

With Compliments of  
Dr. Linné

6

"OFFICE SUP'T U. S. MILITARY GENERAL HOSPITALS, }  
"Memphis, Tennessee, September 5, 1863.\* }

"MY DEAR SIR—I am in receipt of your letter of the 25th ult., by which I learn the pleasing intelligence that the great "Tucson Meteorite" is in a fair way of getting to Washington at last. I am sure you will feel proud of it when you see it. I knew the "Carlton specimen" was not ours, as I had sent it (ours) to Humosilla before I left Arizona. That sent in by General C. is about seven hundred and fifty pounds, while ours is about twice that weight.

"The only history I can give you is a vague one, as there is no written record of its advent in Tucson. The old inhabitants of that place all agree that it was brought there from the Santa Catarina mountains, which lie to the north of Tucson, about midway between the Rio San Pedro and that town. It was brought in by the military stationed at the old Presidio, where it remained until after the withdrawal of the Spanish garrison. It was then taken into town, set up on end, and used as a kind of public anvil, for the use of the inhabitants. The smaller one was used in a blacksmith's forge, for similar purposes. In 1857, I found the large one lying in one of the by-streets, half buried in the earth, having evidently been there a considerable time. No person claimed it, so I publicly announced that I would take possession of it in behalf of the Smithsonian, and forward it whenever an opportunity offered. Mr. Palatine Robinson, near whose house the iron was, assisted me in getting it sent to Humosilla. There was some expense attending its hoisting into the truck-wagon that took it down to Sonora, which I paid to Mr. R. Mr. Ainsa agreed to take it, or have it taken, to Guaymas, Sonora, for fifty dollars.

"The people of Tucson all agree that a shower of these meteorites fell in the Santa Catarina mountains some two hundred years ago, and I have been told that there were plenty of them remaining in the mountains. I never was in the immediate portion of the mountain range where they report the specimens are to be found, so I cannot vouch for the correctness of their reports. As the country is volcanic almost entirely, I have often thought, from the fact that iron ore is abundant in several of these mountains, that it might have been that masses of iron mineral were reduced to the metallic state by volcanic heat. Such is the case in the famous Planchas de Plata silver mines, some one hundred miles south of the Santa Catarina, where large pieces of pure silver have been found, reduced to the pure state by fire, which has left every-

\*Smithsonian Report, 1863, p. 85, *et. seq.*

thing in its vicinity in a state of calcination. One piece, weighing fifteen hundred pounds, was found and cut in two, to allow its removal to the city of Mexico by the Spanish authorities. I think you will find allusion to those interesting and once rich mines in Brantz Mayer.

"I believe I have given you some data about the Tucson meteorites in a monogram published by the War Department in 1860—Medical Statistics of the United States Army, 1855-'60.

"I wish I could give you full information on this matter. Please let me know when you receive it, and be assured that when I go to Washington I will pay my respects in person to you and it.

"I am very busy, so you will excuse this hurried letter, and believe me,

Yours, very respectfully,

"B. J. D. IRWIN,

*Surgeon U. S. Army.*

"Professor Spencer F. Baird, Ass't Sec'y Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D. C."

SAN FRANCISCO, July 2, 1863.

"DEAR SIR—The aerolite, which had remained so long at Alamo, for want of a proper person to bring it here, was brought by one of my brothers, Jesus M. Ainsa, who visited Sonora lately. We have been induced to retain it here for a short time, to satisfy the curiosity of the San Francisco people. The State Geological Society asked to be allowed to have a small piece for their collection, which request was, of course, granted. With this exception, the aerolite has been preserved entirely in the same condition in which it was found in Arizona, and by the 13th of this month we will have the pleasure to ship it to New York, under the care of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company.

"I take this opportunity to offer my services to the Institution.

"I remain, respectfully,

"SANTIAGO AINSA.

"Professor Henry, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C."

SAN FRANCISCO, California, August 26, 1863.

"DEAR SIR—I have the pleasure to acknowledge your favor of July 31st, and I take pleasure in complying with your request. In fact, I intended to do this before, but, owing to many engagements on hand, I have been postponing it to this moment.

"I announced in my last that the meteorite would be sent by the following steamer from that date, but we were asked to retain it some time longer by some scientific men, who wished to examine it closely.

"The history of this aerolite we have from our grandmother, Dona Ana Anza de Islas, daughter of Don Juan Bantista Anza, our great grandfather. The Jesuit missionaries had the earliest knowledge of this curiosity. There were various theories entertained about it, but it was generally believed to proceed from some iron mine in the vicinity, which belief holds to this day in Sonora. In an expedition made by Don Juan Bantista Anza, then "Gran Capitan de las Provincias del Occidente," about the year 1735, to the

country about Tucson, he was induced to visit the aerolite, and he undertook the work of transporting it to Spain. The place where it was found is called "Sierra de la Madre," on a spot called Los Muchadíos. Through the want of proper means and the bad state of the roads, (having to carry it to San Blas, then the nearest port of entry,) the work of transportation was given up, and they were satisfied to take it as far as Tucson. There it remained ever since, until my brother, Augustine Ainsa, undertook to transport it, in 1860, and present it to the Institute. His intentions, however, were never carried out till May last, when another of my brothers, Jesus M. Ainsa, visited Sonora and brought it with him on his return.

"By the time of the receipt of this the aerolite must be already in Washington, as we delivered it to the agent of the Institute about a month ago, to have it transported to you. Your agent spoke to us about expenses, but we wish not to deprive ourselves of the honor of having presented it to the Institute, and as such we desire that you should accept it.

"I would be thankful if you would send me a copy of the analysis, and of other information about the aerolite, and if you find it not too troublesome, to send the same, with my compliments, to St. John's College, Fordham, New York, where I was educated.

"I have the honor to remain,

"Your obedient servant,

"SANTIAGO AINSA.

"Joseph Henry, Esq., Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C."

[This meteorite is now in the museum, and is an object of special interest to visitors.]

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"Among the specimens received by the Institution during the year, should especially be mentioned the great Ainsa or Tucson meteorite.\*

"This meteorite was first discovered by the Jesuit missionaries in Sonora, by whom it was considered a great curiosity, exciting much speculation as to its origin. In 1735, the 'Gran Capitan de las Provincias, del Occidente, Don Juan Bantista Anza, was induced to visit the aerolite,' and found it at a place called 'Los Muchachos,' in the Sierra Madre, and, struck with its appearance, undertook to transport it to San Blas, then the nearest port of entry, with the view of carrying it to Spain. With this object it was brought as far as the Presidio, near Tucson, in Arizona, and left there on account of the difficulty of carrying it any further. After the withdrawal of the Spanish garrison, it was taken into the town of Tucson, set up vertically, and used as a kind of public anvil, of which it bears marks at the present time. In this condition it was seen and reported upon by various travellers; among others it was visited by John R. Bartlett, July 18, 1852, at the time Commissioner of the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey. Mr. Bartlett gives a short account of it, (Personal Narrative, vol. II, p. 297,) accompanied by a figure, (the lower one on the plate,) where it is repre-

\**Op. cit.*, p. 86, *et. seq.*

sented as resting upon two legs, owing to the lower part of the ring of which it consists being buried in the ground. His estimate of six hundred pounds, as its weight, falls far within the actual amount.

"In 1857, Dr. B. J. D. Irwin, United States Army, then stationed at Fort Buchanan, south of Tucson, found this meteorite lying in one of the by-streets of the village, half buried in the earth. As no one claimed it, he publicly announced his intention to take possession of it and forward it to the Smithsonian Institution, whenever an opportunity offered. Some time after, assisted by Mr. Palatine Robinson, of Tucson, (near to whose house the meteorite lay,) he succeeded in having it sent, by the agency of Mr. Augustine Ainsa, to Hermosilla, where it remained for some time at the hacienda of Don Manuel Ynigo, father-in-law of Mr. Ainsa. In March, 1863, Mr. Jesus Ainsa, brother of Mr. Augustine Ainsa, and grandson of Dona Ana Ainsa de Islas, the daughter of Don Juan Bantista Ainsa, visited Sonora, and on his return brought the meteorite with him to San Francisco, where it was delivered by his brother, Mr. Santiago Ainsa, to the agent of the Smithsonian Institution, Mr. A. B. Forbes, of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, and forwarded by him, via the Isthmus, to Washington, where it arrived in November, and is now on exhibition and the great object of attraction in the Smithsonian hall. It is proper to state that, although Dr. Irwin was authorized to expend whatever was necessary to secure the transmission of the meteorite to San Francisco, beyond some small expenses paid by him for placing it upon the truck in Tucson, no charge was made by the Ainsa family for the cost of transportation to Guaymas and delivery to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company; performed partly with their own wagons and partly by other means of conveyance. It was brought, free of charge, from Guaymas to San Francisco, by the Flint and Haliday line of steamers, while on the route to New York the Pacific Mail Steamship Company and the Panama Railroad Company, with that liberality which has ever characterized their intercourse with the Smithsonian Institution, transported it without expense to Aspinwall, and thence to New York.

The meteorite is in the shape of an immense signet ring, much heavier on one side, where it is nearly flat on its outer surface, and presents the face used as an anvil. The greatest exterior diameter is 49 inches; width of thickest part of the ring, 9 inches; the least, 38 inches; the greatest width of the central opening, 23 inches; width of thickest part of the ring,  $17\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The weight is now 1,400 pounds; but some portions have been removed, from time to time, probably reducing it considerably. Its composition is principally of iron, with small specks of a whitish silicious mineral diffused through it.

"A careful chemical and physical examination of the meteorite will be made by Professor G. J. Brush, of New Haven, to whom the Smithsonian Institution has committed the subject for detailed report.

"As the acrolite was first brought from the mountains north of Tucson by the great grandfather of the gentleman to whose exertions in transporting it to Washington the Institution owes so much, it is proposed to call it the 'Ainsa Meteorite.' To Dr. Irwin,

of the United States Medical Department, the Institution is also under great obligations for his agency in securing this specimen.

“Dr. Irwin states that the inhabitants of Tucson have a tradition that a shower of these meteorites took place in the Santa Catarina mountains about two hundred years ago, and that there are many other masses of a similar character yet remaining in those mountains.

“This meteorite is among the largest known, and in this country is only exceeded a little in weight by the Gibbs meteorite, in the cabinet of Yale College, New Haven, while it surpasses the latter in size, being disposed in the form of a ring, instead of a solid mass.

“The Smithsonian Institution also possesses the third largest meteorite in the country, in the ‘Couch meteorite,’ weighing 252 pounds, and brought from North-eastern Mexico by Major General D. N. Couch, and by him presented to the Institution.”

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OFFICE OF SUP'T U. S. ARMY GENERAL HOSPITALS, }  
 Memphis, Tennessee, June 27, 1865. }

*Professor Joseph Henry, Sec'y Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.*

SIR—In tendering my obligations for a copy of the “Smithsonian Report” for 1863, I have the honor to call your attention to a very palpable and gross injustice done me in regard to the “Tucson Meteorite,” presented and donated by me to the Institution. In December, 1857, I took post at Fort Buchanan, Arizona, and shortly afterward visited Tucson, to examine the famous aerolite, which I found hidden away amongst the rubbish of an obscure alley. No person claimed it, and it was looked upon as a curious but valueless object. Having devoted much of my leisure time, during the preceding three years, to collecting specimens of natural history for the Smithsonian, I determined to make an effort to secure such a fine specimen of meteoric iron for the national collection at Washington. Mr. Palatine Robinson, near whose house it lay, partly buried in the earth, kindly volunteered to assist me in having it forwarded whenever I could make arrangements for that purpose. In my correspondence with Professor Spencer F. Baird, Assistant Secretary to the Smithsonian Institution, I communicated my intention of forwarding and presenting it to the Institute. Many officers and others in the country at the time looked upon the idea as impracticable, owing to the difficulty of transporting such a heavy mass over the bad roads of the country. Professor Baird, however, heartily approved my design, and, by way of encouragement, authorized me to contract for the expense of its freight to Guaymas, Sonora, provided it would be moderate in amount. My correspondence on the subject is doubtless to be found on the records of the Institution. The opportunities to send such freight to Guaymas were very rare, as trains seldom went so far—apart from which an ordinary wagon was not deemed sufficiently strong for the purpose—so that I did not get the long-sought chance of dispatching it until the winter of 1860 or spring of 1861. Mr. Augustin Ainsa, who was engaged in the business of freighting,

and lived at the Fort or in its vicinity during much of the three years while I was stationed there, entered into a contract with me to haul it to Guaymas, Sonora, for which I gave him my written promise to pay, or see that he was paid, the sum of fifty dollars, as soon as it was delivered at Guaymas, from whence arrangements were made for its shipment to San Francisco, California. In the latter part of 1861 I arrived at Washington, where I met Mr. A. Ainsa, who informed me that he had been unable to convey the aerolite farther than Alamito, near Hemosilla, where it would remain until an opportunity offered to have it sent the remainder of the way to Guaymas. These facts I communicated in person to Professor Spencer F. Baird. Some time ago, I had the pleasure of receiving a letter from Professor Baird, announcing the arrival of the meteorite, and informing me that it would have a most conspicuous position in the Institution, and that a plate would be placed upon it, giving a history of my donation.

With these facts known to the officers of the Smithsonian Institution, I must be pardoned for saying that I have read with profound surprise and indignation the letter of Santiago Ainsa—contained in the Annual Report, pp. 86, 87—wherein, in the coolest manner and with the most unblushing effrontery, he takes upon himself, *after declining to receive the freight for its transportation*, the unwarrantable liberty of tendering it, *as the gift of himself and brother to the Institute!!!* This conduct may be in keeping with the romantic history given by Mr. Ainsa's "grandmother" in regard to the exploits of the "Great Captain of the Western Provinces," which, doubtless, is as pertinent to the true history of the matter as is the attempted imposition of Mr. Ainsa—*vel Anza, aut Anser*—to an honest transaction; so I must be pardoned for doubting the correctness of both. In my negotiations with Mr. A. for the transportation of the aerolite, he never evinced any knowledge of its history or interest in it beyond the pecuniary amount which he was to receive for carrying it to Guaymas. When it arrived at San Francisco it attracted public attention, and his brother took upon himself the responsibility of detaining it to satisfy the public curiosity, and generously permitted the State Geological Society to help themselves to a portion of it! Then it flashed upon the minds of Messrs. Ainsa that the crude mass of metal was an object of value and interest to scientific persons; so they *liberally* declined to receive the amount of their freight; and, with that magnanimous generosity so peculiar to their countrymen, politely requested its acceptance by the Institute *as a donation from themselves!!* This was a gross breach of trust and faith on the part of those public carriers, consequent upon which I respectfully enter my emphatic protest against the meteorite being received by or known in the Institution as coming from them, or bearing the name of "*Ainsa Meteorite.*" I presented it, and it is *MY* donation. As the officers of the Institute have failed to recognize my services by bestowing my name upon it, it should be known as it was until I brought it within the reach of the scientific world, *i. e.*, the "*Tucson or Arizona Meteorite.*" The fact that Mr. Ainsa had it carried for me a certain distance is no valid reason why it should bear his name. Messrs. Flint & Haliday would have better claims to endow it with the names of their very liberal business firm, as

they transported it gratuitously a greater distance; and, with equal plausibility, might the parties who were employed to carry the "Carlton," "Couch," or "Gibbs" meteorites, have delivered them to the institutions for which the donors designed them as their own particular contributions. In regard to the tradition that Don Juan Bautista Anza *saw* this meteorite, and endeavored to carry it off in 1735, I can only say that the learned Jesuits of those days *saw it before him*, and I am inclined to give their well-known habits of industry the credit of having it removed to the vicinity of their famous mission church at San Xavier de Bac, from whence it was taken to the Presidio of Tucson, eight miles distant. When the Spanish garrison was withdrawn from that station, the people had it taken to the plaza of their town; after which necessity pointed it out as an improvised anvil to some enterprising blacksmith. This is one of the many traditions given by the inhabitants to account for the advent of the meteorite at Tucson, and I regard it as the most rational and truthful of the many stories put forth on the subject. If Don Juan Anza had it hauled to town (?), *en route* to San Blas, it would be interesting to learn who had the "Carlton" specimen taken there, as I found both of them at that place. Granting that he looked upon it with admiring and covetous eyes—as many others had done before, and have done since his contemplated project for its removal to Spain—I cannot see the propriety of honoring his name by coupling it with the specimen, as he left no record of his intentions, whatever they may have been. His failure is a matter of congratulation, as he might have succeeded in depriving our country of a valuable specimen. Truly, I am surprised and disappointed at the apparent ease with which this fraudulent claim to proprietorship has been received and allowed by the Institute; and, in justice to myself, I respectfully request that this communication may be placed before the officers of the Institution, at their next meeting, with a view to their taking such action in the case as truth, justice, and science demand.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully,

Your ob't servant,

B. J. D. IRWIN,

*Surgeon U. S. A., Sup't U. S. A. General Hospitals.*

