

remark, that a great deal of cacao of an inferior quality, such as that of Marañon, the Rio Negro, Honduras, and the island of St. Lucia, bears the name, in commerce, of Guayaquil cacao. The exportation from that port amounts only to sixty thousand fanegas; consequently it is two-thirds less than that of the ports of the Capitanía-General of Caracas.

Though the plantations of cacao have augmented in the provinces of Cumana, Barcelona, and Maracaybo, in proportion as they have diminished in the province of Caracas, it is still believed that, in general, this ancient branch of agricultural industry gradually declines. In many parts coffee and cotton-trees progressively take place of the cacao, of which the lingering harvests weary the patience of the cultivator. It is also asserted, that the new plantations of cacao are less productive than the old; the trees do not acquire the same vigour, and yield later and less abundant fruit. The soil is still said to be exhausted; but probably it is rather the atmosphere that is changed by the progress of clearing and cultivation. The air that reposes on a virgin soil covered with forests is loaded with humidity and those gaseous mixtures that serve for the nutriment of plants, and arise from the decomposition of organic substances. When a country has been long subjected to cultivation, it is not the proportions between the azote and oxygen that vary. The constituent bases of the atmosphere remain unaltered; but it no longer contains, in a state of suspension, those binary and ternary mixtures of carbon, hydrogen, and nitrogen, which a virgin soil exhales, and which are regarded as a source of fecundity. The air, purer and less charged with miasmata and heterogeneous emanations, becomes at the same time drier. The elasticity of the vapours undergoes a sensible diminution. On land long cleared, and consequently little favourable to the cultivation of the cacao-tree (as, for instance, in the West India Islands), the fruit is almost as small as that of the wild cacao-tree. It is on the banks of the Upper Orinoco, after having crossed the Llanos, that we find the true country of the cacao-tree; thick forests, in which, on a virgin soil, and surrounded by an atmosphere continually humid, the trees furnish, from