

was filled with all the monks of San Francisco, begging to see a dipping-needle. The curiosity excited by physical phenomena is naturally great in countries undermined by volcanic fires, and in a climate where nature is at once so majestic and so mysteriously convulsed.

When we remember, that in the United States of North America, newspapers are published in small towns not containing more than three thousand inhabitants, it seems surprising that Caracas, with a population of forty or fifty thousand souls, should have possessed no printing office before 1806; for we cannot give the name of a printing establishment to a few presses which served only from year to year to promulgate an almanac of a few pages, or the pastoral letter of a bishop. Though the number of those who feel reading to be a necessity is not very considerable, even in the Spanish colonies most advanced in civilization, yet it would be unjust to reproach the colonists for a state of intellectual lassitude which has been the result of a jealous policy. A Frenchman, named Delpeche, has the merit of having established the first printing office in Caracas. It appears somewhat extraordinary that an establishment of this kind should have followed, and not preceded, a political revolution.

In a country abounding in such magnificent scenery, and at a period when, notwithstanding some symptoms of popular commotion, most of the inhabitants seem only to direct attention to physical objects, such as the fertility of the year, the long drought, or the conflicting winds of Petare and Catia, I expected to find many individuals well acquainted with the lofty surrounding mountains. But I was disappointed; and we could not find in Caracas a single person who had visited the summit of the Silla. Hunters do not ascend so high on the ridges of mountains; and in these countries journeys are not undertaken for such purposes as gathering alpine plants, carrying a barometer to an elevated point, or examining the nature of rocks. Accustomed to a uniform and domestic life, the people dread fatigue and sudden changes of climate. They seem to live not to enjoy life, but only to prolong it.

Our walks led us often in the direction of two coffee plantations, the proprietors of which, Don Andres de Ibarra