

Rains are extremely frequent at Caracas in the months of April, May, and June. The storms always come from the east and south-east, from the direction of Petare and La Valle. No hail falls in the low regions of the tropics; yet it occurs at Caracas almost every four or five years. Hail has even been seen in valleys still lower; and this phenomenon, when it does happen, makes a powerful impression on the people. Falls of aërolites are less rare with us than hail in the torrid zone, notwithstanding the frequency of thunder-storms at the elevation of three hundred toises above the level of the sea.

The cool and delightful climate we have just been describing is also suited for the culture of equinoctial productions. The sugar-cane is reared with success, even at heights exceeding that of Caracas; but in the valley, owing to the dryness of the climate, and the stony soil, the cultivation of the coffee-tree is preferred: it yields indeed but little fruit, but that little is of the finest quality. When the shrub is in blossom, the plain extending beyond Chacao presents a delightful aspect. The banana-tree, which is seen in the plantations near the town, is not the great *Platano harton*; but the varieties *camburi* and *dominico*, which require less heat. The great plantains are brought to the market of Caracas from the haciendas of Turiamo, situated on the coast between Burburata and Porto Cabello. The finest flavoured pine-apples are those of Baruto, of Empedrado, and of the heights of Buenavista, on the road to Victoria. When a traveller for the first time visits the valley of Caracas, he is agreeably surprised to find the culinary plants of our climates, as well as the strawberry, the vine, and almost all the fruit-trees of the temperate zone, growing beside the coffee and banana-tree. The apples and peaches esteemed the best come from Macarao, or from the western extremity of the valley. There, the quince-tree, the trunk of which attains only four or five feet in height, is so common, that it has almost become wild. Preserved apples and quinces, particularly the latter,* are much used in a country where it is thought that, before drinking water, thirst should be excited by sweetmeats. In proportion as the environs of the town have been planted with

* "Dulce de manzana y de membrillo," are the Spanish names of these preserves.