

of the ground to the tension of elastic fluids, cited in favour of their opinion, the total cessation of the shocks at the island of Eubœa, by the opening of a crevice in the Lelantine plain.*

The phenomena of volcanoes, and those of earthquakes, have been considered of late as the effects of voltaic electricity, developed by a particular disposition of heterogeneous strata. It cannot be denied, that often, when violent shocks succeed each other within the space of a few hours, the electricity of the air sensibly increases at the instant the ground is most agitated; but to explain this phenomenon, it is unnecessary to recur to an hypothesis, which is in direct contradiction to everything hitherto observed respecting the structure of our planet, and the disposition of its strata.

CHAPTER V.

Peninsula of Araya.—Salt-marshes.—Ruins of the Castle of Santiago.

THE first weeks of our abode at Cumana were employed in testing our instruments, in herborizing in the neighbouring plains, and in examining the traces of the earthquake of the 14th of December, 1797. Overpowered at once by a great number of objects, we were somewhat embarrassed how to lay down a regular plan of study and observation. Whilst every surrounding object was fitted to inspire in us the most lively interest, our physical and astronomical instruments in their turns excited strongly the curiosity of the inhabitants. We had numerous visitors; and in our desire to satisfy persons who appeared so happy to see the spots of the moon through Dollond's telescope, the absorption of two gases in a eudiometrical tube, or the effects of galvanism on the motions of a frog, we were obliged to answer questions often obscure, and to repeat for whole hours the same experiments. These scenes were renewed for the space of five years, whenever we took up our abode in a place where it was understood

* "The shocks ceased only when a crevice, which ejected a river of fiery mud, opened in the plain of Lelantum, near Chalcis."—Strabo.