

effects of the heat of the tropics. The negro was a young man, eighteen years of age, very robust, and born on the coast of Guinea; an abode of some years on the high plain of Castile, had imparted to his organization that kind of irritability which renders the miasma of the torrid zone so dangerous to the inhabitants of the countries of the north.

The site on which Cumana is built is part of a tract of ground, very remarkable in a geological point of view. The chain of the calcareous Alps of the Brigantine and the Tata-raqual stretches east and west from the summit of the Im-possible to the port of Mochima and to Campanario. The sea, in times far remote, appears to have divided this chain from the rocky coasts of Araya and Maniquarez. The vast gulf of Cariaco has been caused by an irruption of the sea; and no doubt can be entertained but that the waters once covered, on the southern bank, the whole tract of land impregnated with muriate of soda, through which flows the Manzanares. The slow retreat of the waters has turned into dry ground this extensive plain, in which rises a group of small hills, composed of gypsum and calcareous breccias of very recent formation. The city of Cumana is backed by this group, which was formerly an island of the gulf of Cariaco. That part of the plain which is north of the city, is called Plaga Chica, or the Little Plain, and extends eastwards as far as Punta Delgada, where a narrow valley, covered with yellow gomphrena, still marks the point of the ancient outlet of the waters.

The hill of calcareous breccias, which we have just mentioned as having once been an island in the ancient gulf, is covered with a thick forest of cylindric cactus and opuntia. Some of these trees, thirty or forty feet high, are covered with lichens, and are divided into several branches in the form of candelabra. Near Maniquarez, at Punta Araya, we measured a cactus,* the trunk of which was four feet nine inches in circumference. A European acquainted only with the opuntia in our hot-houses is surprised to see the wood of this plant become so hard from age, that it resists for centuries both air and moisture: the Indians of Cumana therefore employ it in preference to any other for oars and door-posts.

* Tuna macho. We distinguish in the wood of the cactus the medullary prolongations, as M. Desfontaines has already observed.