

CHAPTER V.

Journey into the province of Socorro, situated to the north of Santa-Fè de Bogota.

SCARCELY had I returned from one journey than I was anxious to undertake another, and Socorro, rich in industry and population, appeared to present the greatest interest. In the month of June, therefore, I procured two mules, engaged an intelligent guide, and set out for the valley of Tenza, which is to the north north-east of Bogota: by following this course, I could examine the plain of Bogota in its greatest extent.

We took the royal road: the ground perfectly level facilitated the construction of a highway similar to those in Europe. In many parts are seen farms of a very handsome appearance, covered with tiles and furnished with panes of glass to their windows. All these farms are carefully inclosed with stone walls. I crossed the plain at the time when the corn was green; it promised abundantly for the harvest which was to take place in two months afterwards. The bridge, constructed over the Commun, is of stones; this work of the Spaniards is not without merit, it is moreover exceedingly useful.

for the communications of Bogota with the salt mines of Zipaquira. The Commun discharges itself into the Bogota. When the plain is more inhabited and better cultivated, this river will be very commodious for commerce and the different relations of the country; not a canoe is at present to be seen on it. The night came on, and as a short time before an alcaid had been assassinated near the place where we were, I stopped at a farm.

The next day I passed through a number of small villages, situated on the road to Tunja. In general, they are only inhabited by Indians, who live by twisting cotton, or manufacturing pottery ware. The cabins of these poor people are extremely small, and some of them are round as they all were previous to the conquest. It is not without surprise that, in the middle of these wretched huts, the house of the curate is seen from afar, raising its proud head like a castle. Indeed the balconies, the glazed windows, the tiles with which the presbytery is ornamented, impart to it an air of magnificence which creates astonishment when compared with the wretchedness of the hovels by which it is surrounded.

Towards noon, quitting the plain, in which our route hitherto lay, I approached the granite mountains commanding it. Sesquila the last village of the plain of Bogota, on this side, is situated at a short distance from the lake of Gua-

tavita. I found the air very sharp upon the Paramo de Chocotan, the wind blowing there with as much violence as on the sea-shore. A very small but cold rain, froze our faces and hands. The soil of Chocotan is of a very dark colour; the land is undulating like that of downs, and the grass is so fine, that the foot-steps of the traveller, are effaced almost as quickly as in the sands of an African desert.

It is in these wild places that the hunter repairs to pursue the animals which, envelopped in perpetual mists, think themselves safe from the shafts of man. The bear is here remarkable for his strength and courage, and the inhabitants are continually at war with him. Mounted upon horses and armed with a lance, they attack and are often victorious; these feats are however many times attended with danger. It is indeed very interesting when on the top of an elevation so prodigious, to hear the cries of the hunters, the barking of the dogs, and all the cheerful tumult of the chase suddenly succeed to the hollow roaring of the winds; it is impossible to see without astonishment horsemen galloping fearless along the rugged tops of mountains, crossing torrents, bounding over precipices, scaling rocks, and at length reaching with their spears the animal worn out with the fatigue of flight.

Upon descending the Paramo de Chocotan, I met with an isolated hut built at a short dis-

tance from a petroleum (petrote) mine, belonging to the cathedral of Santa-Fé. Here I passed the night. Although the sowing was over, they were working in the fields with great activity. Furnished with a hoe fixed at the end of a long handle, the *pions*, so the day labourers are called, were occupied in hoeing the land. These labourers, whose task commences with the day and finishes at night, receive one real, and two rations of *masamora* (boiled rice) per day. Those employed upon the coast are paid double, and have daily a pound of meat. It is true that the fatigue is much greater on the burning coasts of the sea than in the Cordilleras. The labours of agriculture are much less severe for him who works under a temperature of 12° to 15° than for him who groans under the weight of 25 to 30°, R.

I coasted the Machetan, the banks of which are very rugged; its source is in the Paramo, which we had traversed the preceding evening. This torrent runs through a rich valley; and on arriving near Somondocon, takes the name of that village, and runs eastward into the Llanos. The road was dreadful which made me admire the hardiness of some women, who travelled on horseback in company with us, carrying their infants in their arms. Spite of the dangers which every instant threatened them, they laughed and sang with as much

gaiety and unconcern as if they had been in the best carriage and on the best roads in France. We arrived all together at Tiribita, in the rivulets of which are found many ferruginous pyrites ; we afterwards reached Guatake : these two villages are built upon territory called Indian.

The Indians are loudly accused of regretting the ancient regime: that may be the case, since formerly they allowed no white to settle among them, while in the present day, they see their territory invaded by all sorts of avaricious men. This forced union keeps up among the inhabitants of these villages, a violent antipathy, and an inveterate animosity.

I crossed the river a little beyond Guatake, and began to climb up the opposite bank on which Somondocon is built. The temperature was here milder, and the whole face of nature appeared to me richer and more varied than I had observed it in coming from Machetan. In fact, on all sides were plantations of the sugar cane, mace, and yucca,* inclosed by willow hedges; cotton trees and cactus, round which were twined thousands of the bind-weed family loaded with flowers of the most brilliant hues. The mountain, at the base of which Somondocon is situated, presented a very curious sight ; one

* The *Tutropha Manihot*. The root of this plant is made into a sort of cakes, and is almost the only bread used in America.—*Translator*.

might have imagined it to be formed entirely of crystal ; this effect was produced by numerous torrents falling vertically amid the thick forests, fringing its declivities. Even at the distance where I stood, the noise of these cataracts was tremendous.

Somondocon is so poor a village, that no one could afford me hospitality. I thought that the parsonage would certainly grant me an asylum ; I was however deceived in my conjecture. Francisco Antonio Dias, for that was the curate's name, declared that he had already strangers in his house, and refused to receive me ; not a soul however was there. My embarrassment was most distressing. One woman alone took compassion on my unfortunate situation, I perceived it, and laid claim to her kindness. But the opinion, and especially the anger of the curate, delayed her consent ; at length I obtained it, and received in her humble cabin attentions I should, with difficulty, have found elsewhere. The slight difference in civilization, which distinguishes the part of America I was now in, from the regions of Africa, which I had traversed four years before, produces none whatever in the affectionate sympathy of females for the suffering traveller ; he has never to fear appealing in vain to the tenderness of a woman.

I had often heard of the richness of the emerald mines, which the Indians had former-

ly worked in this neighbourhood ; and had a great wish to discover the traces of them. I questioned many people very particularly, but the only result of my enquiries, was a faint hope of being able to make some discoveries in a neighbouring mountain, which I was recommended to visit. This advice pleasing me, I was preparing for my departure on the next day, when the alcade of Somondocon, followed by a dozen of his attendants, came into my room, and presenting me a letter, desired I would read it. Fixing his eyes upon my face, he endeavoured to discover the uneasiness which the reading of the letter might cause me. It was not of a nature to give me any. The civil judge at Guatake, had given instructions to the alcaid to watch my motions with the utmost vigilance, it being supposed my intention to pass from the high country into the Llanos. He also expressly ordered him to demand my passport, which I immediately put into his hands; the alguazils of the curate, for it was by his order this trick was played me, instantly retired covered with confusion.

This adventure did not deter me from my design, and accompanied by a steady guide, I proceeded in an easterly direction, towards the mountain supposed to contain emeralds; from its summit the Llanos are discovered; but so difficult was the road, that I did not reach

till after three hours of painful toil. I was well recompensed however for my fatigues by the magnificent view which suddenly burst upon my sight. On the east was seen an extensive and deep valley intersected by the Majoma, from which it derives its name; at a still greater distance and considerably lower, though in the same direction, a dark and thick cloud was perceptible behind some mountains of small elevation; it was the Llanos de San Martin, situated at about two or three days' journey. But for my guide, I should never have been able to have recognised it as land, by indications, which, from a singular coincidence, are the same as those which announce the proximity of land at sea. Turning towards the west, the rich and beautiful valley watered by the Somondocon, presents itself, with the villages, the dazzling whiteness of whose houses forms an agreeable contrast with the green verdure of the surrounding country. Somondocon, hidden in the gigantic shadows of the mountains, was concealed from my view; but I distinguished Manta, Guatake, Suta, and numerous isolated huts shaded by bananas.

Though I could not see either men or cattle, I could ascertain the spot where they were, from their cries, which, rising with the vapours from the plain, resounded in my ears. This effect is not of rare occurrence in the mountains, men frequently here converse together at distances

which the voice could never traverse in flat countries. My search after emeralds was fruitless : in vain did I examine the sand of the rivulets and the schist of which the mountain is composed, nothing could be found ; I therefore descended from these cold regions to enter a warmer and less barren country. Our excursion would have been unattended with any accident, had not my guide's dog, almost famished with the fasts he had so long endured, rushed upon a flock of sheep ; and in spite of the cries, the threats and blows of his master, tore one of them in pieces. These ravages happen very frequently ; the dogs often even unite in bands to attack horses and cows ; but this is only the case when carrion fails them. To discover this they watch the gallinazos (*vultur aura*), and when they see them assembling in one spot, guessing it is some prey which attracts them, they rush thither, and after driving away those voracious birds, supply their place.

I expected to have found my passport at Somondocon, which had been forwarded the evening before to the civil judge of Guatake : I waited for it in vain till noon, when, becoming impatient at this delay, I set forward on my return to Guatake. Having demanded my passport from the alcalds, complaining at the same time of their want of dispatch, they feebly excused themselves, but soon made me forget these dis-

greeables, by offering me their house to pass the night in. Upon my declining their offer, from my desire of arriving quickly at Suta, they dispatched, unknown to me, an express, with instructions to the commandant of Suta, to treat me with great respect ; their orders were punctually obeyed, this officer shewing me the utmost kindness and attention.

At Suta, to my great surprise, I received a visit from the son of a French doctor, who had died in this country several years since ; his name was Courtois, he had however turned it into Spanish, by making it Cortes : it was impossible to witness, without compassion, the deplorable state of poverty to which the son of a countryman was reduced ; almost entirely naked, he could only be distinguished from the most wretched of the inhabitants, by his face, the features of which had not been debased by misery. My host at Suta wished me to make a three-days' stay with him : but I forced myself away from his kindness ; and, on the 20th of June, directed my course to the north north-east towards Tenza. I only passed through this village, and did not enter Guachabita till night had closed in.

Here terminates the valley of Tenza, which is dependent on the province of Tunja. Few diseases are found here ; no one is afflicted with goitres. A great number of streams cross the

valley of Tenza in every direction, giving rise to several rivers, which all discharge their waters into the Somondocon: the latter, after having described various sinuosities, forms a confluence with the Meta. The banks of the Somondocon are full of salt-springs, which the inhabitants use instead of the salt of Zipaquira.

The country is rather elevated; the soil is fat earth, but so much softened by the rains, as to render the roads impassable. The inhabitants however, complain but little of this temporary inconvenience, when they see the riches of the harvests. Here man answers to the voice of nature; every thing is assiduously cultivated, bananas, sugar-canes, mace, yucca, all thrive in wonderful abundance. But notwithstanding so many invaluable benefits, man is poor; enriched by nature, society ruins him by the vicious system of the imposts it exacts from him. In vain do his plantations flourish, in vain are his granaries filled, the inhabitants of Tenza groan amid misery the most wretched; and, as upon the Magdalena, the poor are seen seated at the foot of abundance itself. One cannot enter a house, nor a street, without meeting crowds of beggars; in the villages, in the country, in fact every where are persons asking alms. How can one refuse to grant assistance to infirmities of old age!

The charm imparted to this spot by the

beauty of the surrounding scenery, and by the mild temperature, which, during the fine season, lasts from September to March, is totally destroyed by these objects of misery and wretchedness. At the time of my journey, the country was inundated by the continual rains. Deceived by the drought which had succeeded the storms in the plain of Santa-Fè, whose climate is totally different from that of the other parts of the Cordilleras, upon descending into the valley of Tenza, I had expected to find the same temperature. I was, however, completely deceived; every place here has a different sky, temperature, and seasons, arising from the difference of elevation.

The temperature is generally from 15° to 16° , and the climate being very healthy, the number of old people is, therefore, very considerable; many have even reached their hundredth year. I was shown a tree, which some children had thrown across a torrent, to enable their mother, who was above a hundred and fifteen years old, to go a nearer way to church, whither she went several times a-week, although it was situated very far from her hut, and the road to it very steep and dangerous. As the valley of Tenza is to the east of the immense summit of the Cordilleras, it follows the variations of the climate of the Janos, so that the spring blooms, and the rains fall there at the same time as in the plains,

and consequently the season for sowing is not the same as on the mountains of Bogota. The various stages of cultivation, and their accompanying labours, may therefore be seen on the same day. On the elevated parts, sowing takes place in March; towards the middle of the mountain in May; and in the valley beneath, in July. But such is the force of vegetation in the latter place, that all arrives there at maturity before the inhabitants of the summit can form an idea of the produce of their harvest.

Upon quitting Pachabita, we quickly reached Volador, a mountain of but trifling elevation. We then entered the region of the cold country. On these mountains man appeared to me as different as the vegetable tribe. To the gaiety which reigns throughout the valley of Tenza had succeeded the deepest gloom and sadness. Upon entering the hamlet of Umbita, I was struck with seeing a man fastened to a stake, by order of the curate; a short time after, I saw another smarting under the cane of a military serjeant.—What rapid changes! In the valley at every step, I admired nature's holiday celebrated by poverty and wretchedness; here I saw man as miserable as the earth he inhabited.

The reflections, suggested by the sight of so much misery, added to a temperature of from 8 to 10° only, made me pass a very uncomfortable night. Being ready to set off before day-break

I once more entered the Paramos,* where I again found fine weather, which was wafted hither by the same easterly winds that inundate the valley of Tenza. I left Turmeque on the south, and before noon arrived at Tiribi. Every thing here presented a new aspect; instead of bananas and sugar-canes, I found corn and potatoe-fields. The soil, without being as fertile as that of Tenza, appeared fruitful, and in more industrious hands, susceptible of improvement. The country was rather more woody, and flocks, covered with thick fleeces, were grazing in the meadows. Man, however, still appeared to be a sufferer, and the salutation with which I was welcomed, that of *Master*, indicated the state of slavery to which these people had been reduced for so many ages.

I had just made myself comfortable at Tiribi, in a hut, the use of which had been granted me, when I was disturbed by the entrance of a tall stout man; it was the curate. After the usual compliments, he requested I would lend him my watch; I presented it to him. He then begged I would make him a present of it; and, upon my refusal, desired I would give him my sabre; and upon again receiving a denial, he retired, inviting me in no very gracious terms to pay him a visit.

* The Paramo is a very high part of the Cordillera, constantly covered with snow, where it is always extremely cold.—*Translator.*

Shortly after quitting Tiribi, I traversed the field of battle of Boyaca; where, in 1809, the Spaniards were defeated by the patriots. The same night I entered Tunja, and was hospitably received by the curate; he is one of those whose attentions have had most claim to my grateful remembrance.

Tunja, before the arrival of the victorious Spaniards in these parts, was already a considerable town, and as important in Cundinamarca as Cusco in Peru. Quesada obtained possession of it by the same means as Pizarro and Cortes had found so successful: he put the king of Tunja to death. The riches he found amid the spoils of that prince, the sight of which made the Spaniards exclaim, "We also have found a Peru;" enabled him to build a new town, which was for a long time the rival of Bogota, the whole of the nobility of the country having retired thither: it is now nothing but a desert.

Tunja possesses no recommendations whatever: neither inhabitants, mildness of temperature, nor water, either plentiful or healthy, are to be found. The people are afflicted with goitres, the sky is seldom without clouds, and the climate is very cold; in short, almost all the houses are in ruins. A very interesting phenomenon, however, attracts the curious thither, and constitutes the delight of the inhabitants. To the north-west of Tunja, and at a short distance, are some springs of water, warm enough during

the night to be used for bathing ; in the day-time they are very cold. This luxury, which is consequently only to be obtained after sun-set, is rendered the more agreeable by the basin which has been formed for the better enjoyment of that pleasure ; it is the only one that Tunja possesses.

This town is the chief place of a province of considerable extent, but which is in general very barren. Were it warmer, one might often suppose one's self in the midst of an African desert. The ground is covered with rocks, and furrowed by the waters, which form frightful chasms in different places ; but as these soon evaporate, the country is in great want of water. This province is notwithstanding one of the richest, its inhabitants are active and industrious, and considerable quantities of woollen and cotton stuffs are there manufactured. Although very coarse, these productions are in request throughout the republic, and their sale considerably enriches Tunja.

The greater proportion of the lands lie fallow ; they would, however, produce considerable crops, if the inhabitants were less indifferent. No encouragement can rouse them from their indolent habits and usual routine. This was proved at Leyva, where an attempt was made to cultivate the olive. Barley, oats, and wheat, are sown with success throughout the country. There are few parts of the province

where any thing else could be produced on account of the cold. Rice, sugar, and coffee, are obtained from Muzo.

It took me a whole day to go from Tunja to Paipa, whence I directed my course to the south south-east to reach a farm, the income from which is very considerable, owing to the peculiar bounty of nature. The meadow, in the midst of which this farm is built, and which is nearly half a league in extent, contains several springs of warm sulphureous water, the temperature being about 49°, R. In the dry season, the vapours are condensed, and cover all the pastures with sulphate of soda. This salt is very carefully collected, and afterwards given to the cattle, who are wonderfully improved by it in the course of six months. By means of this advantage, the proprietor of the estate purchases in the Llanos of San Martin, cattle at the rate of five piastres a piece, which he afterwards sells for twenty-five or thirty. This fine estate belongs to the jesuits. A sulphur mine is in its neighbourhood.

We afterwards proceeded towards the south south-east, and continuing to traverse uncultivated and uninhabited countries, descended into the plain of Sogamoso. In the course of an hour we arrived at Issa, a village situated to the east. We witnessed a singular sight on our arrival, that of a fête, consisting of songs and dances,

to celebrate the death of a child; a strange custom to rejoice at a loss which every where else costs so many tears, and so much sorrow. Upon coming to Issa, I had promised myself to visit the lake of Tota, situated higher up, but in the same direction; I therefore quitted Issa before sun-rise, and, accompanied by a fresh guide, scaled the rugged heights upon which the paramo Ramona is situated. Here the cold was very severe. At eight o'clock, I was on the borders of the lake, which is very large, since the tour of it is made with difficulty in a day. Superstition has not failed to people this spot with frightful prodigies; in fact, the savage nature of the country, the waters suspended at such an immense height, and always agitated by the winds blowing off the Toxillo, (a paramo which raises itself above the lake Tota) a mucilaginous substance of an oval form, and filled with an insipid water, which is found on the sands—all inspires astonishment. According to the inhabitants, the waters of this lake are not navigable; in its depths malignant genii are said to inhabit dwellings, whose porticoes may be perceived on leaving the shores, and proceeding some distance in the stream; it is even added, that, at intervals, a monstrous fish is seen to rise from the abyss and shows itself for a few moments.

The lake of Tota is in the form of an arc, the two ends of which extend in a direction

from the north-west to the south-east ; the temperature is very damp and cold ; the water of a blueish colour is heavy, insipid and scarcely drinkable ; like that of the sea, it is in continual agitation, caused by the tempests so common to the Toxillo. Some isles rise from the bosom of the lake ; but on these, one man alone has dared to set his foot ; the idea that the lake is enchanted, prevents them being revisited : the bottom appears composed of silicious sand. The mountains which enclose the lake of Tota are immense walls composed of basaltic and granite rocks, so strongly cemented as to resist all filtration ; it may however be conjectured that the warm springs of Issa and Paipa owe their origin to this immense basin placed so many toises above their level. Some desolate huts, the sport of the winds, are scattered along the prodigiously high and rugged sides of this lake of the Cordilleras. Near this lake is the village of Guitiva, which I traversed on my return to Issa, the road we took was full of capopals loaded with the cochineal insects ; and what is not less interesting to the inhabitants, affording a great quantity of flints. In proportion as I removed from these heights, I found the temperature more supportable. Having arrived in the beautiful plain of Sogamoso, I soon distinguished the village amid the willows which shade it ; I stopped till the next day, in this place so renowned before the

conquest, for the worship paid to the sun; the temple which was there, being according to some historians, of unequalled magnificence; no traces of its past grandeur are now perceptible. A considerable cattle trade is carried on at Sogamoso; the animals are brought from the Llanos by the Toxillo. Cotton, stuffs, and woollen hats manufactured at Somagoso, are forwarded to those plains in exchange for the cotton, indigo and salt, also drawn from thence. Notwithstanding the profits of this trade, it is much neglected on account of the bad state of the roads and the dangers presented by the paramo. A great number of the inhabitants of the Cordillera perish in the plain, or are soon attacked by fever, on account of the quantity of animal food which they eat; the inhabitants of the plains run less risk, it might be supposed that they would not be able to endure the cold of the more elevated regions; they however brave it in their light cotton garments, and are very seldom attacked with sickness.

Upon quitting Sogamoso, I turned to the north-west, in order to visit a lead mine which is being worked in the neighbourhood; it was necessary to cross the Rio-Grande, the ford of which was pointed out to me by a man on horseback; after ascending gradually for a short time, I descended into the plain of Tibasosa. This village is situated on the other side of the river which waters the vallies of Sogamoso, and Tibasosa; almost opposite the latter is the lead mine

of Sogamoso, eight men were at work there ; they informed me they had entered into a partnership, for the working this mine, and that it afforded but little profit since the water had stopped up the principal gallery, which had been open for more than a century ; they contented themselves with washing the mineral ; but being frequently in want of water, they could not obtain by this rough process, more than an arroba of lead per week, producing about 30 francs.* The hardness of the rock, the encroachments of the water, and especially the want of necessary implements, prevent further profits, notwithstanding the mine is rich and abundant.

At a short distance from this place is a copper foundery, the metal is brought from Moniquira ; the articles manufactured at this wretched forge are not destitute of taste, and consist generally of stirrups and bells.

I resumed my journey towards the north, in the midst of mountains formed of purple and violet coloured clay : it was night when I entered Santa Rosa. Hospitality is every where exercised with so much generosity, that I thought, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, I should find no difficulty in getting a lodging ; but I was deceived, every door was closed against me. I knocked at those of the alcalds and the civil judge ; but they refused opening them, under pretext that their masters were absent ; the curate to

* About 22 shillings English.

whom I applied as a last resource, did not manifest more charity than his neighbours. It was late, my cloaths were wet through, I had not eaten all day, and found myself obliged to lie in the street; I was indeed in much distress; all were deaf to my prayers, one only, and that, for the second time, a woman took compassion on me and offered me half her cabin; I joyfully shared it; and although it was difficult to sleep amid the pots of *chicha*,* and heaps of onions, with which it was stored, I passed a delicious night by comparing it with that reserved for me by the inhospitality of the inhabitants of Santa Rosa, and by listening to the rain which fell in torrents.

The name of Santa Rosa, sounds well to the ear; and from the regularity of the houses and streets, the town in some degree answers the pleasing ideas to which its appellation gives rise. But the temperature is very cold; and as the environs produce nothing but corn, potatoes and onions, the population would not be very rich had it not as a resource several manufactories of woollen hats and cotton stuffs, which articles are in much request with their neighbours, the inhabitants of Socorro. Goitres are here very common.

The next day I passed through Serinsa, situated in an irregular valley, where the cold is very

* The common beverage of the Indians. It is generally made of maize, which is pounded and then left to ferment—in some parts, instead of pounding, the Indians chew it between their teeth. It is very intoxicating—*Translator*.

severe, if we may judge from the moss which covers the roofs. This severe temperature comes from the paramo that commands the valley, and which extends from the north north-east, to the south south-west. At noon I began to climb it; and reached the summit after having travelled some time among apple trees, which, in the Cordillera, form the limits of the earth's obedience to man. At five o'clock in the evening, I arrived at the *venta*, on the Socorro side of the mountain, the resting place for all travellers.

The paramos form a country absolutely unlike those above which they rise. All is different, nature there produces plants entirely distinct from those of the other regions; and but for a few spots sheltered from the winds, where man has sown potatoes, beans, and onions, these places would be uninhabitable. The earth is here rarely covered with stones, except in places near the region of snow, where a kind of gravel is found similar to that of rivers.

When I traversed the Serinsa, the temperature although cold was bearable; but the air was excessively dry, so much so that the straps and ropes, which secured my baggage, were breaking every instant. I had great cause to congratulate myself; for, according to what the inhabitants told me, when the paramo *se pone bravo* (is out of humour), then the greatest dangers threaten the traveller; a wind laden with icy vapours blows with tremendous violence; thick darkness covers

the earth and conceals every trace of a road. The birds which, on the appearance of a fine day, had attempted the passage, fall motionless. The traveller seeks to shelter himself under the stunted shrubs which here and there grow in these deserts; but their wet foliage obliges him to find another covert. Worn out with fatigue and hunger, in vain urging on his mules, benumbed with cold, he sits down to recover his exhausted strength. Fatal repose! his stomach soon becomes affected as when at sea, his blood freezes in his veins, his muscles grow stiff, his lips open as if to smile, and he expires with the expression of joy upon his features. The mules, no longer hearing their master's voice, remain standing, till at length tired, they lie down to die.

Nothing presents so dismal an appearance as the Seriusa, seen from below, its frowning brow is generally hidden in the clouds; while its summit is rarely illumined by a cheerful sky. Some springs, whose livid and icy waters are not potable, escape from its barren sides, but never produce on them that fertility to which they contribute in the lower region; muddy pools, choaked up with bull-rushes and other aquatic plants, occupy the bottom of the vallies. The screams of the white heron, when the winds are hushed, is all that breaks in upon its silence. The earth produces nothing but a short kind of grass, eagerly sought after by animals. One

plant alone, the (*espeletia frailexon*) of stately growth is able to resist the hurricane ; its yellow leaves, placed at the top of a stalk, entirely black, shed a melancholy gleam, like that of a funeral torch ; an effect still heightened by the numerous crosses placed upon the graves of travellers who have perished in their endeavours to cross the paramo.

Spite of the perils often encountered by man upon these heights, poverty, and his avidity after gold, continually force him to traverse them. If he is met coming from the warm countries, he is seen laden with bananas and succulent fruits ; if from cold ones, bending beneath sacks of flour, or enormous earthen pots, filled with chicha, in a state of fermentation. A miserable profit is sufficient to induce him to brave the fatigues and privations to which he is condemned in these wild and desert regions. Will it be credited, that a man can earn little more than five francs (about three shillings and ninepence) for carrying a load of seventy five pounds weight from Santa Rosa to Socorro, a journey of three days ? But by this he gains the utmost of his wishes ; he sells the overplus of his harvest, and lives for nearly a month upon its profits. Mules are also used on this laborious passage, but the roads are so excessively bad, that men are employed to much greater advantage. The *venta del Basto*, built by a worthy man on the paramo of Serinsa, and where I passed the

night, consists of four cottages—two only are closed in with earth, the other two being open, expose the traveller to a most intense cold. The prejudice of the inhabitants of the Cordillera against fire, which they conceive to be unwholesome, prevents them from lighting any. It is indeed, impossible to imagine, how men born in the glowing regions of the Socorro, and clad only in cotton garments, can resist a cold so intense: as for me, I was benumbed, although my birth was the least exposed to the outward air, and notwithstanding I was well wrapped up in thick woollen cloaks, &c. The cold, however, which I felt, did not last all the night, my host had conceived the singular idea of bringing up a great number of cats, which were trained to place themselves upon the feet of travellers; I had two of them, whose thick furs kept me very warm. I certainly needed them much, my host's supper not being at all calculated to exhilarate me; yucca, potatoes, masamora, a bouilli of maize, and warm chicha, are dishes too simple for an European stomach.

The owner of the venta has, at the foot of the paramo, a field which, under the fostering rays of a warmer sun, produces sugar canes.—This place, so fortunate when compared with those by which it is overlooked, is called Las Vueltas; the way to it lies through very thick woods, which, in several places, advance even

into the sinuosities of the paramos, as if they were braving a new climate; their audacity seems to be punished, for, constantly blown upon by the frosty winds, the trees, which approach too nearly the limits of vegetation, are covered with mosses, which stop their growth and hasten their decay.

I had been told, that I should find at Las Vueltas the ruins of a village, formerly inhabited by the Indians, this had greatly excited my curiosity; but on arriving there, I could only discover holes, dug by the inhabitants in every direction, for the purpose of discovering the riches which they supposed to lie buried there; to their great disappointment, they had found nothing but earthen vessels, and glass ornaments, proofs of the comparatively recent destruction of the Indian village. Whether the inhabitants of this inaccessible retreat had fled unto the plains of Meta, or had dispersed themselves in different directions, cannot be ascertained—a circumstance which renders their disappearance from among so many habitations, scattered in every direction, the more mysterious. Upon the ruins of the Indian huts, the landlord of the venta has built his residence. The site is very lonely, but enchanting; at the foot of it flows a river of considerable breadth; and upon its rugged sides have been sown maize and beans. This estate has all the extent which the peaceful ambition of

its owner requires. Oaks of majestic growth shade his fields and preserve them from the hurricanes of the mountains. But in spite of the pleasure which is experienced in contemplating the image of happiness and plenty in this retreat, when compared with the desolate aspect of the paramo, one cannot help feeling some regret from the reflection, that these fields were formerly cultivated by an unfortunate race, now afar off, and sighing, perhaps, after their lawful possessions. On the other hand, when thinking of the savage state in which that people must have lived, it is delightful to walk fearlessly amid these beautiful forests, enlivened, at intervals, by the lowing of the cattle, where, although so completely isolated, one meets with civilisation, peaceful habits, and even customs not unknown to Europeans.

Bidding an adieu to this charming retreat, in which I could have spent some months with much satisfaction, I soon entered the road of Guacha, by which the traveller descends into the Socorro. The inhabitants of this country look upon it as the work of the devil; they have pointed out to me with their finger the abode of the wicked one, but I must confess I saw nothing. The Guacha is nothing but a rock of immense extent, in which the rains and the earthquakes have made considerable chasms; it is consequently impossible to make use of horses there,

and I therefore alighted ; no accident happened to me, which was the more fortunate, as in general several horses are lost in this dangerous passage. Some idea may be formed of the risks to be run, by the bones with which the road is strewed, and the numerous crosses erected at the foot of the precipice. When we arrived there our labours were not over ; we were obliged to continue walking on foot, for the road, although not so rugged, is formed along the bed of a river, so that one is continually in the water. I arrived safe and sound at the venta Corda, a very small house. Twelve of us lodged there together.

On the 1st of July I was out of the paramos, the aspect of the country was less forbidding, the climate milder, and the sky more serene. The cold no longer prevented me from rising before day-break : in a few hours we reached Elisano, and were on the territory of Socorro—upon advancing into this province, we experienced a most agreeable change ; all the cottages were covered with tiles ; an air of comfort was observable throughout the inhabitants, and an amenity of manners, seldom to be met with in cold climates ; we were every where received with welcome ; the beautiful tropical character of nature gladdened our sight on every side, for it is ever pleasing to see again the banana and the orange trees ; unfortunately the

roads are so encumbered with mud, that it was necessary to advance with the utmost caution, in order to avoid making a slip, which would have been truly dangerous. Upon quitting Elisano, I coasted the Pienta, a river which waters all the valley of Charalan.

Before night-fall I entered the town of that name; I was surprised at the regularity of its streets and houses, and had the satisfaction of meeting once more that careless gaiety indigenous to a warm climate.

The next day I took the direction towards Culetas, where I arrived at noon; I did not stop here, but continued to follow the route of villa Socorro; on the road, we met a man and woman, whom the alcaid of a neighbouring village had so ill treated, for their having refused to submit to a most unjust *corvée*, that they were nearly expiring; some wealthy inhabitants of Charalan, who were travelling with me, advised them to go and confess themselves instantly, without however, backing this advice by more substantial consolations, of which these unfortunate wretches stood in present need: they assisted them to rise, condoled with them on their lot, and they were at length able to recover their strength, and travel on to reach Culetas; we took the road of the town of Socorro, which town I entered before night.

The province of Socorro ends, on the north,

a league and a half beyond St. Giles, and borders on this side upon Pamplona.* It extends on the south as far as Puente Real; to the east, it is bounded by the province of Tunja; and to the west, by the unknown lands of the Magdalena; it contains several towns of importance, St. Giles, where a stone bridge, and a college have just been built, Zapatoca, Charalan, Palmar, Aiba, Simatoca, Palmas, Guadalupe, and Socorro. This latter, which gives its name to all the province, is the capital of it: there is the residence of the governor, who has under his orders a few militia men and invalids, to whom the government pays four or five piastres per month.

The town of Socorro is ill built, and still worse paved. Situated on the declivity of a mountain, it is seldom refreshed by the winds, on account of the chain of Opon, which extends north and south, to the mountains of Ocana. The heat is consequently very intense there, the thermometer in the shade, rarely being lower than 20°. At the time I was there (July) it usually began raining at one o'clock in the afternoon; the thunder roared, and the storm lasted till sunset. The winds blew from the north.

The waters are generally disagreeable for drinking, and of a bad quality. May not the goitres, which disfigure all the population, and even

* See the first note.

foreigners, after a long residence there, be attributed to them? even animals are affected with this evil, and only escape from it by death. Fevers are also very common, and many old men are dropsical. The population of Socorro is, however, estimated at nearly twelve thousand inhabitants; their activity and intelligence are astonishing; they are assiduous in agriculture, nor are their manufactures despicable. Their harvests of sugar, cotton, and rice, are plentiful;* these articles are at the most reasonable rate possible, for few roads are practicable. It had been proposed to form a road over the mountains of Opon, by which the Magdalena might have been reached in six days, whilst a longer time is required to reach the port of Botigas, which is only twenty-seven leagues distant; but the war has prevented this useful project from being executed.

The inmates of every hut are engaged in spinning, dying, or weaving; different trades are seen in every direction; a considerable number of the inhabitants prefer making straw hats: these manufacturers are easily distinguished, by the nail of the index finger, which they permit to grow to a most extravagant length.

The stuffs manufactured are coarse, but durable; although in the provinces they are preferred

* Moist sugar about 6lb 1 real; loaf sugar, 25lb 5 reals; cotton, 25lb 10 reals; rice, 25lb 4 reals.

to the foreign cotton when sold at the same price, and notwithstanding the sale is consequently considerable, the manufacturers are very poor; in fact a spinster does not earn a real per day; a piece of cotton stuff containing sixty-four vares (about 52 yards) does not produce the weaver a greater profit than seven reals.—The merchant alone gains; he transports the stuffs from Socorro to Giron, where he exchanges them for tobacco and gold; at Cucuta, he barterers them for cocoa; and at Zipaquira, for salt and English stuffs. The latter are the only ones in request; a prejudice little encouraging to native industry; even the women now only dress à l'Anglaise. A fancy the more easily gratified as the Manchester cottons are even cheaper than those manufactured in the country itself; a gown may be had for about seven shillings.

The houses are generally dirty and badly constructed, but are more commodious than those of the cold regions. There are beds in them; silver plate, table cloths and napkins are used at meals; but in general the only dishes are potatoes, rice, bananas and pork.—The inhabitants of Socorro have, at all times, displayed a boldness and energy of character, which forms a singular contrast with their heavy and stupid appearance; even now, although they seem tired out with the numerous claims every day made upon their patriotism, the only title

they use one to another is that of citizen, appearing firmly attached to the republican system. They were the first who, long before Europe supposed that America could ever become independent, raised the standard of revolt.

I shall now proceed to investigate the origin and the consequences of the insurrection, which produced the emancipation of America, first briefly describing the situation of this country from the period of the conquest to the commotion which took place in 1781: by this means the reader will be made acquainted with the two eras of the Spanish Empire in America, and will be enabled to compare the new system with that which existed previously.