

**COLOMBIA: ITS PRESENT STATE, IN
RESPECT OF CLIMATE, SOIL,
PRODUCTIONS, POPULATION,
GOVERNMENT, COMMERCE, REVENUE,
MANUFACTURES, ARTS, LITERATURE,
MANNERS, EDUCATION**

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Colombia: its present state, in respect of climate, soil, productions, population, government, commerce, revenue, manufactures, arts, literature, manners, education by Francis Hall

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FRANCIS HALL

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D E D I C A T I O N .

To Jeremy Bentham, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR,

Maracaybo, Feb. 5, 1824.

I TAKE the liberty of dedicating the following pages to *you*, because I am convinced there is no one more aware of the evils of a crowded population, and defective social institutions, or who would more gladly anticipate in the New World such improved forms of political existence as we must almost despair of witnessing in the Old.

It is superfluous to insist on the paramount interest of Great Britain to plant in South America a nation of *customers* whose trade will one day, from the fertility of their soil and superior value of its productions, become of infinitely more importance than even that of the United States. There is yet another interesting consideration — the political wheel has very nearly “come full circle” in the Antilles. Spain is not the only nation whose crimes will meet with retribution in the downfall of colonial establishments founded on anti-social principles. It is in vain the Creole proprietor proudly exclaims against all interference with *his*

property. The time is fast approaching when *Man* will cease to be the property of *Man*. Fortunately the natural bent of circumstances offers a species of *euthanasia* to the West-India colonies, if not too long and obstinately rejected. The capital employed on them has long since made very inadequate returns, and these returns will be much smaller when the sugars, rum, and coffee of South America obtain that preference in the European markets to which their superior cheapness will, of course, entitle them. South America must *under-sell* the West-India islands: let the capital employed on the latter be transferred to the former, and let the capitalist rather seek to share the prosperity of a new, than the ruin of an old country. I speak not of a more violent catastrophe, but they who dwell on the edge of a volcano should at least understand the signs of an approaching eruption.

I trust it is superfluous to speculate on the plans of the allied despots; meek-hearted sovereigns—who enslave, plunder, and partition, and then modestly desire the world will esteem them “all honourable men;” --aye, and righteous too, for they would cover both hemispheres with scaffolds and

dungeons, and devoutly preach to their victims from the text of social order, religion, and philanthropy. The firm and prompt measures of the British cabinet give us every reason to hope the New World may at least escape their ravages. The well-beloved Ferdinand has already despatched a proclamation to his colonies, containing the usual quantity of official cant and insolence, but his "paternal yearnings" and "energetic measures" will serve here only to excite ridicule and contempt.

You will be pleased to know that your ideas on legislation are gaining ground in Colombia; a law of Congress of the 11th of June, 1823, orders, "That all laws shall be accompanied by an exordium, containing the fundamental reasons for their enactment." I have no doubt that this idea was suggested by the present of your *Codification proposal* to this government. For *its* sake, rather than for *yours*, I could have wished the obligation had been acknowledged.

With respect to the pages now offered to your perusal, I have but one observation to make of a personal nature, and this is, to disclaim every thing like undue bias in the representation I have made of the advan-

tages of emigration to this country. It not unfrequently happens that they who recommend a plan have some interest in its adoption; and their statements, in such cases, as commonly take a tinge from their interests. I have no connexion, directly or indirectly, with any scheme of emigration, nor can the adoption or rejection of my ideas on the subject, influence, in any manner that I am at present aware of, my future welfare. Neither am I misled by any advantages which have occurred to myself from a change of country; my success as a military man has been too partial and too dearly purchased to dazzle my imagination. Whenever I quit Colombia I shall scarcely leave behind me any other trophies than the sepulchres of my friends: I write that my countrymen may profit, if they think fit, by what I have seen and felt, and that England and Colombia may hereafter add the ties of blood and relationship to those of political friendship.

That you may long retain life and health for the benefit of humanity in ages yet unborn, is the sincere wish of, dear Sir,

Your faithful Friend and Servant,

F. HALL.

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A S K E T C H
OF THE
REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA.

PART I.

Geographical Outline of Colombia; Climate, Soil, and Productions; Population; Government; Commerce and Revenue; Manufactures; Arts; Literature and Education.

§ 1. GEOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE, CLIMATE,
SOIL, AND PRODUCTIONS.

THE Republic of Colombia occupies an extent of 22°, or 1,320 miles of longitude, reckoning from the mouth of the Orinoco to the western extremity of the Isthmus of Panama; and 18°, or 1,080 miles of latitude, 11½ to the north, and 6¼ to the south of the Equator, reckoning from Cape la Vela to the southern extremity of Quito. It is bounded to the north and east by the Atlantic Ocean, and by Dutch and French