

extends along a space of two hundred leagues. It is washed by the Caribbean Sea, a sort of Mediterranean, on the shores of which almost all the nations of Europe have founded colonies; which communicates at several points with the Atlantic; and which has had a considerable influence on the progress of knowledge in the eastern part of equinoctial America, from the time of the Conquest. The kingdoms of New Grenada and Mexico have no connection with foreign colonies, and through them with the nations of Europe, except by the ports of Carthagena, of Santa Martha, of Vera Cruz, and of Campeachy. These vast countries, from the nature of their coasts, and the isolation of their inhabitants on the back of the Cordilleras, have few points of contact with foreign lands. The gulf of Mexico also is but little frequented during a part of the year, on account of the danger of gales of wind from the north. The coasts of Venezuela, on the contrary, from their extent, their eastward direction, the number of their ports, and the safety of their anchorage at different seasons, possess all the advantages of the Caribbean Sea. The communications with the larger islands, and even with those situated to windward, can nowhere be more frequent than from the ports of Cumana, Barcelona, La Guayra, Porto-Cabello, Coro, and Maracaybo. Can we wonder that this facility of commercial intercourse with the inhabitants of free America, and the agitated nations of Europe, should in the provinces united under the Capitania-General of Venezuela, have augmented opulence, knowledge, and that restless desire of a local government, which is blended with the love of liberty and republican forms?

The copper-coloured natives, or Indians, constitute an important mass of the agricultural population only in those places where the Spaniards, at the time of the Conquest, found regular governments, social communities, and ancient and very complicated institutions; as, for example, in New Spain, south of Durango; and in Peru, from Cuzco to Potosi. In the Capitania-General of Caracas, the Indian population is inconsiderable, at least beyond the Missions and in the cultivated zone. Even in times of great political excitement, the natives do not inspire any apprehension in the whites or the mixed castes. Computing, in 1800, the