

CHAP.
XII.

three fathoms of water, and protected by a bar over which the largest vessels may pass with safety, have hitherto saved St. Domingo from entire decay, and may possibly continue to save it. With this very defective information the reader must be content. As little seems to be known concerning the state of agriculture in the Spanish possessions in this island, as of their capital and commerce. A few planters are said to cultivate cacao, tobacco, and sugar, for their own expenditure; and, perhaps some small quantities of each are still exported for consumption in Spain. The chief article of exportation, however, continues to be, what it always has been since the mines were abandoned, *the hides of horned cattle*; which have multiplied to such a degree, that the proprietors are said to reckon them by thousands; and vast numbers (as I believe I have elsewhere observed) are annually slaughtered solely for the skins †.

IT seems therefore extremely probable, that the cultivation of the earth is almost entirely neglected throughout the whole of the Spanish dominion in this island; and that some of the finest tracts of land in the world, once the paradise of a simple and innocent people, are now abandoned to the beasts of the field, and the vultures which hover round them (*d*).

OF this description, probably, is the country already mentioned, called Los Llanos, which stretches eastward

† It is said that a Company was formed at Barcelona in 1757, with exclusive privileges, for the re-establishment of agriculture and commerce in the Spanish part of St. Domingo: I know not with what success.

(*d*) The *Gallinazo*, or American vulture, a very ravenous and filthy bird that feeds on carrion. These birds abound in St. Domingo, and devour the carcases of the cattle as soon as the skins are stripped off by the hunters.

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