

## CHAPTER VI.

Mountains of New Andalusia.—Valley of Cumanacoa.—Summit of the Cocollar.—Missions of the Chayma Indians.

OUR first visit to the peninsula of Araya was soon succeeded by an excursion to the mountains of the missions of the Chayma Indians, where a variety of interesting objects claimed our attention. We entered on a country studded with forests, and visited a convent surrounded by palm-trees and arborescent ferns. It was situated in a narrow valley, where we felt the enjoyment of a cool and delicious climate, in the centre of the torrid zone. The surrounding mountains contain caverns haunted by thousands of nocturnal birds; and, what affects the imagination more than all the wonders of the physical world, we find beyond these mountains a people lately nomade, and still nearly in a state of nature, wild without being barbarous. It was in the promontory of Paria that Columbus first descried the continent; there terminate these valleys, laid waste alternately by the warlike anthropophagic Carib and by the commercial and polished nations of Europe. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the ill-fated Indians of the coasts of Carupano, of Macarapan, and of Caracas, were treated in the same manner as the inhabitants of the coast of Guinea in our days. The soil of the islands was cultivated, the vegetable produce of the Old World was transplanted thither, but a regular system of colonization remained long unknown on the New Continent. If the Spaniards visited its shores, it was only to procure, either by violence or exchange, slaves, pearls, grains of gold, and dye-woods; and endeavours were made to ennoble the motives of this insatiable avarice by the pretence of enthusiastic zeal in the cause of religion.

The trade in the copper-coloured Indians was accompanied by the same acts of inhumanity as that which characterizes the traffic in African negroes; it was attended also by the same result, that of rendering both the conquerors and the conquered more ferocious. Thence wars became more frequent