

This appeared to us not a very agreeable mode of prolonging life, for the sun was darting his rays almost perpendicularly. The brown-skinned nations, blacks well seasoned, and Indians, frequently attain a very advanced age in the torrid zone. A native of Peru named Hilario Pari died at the extraordinary age of one hundred and forty-three years, after having been ninety years married.

Don Francisco Montera and his brother, a well-informed young priest, accompanied us with the view of conducting us to their house at La Victoria. Almost all the families with whom we had lived in friendship at Caracas were assembled in the fine valleys of Aragua, and they vied with each other in their efforts to render our stay agreeable. Before we plunged into the forests of the Orinoco, we enjoyed once more all the advantages which advanced civilization affords.

The road from Mamon to La Victoria runs south and south-west. We soon lost sight of the river Tuy, which, turning eastward, forms an elbow at the foot of the high mountains of Guayraina. As we drew nearer to Victoria the ground became smoother; it seemed like the bottom of a lake, the waters of which had been drained off. We might have fancied ourselves in the valley of Hasli, in the canton of Berne. The neighbouring hills, only one hundred and forty toises in height, are composed of calcareous tufa; but their abrupt declivities project like promontories on the plain. Their form indicates the ancient shore of the lake. The eastern extremity of this valley is parched and uncultivated. No advantage has been derived from the ravines which water the neighbouring mountains; but fine cultivation is commencing in the proximity of the town. I say of the town, though in my time Victoria was considered only as a village (pueblo).

The environs of La Victoria present a very remarkable agricultural aspect. The height of the cultivated ground is from two hundred and seventy to three hundred toises above the level of the ocean, and yet we there find fields of corn mingled with plantations of sugar-cane, coffee, and plantains. Excepting the interior of the island of Cuba,* we scarcely find elsewhere in the equinoctial regions

* The district of Quatro Villas.