

country, and numbers who have escaped from the ruin of their dwellings are swept away by disease. Far from strengthening mutual confidence among the citizens, the feeling of misfortune destroys it; physical calamities augment civil discord; nor does the aspect of a country bathed in tears and blood appease the fury of the victorious party.

After the recital of so many calamities, the mind is soothed by turning to consolatory remembrances. When the great catastrophe of Caracas was known in the United States, the Congress, assembled at Washington, unanimously decreed that five ships laden with flour should be sent to the coast of Venezuela; their cargoes to be distributed among the most needy of the inhabitants. The generous contribution was received with the warmest gratitude; and this solemn act of a free people, this mark of national interest, of which the advanced civilization of the Old World affords but few examples, seemed to be a valuable pledge of the mutual sympathy which ought for ever to unite the nations of North and South America.

CHAPTER XV.

Departure from Caracas.—Mountains of San Pedro and of Los Teques.—
La Victoria.—Valleys of Aragua.

To take the shortest road from Caracas to the banks of the Orinoco, we should have crossed the southern chain of mountains between Baruta, Salamanca, and the savannahs of Ocumare, passed over the steppes or llanos of Orituco, and embarked at Cabruta, near the mouth of the Rio Guarico. But this direct route would have deprived us of the opportunity of surveying the valleys of Aragua, which are the finest and most cultivated portion of the province; of taking the level of an important part of the chain of the coast by means of the barometer; and of descending the Rio Apure as far as its junction with the Orinoco. A traveller who has the intention of studying the configuration and natural productions of a country is not guided by