

colate and the flour of maize, have rendered accessible to the traveller the table-lands of the Andes, and vast uninhabited forests.

The cacao harvest is extremely variable. The tree vegetates with such vigour that flowers spring out even from the roots, wherever the earth leaves them uncovered. It suffers from the north-east winds, even when they lower the temperature only a few degrees. The heavy showers that fall irregularly after the rainy season, during the winter months, from December to March, are also very hurtful to the cacao-tree. The proprietor of a plantation of fifty thousand trees often loses the value of more than four or five thousand piastres in cacao in one hour. Great humidity is favourable to the tree only when it augments progressively, and is for a long time uninterrupted. If, in the season of drought, the leaves and the young fruit be wetted by a violent shower, the fruit falls from the stem; for it appears that the vessels which absorb water break from being rendered turgid. Besides, the cacao-harvest is one of the most uncertain, on account of the fatal effects of inclement seasons, and the great number of worms, insects, birds, and quadrupeds,\* which devour the pod of the cacao-tree; and this branch of agriculture has the disadvantage of obliging the new planter to wait eight or ten years for the fruit of his labours, and of yielding after all an article of very difficult preservation.

The finest plantations of cacao are found in the province of Caracas, along the coast, between Caravalleda and the mouth of the Rio Tocuyo, in the valleys of Caucahua, Capaya, Curiepe, and Guapo; and in those of Cupira, between cape Conare and cape Unare, near Aroa, Barquesimeto, Guigue, and Uritucu. The cacao that grows on the banks of the Uritucu, at the entrance of the llanos, in the jurisdiction of San Sebastian de las Reyes, is considered to be of the finest quality. Next to the cacao of Uritucu comes that of Guigue, of Caucahua, of Capaya, and of Cupira. The merchants of Cadiz assign the first rank to the cacao of Caracas, immediately after that of Socomusco; and its price is generally from thirty to forty per cent. higher than that of Guayaquil.

\* Parrots, monkeys, agoutis, squirrels, and stags.