

total population of the seven united provinces at nine hundred thousand souls, it appeared to me that the Indians made only one-ninth; while at Mexico they form nearly one half of the inhabitants.

Considering the Caribbean Sea, of which the gulf of Mexico makes a part, as an interior sea with several mouths, it is important to fix our attention on the political relations arising out of this singular configuration of the New Continent, between countries placed around the same basin. Notwithstanding the isolated state in which most of the mother-countries endeavour to hold their colonies, the agitations that take place are not the less communicated from one to the other. The elements of discord are everywhere the same; and, as if by instinct, an understanding is established between men of the same colour, although separated by difference of language, and inhabiting opposite coasts. That American Mediterranean formed by the shores of Venezuela, New Grenada, Mexico, the United States, and the West India Islands, counts upon its borders near a million and a half of free and enslaved blacks; but so unequally distributed, that there are very few to the south, and scarcely any in the regions of the west. Their great accumulation is on the northern and eastern coasts, which may be said to be the African part of the interior basin. The commotions which since 1792 have broken out in St. Domingo, have naturally been propagated to the coasts of Venezuela. So long as Spain possessed those fine colonies in tranquillity, the little insurrections of the slaves were easily repressed; but when a struggle of another kind, that for independence, began, the blacks by their menacing position excited alternately the apprehensions of the opposite parties; and the gradual or instantaneous abolition of slavery has been proclaimed in different regions of Spanish America, less from motives of justice and humanity, than to secure the aid of an intrepid race of men, habituated to privation, and fighting for their own cause. I found in the narrative of the voyage of Girolamo Benzoni, a curious passage, which proves that the apprehensions caused by the increase of the black population are of very old date. These apprehensions will cease only where governments shall second by laws the progressive reforms which refinement of manners, opinion,