

CHAPTER II.

Departure from Barranca—Village of Teneriffe—Sembrano—Isle San Pedro—Pinto—Santa Anna—Moupox—The Governor of Moupox—Margarita—Guano—Penon—Banko—Sierra-Ocana—Regidor—Rio-Viejo—Morales—Vadillo—The Inhabitants of the Magdalena—Boca Rosario—San Pablo—The Point of Barbacoa—Garapata—Angustura—Nare.

To accomplish our journey to Bogata, it was necessary to ascend the Magdalena; and although the navigation is dangerous, and requires a month to accomplish it, I considered it preferable to the journey over-land. Before embarking, I took the opinion of my host, who gave me his advice in a few words, and painted the sufferings I should have to endure in the blackest colours.

The first proof of his not having been guilty of any exaggeration, was in beholding the five sailors, hired to conduct my piragua, and who were completely inebriated. There was something very designing in their savage countenances, but this I afterwards found belonged rather to their peculiar employment, than to any thing particularly wicked in their dispositions. Thanks to the care of the old Peruvian, my arrangements were promptly concluded.

By five o'clock all my effects were on board my fragile bark ; and my bogas, as they call the mariners of the Magdalena, bade their adieu to Barranca chaunting the litanies of the Virgin.

In consequence of their intoxication, at every thrust which these boatmen gave with their poles, to push forwards the piragua, they staggered and fell one over the other into the water, so that it was seven o'clock before we passed Barranca-Nueva, which I had recently quitted. At half-past eight we stopped at Oiougar. The next morning, we again started before the rising of the sun, and by the time it appeared, beheld with delight a charming village, to which its name Buena-Vista, signifying a delightful prospect, is certainly well applied.

We thence glided along between the verdant banks of a river, which, besides its magnitude, presented me with many other traits of resemblance to the Senegal. The solitude of the forests on its uncultivated borders, the heat that we experienced, and the black human beings who, at considerable intervals, were seen seated under their cabins of reeds surrounded by fields of maize, or, cleaving the current of the river in hollow trees, transported me in imagination to the wilds of Africa.

The negro of the Magdalena does not, however, possess the manly courage, the bold intre-

pidity, and the muscular form of the inhabitant of Senegal; neither has he that blind confidence in the protection of his God, with which a scrap of paper purchased of an impostor of a priest, inspires the other. The African, relying on the efficacy of such a talisman, neither dreads the gripe of the crocodile, nor the venom of the snake; he throws himself without dread into the water, and penetrates without iniquitude into the deepest thickets. The degenerate black of the Magdalena is every where in dread of meeting with an enemy, and never forgets the spot that has been fatal to an imprudent being. "Here," said one of my bogas to me, "a man and his ass were devoured by a serpent: there, a boga fell a prey to a cayman, and in that place, a jaguar tore an infant to pieces;"—and such are the frightful recollections afforded by every part of the Magdalena. The African, on the contrary, when amid his native streams recites nothing but the sanguinary contests sustained by man against ferocious animals, and the victories which crowned his fanatical valour.

Without regarding the danger we ran of encountering the partisans of Morales, we kept upon the shore of Santa-Martha, in order to avoid the dangerous currents of the other side of the river; and, after having proceeded three leagues beyond Tenerife, making our whole

day's voyage thirty leagues, we took up our abode for the night upon a sandy spot of shore in the province of Cartagena.

The labours of my bogas were now excessively painful; from the river becoming very narrow, the current was much increased in violence, and could only be surmounted by keeping close in shore, and hauling ourselves along by the branches of the trees. We here experienced some gales from the north, that greatly tempered the heat, which we found excessive during that part of the night when they cease to blow; on the contrary, from two o'clock in the morning to the rising of the sun, the cold was so piercing, that I was unable to sleep. We were here no longer solitary possessors of the river; for, since the last evening, we were gratified with the sight of fishermen and crocodiles vying with each other in giving chase to the fishy tribe.

At two o'clock, we passed Sembrano, and the island of San Pedro; and, taking the right branch of the stream, enjoyed a delicious prospect. The isle of San Pedro is entirely covered with trees, whose branches serve as a refuge for thousands of parroquets; the variegated plumage of the macaws forms an agreeable contrast to the gloomy green of the trees, while the shrill cries of these birds somewhat relieve the silence of this peaceful part of the river. In these solitudes, man might find an agreeable retreat

where the soil, enriched by the inundations of the river, would largely recompense his labours; the situation is also favourable in a commercial point of view, as it is a convenient distance from Barranca and Moupox. On quitting this asylum of peace, we again found ourselves exposed to the currents of the river, and not without danger from its rocks and shoals. A Promontory formed of vast cliffs, against which the waters of the Magdalena were precipitated with violence, in particular, caused a current which we surmounted with much hazard and difficulty, and it was ten at night before we had finished our labours. A sand bank, as usual, was our place of repose.

Little accustomed to the course of life to which one is condemned on the waters of the Magdalena, the neighbourhood of serpents and caymans, the bites of mosquitoes, and the icy cold occasioned by the dews and the humidity of the soil prevented me from sleeping the whole of the night; but when use had fortified me against these inconveniences, the necessity of taking rest made me disregard them.

When a person is witness of the fatigues which the mariners of the Magdalena undergo, he restrains himself, however anxious he may be to proceed with more expedition, from uttering any complaints, or from being vexed at the frequent delays. The bogas make a practice of stopping as

often as possible ; to day they thought it necessary to dig up some turtle's eggs; but after all their trouble, they were unsuccessful, and the fruit of their labours was a few dozen eggs of the cayman, which were very properly destroyed: scarcely had they made this sacrifice, when they had the happiness of meeting a fisherman with his piragua laden; my generosity was instantly appealed to, and I had an opportunity of displaying it at a trifling expense, for with a couple of reals I purchased a dozen large fish which we found quite sufficient for several meals.

Little alarmed by the perils, with which we had been informed, we should be menaced on the side of the province of Santa Martha, we continued coasting along that shore, stopping a few minutes at Pinto to purchase some tobacco and sugar-canes; commodities which, in this place, are of a superior quality, and in great abundance.—My bogas, always anxious to obtain some turtle's eggs, fancied they should be more successful than before, upon a sand bank at a little distance from Pinto, but were again disappointed. A few cayman's eggs were found and were broken against the side of the piragua, under the eyes of one of these reptiles: his muzzle appeared above the water close to the edge of the river, nor did he quit us until the work of destruction was finished. Leaving upon our right that branch of the river which leads to Saragossa, we entered

that which goes to Honda, and before night were in sight of Santa Anna.

When daylight began to appear, we found ourselves at Monpox, and landed over fragments of the quay with which the banks of the river had been scattered, a great part of it having been thrown down by the stream. When I attained the top, I was conducted to the governor's residence, across a square that appeared tolerably regular.—The letter of recommendation which I had brought with me, procured me many civilities, and the offer of a lodging, which I accepted.

The governor, not confining himself to these attentions, would have me, in the evening, go over the town on horseback with him. He seemed anxious that I should examine the preparations he had made for defense against any attack on the part of Morales. I eulogized the hill with which he had fortified an open town, as it properly deserved, and my praises appeared to give him great satisfaction. "Here, he first told me, was a number of houses, surrounded by a thick wood, all of which have disappeared; for I have set fire to the whole, to give me a clearer view of the approach of our enemy." "These ditches," said he, "will stop his cavalry, while mine, on the contrary, supported by my infantry, will make dreadful havoc among his troops; and my sloops of war, will pour in a terrible fire

upon his vessels."—It was in vain that I used my best efforts to discover what he wished to show me, for about forty horsemen quite naked, encamped in the middle of a field under a thatched shed, with two hundred militia, quartered in an ancient college of the Jesuits, composed all his army; and five boats with one gun to each, formed the muster of this redoubtable marine.

The town is not destitute of interest on account of its position. The streets are of a convenient breadth, and some are even furnished with paved foot-ways. The houses though low, are regularly built, and the bars of the windows, being made of iron, have a less clumsy appearance than those of Carthagena, where they are made of wood. Constructed in a manner the most convenient for enjoying as much coolness as possible, very little ingenuity is applied to furnishing the interior with light, for the insides of all the houses are pervaded by long low galleries into which the rays of the sun never penetrate. Although the commercial relations of Monpox have lost much of their importance, they still retain a certain degree of interest; in fact, by the way of Ocana, this place receives the tobacco, sugar, flour, and cocoa of Pampluna and Cuenta. Antioqua transmits it gold, and Santa-Fè the produce of the upper Magdalena; thus Monpox is still really a place of much consequence.

The climate is burning, the thermometer ranging from 25° to 30°; the inhabitants consequently pass the evenings seated in the streets, to breathe the fresh air, and to escape the stings of the mosquitoes. The sky is constantly cloudy, and scarcely a day passes without showers; the nights, on the contrary are beautifully clear and truly delicious. It is then, a great pleasure to promenade the streets, and observe the lively parties which present themselves before the doors of the houses. Loud bursts of laughter are heard on every side, in which the passenger takes part without the least ceremony. Far from this familiarity being offensive, it gives great satisfaction, for the frankest cordiality presides at these meetings. Thus passes the life of the inhabitants of Monpox; the day is spent in their hammocks, the night in the street, and nothing would trouble their peaceable existence, were they not afflicted with goitres which disfigure them in a horrible manner; without this infirmity, which usually attacks them at the age of thirty or forty, they would possess an agreeable figure, though indeed with less lively expression than the inhabitants of Carthagena, and with less of that soft-coloured tint which distinguishes the natives of Bogota. The manner of living of the people of Monpox, differs little from that which the inhabitants of the *tierras calientas* of

South American have adopted.—All classes have a destructive fondness for ardent spirits;* nevertheless, the good folks of Monpox drink nothing but water with their meals; they are great eaters of pork, and to such an extent is their passion for pigs carried, that many females take a pleasure in feeding these disgusting animals, and teaching them to follow, like so many dogs.

The delays which I experienced from the fêtes with which they celebrated the taking of Santa Martha from the Spaniards, terminated on the 27th.; but the moment of my departure was marked by many untoward accidents. I had engaged six boatmen, but only five made their appearance; one of them, as I was informed, had been taken ill, and had spent part of the money I had paid him in advance.—My piragua was caulked with the fat of the cayman, and it was consequently impossible to sleep without running the risk of being poisoned by the infectious odour it exhaled. They procured me another; it wanted refitting, which was soon accomplished; but when we had got a little up the river, the water penetrated in such quantities, as obliged us to make for the shore as fast as we could. At last the obliging disposition of one of the

* They divide the day into different portions consecrated to drinking, which they stile, *las siete, las onze, las dos, las quatro, &c. &c.* so that, before night, each man has emptied his bottle of brandy.

inhabitants who lent me his piragua, enabled me to start by the middle of the day. These annoyances I mention only to give some idea of the impediments that arrest the progress of every traveller in Spanish America.

At every instant my bogas were stopping at the foot of the habitations which cover the isle on which Monpox is built. These dwellings, the plantations of banana-trees, and the light built barks returning from fishing, or carrying to the town the produce of their soil, so much animate this part of the river, that one would believe one had left the Magdalena, so mournfully distinguished for its frightful solitudes, and had entered upon the stream of some richly cultivated country.

We halted at night at a village called Margarita, for the purpose of procuring a boga, as a substitute for the one who had fallen sick; I was shewn a strong young man, but it was not without difficulty that I could persuade him to follow me, when he found that they were negroes who had come with me from Monpox; so much was he prejudiced against them.

The next day we passed Guama, situated upon the shore of Santa Martha, and in the evening we ran the piragua upon a bank of sand, an asylum where henceforth I was accustomed to pass my nights.

I had come to some unpleasant explanations with my watermen, who dissatisfied with labour-

ing until the close of the day, had talked of quitting me, but I succeeded partly by menaces, more by promises in appeasing them. This mutinous disposition of theirs is certainly not very encouraging, for they frequently abandon the traveller when they are discontented with too rigorous a service, and take refuge in the first inhabited place they come to, where they are sure of finding friends and protectors.

At five o'clock in the morning we passed below Penon, and after having stopped a few moments in this village, came in sight of Banko: about mid-day we discovered Sierra-Ocana.

From an excess of zeal, or perhaps from the restlessness occasioned by the bites of the mosquitoes, the bogas sang their hymn to the Virgin, and set off again at midnight. By five we had passed Regidor, and at seven o'clock, leaving upon our right that branch of the Magdalena which leads to Ocana, we entered upon that of Morales. At Rio-Viejo I found the heat much less than at Monpox; the sky continually charged with vapours, had a different tint from that of the plains. We were already within the influence of the Cordilleras, and I was much surprised at finding the cocoa and palm trees, in a country nearly temperate, upon the banks of a mild and tranquil river, and in a deep and black earth, while every where else they are

only to be met with upon the sandy borders of the sea.

By eight o'clock, the next day, we reached Morales, a large village shaded by cocoa trees and situated upon an island of the same name; the neighbouring country produces a great quantity of palm wine. The white population of this place have established some inns, constructed of hurdles of bamboos, in order that the light and air may penetrate them, and containing two or three benches with some bull's-hides stretched upon wooden frames for beds.

Stopping no longer at Morales than was necessary to purchase some provisions, we soon discovered the mountains on which Zimitri elevates itself upon one of the branches of the Magdalena, which unites itself to that of Morales near this place.

On the first of February we were in sight of Vadillo, by six o'clock in the morning, and at intervals I perceived some isolated cottages. I stopped at several, being desirous of studying the people who inhabit the borders of the Magdalena; and I particularly remarked that they live concentrated in a family, and seem to shun every other sort of society.

Bogas advanced in years, who, weary of navigating the river, have become desirous of leaving the fruits of their painful labours to their children, with some enfranchised

slaves and deserters belonging to all races or rather to all colours, have established themselves upon these unwholesome shores; but, though leading such isolated lives, with respect to one another, they have not entirely renounced the society of men. Boats and piraguas frequently stop near their dwellings, and purchase the surplus of their crops; yet, notwithstanding the vegetable production is very abundant, so many bananas are demanded for a single dollar, that they cannot procure sufficient to supply themselves with clothes.

These people are therefore very poor, and exceedingly unhappy, since out of the ten plagues of Egypt, they have at least five;—the putridity of the water—ulcers—reptiles—large flies—and the death of their eldest born; in fact, they rear their children with great difficulty. If nature, however, has thus poisoned the air respired by the inhabitant of the banks of the Magdalena, and tainted the pleasures he tastes, if she has filled the place in which he lives with poisonous animals, she has every where spread around the healing plants of which, he well knows the use, and which alleviate his evils if they do not entirely cure them.

The solitary families which people the borders of this river, are usually composed of the husband, the wife and two or three children; it is very rare indeed that any old people are to be found. The

evils which these people suffer in common with all the mixed breeds between the tropics shorten the duration of life considerably. The Arabs, the Indians, and the Negroes, when they are not obliged to work too hard, are never ill.

The houses in which these poor creatures dwell, are formed of reeds and bamboos, and are generally erected in the midst of some spreading woods, where they content themselves with clearing a little spot for planting some bananas*, sugar-canes, cocoa-nut trees, ananas, papayas, and pinuntas, with some flowers to ornament the heads of the women.

The wood which surrounds the house, is not an inextricable labyrinth, for it abounds in paths, known only to the proprietor. Through them he pursues those animals, to their distant retreats, which not long since, prowled near the site of his dwelling, or makes his way to his field of maize, which is always out of the reach of inundations. There often he fells his piragua, or cuts down the rafters of his cabin; and without any other help than what is afforded by rollers, when his work is completed conveys it to the banks of the river.

* The bananas are the manna of the Americans; when green, they boil them; and when ripe, they are a very sweet fruit, which they roast and eat with much pleasure.

Twelve fowls compose his barn-yard, and he is considered a happy man, if he can increase this stock, with a cow, or even a pig; but he seldom possesses the means, and his sole support is bananas, fish, and sometimes game. Two or three dogs trained to the chase, with some cats, devour the remains of his frugal meat. He generally possesses a cylinder, to manufacture *guarapo*, a syrup of fermented sugar, and a frame for weaving of mats, with some nets, darts, and shells of the turtle, which at one time serve for plates, and another for seats; to this list of his utensils may be added, a hatchet, a sabre, some calabashes, and earthen pipkins, and he is considered as a very careful, provident man, if his store contains a few pieces of smoke-dried meat, and a few jars filled with maize.

The life of the inhabitant of the Magdalena, is not one of inactivity, depending solely upon himself, he expects no aid from society, and all must be provided by his care; he ought to be simultaneously an architect, a hunter, a fisher, and a clever workman. Sometimes he traverses the woods in pursuit of the jaguar, which perhaps has deprived him of one of his dogs, and at other times, embarks upon the stream, to pierce the fish with his darts or enclose them in his nets. Thus he is never at rest; nor are these all his cares, when the overflowing of the river inundates his plantations, he is seen se-

curing his piragua to the trees of his garden, and embarking all his family; then along those paths, which a few days before he had been chasing the deer, he conducts them to his field of maize, and hastily erects some covering to protect them from the torrents of rain.

The husband does not always alone support the burthen of the labours of his family; his wife sometimes shares them with him. She works in the fields, and accompanying her husband a-fishing, she steers his little bark. Afflicting wants often discourage the souls of these unfortunate beings. The father falls the victim of long infirmities, the infant, of the evils which belong to early life, and a raging fever cuts off the mother of the family; thus the miseries which they undergo in procuring a subsistence, are heightened by the sorrows of final separation. Unable to live alone, the man allots a few months to the griefs of widowhood, then descends the river in his piragua, and presents himself at some village to offer to some new spouse his many fatigues and privations, but with them a heart which is wholly her's.

For many days past the mountains had made their appearance to the west, and the number of the caymans visibly diminished: this circumstance indicated that the heat was less ardent, though the temperature was still so great, that we always halted at noon, and passed some time

under the natural shelters that were formed over the river by the majestic ceibas, and various other trees of thick foliage.

Although our piragua was very large, being about 48 feet long, we took care whenever we stopped to draw it up upon the land, and in that situation took our repose with more tranquillity. If the left bank of the river had been less embarrassed with the trunks of trees, the plantations of bananas which cover it, would have induced us to coast along it ; but we should have been exposed to so many dangers, that we determined keeping upon the right. Amidst the solitudes of these waters we encountered a luggage boat laden with soldiers, who were descending the river to the mournful sound of an Indian flute. Upon leaving Vadillo, we arrived at the common boundary of the provinces of Santa-Martha and Cundinamarca, and a surprising change in the appearance of the country forced itself upon our attention ; for bananas and cocoa trees were every where to be seen, and I experienced an infinite satisfaction, at finding these traces of the labours of man in places which seemed exclusively the patrimony of ferocious animals.

At five o'clock, we passed through the Bocca-Rosario, so they call a part of the river where it is extremely confined, and consequently flows with great rapidity. At eight, when we were

established as usual upon our bank of sand, I said to myself: it is now midnight at Paris and nearly all my countrymen are also taking their repose; but, fatigued with a thousand varied pleasures, and feasted with exquisite dainties, they refresh themselves on beds of down; vigilant guards insure their safety; winter and the industry of man protect them from the myriads of insects with which I am devoured;—it freezes with them, yet they enjoy a comfortable warmth, while I, but a few degrees from the line, am almost perished with cold.—

We still continued to struggle against the current of the river, which increased in rapidity in proportion as we approached its source; this velocity of the stream was also occasioned by the promontories which, from place to place, arrested its course: these projections of the land, were particularly remarkable by the brilliant colours of the different strata disposed in regular beds. The day having been passed in great exertion, we stopped at five o'clock opposite San Pablo.

In the evening, I ascended the banks of the river, entered the village and paid a visit to the alcaid. A field of bananiers, a piragua for fishing, some dogs for hunting, an indifferent fowling piece, and two hammocks composed all his wealth; a pair of drawers, a linen shirt and a straw hat all his stock of clothing. He

walked bare-foot, but nevertheless enjoyed in the village every imaginable prerogative : for, in fact, besides the right of hearing and determining causes, in the same manner as our justices of the peace, it was his office to regulate the weights and measures, than which nothing could be more arbitrary ; a parcel of stones, whose value is perfectly conventional, serves as weights, while the scales are made of two calabashes often very unequal.—It is also his duty to levy the taxes and conscriptions.

Notwithstanding the necessity which we experienced in this frightful navigation of frequently bathing on account of the heat occasioned by the sun, by the bites of the mosquitoes, and the number of men crowded together in so small a space, I began to take this exercise with less pleasure after we got at some distance from Morales.—Indeed, both the air and the water were extremely cold, and I experienced a disagreeable sensation every time I went into the river.—This was not the only change I remarked in these higher parts of the stream : the sky was so continually covered with clouds that we seldom got a sight of the moon.—We no longer experienced those resplendent nights of the tropics in which the light was almost as brilliant as that of the day. On the contrary, the summits of the high mountains, which surrounded us, were so enveloped in vapours as to be entirely hidden from our view. Thus, in spite of

the zealous efforts of my bogas we seldom proceeded during the night, and even in the forenoon the fogs were frequently so thick, that it was with difficulty we could distinguish objects at two boats length from our piragua. On the other hand, the greater mildness of the temperature, produced an effect upon the productions of nature, that were by far more agreeable to the eyes of an European. In fact, the ground was better covered, and more variegated; the most brilliant flowers spread themselves over the banks of the river, and amidst them the maravilla formed garlands of the most splendid purple.—The trees were stronger though less elevated, and being fixed in the earth by deeper roots, a less number of trunks impeded the navigation of the river. I had above all an opportunity of contemplating the lofty summit of Barbacoa; but the recollection of the battles fought there by the Spaniards and the Independents destroyed all its charm, by reflecting that the pure and limpid streams which wash its base had been polluted with blood, and that, in these delicious solitudes visited once only by men, they met but for mutual destruction.

On the 7th February we saw St. Bartholomew on our right: a bad road leads from this village to the province of Antioquia; we were now soon amid the dark and muddy waters, which a neighbouring stream brings in tribute to the

Magdalena, and whose fetid odour indicates its unhealthy quality. Quitting these pestilential waves, we had to double a promontory called Remolino Grande; the waters here precipitate themselves with a violence dangerous for boats, which do not always insure their safety by occasionally grappling to the rocks, branches and roots which are found along its banks; passing all these dangers in safety, we arrived before night-fall at Garapata. The inhabitants of this hamlet have the reputation of being very patriotic. By virtue of this, my bogas were desirous of establishing a system of agrarian law, which did not at all meet the views of the citizens of Garapata, who were obliged to be on the alert all night, and watch the motions of my sailors. The latter indeed, drawing the inference from their political logic, insisted upon being furnished gratis with fowls, oranges, bananas and even salt. "Between friends and brothers," said they, "all should be had in common." The principle was not admitted. Upon which, changing their system, they unknown to me threatened the inhabitants with the whole weight of my indignation, which with these poor wretches was not an idle menace, as I had been made to pass for an officer of the republic.—By this stratagem, my bogas succeeded in obtaining many necessaries.

We were now to cross the Angustura, a very dangerous strait. Our first care was to twist two

or three ropes into one, next to examine the piragua, and repair the damage it had received near Garapata, and lastly to take on board fresh poles. When all was ready we pushed off shore, and in a short time were at the foot of the Augustura. This rock is very lofty, and as it projects far into the river narrows it considerably. It was not without anxiety we found ourselves in the midst of the breakers, where our poles only could be of service to us. The banks of the river are so steep, that no means of grappling are any where to be found. When the water is low, the sailors go with much difficulty and fasten their rope to some tree at a great distance, and by this means escape the danger of being carried away by the impetuosity of the current. There were formerly at Augustura men stationed to verify the passports of travellers; they were at the same time provided with all that was necessary in case of an accident; at present nothing of the kind exists.

The river at the Augustura is very limpid, but the moment this dangerous strait is passed, its waters become again yellow and murky. At a short distance we perceived Nare, to which I soon ascended. Nare is one of the most important villages of Magdalena. Situated at the distance of five days' journey from Medellin, it has become the most frequented port of the rich province of Antioquia. Couriers, merchants and

travellers, all stop there, and cause much bustle and activity. In short it is the entrepot of the cocoas of Magdalena, for the regions of the western Cordilleras, the cocoas being here exchanged for the gold worked in these mountains. The river, which bears the name of Nare, is a canal very commodious for the transport of merchandize into the interior of the country.