

the trunks of bamboos, supply ladders, and facilitate in a thousand ways the construction of a hut, and the fabrication of chairs, beds, and other articles of furniture that compose the wealth of a savage household. In the midst of this lavish vegetation, so varied in its productions, it requires very powerful motives to excite man to labour, to rouse him from his lethargy, and to unfold his intellectual faculties.

Cacao and cotton are cultivated at Barbula. We there found, what is very rare in that country, two large cylindrical machines for separating the cotton from its seed; one put in motion by an hydraulic wheel, and the other by a wheel turned by mules. The overseer of the farm, who had constructed these machines, was a native of Merida. He was acquainted with the road that leads from Nueva Valencia, by the way of Guanare and Misagual, to Varinas; and thence by the ravine of Collejones, to the Paramo de Mucuchies and the mountains of Merida covered with eternal snows. The notions he gave us of the time requisite for going from Valencia by Varinas to the Sierra Nevada, and thence by the port of Torunos, and the Rio Santo Domingo, to San Fernando de Apure, were of infinite value to us. It can scarcely be imagined in Europe, how difficult it is to obtain accurate information in a country where the communications are so rare; and where distances are diminished or exaggerated according to the desire that may be felt to encourage the traveller, or to deter him from his purpose. I had resolved to visit the eastern extremity of the Cordilleras of New Grenada, where they lose themselves in the paramos of Timotes and Niquitao. I learned at Barbula, that this excursion would retard our arrival at the Orinoco thirty-five days. This delay appeared to us so much the longer, as the rains were expected to begin sooner than usual. We had the hope of examining afterwards a great number of mountains covered with perpetual snow, at Quito, Peru, and Mexico; and it appeared to me still more prudent to relinquish our project of visiting the mountains of Merida, since by so doing we might miss the real object of our journey, that of ascertaining by astronomical observations the point of communication between the Orinoco, the Rio Negro, and the river Amazon. We returned in consequence from Barbula to Guacara, to take leave of the family of the