

from May to October, and comprehending consequently the periods of the greatest heats, which occur in July and August.*

Nothing can equal the clearness of the atmosphere from the month of December to that of February. The sky is then constantly without clouds; and if one should appear, it is a phenomenon that engages the whole attention of the inhabitants. A breeze from the east, and from east-north-east, blows with violence. As it brings with it air always of the same temperature, the vapours cannot become visible by cooling.

About the end of February and the beginning of March, the blue of the sky is less intense, the hygrometer indicates by degrees greater humidity, the stars are sometimes veiled by a slight stratum of vapour, and their light is no longer steady and planetary; they are seen twinkling from time to time when at 20° above the horizon. The breeze at this period becomes less strong, less regular, and is often interrupted by dead calms. The clouds accumulate towards south-south-east, appearing like distant mountains, with outlines strongly marked. From time to time they detach themselves from the horizon, and traverse the vault of the sky with a rapidity which little corresponds with the feeble wind prevailing in the lower strata of the air. At the end of March, the southern region of the atmosphere is illumined by small electric explosions. They are like phosphorescent gleams, circumscribed by vapour. The breeze then shifts from time to time, and for several hours together, to the west and south-west. This is a certain sign of the approach of the rainy season, which begins at the Orinoco about the end of April. The blue sky disappears, and a grey tint spreads uniformly over it. At the same time the heat of the atmosphere progressively increases; and soon the heavens are no longer obscured by clouds, but by condensed vapours. The plaintive cry of the howling apes begins to be heard before sunrise. The atmospheric electricity, which, during

* The maximum of the heat is not felt on the coast, at Cumana, at La Guayra, and in the neighbouring island of Margareta, before the month of September; and the rains, if the name can be given to a few drops that fall at intervals, are observed only in the months of October and November.