

## PART II.

## SECTION I.

*Description of the Strait of Magallanes.—Division of the Country into high and low.—Temperature: Qualities of the Soil.—Productions of the Strait: Herbs, Plants, Flowers, Shrubs, and Trees.—Description of the Quadrupeds, Birds, Fishes, and Insects.*

THE opinion of the greatest part of naturalists is not improbable, that this Strait has been formed by the earthquakes and effects of the volcanos of this part of the globe. M. Buffon, in his "*Epoques de la Nature*," thinks that the high mountainous part of the country is very ancient, and that the plains are comparatively modern; assigning as a reason for this opinion, that the sea, agitated by the winds, constant and violent from the west, gradually consuming the west coast of the continent of South America, has gained on the land, on that side, as far as its power was able to prevail; from which he infers, that the land now seen on that west side must be very ancient; and also that, on the contrary, the sea loses ground, or falls off, on the eastern coast, leaving uncovered and visible such low lands as are now seen near Cape de las Virgines: so that the low land extending north from Point de Micra to the ridge of hills reaching behind Cape de las Virgines to Cape Possession, is all very modern; and that, in former times, the sea extended over that low land up to the above ridge, which was then a high steep shore.

We will, however, now leave these conjectures, and begin to treat of such objects as have been observed; and the first thing to be noticed is, that the country in the vicinity of the Strait of Magellan must be considered under two different points of view, separating the low or plain part from the mountainous; since there is a total difference, not only in their natural qualities and productions, but also in their inhabitants.

The plains, or low country, occupy all that part of the continent on the north side of the strait from Cape de las Virgines westward to Cape Negro, but it is not easy to ascertain its extent towards north and east; only we may be certain it reaches a great way in that direction, and that it joins with the