

philosophy in general have been long since acknowledged. Happy the traveller who may cherish the hope that he has availed himself of the advantages of his position, and that he has added some new facts to the mass of those previously acquired!

Since I left America, one of those great revolutions, which at certain periods agitate the human race, has broken out in the Spanish colonies, and seems to prepare new destinies for a population of fourteen millions of inhabitants, spreading from the southern to the northern hemisphere, from the shores of the Rio de la Plata and Chile to the remotest part of Mexico. Deep resentments, excited by colonial legislation, and fostered by mistrustful policy, have stained with blood regions which had enjoyed, for the space of nearly three centuries, what I will not call happiness but uninterrupted peace. At Quito several of the most virtuous and enlightened citizens have perished, victims of devotion to their country. While I am giving the description of regions, the remembrance of which is so dear to me, I continually light on places which recall to my mind the loss of a friend.

When we reflect on the great political agitations of the New World, we observe that the Spanish Americans are by no means in so favourable a position as the inhabitants of the United States; the latter having been prepared for independence by the long enjoyment of constitutional liberty. Internal dissensions are chiefly to be dreaded in regions where civilization is but slightly rooted, and where, from the influence of climate, forests may soon regain their empire over cleared lands if their culture be abandoned. It may also be feared that, during a long series of years, no foreign traveller will be enabled to traverse all the countries which I have visited. This circumstance may perhaps add to the interest of a work which portrays the state of the greater part of the Spanish colonies at the beginning of the 19th century. I even venture to indulge the hope that this work will be thought worthy of attention when passions shall be hushed into peace, and when, under the influence of a new social order, those countries shall have made rapid progress in public welfare. If then some pages of my book are snatched from oblivion, the inhabitant of the banks of the Orinoco and the Atabapo will behold with delight populous cities enriched by commerce, and fertile fields cultivated by the hands of free men, on those very spots where, at the time of my travels, I found only impenetrable forests and inundated lands.