

heated by the radiant caloric which the perpendicular rocks emit from the time the sun sets. The examination of the thermometric observations made during nine months at La Guayra by an eminent physician, enabled me to compare the climate of this port, with those of Cumana, of the Havannah, and of Vera Cruz. This comparison is the more interesting, as it furnishes an inexhaustible subject of conversation in the Spanish colonies, and among the mariners who frequent those latitudes. As nothing is more deceiving in such matters than the testimony of the senses, we can judge of the difference of climates only by numerical calculations.

The four places of which we have been speaking are considered as the hottest on the shores of the New World. A comparison of them may serve to confirm what we have several times observed, that it is generally the duration of a high temperature, and not the excess of heat, or its absolute quantity, which occasions the sufferings of the inhabitants of the torrid zone.

A series of thermometric observations shows, that La Guayra is one of the hottest places on the earth; that the quantity of heat which it receives in the course of a year is a little greater than that felt at Cumana; but that in the months of November, December, and January (at equal distance from the two passages of the sun through the zenith of the town), the atmosphere cools more at La Guayra. May not this cooling, much slighter than that which is felt almost at the same time at Vera Cruz and at the Havannah, be the effect of the more westerly position of La Guayra? The aërial ocean, which appears to form only one mass, is agitated by currents, the limits of which are fixed by immutable laws; and its temperature is variously modified by the configuration of the lands and seas by which it is sustained. It may be subdivided into several basins, which overflow into each other, and of which the most agitated (for instance, that over the gulf of Mexico, or between the sierra of Santa Martha and the gulf of Darien) have a powerful influence on the refrigeration and the motion of the neighbouring columns of air. The north winds sometimes cause influxes and counter-currents in the south-west part of the Caribbean Sea, which seem, during particular months, to diminish the heat as far as Terra Firma.