

REVIEWS.

Travels in Central America; being a Journal of nearly Three Years' Residence in the Country, &c. By Robert Glasgow Dunlop, Esq. London: Longman and Co., 1847, pp. 358.

AFTER reading carefully this work, we were, indeed, grieved to find that the talented author had, after concluding and transmitting his notes, fallen a victim at Guatemala to the fever of the climate. Mr. Dunlop's book does not aim at gossip alone, but it has a higher ambition, a nobler end; and whilst it affords to the reader a rich repast of incident and adventure, it gives to the knowledge-seeker substantial facts. Unlike the hurried notices of travel and palpable inaccuracies which we have heretofore had of the fine regions comprehended in the general term Central America, it abounds with valuable statistical and general information of the towns, the people, the climate, and the products. The writer has strongly developed the capacity for collecting and imparting useful information, and we are sure the work will meet with a large share of popular favour. Every page teems with matter which might of itself form the subject of a critique or an essay.

We are first introduced to the Bay of Conchagua and the entrance to the port of the Union, where the scenery is described as being wild and magnificent in the extreme, no fewer than nine volcanic mountains being visible at the same time.

Chancaku (the crude juice of the sugar-cane boiled till it crystallises) forms one of the exports of Realejo, situated on the port of the same name, the trade of which, we are informed, is rapidly declining. The present exports are from 400 to 500 bales of cotton, principally sent to Costa Rica; about 1,000 tons of Brazil wood, principally sent to Great Britain and the United States; about 1,000 bales of indigo, the quality being the best of any produced in the Republic, and a few hundred bales of cocoa, sent to the states of San Salvador and Honduras.

The description of cane here used is indigenous, and very different from the Asiatic cane, which is now extensively cultivated in the West Indies, Brazils, and the United States of North America. It is said to be about equally productive with the foreign species, the canes being slender and softer, but containing more and stronger juice in proportion to their size; two crops are taken annually.

As the most practically useful to our Colonial readers, we shall make extracts of the mode of culture and results of production of the staple exports.

Culture and Manufacture of Indigo.

"Several vessels generally arrive at the Union from South America at the period of the great fairs which are held there three times in the year, and nearly all the indigo (the only produce of any importance) is disposed of: formerly it reached 10,000 bales, but at present it will not, at most, exceed 3,000 bales of 150lbs. each.

"The indigo, well-known in Europe by the name of Guatemala indigo, was never cultivated in that province (in the same manner as not a grain of the Honduras cochineal is grown there), being entirely grown in the state of San Salvador, in the vicinity of San Miguel, San Vicente, and the city of San Salvador, with the exception of a small quantity of very superior quality grown in the state of Nicaragua and a few bales in Costa Rica, which is all consumed in the state. Under the government of Spain the produce of the state of San Salvador alone had reached 10,000 bales, and that of Nicaragua 2,000, the produce of San Salvador in 1820, two years before its independence, being 8,323 bales. But since 1822 the annual produce has gradually declined, and at the present period (1846), it does not exceed 1,000 to 1,200 bales; nearly all the indigo estates being abandoned, partly, no doubt, from the great fall in the price of the article, but more on account of the impossibility of getting labourers to work steadily, the continued civil wars having imbued the whole population with idle habits and a disinclination to labour, while the insecurity of property and the robberies of government have discouraged all parties from attempting any cultivation which requires outlay of capital, and reduced it nearly to maize and other articles required for food.

"The plant cultivated in Central America for the manufacture of indigo is the indigofera, a triennial plant, supposed to be a native of America; but there is also an indigenous perennial plant, abounding in many parts of Central America, which produces indigo of