

productions of the soil chiefly cultivated were, as in Europe, the plants that serve to nourish man. This primitive stage of the agricultural life of nations, has been preserved till the present time in Mexico, in Peru, in the cold and temperate regions of Cundinamarca, in short, wherever the domination of the whites comprehends a vast extent of territory. The alimentary plants, bananas, manioc, maize, the cereals of Europe, potatoes, and quinoa, have continued to be, at different heights above the level of the sea, the basis of continental agriculture within the tropics. Indigo, cotton, coffee, and sugar-cane, appear in those regions only in intercalated groups. Cuba, and the other islands of the archipelago of the Antilles, presented during the space of two centuries and a half, a uniform aspect: the same plants were cultivated which had nourished the half-wild natives, and the vast savannahs of the great islands were peopled with numerous herds of cattle. Pedro de Atienza planted the first sugar-canes in Saint Domingo, about the year 1520; and cylindrical presses, moved by water-wheels, were constructed.* But the island of Cuba participated little in these efforts of rising industry; and what is very remarkable, in 1553, the historians of the Conquest† mention no exportation of sugar except that of Mexican sugar for Spain and Peru. Far from throwing into commerce what we now call colonial produce, the Havannah, till the eighteenth century, exported only skins and leather. The rearing of cattle was succeeded by the cultivation of tobacco and the rearing of bees, of which the first hives (colmenares) were brought from the Floridas. Wax and tobacco soon became more important objects of commerce than leather, but were shortly superseded in their turn by the sugar-cane and coffee. The cultivation of these productions did not exclude more ancient cultivation; and, in the different phases of agricultural industry, notwithstanding the general tendency to make the coffee plantations predominate, the sugar-houses furnish the greatest amount in the annual profits. The exportation of tobacco, coffee, sugar, and wax, by lawful and

* On the *trapiches* or *molinos de agua* of the sixteenth century, see Oviedo, *Hist. nat. des Ind.*, lib. 4, cap. 8.

† Lopez de Gomara, *Conquista de Mexico* (Medina del Campo, 1353), fol. 129.