

alone. In one of the fights against them he was wounded in the throat by an arrow; then he got orders to join Louis Martín on an expedition to Chiapas, where he underwent more hard fighting. Finally in November, 1524, Cortes came to Espiritu Santo on his way to Naco, in Honduras, and he ordered Bernal Diaz to join him.

This is all the early information we have about the Coatzacoálcos basin. Up until around the year 1800 we hear little about it. Humboldt states that the climate of the area is very unhealthful.*

In 1829 and 1830, several ships left France with colonists for Coatzacoálcos. They had been tempted by a get-rich-quick scheme which quickly broke down. Another ship left in 1831, and one of the participants in this expedition, Pau Pierre Charpenne, tells us about the total failure of this colonization scheme. Most of the French colonists died from fever and several of them committed suicide. Now only a few place names remind one of the struggles and hardships these people went through.†

Cortes was the first to propose a communication between the Atlantic and the Pacific by way of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. After him came, in 1774, a reconnaissance for a road made by the engineer, August Cramer, in the times of the Viceroy, Antonio Bucareli.

In 1842 a contract was made between the Mexican Government and the Louisiana-Tehuantepec Railroad Company for a steamship line from New Orleans to Minatitlán and a service of coaches over the Isthmus. This road was much used during the California Gold Rush in 1849, and many were the eager gold hunters who died here of fever, on their way to the promised land.

The Louisiana Company did not fulfill its contract, and prolonged discussion followed between it and the Mexican Government, resulting in a new contract of 1852.‡

The famous Americanists, L'Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg, crossed the Isthmus in 1859-60. He has not much good to say for the way in which the American company managed the transportation. In his book on this voyage he gives a charming report of his experiences, and also a large amount of interesting historical data.§

A more serious study of the Isthmus was made by the U. S. Government engineers, at the direction of the Secretary of the Navy in 1870. This survey was conducted in order to see if it was practicable to make a ship canal from coast to coast. Various methods of crossing the higher points of the Isthmus were proposed,

*Traite Politique de M. de Humboldt sur la Nouvelle-Espagne, 1811.

†Charpenne, 1836.

‡Williams, 1852. Supremo Gobierno, 1853. Ramirez, J. F., 1853.

§Brasseur de Bourbourg, 1862.