

## CHAPTER XIX.

Population—Inhabitants of the Paramos—Inhabitants of the corn mountains—Inhabitants of the plains—Indios bravos—Negro Slaves—Religion.

ALL the provinces of Colombia were so united under the Spanish government, they had so seldom occasion to compare themselves together and to hate each other, that they knew only the two great divisions of Caracas and New Grenada. The distinctions of colours and cast were unknown. There were only slaves, subjects and a sovereign. Now that titles have been abolished to revive the rights of each individual, there are neither masters nor slaves ; we find only equals ready to tear each other to pieces. Formerly all constituted one great Spanish family, at present, if we except their language and religion which are the same, the bonds of union are broken. Here are the blacks and there the whites ; on one side the half whites, and on the other mulattoes.

To make these differences better known, we shall give a distinct account of the different races, their origin and their mixture ; we shall class the inhabitants of Colombia according to the places which they inhabit, and describe in a separate chap-

ter their national character, dividing them into inhabitants of the hot and the cold lands.

In general the creoles who are called whites, descend from a mixture of the Spanish race with the blacks and Indians. In the maritime provinces, the first especially have entered into European families ; and in the Cordilleras, it has been necessary to admit the Indians.

The whites on the coast, have all the Spanish features ; those of the Cordilleras have more resemblance with the Europeans of the north, though their eyes have retained in a great degree the obliquity of the Indians ; they have generally black and rough hair like the aborigenes of the New World.

A great number of the inhabitants of Colombia are disfigured by two horrid maladies, the syphilis and the goitres ; the children are born with the germs of the disorder. The first seems to be endemical in the country. Neglected by the ignorance of the inhabitants, it assumes a thousand different shapes ; nevertheless it is not so violent as in Europe ; every remedy is at hand to check its progress.

Nothing can cure the goitre ; there are places where every body is afflicted with it, without any reason that can be assigned. However, in general, it is met with only in the mountains, and in places remote from the influence of the sea breezes.

The negroes and Indians have a strong constitution, very superior to that of the whites. The negroes have all the characteristics of the African countenance ; among those of Colombia are placed the children of the Indian and the black, whose features are generally handsome, with a good stature and long hair ; they are called *zambos*.

The Indians are very robust ; their teeth never decay, and their hair does not turn grey, till they are ninety years of age. They are extremely sober, and their stomach so strong, that nothing can incommode them. The Indians have round countenances, rather more broad than long, and a little convex ; the forehead flattened and the hair coming down within two fingers breadth of the eye-brows ; the skull low ; the nose small and thin ; their eyes black, oblique and without expression ; very prominent cheek bones, their lips rather thick ; they have no beard till a very advanced age. They are of middling stature ; their body square and broad is supported by little crooked legs. Their colour is copper in the mountains, and bronze in the plains.

The Indians, formerly condemned to a state of servitude, have all been declared free since the revolution ; so that we hear no more of the distinctions of *Indios reducidos* (reduced Indians) ; but that of *Indios racionales* or *civili-*

*zados*, (rational or civilized Indians) ; and those of *Indios bravos, irracionales, salvajes*, (savage Indians).

All the Indians of the mountains, except those who inhabit the heights of Santa-Marta, and some parts of the chain of the Quindiu, are classed under the first head ; a small number of the Indians of the plains may be included in it ; the remainder form part of the second.

The latter are esteemed for their perseverance in labour, and their strength, which renders them capable of resisting the inclemency of the weather, though it is not equal to too severe labour. They are also valued for works which require patience, and above all for their obedience.

The *Indios bravos* are an entirely opposite character ; whence the effeminacy which is always the effect of a warm and moist temperature, has been ascribed to the custom followed by those of the mountains of placing their huts on the sides of lakes and marshes, and their immoderate use of *chicha*.

A temperate climate which never varies induces peaceable manners ; besides, three centuries of peace, the abundance produced by easy agricultural labours, of which they are fond, the repose secured by the remoteness or absence of formidable enemies, have preserved among the Indians that mild and docile character, which

they had even at the time of the conquest, since in the Cordillera, royalty was every where established on a splendid footing, and a traveller without quitting the summit of the Andes, passed from one monarchy to another, from Mexico to Peru.

On the highest summit of the Cordillera, we meet with Indians feeding their flocks, or retired into their huts, without any other clothing than a cotton shirt, and trowsers; they seldom need any fire to warm themselves; whereas in the deserts of Africa, the people cannot sleep in the night, without lighting one. The Indians hardly ever enjoy the sight and the agreeable warmth of the sun. Always enveloped in vapours, chilled by the winds which descend from the snowy peaks, from which they are sometimes only a few toises distant; almost naked, but accustomed to this miserable life, they pass their days unknown to the rest of mankind, with whose existence they are themselves unacquainted. Happy in the enjoyment of a liberty which nobody envies them, they roam about the heaths of the paramos, without thinking that the universe is at their feet; for them it begins in the region of the cryptogamous plants, and ends with that of the snows.

There is something singular, though it has been but little remarked, in the existence of a pastoral people, placed at the height of 2,000 toises

above the level of the sea, who have pasturages as rich as those of the plains of Russia, and live amid rocks as elevated as the Peak of Teneriffe.

From these desolate scenes, where vegetation expires, we descend to those where it revives, and where nature resumes her strength. Here we find another nation of Indians, who cultivate the soil; the fields are covered with harvests, the seeds of which they have received from Europe.

The Indian does not like living in large societies;—he is melancholy, and it is seldom that a neighbour troubles his repose. Perhaps the Indians originally dispersed themselves in this manner, that they might not have among them a Spaniard under the name of priest or an alcaid.

The Indian of the mountain is not like the negro, noisy in his pleasures, though equally partial to music and dancing; they are both fond of them in a different manner. The negro when dancing leaps, springs, and stamps with his feet; the Indian, on the contrary, moves with a slow measured step; the one is animated only by the sound of the drum, and the noise of his enormous ivory trumpets; the other is affected only by the mournful languishing tone of a hollow reed; he listens with delight to one of his bards, beating time with a hollow bamboo, filled with grains of maize, or scraping with a stick on the jaw bone of a mule, the only instrument possessed by the inhabitants of the Cordillera. Their tastes,

their diversions, are as calm as the air they breathe.

In proportion as we remove from the heights, the appearance of nature and of the inhabitants changes. The banks of the river are generally burnt up by a sultry heat; we observe other habits, another mode of life, and often regret the mildness of the shepherds, and the politeness of the Indian farmers, when comparing it with the rude and violent character of the coasters and the fishermen.

The people of the plains of the Oronooko, and the Apure, present an infinite variety of colours. Their character is lively and passionate. If in the town this vivacity degenerates into rudeness, in the plains it becomes boldness and courage. The free negro, or the mulattoc, in the maritime provinces, if he be not a sailor, is a workman. Those of the plains return to the natural taste of all the Africans, and very different from all the Indians of the mountains, they are fond of riding on horseback, hunting and war. In fact, the Indians of the Cordilleras love the peaceful labours of agriculture, are attached to their huts, patiently support fatigue, and fear danger. The inhabitant of the plain eagerly seeks it; to hunt the jaguar, to tame a fiery courser, to catch a bull with a noose: these are his sports and exercises. As bold when they make war as when they attack the bulls in the woods, these people often employ,

to catch them, a noose of leather, which they throw with such address, that whatever it reaches is taken and killed. In the pampas of Buenos Ayres a similar race of men fix iron balls to the end of the thongs, a terrible weapon, which seldom misses its object.

Nothing stops them in their excursions and their enterprises. Mounted on their horses, they capture, even in the water, fleets which suppose themselves secure from their attacks. It was thus that País destroyed that of the Spaniards on the Oronooko.

These new Arabs naturally despise the indolent and mild people of the Cordilleras. Civilization appears to them to be a weakness, which they designate by all the diminutives of the Spanish language. The inhabitants of the Andes are, in their eyes, not brave and hardy men, but *blanquillos*, little whites.

The Llanaros, or inhabitants of the plain, are divided like all the people of the *tierras calientes*, into the children of Europeans and Indian women, and those of negroes and Indians. Among them we still find tribes of Indians, whose savage habits have not been changed in any degree; and who, since the destruction of the missions, will not lose them, except by entering into the families of the new inhabitants of the plains.

The *Indios bravos* (savage Indians) have neither the mildness of those called *reducidos*; nor the courageous, though not ferocious bold-

ness of the Zambos, who occupy their territory. They are unacquainted with any other means of combatting their enemies than by surprise; and when they fall into their hands they eat them. The want of food, which these people naturally experienced when they first came into these vast countries, was probably the origin of this horrible custom.

The number of savage Indians in Colombia is considerable; and though ancient and modern geographers have included them in the Spanish possessions, they have always enjoyed a complete independence which Spain left them, or which they acquire by concealing themselves in inaccessible places. Perhaps if Spain had been able to have conquered all America, in the first century after the discovery, they would have been subjected to its laws; but a hundred years afterwards the Spaniards thought only of enjoying, and the conquest of a few barbarians offered no temptation. Thus the Guajires who live between Santa-Martha and Rio-Hacha; the Indians of the Darien and of San-Blas\*; the Andaquis to the south of Timana, and the numerous wandering tribes from the banks of the Amazons to those of the Apure lived in peace, so long as they did not act offensively.

It is long since they have disturbed the repose of their civilized neighbours, who, on their

\* They all speak English.

side, do not interfere with them. By degrees the colonists advance and make them retire ; but wives are no longer to be obtained among them. The jealousy of the men has contrived to inspire the women with a violent antipathy for the whites, whose first invasions have not been forgotten. The system of *repartimientos* prevents this inconvenience ; by reducing the Indians to the state of vassals, they were made to consider it as an honour to enter the families of their masters. These unions have given birth to a peaceful, agricultural, and industrious population in places, which before this measure, rendered necessary by circumstances, had been stained with the blood of human sacrifices.

The independence which all these savages, whether mulattoes, negroes, or Indians, enjoy, and the nature of the country in which they live, should make the chiefs of the government give up the idea of again transporting the camel into America, and they should the less regret that the first attempt of this kind was counteracted by the civil war ; in fact, if this attempt had succeeded, it is very probable that the black and almost savage inhabitants of the plains, provided with some bananas, deriving an intoxicating and never-failing beverage from the trunks of the palms, would not have consented to have remained in fixed abodes. Even since the beginning of the war a great number of the Llaneros have deserted

them ; already they look with contempt on the frozen summit of the Andes, and defying the timid and mild inhabitants of those mountains, they seem to await them in the plains, where, perishing with heat and thirst, they will fall an easy prey.

These hypotheses are not without foundation. The inhabitant of the burning plain of America, amidst the oppression of the heat, the plague of the insects, and the danger of the wild beasts, has acquired a degree of bravery to which the mountaineers are strangers. The mild temperature which the Indian half whites breathe in their valleys has given them a delicate constitution, which makes them as sensible as the European to the heat of the plain. They rarely escape the fever, and often fall victims to it ; so that the new people of Bedouins, who are supposed to be spread in the plains, possessing every thing favourable to a wandering life, the camel, the horse, large flocks, and the banan would, perhaps, renew against Santa-Fè de Bogota, Caracas, and in general against all the towns, the incursions to which they might be invited by the hope of pillage. Perhaps the roads of Venezuela, infested by their robberies, will not become safe again till peace be purchased, as is done on the road to Mecca.

An immense continent, where it was easy to find a secure retreat, obliged the Spaniards to

adopt a system of excessive indulgence and mildness towards their slaves. However, if they had obviated the danger of desertion, they had not avoided that of the neglect of agriculture, so that every thing languished, and the productions of the soil in the continent were very inferior to those of the Antilles. Though the number of slaves was considerable, it decreased every year by the custom of the Spaniards, who, when dying, enfranchised them.

The new government imbibing the principles of the European peninsula, has shewn itself very favourable to the slaves, and by a law lately passed, in forty years there will be none remaining in the republic.

The greatest number of negroes is found in the maritime provinces. Those of Antioquia, the Magdalena, of Cauca, of Guayaquil, and of Choco, contain a great number; they have increased there in such a manner that the whites are noticed as in our colonies. In the eastern branch of the Cordilleras there are none but whites and Indians.

In all the families of the people, whatever be their origin or colour, they are scarcely ever troubled with domestic discord; if there is but little cordiality among the number which compose it, on the other hand there is a mutual attention and respect which give pleasure. The father of the family is an object of veneration;

his children give him the title of *su merced*, your grace, and come morning and evening to pay him their respect, and to ask his blessing on their knees.

The kind hospitality which the poorest inhabitants of Colombia, formerly took delight in shewing is now a subject of chagrin and uneasiness to them; formerly they offered it, now in many places they will not grant it, unless threatened by the alcaid; deceived, plundered by ferocious soldiers, every traveller appears to them a tyrant, coming to occupy their house by force. Formerly hospitality was gratuitous, now it is paid for, at least a compensation must be given to the host. Thus the disasters of war, and acts of injustice, have given rise to feelings of self interest, and there is reason to suppose that in a few years it will be carried to excess.

The following is the statement of the population of New Grenada :

Whites. . . . .	250,000
Mestizoes of whites and Indians. .	400,000
Indians . . . . .	450,000
Mulattoes. . . . .	550,000
Free negroes and slaves . . . . .	94,600
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	1,744,600

Venezuela is supposed to contain 900,000 inhabitants, two-thirds of whom are people of colour; so that, in a population of 2,644,600

individuals, the number of whites is very inconsiderable. But the Indian mestizoes, who, to pretend to the title of whites, require only half a century to make their origin forgotten, will greatly augment this cast, in which they naturally enter by their colour; an inestimable advantage to the whites, as the mestizoes increase with a prodigious rapidity, and the war does not appear to have diminished their numbers.

It should seem that, in revolutions, the population is hidden like money, and, in fact, when peace succeeds the dangers of war, it reappears in a wonderful manner; this will be the case in Colombia, the number of whose inhabitants, after a few years repose, will increase, as is already proved, by the cultivation of waste lands, which has begun in many places.

All the casts, composing the population of Colombia, have learnt, by the revolution and by the agents from St. Domingo, to set a value on themselves. They all labour in concert towards the expulsion of foreigners, each with a view of serving his own colour. The Indians alone, indifferent to the choice of their masters, regret the kindness shown them by the Spaniards, who suffered them to enjoy a real independence in their villages, called by the name of *pueblos de Indios*. They are not much pleased with an equality which assimilates them with the negroes, towards whom they feel a strong antipathy.

The strongest bond of union between all these races, which hinders them from coming to a rupture with each other, is religion. Every where it preaches concord among the people, that the unity of divine worship may be preserved, every where its word is listened to with respect; all casts, and all classes, submit to its decrees, and their hatred is appeased at its command.

The climate, the prudence of the clergy, the education which the people have received from the Spaniards, and which, during three centuries, has not been affected by any contact of foreigners, have inspired all the Colombians with a profound respect for all the exercises of religion; accordingly, the fairest title which a Frenchman has in their eyes, is that of *most christian*, and if they envy our nation in any thing, it is the having given so many saints to the church.

The authority of the parish priests is absolute; the respect shewn them is such, that nobody would, on any account, withhold a part of the first fruits which are paid to the priest. In other respects, it is pleasing to find, in the midst of this half-savage population, prudent men, whose ascendancy is able to make them submissive to the laws, and to counteract the tyranny of the municipal authorities. The ecclesiastics are reproached with hating the heretics, and with treating the Indians with cruelty: but abuses are always found, wherever man exists.

Notwithstanding the irregularities which are laid to the charge of the priests, the greatest decorum prevails in the churches: the devotion of the faithful is no less striking: genuflexion, prostration of soul, nothing is too much for their fervent piety. Their eyes fixed on the officiating priest, are never drawn aside by an inattentive reading of the holy book; all the prayers are known by heart, and punctually recited.

The women, as in Spain, can only sit down on the ground; contrary to the precept of St. Paul, they must all have their heads uncovered. With the exception of holidays, vespers are never said. A person is not allowed to marry till he has taken an oath that he is not a freemason, and submitted to a retreat and penitence for a longer or shorter period.

These are not the only religious practices which are different from ours. At funerals, the body is carried uncovered and richly dressed; and they have preserved the Indian custom of dancing and rejoicing at the death of an infant. But few towns have public burying grounds, and the dead are still deposited under the pavement of the churches.

Many members of the American clergy, if they did not fear, by separating from Rome, to establish a principle of independence fatal to themselves, would be very glad to withdraw from the supremacy of a remote sovereign; they would

be particularly happy in having an ecclesiastical court, but they are afraid of justifying, by innovations, those of their adversaries, and of putting into the hands of the civil power, which already claims the *patronato* (patronage)\*, which Spain possessed in the American church, the spiritual sceptre which Henry VIII assumed. For this reason, they prefer preserving their authority, which is always respectable, if they themselves respect its ancient forms.

At present, the clergy, having no bold leaders, are not dangerous to the new government. Happy in retaining their property, undisturbed in their enjoyments, the heads of the clergy receive the homage with which they are dazzled; and provided they are honoured, abstain from hostile projects. The plebian members alone would willingly excite confusion; they are young and ardent, but the Roman hierarchy is so immovable, that they must either remain attached to it, or fall into heresy: they choose the former. The American revolution, partly the work of the ecclesiastics, because they hoped to direct its movements and reap the fruit of it, is a field which still satisfies their ambition; this is at present confined to the gaining a name by writings, or by speeches in a legislative assembly, in which it is easy to succeed, because the members of the

\* This right was granted to the kings of Spain by Julius II. in 1580.

clergy are the most enlightened men of the republic. On the other hand, this transitory triumph, during which they have already seen some of their most inveterate enemies crowned by the people, is a rock against which the moral influence of the priests is weakened, and daily suffers by the criticisms the profane make upon their talents and their eloquence, which ceases to be powerful in the pulpit when it has been found feeble in the tribune. They plead the cause of religion to less advantage when they have lost that of political interests.