

demics of 1800 and 1804. I examined with attention the bed of the torrent of La Guayra; and found it to consist merely of a barren soil, blocks of mica-slate, and gneiss, containing pyrites detached from the Sierra de Avila, but nothing that could have had any effect in deteriorating the purity of the air.

Since the years 1797 and 1798, at which periods there prevailed dreadful mortality at Philadelphia, St. Lucia, and St. Domingo, the yellow fever has continued its ravages at La Guayra. It has proved fatal not only to the troops newly arrived from Spain, but also to those levied in parts remote from the coasts, in the llanos between Calabozo and Uritucu, regions almost as hot as La Guayra, but favourable to health. This latter fact would seem more surprising, did we not know, that even the natives of Vera Cruz, who are not attacked with typhus in their own town, sometimes sink under it during the epidemics of the Havannah and the United States. As the black vomit finds an insurmountable barrier at the Encero (four hundred and seventy-six toises high), on the declivity of the mountains of Mexico, in the direction of Xalapa, where oaks begin to appear, and the climate begins to be cool and pleasant, so the yellow fever scarcely ever passes beyond the ridge of mountains which separates La Guayra from the valley of Caracas. This valley has been exempt from the malady for a considerable time; for we must not confound the *vomito* and the yellow fever with the irregular and bilious fevers. The Cumbre and the Cerro de Avila form a very useful rampart to the town of Caracas, the elevation of which a little exceeds that of the Encero, but of which the mean temperature is above that of Xalapa.

I have published in another work* the observations made by M. Bonpland and myself on the locality of the towns periodically subject to the visitation of yellow fever; and I shall not hazard here any new conjectures on the changes observed in the pathogenic constitution of particular localities. The more I reflect on this subject, the more mysterious appears to me all that relates to those gaseous emanations which we call so vaguely the seeds of contagion, and which are supposed to be developed by a corrupted air, destroyed

* Nouvelle Espagne, tom. ii.