

CHAPTER XI.

Santa-Fé de Bogota—Climate—Houses—Furniture—Cathedral—Convents—Hospital—Colleges—The President's Palace—Palace of the Deputies—Palace of the Senate—Prisons—The Mint and Theatre—Streets—Police—Market—Paupers—Public Walks—Mode of Living—Shops—Amusements—Fête Dieu—Manners—Devotees—Scientific Establishments—Character of the Inhabitants.

COMPARED with the other arts cultivated in Colombia, architecture is the one which has made the greatest progress ; a circumstance the more surprising, as all instruction in it is confined to that furnished by books and engravings ; sculpture and painting are still very backward, but it may justly be anticipated that greater advances will be made in them than has hitherto been done.

The houses in the country are in general, merely huts with mud walls, straw roofs, and leather doors. They usually contain two rooms, one of which is for the kitchen ; the other, in which the family lives, is divided into two ; the one used as a parlour, the other as a bed-room. The furniture is extremely simple. Bananas and other vegetable plants, the favorites of the American, form a pleasing shade around the exterior of the dwelling.

More taste is observable in the villages. The church is large and very neatly kept; it has bells, and almost always an organ, while the curate's house, ornamented with a balcony, has the air of a palace. From these two edifices, individuals have derived all their architectural ideas.

The towns are handsome, large, and agreeable in proportion to their locality, the commerce they carry on, the influence they enjoy, or the rank they possess.

The most important town of Colombia is Panama; the best fortified, Cartagena; the most agreeable, Santa-Fè; the best built, Popayan; the richest Guayaquil; the most lively, Zipaquira; the best situated, Maracaïbo. Caracas is said to have eclipsed them all, but Caracas is now in ruins. Quito, by all accounts, is superior to any in population; but this advantage could not procure it the honour of being the capital, and Santa-Fè, is almost its rival even in this particular.

All the towns of South America are nearly constructed on the same plan. The founders almost every where, have traced out a cross, of which the principal square and church form the centre.

The Spaniards have, generally speaking, built their towns at the foot of mountains, and very rarely in the midst of the plains. The

object in the first instance was to provide against surprise, and at present these positions have the advantage of affording plenty of fresh water, which the Spaniards have not neglected to distribute in every direction by means of aqueducts. Another method which they make use of to enliven the towns, is that of whitening the outside of the houses, which gives them an appearance of much neatness. The principal streets have *trottoirs*; in fact, the *useful* and the *agreeable* have been much less neglected in America than Europeans are willing to allow.

No town possesses more natural advantages than the capital; if less cleanly than others, the fault must be attributed to the climate, and to the immense traffic daily carried on there.

Santa-Fè de Bogota was founded in the plain of that name, on the sixth of August 1538,* at the foot of two mountains of considerable elevation. At that time it could only reckon twelve huts, and about sixty inhabitants. Destined to become a town of considerable extent, it rapidly increased; for, two years after its foundation, it was considered of sufficient importance by the Spanish court, to be raised to the rank of *Ciudad*, (city). Its present population is estimated at 30,000 souls†. Quesada had

* S. M. Salazar.

† See note IV.

admirably chosen the site of a town which was one day to give the law to a great part of the Cordillera. Situated between two mountains which shelter it from the violent hurricanes of the east, it receives from them constant supplies of fresh and pure water, and commands the plain, so as to be able to defend itself against any enemy from that quarter. Santa-Fè, may be seen at a great distance, especially the belfrey of the cathedral, but the natural frame-work in which the town is inclosed is so prodigiously vast, that it disappears in the immense shadows projected by the mountains over its public edifices.

The climate of Bogota is generally rainy and cold; the thermometer seldom rises above 12° to 14°, and frequently falls to 6° or 7°. The sky is always cloudy, and there are but few of those fine days which even in the severest winters, we enjoy in Europe.

The climate of Bogota may indeed be thus apportioned, six months of continued rain, April, May, September, October, November and December; three months showery, June, July and August; and three others uncertain. North north-west winds invariably bring storms, which sometimes last several days together, and form large collections of water in the plain.

Notwithstanding the excessive humidity predominant even in the houses, the climate is

not unhealthy, epidemics are never known. Europeans, provided they take the precaution of not getting wet in the feet, enjoy good health, after having had, on their arrival, the fever for a few days; this, by some has been attributed to their fatigues, it may rather be referred to the tropical influence which, although weakened by the elevation of the land, acts nevertheless very powerfully upon Europeans. The inhabitant of the *tierras calientes*, is much less exempt from dangers than ourselves; the cool and limpid streams of the mountain, which he drinks with so much delight, never fail to give him the dysentery, which, in numerous instances, proves fatal in a short time. Even the inhabitants of Bogota, are oftener ill than foreigners; another proof that the cause of these affection is less to be sought for in the climate, than in the mode of life, and the food they make use of.

The ladies rarely go out. Domestic habits, joined to severe stomach-aches caused by the garlic, tobacco, pork and chicha, of which they partake very freely, cause them to be almost continually indisposed. A dreadful disorder determines still more in both sexes, numerous infirmities, of which intemperance, more than climate, is the cause; to this may be attributed the rheumatisms, hysterics, tooth-aches, and sore throats, so generally complained of, and

which soon assume the most dreadful character. All possible precautions are had recourse to in these cases, warm clothing is much used; but the disorder does not lie in the air.

The whole of South America is subject to earthquakes. Santa-Fè has experienced several; this it is which prevents the houses from being very high, although in their construction the same principles of architecture have been followed as the Spaniards, used in all their towns, those of Bogota differ more than any of the others: in their construction they use bricks baked in the sun; the greater part are covered with tiles, and the external walls are whitewashed. As to the interior of the houses, they are not better arranged than our's were at the time of the discovery of America. Windows very small and always barricadoed by large wooden bars, are seen by the side of others of an immense size; the beams are rarely concealed by a ceiling; the walls have enormous projections; the doors are of all heights, the use of locks is scarcely known, at least those manufactured in the country, afford but little security. The use of glazed windows is but of recent introduction; a less barbarous taste is however observable, in the construction of many modern habitations, and several improvements begin to appear. Light and convenient balconies have superseded the enormous heavy galleries; the ceiling is no longer disagreeably intersected

by beams, the windows are without barricadoes ; the street doors better painted ; a general neatness is indeed being introduced through all classes. In general two gates are to be passed before arriving in the court yard. The entry which separates it from the street is but too often a receptacle for the uncleanness of the passengers. A gallery generally runs round the court, if the house consists only of a ground floor ; but if of two stories, a covered terrace. The staircase is generally of stone, and of very rude construction : on the wall of the first square is generally painted a giant, carrying in one hand a child, and in the other a ball ; this is St. Christopher, the household god of the country. Round the inner gallery is a long suit of rooms, which only receive day-light through the door.

Every house has at least one saloon, and an eating-room ; for it is considered unpolite to receive friends, or to entertain them in a sleeping-room. The kitchen is always of an immense size, less on account of the quantity of provisions cooked, than the number of useless servants assembled there : there is no chimney, stoves only are used.

No houses are seen without carpets ; the ancient straw mats of the Indians are no longer used by fashionable people, but are superseded by carpets of European manufacture. Both of these are destined, if there be no fire, to warm

the apartments, and to conceal the inequalities of the floor, where unfortunately the negligence of the servants permits the most loathsome insects to swarm in immense numbers. Some persons cover the walls of their chambers with diel paper; and numbers have garlands of flowers, and genii drawn upon it, in a style alike indicative of the bad taste of the painter and his employer.

The furniture is simple, and usually consists of nothing more than two sofas covered with cotton, two small tables, a few leathern chairs, after the fashion of the fifteenth century; a looking-glass, and three lamps suspended from the ceiling. The bed is tolerably well ornamented, but feathers are never used, it is formed of two wool mattresses.

With some slight difference, all the houses resemble each other; nothing serves to distinguish those of the ministers, and it would be difficult to recognize the president's, were it not for the guard at the entrance.

The architects of Santa-Fè, I repeat, will always have an excuse to justify the deformity of their edifices, viz. the nature of the ground, which, being so often convulsed, compels them to sacrifice elegance and majesty to solidity, thus it is that the houses are so low, although the walls are prodigiously thick. The public buildings are also obliged to have enormous founda-

tions, and the shafts of the columns of the churches are less in proportion to the weight they have to sustain, than to the shocks which they are required to resist.

The architecture of some, however, is in a purer style. The cathedral in particular, erected in 1814, is remarkable for the simplicity of its interior, redeeming, in some degree, the bad taste to which its façade is indebted, for an accumulation of lines produced without harmony, and intersecting each other without the least symmetry.

The other churches of Bogota, to the number of twenty-six, are, on the contrary, resplendent with gold; no temple of the Incas was ever so dazzling. But, although the magnificence of the cathedral itself is not so great, the treasures it possesses are more valuable. One statue of the Virgin alone, out of the many which adorn the altars, is ornamented with 1358 diamonds, 1295 emeralds, 59 amethysts, one topaz, one hyacinth, 372 pearls, and its pedestal is enriched with 609 amethysts; the artist was paid 4000 piastres for his labours.

A great number of churches are dependent upon convents, the revenues of which are very considerable. There are nine monasteries and three nunneries: those of the Dominicans, and of the monks of San Juan de Dios, are the most richly endowed. Four-sixths of the houses

in Bogota belong to them. These retreats, of regular construction, are more remarkable for solidity than beauty of architecture. The building is generally square; in the centre is a court-yard ornamented by a fountain, and having a double range of galleries round it, the lower one of which is generally filled with wretched paintings, representing the history of the saint at whose prayer the convent was founded.

Some of these convents have colleges or hospitals dependent upon them. The monks of San Juan de Dios are particularly devoted to the relief of suffering humanity. What a pity that their hospital has so disgusting an appearance! wooden beds offensive from dirt, upon which lie patients, in rooms inaccessible either to light or air; heaps of filth and ordure in the yards; kitchens, in which victuals are cooked with all the negligence and nastiness peculiar to the den of a savage; straw carpets, black with mud and all imaginable uncleanness; dead bodies exposed on the ground to the view of the dying, are objects which might impair health the most vigorous, and render any cure effected in this loathsome abode, a subject of the utmost astonishment.

The colleges are attended to with more care; they are three in number, and are all well situated and well-built; the principal one, that of the Jesuits, possesses the character of solidity peculiar to all the edifices of that famous order.

The majority of the professors wear the tonsure ; a very small proportion of them being laymen. The course of instruction in these establishments consists of the Latin language, philosophy, the mathematics, and theology ; the pupils are required to devote four hours a-day to study. A three months' vacation is allowed at the end of the year.

It might be imagined, from the pompous title of palace, given to the ancient residence of the viceroys, which is now occupied by the president of the republic, that a sumptuous edifice would present itself ; it is, however, nothing more than a house with a flat roof ; two adjoining ones, much lower, ornamented with galleries, together with the prison, constitute the whole of its dependencies ; here are also the offices of the ministers of state. Upon entering the palace, stair-cases without the least pretensions to elegance, and galleries equally devoid of taste, present themselves ; no hall leads into the presence-chamber : it is entered either from the president's bed-room, or from a small anti-chamber. A few sofas covered with red damask, a worn-out Segovia carpet, some lamps suspended from the cross beams, which, for want of a ceiling, give this part of the saloon the appearance of a barn ; would make it difficult to conceive the idea of a palace, were not the apartment decorated with a throne covered with red damask, a few looking-

glasses, glazed windows, and some wretched paintings. The idea of regality is still further increased by a troop of twenty hussars guarding the avenues ; these, notwithstanding their want of boots and horses, and the wretched plight of their uniforms, give the stranger a hint that he is within the precincts of royalty.

The place, dignified with the name of the palace of the deputies, is nothing but a large house situated at the corner of a street, the ground-floor of which is let out in shops for the selling of brandy. The first objects which attract attention upon ascending the stair-case, are two Fames painted upon the wall, at the foot of which is this inscription : " No country without laws." Having gained the inner gallery, the noise which escapes through a small door indicates it to the visitor to be that of the Hall of Assembly. This consists of a long and narrow room, in the middle of which has been erected a wooden balustrade, upon which the spectators lean ; for no one is seated but the representatives, who are economically placed upon arm-chairs made of polished wood, with leather bottoms, ranged in long rows ; within the balustrade, eight chandeliers, glazed windows, and a matting, compose the decorations of the palace of deputies.

Upon quitting this, it is only necessary to cross the street to enter the palace of the senate, which is perhaps still more simple than that of

the representatives. The Dominicans having granted this body one of the wings of their convent, it was fitted up in a similar manner to the Hall of the Deputies; the walls are, however, ornamented with emblematical figures. Under one of these which represents Justice, the ignorant painter has written *Policy*.

Thus in the palace there is neither *salle de réception*, hall, nor anti-chamber, and when the ministers attend to make any communication to one of the chambers, they are obliged to wait upon the staircase, till the usher of the house, who is at the same time manager of the theatre, comes to disengage them of their umbrella, and invite them to enter.

In their places of confinement the Spanish Americans have established a system of excessive indulgence. The prisons are on the ground floor, and the windows are sufficiently low to allow the passers-by to converse with those incarcerated; as to state prisoners, they are treated with greater severity.

The other public buildings in Bogota are the Mint and the Theatre. The internal arrangements of both of these are excessively bad; neither of them seems adapted to the objects for which it was intended: it is however very surprising to find establishments of this kind in places so far removed from all communication with Europe.

In this respect Bogota resembles, in some degree, the European factories on the coast of Africa: within the town many institutions and customs of the other capitals of the world are to be met with; without, all is different: one is in the centre of Africa, surrounded by barbarians, the greater part of whom have no other cloathing than a shirt and drawers; the abundance even of the fields, so regretted by the Americans who visit Europe, an abundance in comparison of which the riches of our industry appear as wretched poverty, seems to the European, a wild and savage luxuriancy.

The three principal streets of Bogota, are cheerful, tolerably regular, but badly paved. The *trottoirs* are however better than in the other Spanish towns, and passengers walk sheltered from the rain, by favour of the projecting roofs of the houses.

It was a saying of one of their viceroys that Bogota had four police officers, to keep the town clean, the gallinazos (*vultur aura*), the rain, the asses, and the hogs; the same observation will nearly apply now; but the streams of fresh water which run through the streets would cleanse them still more efficaciously, if, at eight o'clock in the evening, the idleness of the inhabitants did not convert them into filthy and infectious sewers.

At night, a few lanterns placed at the corners of some streets, shed a feeble and imperfect light, while the warehouses are committed to the care of nightly watchmen, in spite of whose vigilance they are occasionally broken into. The squares are spacious, and are all ornamented with fountains. That of the palace is on Fridays converted into the market place, which forms an interesting object for foreigners, notwithstanding the confusion among the immense crowds which repair on that day to Bogota.

This market is full of provisions, meat, vegetables, and fruits of every description. Those of Europe and America may here be seen mingled together, on one side are hampers full of strawberries, on the other, ananas, aguacates, peaches and apples; near heaps of cabbages, carrots and potatoes, are yuccas, and bananas; and among sacks of maize, barley and corn, are piles of cocoa, and loaf sugar; in one place are sold numerous healing herbs gathered by the Indians in the paramos, in another, pinks, roses, and jessamine are exposed for sale.

Bogota is subject to a dreadful nuisance; every Saturday, the poor rush into the town as if to take it by assault; they besiege every door, and to gain admittance, endeavour to excite compassion by the exposure of the most revolting infirmities; old men led by children form nu-

nerous groups, which throughout the day obstruct the streets and even block up the thresholds of the houses.

In the neighbourhood of Bogota, are some very agreeable walks which, although shaded by willows and ornamented with rose trees and the beautiful cardamindum, are little frequented; the preference being given to a few select streets, the *trottoirs* of which offer a commodious promenade, as from them gentlemen on horseback may be seen traversing the town at full gallop; the greater part of these horsemen are bedizened with gold, and glittering in military uniforms; some with round hats ornamented with plumes of feathers, others with cocked ones, and a still greater number wearing *shakos* and helmets; although their own appearance is upon the whole striking, that of their horses, which resemble norman ponies, is so wretched as to lessen the effect considerably.

Upon arriving at Bogota, the foreigner, unless he has letters of recommendation, finds himself much embarrassed for a lodging, although as a last resource, he may find, as in other places, a fire and shelter at the *posada*. The best plan is to go to a public hotel, which has lately been established, where, at the rate of a piastre a day, he may find tolerable entertainment.

Living is not very expensive for such as are

contented with their host's fare*, which usually consists of a piece of boiled beef, with some potatoes, yucca, and bananas ; in the more wealthy families, lentils, peas, and kidney beans dressed with lard, are also added, and on gala days, a piece of pork. The bread is tolerably good, little however is eaten ; chocolate is taken thrice a day, and is always accompanied with cheese and confectionery. The most common drink is water, and occasionally chicha. Wine is very rare, and is considered as hurtful as brandy, and with great justice ; both these liquors are very dangerous at Bogota ; the greatest moderation must be observed in the use of them. The meals are very frequent. At seven o'clock in the morning they eat meat, and drink chocolate, at ten they take some soup ; dinner is served up at two, chocolate is again sipped at five, and at ten they sup. Silver goblets are in common use, no one is without them. Napkins are not known, but table cloths are indispensable. Pots of earthenware are generally preferred for drinking water out of, and generally, one serves the whole company. After a repast, they wash their hands, smoke, and then take a *siesta*. This custom is so general, that, at three o'clock the most profound silence reigns throughout the

* See note V.

city, the same as in all towns inhabited by Spaniards.

Some persons have certainly adopted the European manners and customs ; but it was not till after repeated voyages to Jamaica, that they renounced their national habits ; the character of the country is not however to be formed from these cosmopolites.

Bogota cannot boast of ten merchants who can command 100,000 piastres, nor of five individuals, living upon a revenue of equal amount. The most common incomes are from 5, to 10,000 piastres. As almost every inhabitant is a shop-keeper, his business generally increases his income threefold.

The shops are crowded together, dirty, and dark ; the only admission for day-light, is by the door. These however, are the places of resort for the idle. Seated upon his counter, smoking incessantly, and giving laconic answers to his customers, the Colombian merchant in many respects resembles those of Smyrna or Aleppo.

The amusements consist of balls, cock, and bull fights, occasionally the theatre, but more often, games of chance, at which bets sometimes run as high as 10,000 piastres. The pomp displayed in the religious processions, and the multiplicity of Saints' days, greatly contribute to the amusement of the lower orders.

Corpus Christi day is that which is celebra-

ted with the greatest magnificence at Bogota ; it is announced the preceding evening by artificial fire-works. At each corner of the grand square, through which the procession is to pass, are erected four richly ornamented altars, while by a singular mixture of the sacred and profane, *mats de cocagne*, puppet shows and a great number of cages full of rare and curious animals are ranged on all sides. The rejoicings and games cease the moment the bell is heard announcing the approach of the procession. Every one takes off his hat and kneels down in the streets.

At the head of the procession, are chariots dragged along by men ; in one is king David, with the head of Goliath in his hand ; in another, Esther ; in a third, Mordecai ; Joseph, next makes his appearance upon a horse richly caparisoned, and followed by a great number of guards ; these however, are only mounted on paste-board chargers. All these personages are the children of the principal inhabitants of the city. To obtain the honour of acting a part in this imposing spectacle, is a great desideratum, and those who are honoured, by having their children nominated, neglect no kind of expense ; rivalling each other in splendour, they lay pearls, diamonds, emeralds, and rubies under contribution, and put their imagination to the rack, in order to render the dresses of the actors more magnificent. The clergy advance slowly amid the crowd of the faith-

ful, with which the square is thronged. The most beautiful girls in the city walk between two rows of priests, some carrying the ark, and the shew-bread, others incense, or baskets of flowers ; to these succeed young Indians, who, to the sound of a flute and tabor, perform wild fantastic dances. The procession is closed by a detachment of troops, with arms and colours reversed.

This fête is certainly the most magnificent that can be witnessed in America ; those of Christmas, in the warm countries, are not to be compared with it. The latter, however, are more productive of pleasure, for they occasion both in the streets and houses, balls and masquerades, which the cool of the evening renders particularly pleasing.

As in all capitals, morals are more relaxed at Bogota, than in other towns ; but crimes are rare, nor does drunkenness lead to excesses, although the number of shops for the sale of brandy and chicha is very considerable : their sign is a cabbage leaf.

The inhabitants of Bogota, are mild, polite, and cheerful : their gaiety never degenerates into pertness or petulancy. There are few women who are not pretty, and still fewer who are not well formed ; their singular costume, is completely original.

Here, as throughout the republic, the only mark of distinction between the two classes of

society, the rich and the poor, consists in the wearing of shoes. All the girls of the lower orders go barefooted ; with the majority of them this is a means of pleasing which excites the envy of more than one signora.

These very females, either by their personal charms, the caprice of the men, or their own good fortune, are sometimes entitled to pass into the superior class ; but, by a strange prejudice, and an inexplicable reserve, this change is never sudden. The public opinion is first prepared by a curious costume, cut exactly in the fashion, and made of the same materials as the dresses of nuns ; those who are thus clothed, are called *bcates*. This habit is also sometimes assumed by coquetry, or luxury ; but a religious motive is then the pretext, or the obtaining the cure of a husband, a father or mother the alledged cause ; a valuable privilege attached to the cut of a gown which sanctifies her who wears it, represses the jealous feeling excited in female breasts at the sight of a pretty woman, and procures health with no other change in the habits and manner of living, than the obligation of not choosing any colour for gowns, than white or maroon, and of adopting a fashion in dress not less strange than that of the clothes daily worn !!

The enlightened taste which some individuals evince for the sciences and literature, has induced the government to establish a library

containing at present about 6000 volumes, a botanical garden, and an observatory, but these two latter establishments are absolutely abandoned ; there are three printing offices, but they have not much occupation, two gazettes, and a few law papers, being the whole of their weekly employment.

Very few negroes are found in the capital ; the half-bred Indians alone being employed as servants, the mulattoes are less rare ; their colour does not in the least prejudice them in the eyes of the white ladies, who, it is said, do not view them with indifference.

A foreigner has great difficulty in being well waited upon by his servants, especially when travelling ; for, being with difficulty understood by the country-people, his servants become his interpreters, and by the familiarity thus necessarily established, in a short time, his equals.

It is not easy to say what are the political opinions of the inhabitants of Bogota. Like all those who live in capital cities, they are oppositionists, because they see the machine of government too near ; but they may be considered rather as spectators indifferent as to its fall or duration, than as enemies dangerous to its existence. Provided they pay no taxes, and are at liberty to abuse, they consider themselves free. After having given the re-

volutionary impulse, this capital will, for the future, receive it from the provinces, and every enemy who makes himself master of the plain, will give the law to Bogota.

Some idea has been formed of establishing the capital of the republic at Cucuta ; this is an unjust and ill conceived project ; the only result would be a solitary city, like Washington ; all life and energy would remain at Bogota. The name of Bolivar might be immortalized, but there would never be a great and powerful city, it is as difficult to raise these with a breath, as it is empires. These gigantic ideas, so imposing in theory, have never succeeded but once, and that in an absolute monarchy,—in Russia.

Bogota is then at present the seat of the government ; and it is in this city that the best idea may be formed of the revenues and resources of the republic ; an account of these will be given in the next chapter.