

the cradle of so many various nations, will for ever remain the centre of human civilization in the torrid zone. From these fertile and temperate table-lands, from these islets scattered in the aërial ocean, knowledge and the blessings of social institutions will be spread over those vast forests extending along the foot of the Andes, now inhabited only by savage tribes whom the very wealth of nature has retained in indolence and barbarism.

CHAPTER XXI.

Randal of Garcita.—Maypures.—Cataracts of Quituna.—Mouth of the Vichada and the Zama.—Rock of Aricagua.—Siquita.

WE directed our course to the *Puerto de arriba*, above the cataract of Atures, opposite the mouth of the Rio Cataniapo, where our boat was to be ready for us. In the narrow path that leads to the *embarcadero* we beheld for the last time the peak of Uniana. It appeared like a cloud rising above the horizon of the plains. The Guahibos wander at the foot of the mountains, and extend their course as far as the banks of the Vichada. We were shown at a distance, on the right of the river, the rocks that surround the cavern of Ataruipe; but we had not time to visit that cemetery of the destroyed tribe of the Atures. Father Zea had repeatedly described to us this extraordinary cavern, the skeletons painted with anoto, the large vases of baked earth, in which the bones of separate families appear to be collected; and many other curious objects, which we proposed to examine on our return from the Rio Negro. "You will scarcely believe," said the missionaries, "that these skeletons, these painted vases, things which we believed were unknown to the rest of the world, have brought trouble upon me and my neighbour, the missionary of Carichana. You have seen the misery in which I live in the *raudales*. Though devoured by mosquitos, and often in want of plantains and cassava, yet I have found envious people even in this country! A white man, who inhabits the pastures between the Meta and the Apure, denounced me recently in the Audencia of Caracas.