

gives them a gloomy and monotonous aspect. The northern shore on the contrary, is cheerful, pastoral, and decked with the rich cultivation of the sugar-cane, coffee-tree, and cotton. Paths bordered with cestrums, azedaracs, and other shrubs always in flower, cross the plain, and join the scattered farms. Every house is surrounded by clumps of trees. The ceiba with its large yellow flowers\* gives a peculiar character to the landscape, mingling its branches with those of the purple erythrina. This mixture of vivid vegetable colours contrasts finely with the uniform tint of an unclouded sky. In the season of drought, where the burning soil is covered with an undulating vapour, artificial irrigations preserve verdure and promote fertility. Here and there the granite rock pierces through the cultivated ground. Enormous stony masses rise abruptly in the midst of the valley. Bare and forked, they nourish a few succulent plants, which prepare mould for future ages. Often on the summit of these lonely hills may be seen a fig-tree or a clusia with fleshy leaves, which has fixed its roots in the rock, and towers over the landscape. With their dead and withered branches, these trees look like signals erected on a steep cliff. The form of these mounts unfolds the secret of their ancient origin; for when the whole of this valley was filled with water, and the waves beat at the foot of the peaks of Mariara (the Devil's Nook)† and the chain of the coast, these rocky hills were shoals or islets.

These features of a rich landscape, these contrasts between the two banks of the lake of Valencia, often reminded me of the Pays de Vaud, where the soil, everywhere cultivated, and everywhere fertile, offers the husbandman, the shepherd, and the vine-dresser, the secure fruit of their labours, while, on the opposite side, Chablais presents only a mountainous and half-desert country. In these distant climes surrounded by exotic productions, I loved to recall to mind the enchanting descriptions with which the aspect of the Lemane lake and the rocks of La Meillerie inspired a great writer. Now, while in the centre of civilized Europe, I endeavour in my turn to paint the scenes of the New World, I do not imagine I present the reader with clearer

\* *Carnes tollendas* (*Bombax hibiscifolius*).

† El Rincon del Diablo.