

persuaded the whites, and those who fancy they are so, that to till the ground is a task fit only for slaves (*poitos*) and the native neophytes. The colony of Esmeralda had been founded on the principles of that of Australia; but it was far from being governed with the same wisdom. The American colonists, being separated from their native soil, not by seas, but by forests and savannahs, dispersed; some taking the road northward, towards the Caura and the Carony; others proceeding southward to the Portuguese possessions. Thus the celebrity of this *villa*, and of the emerald-mines of Duida, vanished in a few years; and Esmeralda, on account of the immense number of insects that obscure the air at all seasons of the year, was regarded by the monks as a place of banishment. The superior of the missions, when he would make the lay-brothers mindful of their duty, threatens sometimes to send them to Esmeralda; "that is," say the monks, "to be condemned to the mosquitos; to be devoured by those buzzing flies (*zancudos gritones*), which God appears to have created for the torment and chastisement of man."* These strange punishments have not always been confined to the lay-brothers. There happened in 1788 one of those monastic revolutions, of which it is difficult to form a conception in Europe, according to the ideas that prevail of the peaceful state of the Christian settlements in the New World. For a long period the Franciscan monks settled in Guiana had been desirous of forming a separate republic, and rendering themselves independent of the college of Piritu at Nueva Barcelona. Discontented with the election of Fray Gutierrez de Aguilera, chosen by a general chapter, and confirmed by the king in the important office of president of the missions, five or six monks of the Upper Orinoco, the Cassiquiare, and the Rio Negro, assembled together at San Fernando de Atabapo; chose hastily a new superior from their own body; and caused the old one, who, unfortunately for himself, had come to visit those parts, to be arrested. They put him in irons, threw him into a boat, and conducted him to Esmeralda, as

* "Estos mosquitos que llaman *zancudos gritones* los parece cria la naturaleza para castigo y tormento de los hombres."—"Those mosquitos which are called *zancudos*, Nature seems to have created for the especial punishment and torture of man." (Fray Pedro Simon.)