

Europe, but because the air at this period, the most distant from the rainy season, nearly attains its maximum of dryness. Only those plants which have very tough and glossy leaves resist this absence of humidity. Beneath the fine sky of the tropics the traveller is struck with the almost hibernal aspect of the country; but the freshest verdure again appears when he reaches the banks of the Orinoco, where another climate prevails; and the great forests preserve by their shade a certain quantity of moisture in the soil, by sheltering it from the devouring heat of the sun.

Beyond the small village of Antimano the valley becomes much narrower. The river is bordered with *Lata*, a fine gramineous plant with distich leaves, which sometimes reaches the height of thirty feet.* Every hut is surrounded with enormous trees of persea,† at the foot of which the aristolochiæ, paullinia, and other creepers vegetate. The neighbouring mountains, covered with forests, seem to spread humidity over the western extremity of the valley of Caracas. We passed the night before our arrival at Las Ajuntas at a sugar-cane plantation. A square house (the hacienda or farm of Don Fernando Key-Muñoz) contained nearly eighty negroes; they were lying on skins of oxen spread upon the ground. In each apartment of the house were four slaves: it looked like a barrack. A dozen fires were burning in the farm-yard, where people were employed in dressing food, and the noisy mirth of the blacks almost prevented us from sleeping. The clouds hindered me from observing the stars; the moon appeared only at intervals. The aspect of the landscape was dull and uniform, and all the surrounding hills were covered with aloes. Workmen were employed at a small canal, intended for conveying the waters of the Rio San Pedro to the farm, at a height of more than seventy feet. According to a barometric calculation, the site of the hacienda is only fifty toises above the bed of the Rio Guayra at La Noria, near Caracas.

The soil of these countries is found to be but little favourable to the cultivation of the coffee-tree, which in general is less productive in the valley of Caracas than was imagined

* *G. saccharoides*.

† *Laurus persea* (alligator pear).