

Nueva Valencia, founded in 1555 under the government of Villacinda, by Alonzo Diaz Moreno, is twelve years older than Caracas. Valencia was at first only a dependency of Burburata; but this latter town is nothing now but a place of embarkation for mules. It is regretted, and perhaps justly, that Valencia has not become the capital of the country. Its situation in a plain, on the banks of a lake, recalls to mind the position of Mexico. When we reflect on the easy communication afforded by the valleys of Aragua with the Llanos and the rivers that flow into the Orinoco; when we recognize the possibility of opening an inland navigation, by the Rio Pao and the Portuguesa, as far as the mouths of the Orinoco, the Cassiquiare, and the Amazon, it may be conceived that the capital of the vast provinces of Venezuela would have been better placed near the fine harbour of Porto Cabello, beneath a pure and serene sky, than near the unsheltered road of La Guayra, in a temperate but constantly foggy valley. Near the kingdom of New Grenada, and situate between the fertile corn-lands of La Victoria and Barquesimeto, the city of Valencia ought to have prospered; but, notwithstanding these advantages, it has been unable to maintain the contest with Caracas.

Only those who have seen the myriads of ants, that infest the countries within the torrid zone, can form an idea of the destruction and the sinking of the ground occasioned by these insects. They abound to such a degree on the site of Valencia, that their excavations resemble subterranean canals, which are filled with water in the time of the rains, and become very dangerous to the buildings. Here recourse has not been had to the extraordinary means employed at the beginning of the sixteenth century in the island of St. Domingo, when troops of ants ravaged the fine plains of La Vega, and the rich possessions of the order of St. Francis. The monks, after having in vain burnt the larvæ of the ants, and had recourse to fumigations, advised the inhabitants to choose by lot a saint, who would act as a mediator against the plague of the ants.* The honour of the choice fell on St. Saturnin; and the ants disappeared as soon as the first festival of this saint was celebrated. Incredulity has made great progress since the time of the conquest; and it was

* Un abogado contra los harmigos.