

the road of St. Gothard, and of the Great St. Bernard. Taking the level of the road had never been attempted before my arrival in the province of Venezuela. No precise idea had even been formed of the elevation of the valley of Caracas. It had indeed been long observed, that the descent was much less from La Cumbre and Las Vueltas (the latter is the culminating point of the road towards the Pastora at the entrance of the valley of Caracas), than towards the port of La Guayra; but the mountain of Avila having a very considerable bulk, the eye cannot discern simultaneously the points to be compared. It is even impossible to form a precise idea of the elevation of Caracas, from the climate of the valley, where the atmosphere is cooled by the descending currents of air, and by the mists, which envelope the lofty summit of the Silla during a great part of the year.

When in the season of the great heats we breathe the burning atmosphere of La Guayra, and turn our eyes towards the mountains, it seems scarcely possible that, at the distance of five or six thousand toises, a population of forty thousand individuals assembled in a narrow valley, enjoys the coolness of spring, a temperature which at night descends to 12° of the centesimal thermometer. This near approach of different climates is common in the Cordillera of the Andes; but everywhere, at Mexico, at Quito, in Peru, and in New Granada, it is only after a long journey into the interior, either across plains or along rivers, that we reach the great cities, which are the central points of civilization. The height of Caracas is but a third of that of Mexico, Quito, and Santa Fé de Bogotá; yet of all the capitals of Spanish America which enjoy a cool and delicious climate in the midst of the torrid zone, Caracas is nearest to the coast. What a privilege for a city to possess a seaport at three leagues distance, and to be situated among mountains, on a table-land, which would produce wheat, if the cultivation of the coffee-tree were not preferred!

The road from La Guayra to the valley of Caracas is infinitely finer than the road from Honda to Santa Fé, or that from Guayaquil to Quito. It is kept in better order than the old road, which led from the port of Vera Cruz to Perote, on the eastern declivity of the mountains of New