

Valencia. We have found shrubs of eight or ten feet high entwined with bignonia and other ligneous creepers. The exportation of cotton from Caracas, however, is yet of small importance. It amounted at an average at La Guayra scarcely to three or four hundred thousand pounds in a year; but including all the ports of the Capitania-general, it arose, on account of the flourishing culture of Cariaco, Nueva Barcelona, and Maracaybo, to more than 22,000 quintals. The cotton of the valleys of Aragua is of fine quality, being inferior only to that of Brazil; for it is preferred to that of Carthagena, St. Domingo, and the Caribbee Islands. The cultivation of cotton extends on one side of the lake from Maracay to Valencia; and on the other from Guayca to Guigue. The large plantations yield from sixty to seventy thousand pounds a year.

During our stay at Cura we made numerous excursions to the rocky islands (which rise in the midst of the lake of Valencia,) to the warm springs of Mariara, and to the lofty granitic mountain called El Cucurucho de Coco. A dangerous and narrow path leads to the port of Turiamo and the celebrated cacao-plantations of the coast. In all these excursions we were agreeably surprised, not only at the progress of agriculture, but at the increase of a free laborious population, accustomed to toil, and too poor to rely on the assistance of slaves. White and mulatto farmers had everywhere small separate establishments. Our host, whose father had a revenue of 40,000 piastres, possessed more lands than he could clear; he distributed them in the valleys of Aragua among poor families who chose to apply themselves to the cultivation of cotton. He endeavoured to surround his ample plantations with freemen, who, working as they chose, either in their own land or in the neighbouring plantations, supplied him with day-labourers at the time of harvest. Nobly occupied on the means best adapted gradually to extinguish the slavery of the blacks in these provinces, Count Tovar flattered himself with the double hope of rendering slaves less necessary to the landholders, and furnishing the freedmen with opportunities of becoming farmers. On departing for Europe he had parcelled out and let a part of the lands of Cura, which extend towards the west at the foot of the rock of Las Viruelas.