

believe that the insalubrity of the air is owing to the fresh water, that is, to the overflowings of the Guayguaza and Estevan, the swell of which is so great and sudden in the months of October and November. The banks of the Rio Estevan have been less insalubrious since little plantations of maize and plantains have been established; and, by raising and hardening the ground, the river has been confined within narrower limits. A plan is formed of giving another issue to the Rio San Estevan, and thus to render the environs of Porto Cabello more wholesome. A canal is to lead the waters toward that part of the coast which is opposite the island of Guayguaza.

The salt-works of Porto Cabello somewhat resemble those of the peninsula of Araya, near Cumana. The earth, however, which they lixivate by collecting the rain-water into small basins, contains less salt. It is questioned here, as at Cumana, whether the ground be impregnated with saline particles because it has been for ages covered at intervals with sea-water evaporated by the heat of the sun, or whether the soil be muriatiferous, as in a mine very poor in native salt. I had not leisure to examine this plain with the same attention as the peninsula of Araya. Besides, does not this problem reduce itself to the simple question, whether the salt be owing to new or very ancient inundations? The labouring at the salt-works of Porto Cabello being extremely unhealthy, the poorest men alone engage in it. They collect the salt in little stores, and afterwards sell it to the shopkeepers in the town.

During our abode at Porto Cabello, the current on the coast, generally directed towards the west,\* ran from west to east. This upward current (*corriente por arriba*), is very frequent during two or three months of the year, from September to November. It is believed to be owing to some north-west winds that have blown between Jamaica and Cape St. Antony in the island of Cuba.

\* The wrecks of the Spanish ships, burnt at the island of Trinidad, at the time of its occupation by the English in 1797, were carried by the general or rotary current to Punta Brava, near Porto Cabello. This general current toward the east, from the coasts of Paria to the isthmus of Panama and the western extremity of the island of Cuba, was the subject of a violent dispute between Don Diego Columbus, Oviedo, and the pilot Andres, in the sixteenth century.