is found to last twelve years, yielding two crops a year. The 'costanea' has a bright red flower, and a leaf of a round shape, much smaller than any of the preceding varieties; but it grows fast, and has more leaves than the other sorts, and when only one crop is taken in the year, is found to produce much more cochineal than any of the other descriptions of the plant. It does not, however, last above seven years, and will not stand more than one crop annually. This variety was brought from Oajaca, about eight years ago, and is now preferred in Old Guatemala.

"The general size of the cochineal plantations in Amatitlan valley varies from one to ten manzanas, a space which contains 100 Spanish, or 88 8-9ths English yards square. Three or four estates of a much larger size have lately been planted, and one belonging to Sen. Francisco Lopez contains 150 manzanas; but these estates are not nearly so productive as those of a smaller size, as the immense number of people who must be employed to work them causes a confusion and great loss of labour. The insect is preserved during the winter from leaves cut off the cactus, and ranged in long narrow buildings, called almacenes, erected for the purpose. The roof of these buildings is from a yard to a yard and a-half wide, and for the first six weeks the front, which is open, is