

affirmed that they had imported the contagion, and that the disease had appeared on board a brig from Philadelphia, even before the vessel had entered the roads of La Guayra. The captain of the brig denied the fact; and asserted that, far from having introduced the malady, his crew had caught it in the port. We know from what happened at Cadiz in 1800, how difficult it is to elucidate facts, when their uncertainty serves to favour theories diametrically opposite one to another. The more enlightened inhabitants of Caracas and La Guayra, divided in opinion, like the physicians of Europe and the United States, on the question of the contagion of yellow fever, cited the instance of the American vessel; some for the purpose of proving that the typhus had come from abroad, and others, to show that it had taken birth in the country itself. Those who advocated the latter opinion, admitted that an extraordinary alteration had been caused in the constitution of the atmosphere by the overflowings of the Rio de La Guayra. This torrent, which in general is not ten inches deep, was swelled after sixty hours' rain in the mountains, in so extraordinary a manner, that it bore down trunks of trees and masses of rock of considerable size. During this flood the waters were from thirty to forty feet in breadth, and from eight to ten feet deep. It was supposed that, issuing from some subterranean basin, formed by successive infiltrations, they had flowed into the recently cleared arable lands. Many houses were carried away by the torrent; and the inundation became the more dangerous for the stores, in consequence of the gate of the town, which could alone afford an outlet to the waters, being accidentally closed. It was necessary to make a breach in the wall on the sea-side. More than thirty persons perished, and the damage was computed at half a million of piastres. The stagnant water, which infected the stores, the cellars, and the dungeons of the public prison, no doubt diffused miasms in the air, which, as a predisposing cause, may have accelerated the development of the yellow fever; but I believe that the inundation of the Rio de la Guayra was no more the primary cause, than the overflowings of the Guadalquivir, the Xenil, and the Gual-Medina, were at Seville, at Ecija, and at Malaga, the primary causes of the fatal epi-