

Syria, and we agreed with the captain for our passage. The vessel was to sail the following day; but a circumstance trivial in itself happily prevented our departure. The live-stock intended to serve us for food during our passage, was kept in the great cabin. We desired that some changes should be made, which were indispensable for the safety of our instruments; and during this interval we learnt at Marseilles, that the government of Tunis persecuted the French residing in Barbary, and that every person coming from a French port was thrown into a dungeon. Having escaped this imminent danger, we were compelled to suspend the execution of our projects. We resolved to pass the winter in Spain, in hopes of embarking the next spring, either at Carthagena, or at Cadiz, if the political situation of the East permitted.

We crossed Catalonia and the kingdom of Valencia, on our way to Madrid. We visited the ruins of Tarragona and those of ancient Saguntum; and from Barcelona we made an excursion to Montserrat, the lofty peaks of which are inhabited by hermits, and where the contrast between luxuriant vegetation and masses of naked and arid rocks, forms a landscape of a peculiar character. I employed myself in ascertaining by astronomical observations the position of several points important for the geography of Spain, and determined by means of the barometer the height of the central plain. I likewise made several observations on the inclination of the needle, and on the intensity of the magnetic forces.

On my arrival at Madrid I had reason to congratulate myself on the resolution I had formed of visiting the Peninsula. Baron de Forell, minister from the court of Saxony, treated me with a degree of kindness, of which I soon felt the value. He was well versed in mineralogy, and was full of zeal for every undertaking that promoted the progress of knowledge. He observed to me, that under the administration of an enlightened minister, Don Mariano Luis de Urquijo, I might hope to obtain permission to visit, at my own expense, the interior of Spanish America. After the disappointments I had suffered, I did not hesitate a moment to adopt this idea.

I was presented at the court of Aranjuez in March 1799,