

I think I have observed, in the course of my travels, that the drier the climate, the slower the vat works, and the greater the quantity of indigo, at the minimum of oxidation, contained in the stalks. In the province of Caracas, where 562 cubic feet of the plant slightly piled up yield thirty-five or forty pounds of dry indigo, the liquid does not pass into the beater till after twenty, thirty, or thirty-five hours. It is probable that the inhabitants of Cumanacoa would extract more colouring matter if they left the plants longer steeping in the first vat.\* During my abode at Cumana I made solutions of the indigo of Cumanacoa, which is somewhat heavy and coppery, and that of Caracas, in sulphuric acid, in order to compare them, and the solution of the former appeared to me to be of a much more intense blue.

The plain of Cumanacoa, spotted with farms and small plantations of indigo and tobacco, is surrounded with mountains, which towards the south rise to considerable height. Everything indicates that the valley is the bottom of an ancient lake. The mountains, which in ancient times formed its shores, all rise perpendicularly in the direction of the plain. The only outlet for the waters of the lake was on the side of Arenas. In digging foundations, beds of round pebbles, mixed with small bivalve shells, are found; and according to the report of persons worthy of credit, there were discovered, thirty years ago, at the bottom of the ravine of San Juanillo, two enormous femoral bones, four feet long, and weighing more than thirty pounds. The Indians imagined that these were giants' bones; whilst the half-learned sages of the country, who assume the right of explaining everything, gravely asserted that they were mere sports of nature, and little worthy of attention; an opinion founded on the circumstance that human bones decay rapidly in the soil of Cumanacoa. In order to decorate their churches on the festival of the dead, they take skulls from the cemeteries on the coast, where the earth is impregnated with saline substances. These pretended thigh-bones of giants were carried to the port of Cumana, where I sought for them in vain; but from the analogy of some

\* The planters are pretty generally of opinion, that the fermentation should never continue less than ten hours.—Beauvais-Raseau, "*Art de l'Indigotier*," p. 81.