

bodies, to give their skin a black polish. The persons who came to purchase examined the teeth of these slaves, to judge of their age and health; forcing open their mouths as we do those of horses in a market. This odious custom dates from Africa, as is proved by the faithful pictures drawn by the inimitable Cervantes,* who after his long captivity among the Moors, described the sale of Christian slaves at Algiers. It is distressing to think that even at this day there exist European colonists in the West Indies who mark their slaves with a hot iron, to know them again if they escape. This is the treatment bestowed on those "who save other men the labour of sowing, tilling, and reaping."†

In 1800 the number of slaves did not exceed six thousand in the two provinces of Cumana and Barcelona, when at the same period the whole population was estimated at one hundred and ten thousand inhabitants. The trade in African slaves, which the laws of the Spaniards have never favoured, is almost as nothing on these coasts where the trade in American slaves was carried on in the sixteenth century with desolating activity. Macarapan, anciently called Amaracapana, Cumana, Araya, and particularly New Cadiz, built on the islet of Cubagua, might then be considered as commercial establishments for facilitating the slave trade. Girolamo Benzoni of Milan, who at the age of twenty-two visited Terra Firma, took part in some expeditions in 1542 to the coasts of Bordones, Cariaco, and Paria, to carry off the unfortunate natives. He relates with simplicity, and often with a sensibility not common in the historians of that time, the examples of cruelty of which he was a witness. He saw the slaves dragged to New Cadiz, to be marked on the forehead and on the arms, and for the payment of the *quint* to the officers of the crown. From this port the Indians were sent to the island of Hayti or St. Domingo, after having often changed masters, not by

* El Trato de Argel. Jorn. II. Viage al Parnasso (1784), p. 316.

† La Bruyère, Caractères, chap. xi. (ed. 1765), p. 300. I will here cite a passage strongly characteristic of La Bruyère's benevolent feeling for his fellow-creatures. "We find (under the torrid zone) certain wild animals, male and female, scattered through the country, black, livid, and all over scorched by the sun, bent to the earth which they dig and turn up with invincible perseverance. They have something like articulate utterance; and when they stand up on their feet, they exhibit a human face, and in fact these creatures are men."