

light, heat, and moisture which, while it favours the action of chemical affinities, accelerates the putrefaction of organised substances. May not the mosquitos themselves increase the insalubrity of the atmosphere? When we reflect that to the height of three or four toises a cubic foot of air is often peopled by a million of winged insects,* which contain a caustic and venomous liquid; when we recollect that several species of culex are 1·8 line long from the head to the extremity of the corslet (without reckoning the legs); lastly, when we consider that in this swarm of mosquitos and gnats, diffused in the atmosphere like smoke, there is a great number of dead insects raised by the force of the ascending air, or by that of the lateral currents which are caused by the unequal heating of the soil, we are led to inquire whether the presence of so many animal substances in the air must not occasion particular miasmata. I think that these substances act on the atmosphere differently from sand and dust; but it will be prudent to affirm nothing positively on this subject. Chemistry has not yet unveiled the numerous mysteries of the insalubrity of the air; it has only taught us that we are ignorant of many things with which a few years ago we believed we were acquainted.

Daily experience appears in a certain degree to prove the fact that at the Orinoco, Cassiquiare, Rio Caura, and wherever the air is very unhealthy, the sting of the mosquito augments the disposition of the organs to receive the impression of miasmata. When you are exposed day and night, during whole months, to the torment of insects, the continual irritation of the skin causes febrile commotions; and, from the sympathy existing between the dermoid and the gastric systems, injures the functions of the stomach. Digestion first becomes difficult, the cutaneous inflammation excites profuse perspirations, an unquenchable thirst succeeds, and, in persons of a feeble constitution, increasing impatience is succeeded by depression of mind, during which all the pathogenic causes act with increased violence. It is neither the dangers of navigating in small boats, the savage Indians, nor the serpents, crocodiles, or jaguars, that make Spaniards dread a voyage on the Orinoco; it is, as

* It is sufficient to mention, that the cubic foot contains 2,985,984 cubic lines.