

humid. The azure of the sky is paler, and the elevated regions are loaded with light vapours, uniformly diffused. This season may be considered as the awakening of nature; it is a spring which, according to the received language of the Spanish colonies, proclaims the beginning of winter, and succeeds to the heats of summer.\*

Indigo was formerly cultivated in the Quebrada Seca; but as the soil covered with vegetation cannot there concentrate so much heat as the plains and the bottom of the Tuy valley receive and radiate, the cultivation of coffee has been substituted in its stead. As we advanced in the ravine we found the moisture increase. Near the Hato, at the northern extremity of the Quebrada, a torrent rolls down over sloping beds of gneiss. An aqueduct was being formed there to convey the water to the plain. Without irrigation, agriculture makes no progress in these climates. A tree of monstrous size fixed our attention.† It lay on the slope of the mountain, above the house of the Hato. On the least dislodgment of the earth, its fall would have crushed the habitation which it shaded: it had therefore been burnt near its foot, and cut down in such a manner, that it fell between some enormous fig-trees, which prevented it from rolling into the ravine. We measured the fallen tree; and though its summit had been burnt, the length of its trunk was still one hundred and fifty-four feet.‡ It was eight feet in diameter near the roots, and four feet two inches at the upper extremity.

Our guides, less anxious than ourselves to measure the bulk of trees, continually pressed us to proceed onward and seek the 'gold mine.' This part of the ravine is little frequented, and is not uninteresting. We made the following observations on the geological constitution of the soil. At the entrance of the Quebrada Seca we remarked great masses of primitive saccharoidal limestone, tolerably fine

\* That part of the year most abundant in rain is called winter; so that in Terra Firma, the season which begins by the winter solstice, is designated by the name of summer; and it is usual to hear, that it is winter on the mountains, at the time when summer prevails in the neighbouring plains.

† *Hura crepitans*.

‡ French measure, nearly fifty metres.