

CHAPTER XI.

POLITICAL HISTORY OF CHILI.

1839.

OF the early political history of Chili, we found it difficult to obtain any correct information. There is no publication existing at this date, which furnishes any satisfactory account of the republic in its first struggles to establish itself.

Nearly all the principal actors in its busy scenes are yet living, and not so advanced in age, but they entertain hopes of a change from day to day, that may restore them to power and importance. These, together with the factions that were connected with them, watch with anxiety every turn of public opinion; and with one or the other of them, most of the educated Chilians, who alone are capable of giving an account, are more or less identified.

For this reason, only partial statements can be obtained from any of them. Those who keep aloof from party, are too timid to express any opinion on political subjects, as it might involve them in difficulty. The few foreigners whose long residence in the country would enable them to furnish facts, are so biassed by their prejudices towards different administrations, that no dependence can be placed upon their statements. The inequality of rule of the Chilian administrations makes it difficult to follow their history, and one is left to the barren sources of information afforded by government proclamations, and the official reports of the day, always more or less erroneous and exaggerated, in favour of the ruling party. Under these difficulties, it will not be surprising if the following outline of its history for the last twenty years, should in a few particulars be erroneous; it is, however, believed to be correct, having been drawn from sources that are most to be relied on and entitled to credit, and that were at the time attainable.

After the battle of Chacabuco and Maypo, in which O'Higgins