

## CHAPTER XII.

General View of the Provinces of Venezuela.—Diversity of their Interests,  
—City and Valley of Caracas.—Climate.

IN all those parts of Spanish America in which civilization did not exist to a certain degree before the Conquest (as it did in Mexico, Guatimala, Quito, and Peru), it has advanced from the coasts to the interior of the country, following sometimes the valley of a great river, sometimes a chain of mountains, affording a temperate climate. Concentrated at once in different points, it has spread as if by diverging rays. The union into provinces and kingdoms was effected on the first immediate contact between civilized parts, or at least those subject to permanent and regular government. Lands deserted, or inhabited by savage tribes, now surround the countries which European civilization has subdued. They divide its conquests like arms of the sea difficult to be passed, and neighbouring states are often connected with each other only by slips of cultivated land. It is less difficult to acquire a knowledge of the configuration of coasts washed by the ocean, than of the sinuosities of that interior shore, on which barbarism and civilization, impenetrable forests and cultivated land, touch and bound each other. From not having reflected on the early state of society in the New World, geographers have often made their maps incorrect, by marking the different parts of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies, as though they were contiguous at every point in the interior. The local knowledge which I obtained respecting these boundaries, enables me to fix the extent of the great territorial divisions with some certainty, to compare the wild and inhabited parts, and to appreciate the degree of political influence exercised by certain towns of America, as centres of power and of commerce.

Caracas is the capital of a country nearly twice as large as Peru, and now little inferior in extent to the kingdom of New Grenada.\* This country which the Spanish govern-

\* The Capitania-General of Caracas contains near 48,000 square leagues (twenty-five to a degree). Peru, since La Paz, Potosi, Charcas,