

CHAPTER VIII.

Departure from Caripe.—Mountain and Forest of Santa Maria.—Mission of Catuaro.—Port of Cariaco.

THE days we passed at the Capuchin convent in the mountains of Caripe, glided swiftly away, though our manner of living was simple and uniform. From sunrise to nightfall we traversed the forests and neighbouring mountains, to collect plants. When the winter rains prevented us from undertaking distant excursions, we visited the huts of the Indians; the *conuco* of the community, or those assemblies in which the alcaldes every evening arrange the labours of the succeeding day. We returned to the monastery only when the sound of the bell called us to the refectory to share the repasts of the missionaries. Sometimes, very early in the morning, we followed them to the church, to attend the *doctrina*, that is to say, the religious instruction of the Indians. It was rather a difficult task to explain dogmas to the neophytes, especially those who had but a very imperfect knowledge of the Spanish language. On the other hand, the monks are as yet almost totally ignorant of the language of the Chaymas; and the resemblance of sounds confuses the poor Indians and suggests to them the most whimsical ideas. Of this I may cite an example. I saw a missionary labouring earnestly to prove that *infierno*, hell, and *invierno*, winter, were not one and the same thing; but as different as heat and cold. The Chaymas are acquainted with no other winter than the season of rains; and consequently they imagined the 'Hell of the whites' to be a place where the wicked are exposed to frequent showers. The missionary harangued to no purpose: it was impossible to efface the first impression produced by the analogy between the two consonants. He could not separate in the minds of the neophytes the ideas of *rain* and *hell*; *invierno* and *infierno*.

After passing almost the whole day in the open air, we employed our evenings, at the convent, in making notes,