

castle; but the muleteer, who served as our guide, was parched with thirst, and pressed us earnestly to return. He had long perceived that we had lost our way; and as he hoped to work on our fears he continually warned us of the danger of tigers and rattlesnakes. Venomous reptiles are, indeed, very common near the castle of Araya; and two jaguars had been lately killed at the entrance of the village of Maniquarez. If we might judge from their skins, which were preserved, their size was not less than that of the Indian tiger. We vainly represented to our guide that those animals did not attack men where the goats furnished them with abundant prey; we were obliged to yield, and return. After having proceeded three quarters of an hour along a shore covered by the tide we were joined by the negro, who carried our provision. Uneasy at not seeing us arrive, he had come to meet us, and he led us through a wood of nopals to a hut inhabited by an Indian family. We were received with the cordial hospitality observed in this country among people of every tribe. The hut in which we slung our hammocks was very clean; and there we found fish, plantains, and what in the torrid zone is preferable to the most sumptuous food, excellent water.

The next day at sunrise we found that the hut in which we had passed the night formed part of a group of small dwellings on the borders of the salt lake, the remains of a considerable village which had formerly stood near the castle. The ruins of a church were seen partly buried in the sand, and covered with brushwood. When, in 1762, to save the expense of the garrison, the castle of Araya was totally dismantled, the Indians and Mulattoes who were settled in the neighbourhood emigrated by degrees to Maniquarez, to Cariaco, and in the suburb of the Guayquerias at Cumana. A small number, bound from affection to their native soil, remained in this wild and barren spot. These poor people live by catching fish, which are extremely abundant on the coast and the neighbouring shoals. They appear satisfied with their condition, and think it strange when they are asked why they have no gardens or culinary vegetables. Our gardens, they reply, are beyond the gulf; when we carry our fish to Cumana, we bring back plantains, coconuts, and cassava. This system of economy, which favours