

town of Maracay was heretofore the centre of the indigo plantations, when this branch of colonial industry was in its greatest prosperity. The houses are all of masonry, and every court contains cocoa-trees, which rise above the habitations. The aspect of general wealth is still more striking at Maracay, than at Turmero. The *anil*, or indigo, of these provinces has always been considered in commerce as equal and sometimes superior to that of Guatemala. The indigo plant impoverishes the soil, where it is cultivated during a long series of years, more than any other. The lands of Maracay, Tapatapa, and Turmero, are looked upon as exhausted; and indeed the produce of indigo has been constantly decreasing. But in proportion as it has diminished in the valleys of Aragua, it has increased in the province of Varinas, and in the burning plains of Cucuta, where, on the banks of the Rio Tachira, virgin land yields an abundant produce, of the richest colour.

We arrived very late at Maracay, and the persons to whom we were recommended were absent. The inhabitants perceiving our embarrassment, contended with each other in offering to lodge us, to place our instruments, and take care of our mules. It has been said a thousand times, but the traveller always feels desirous of repeating it again, that the Spanish colonies are the land of hospitality; they are so even in those places where industry and commerce have diffused wealth and improvement. A family of Canarians received us with the most amiable cordiality; an excellent repast was prepared, and everything was carefully avoided that might act as any restraint on us. The master of the house, Don Alexandro Gonzales, was travelling on commercial business, and his young wife had lately had the happiness of becoming a mother. She was transported with joy when she heard that on our return from the Rio Negro we should proceed by the banks of the Orinoco to Angostura, where her husband was. We were to bear to him the tidings of the birth of his first child. In those countries, as among the ancients, travellers are regarded as the safest means of communication. There are indeed posts established, but they make such great circuits that private persons seldom entrust them with letters for the llanos or savannahs of the interior. The child was brought to us at the moment