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## ADDITIONAL NOTICES.

(Printed by order of Council.)

1. *Extract from a Paper by Commander BEDFORD PIM, R.N., on a New Transit-Route through Central America.\**

THE immediate coast-line extending from Cape Gracias à Dios to Navy Bay, Aspinwall, or Colon (by each of which names the Atlantic terminus of the Panama railway is known) is for the most part low and uninteresting, although in some places, even in Mosquito, a spur of the great central chain of mountains reaches quite to the sea-shore, and diversifies the otherwise monotonous aspect by slight, cliffy, projecting headlands. Numerous rivers of more or less volume intersect the country; but they all have a dangerous bar, and therefore none but light-draught vessels can be used for their navigation. From Cape Gracias as far south as Blewfields Lagoon many islands and coral-reefs are distributed at a greater or less distance from the shore, but from the latter place right round to Navy Bay the sea is singularly free from any impediment to navigation. The land is clothed to the water's edge with dense tropical vegetation, which gives to it a very uniform appearance; indeed for miles on either side of Greytown, or, as it is now called, San Juan de Nicaragua, the general aspect is so unvaried that it is often very difficult to distinguish the proper anchorage; and ships, however well navigated, frequently miss the entrance, and, falling to leeward, take days to beat up against the wind and currents.

There are only two harbours between the points I have mentioned; these are the Chirigui Lagoon and Greytown. The former is very spacious and commodious, comprising within itself many excellent anchorages; but as regards the latter, it will not be much longer worthy the name, as the detritus brought down by the river San Juan is rapidly silting it up. In April, 1860, I made a most careful survey of the port, and, after reducing my work to the same scale as the Admiralty chart constructed some years previously, I placed my own plan in red ink upon it, and the result was most startling. Indeed, I consider the rapid filling up of Greytown Harbour the most curious instance of the kind I have ever heard of. The sand-spit which forms the outer enclosure of the harbour has grown towards the mainland (and therefore narrowed the entrance) more than 100 feet; the deepest water I could obtain between the points was only 11 feet, which is the more remarkable when it is remembered that two years before, the frigate *Eurydice* sailed out of the port without the least inconvenience, taking a depth of at least four fathoms. In short, there is every reason to believe that Greytown Harbour will soon become a Lagoon, like Blewfields, Pearl Rey, and Cape Gracias Lagoon; the latter of which was a harbour, superior to Grey Town, when Lord Nelson was there in the latter part of the last century.

*Gorgon Bay* (the Atlantic Terminus of the New Route).—Leaving Blewfields, we ran down in a few hours to Gorgon Bay, and came to in this well-sheltered anchorage for two or three days. During our stay the master and myself sketched in the outlines of the land, and obtained some soundings, which upon a subsequent visit were verified. The fine bay included between Monkey Point and Little Monkey Point is completely sheltered from the Northers, the only destructive winds on this coast; hurricanes are unknown. This large expanse, which comprises a distance of about 5 miles from point to point, and a depth of about 2 miles, is further increased by two islands off its outer point, the nearest  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile, the next  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile more dis-

\* See p. 75.

tant from the mainland, which if joined to the point by a breakwater would make the most capacious and safe anchorage in this part of the world. The contour of the bay is broken into small indentations, from the headlands of which wooden piers might be thrown out for the convenience of loading and unloading small craft. As a site for a settlement the locality appears well suited; the land is rich, rising about 100 feet above the sea-level, with abundance of good wholesome water, but quite free from swamps or other lurking-places of fever: in fact it is drained by the peculiarity of its formation, and well ventilated by the prevalent N.E. trade-wind.

The undulation caused by the strong trade-wind rolls into the bay between Monkey Point and the islands, and therefore renders it prudent to anchor about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  mile off shore in  $4\frac{1}{2}$  fathoms, otherwise we could have gone much closer in. If a breakwater were made, ships could come quite close, as the bottom, of soft mud, shelves very gradually towards the beach, and rocks or shoals are unknown. There is stone in abundance, both on Monkey Point and the islands, well adapted for the construction of a breakwater; it could easily be quarried and the work completed in a short time, as the greatest depth of water is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  fathoms.

A lighthouse on the outer island and a red light on the beach would render the roadstead easy of access in any weather or at any hour of the night.

I hope I have made it plain that the bay (which is without a name on our charts, but which I have designated Gorgon Bay) possesses capabilities and resources which eminently qualify it for a healthy and agreeable settlement, a convenient emporium for the trade of the interior, and a suitable terminus for a great transit-route; indeed the Royal Mail Packet Company have already directed their captains to anchor there instead of at Greytown Roadstead.

*Corn Islands.*—The “Corn Islands” are two in number, called Great and Little; they are both moderately high and very pretty. A coral-reef nearly surrounds each, and makes it necessary to approach with great care and caution. There is a very fair anchorage on the lee side of either island in about 5 fathoms water.

The great island—which, by the by, simply affords a pleasant walk all round it, and is not, therefore, very great—is peopled by about 200 Creoles and Negroes. Their language is English, and they have a small portion of land under cultivation; sufficient, however (such is the richness of the soil), not only to supply their own wants but to afford a large amount of stock to vessels calling. Bullocks, pigs, goats, fowls, ducks, turkeys, and a great variety of fruit and vegetables can always be procured. Cotton of the finest sort was at one time exported in considerable quantities; but since the emancipation of the negroes, which was effected here as summarily as elsewhere, all commercial enterprise has ceased, if a very small trade in cocoa-nuts be excepted.

Little Corn Island is chiefly grazing land, and affords excellent pasturage for herds of cattle, which, however, are not bred on the island but imported from Cape Gracias à Dios. The channel between the Great and Little Island is about 6 miles broad and is deep and safe. About 20 of the Great Corn Islanders generally live on the Little Island to look after the cattle, collect cocoa-nuts, and pick guava, of which great quantities grow wild on the south side, and prove excellent food for pigs. Its scenery is still more pretty than that of the Great Island, and its healthiness is proverbial; the few cases of sickness which occur may be traced to imprudent exposure to the weather. In short, I was much struck with the Corn Islands. Their proximity to Gorgon Bay, their salubrity and charming scenery, as well as the abundant supply of fresh meat, fruit, and vegetables, which can always be obtained, will make their vicinity to the future railway most valuable to those employed upon the works, whenever change and recreation may be deemed desirable. As a sanatorium, the Corn Islands will be invaluable, and I have already made certain arrangements to ensure their full usefulness.