disæus,@@' mention it as a species of honey procured from canes.@@2

That the sugar-cane is an indigenous plant in some parts of the East Indies, we have the strongest reason to believe ; for Thunberg found it in Japan, and has accordingly men­tioned it as a native of that country in his *Flora Japonica,* published in 1788. Osbeck also found it in China in 1751. It may indeed have been transplanted from some other country ; but as it does not appear from history that the in­habitants of Japan or China ever carried on any commerce with remote nations, it could only be conveyed from some neighbouring country. Marco Polo, a noble Venetian, who travelled into the east about the year 1250, found sugar in abundance in Bengal. Vasco de Gama, who doubled the Cape of Good Hope in 1497, relates that a considerable trade in sugar was then carried on in the kingdom of Calicut. On the authority of Dioscorides and Pliny, we should be disposed to admit that it is a native of Arabia, did we not find, on consulting Niebuhr’s Travels, that this botanist has omitted it when enumerating the most valuable plants of that country. If it be a spontaneous production of Arabia, it must still flourish in its native soil. Mr Bruce found it in Upper Egypt. If we may believe the relation of Giovan Lioni, a considerable trade was carried on in sugar in Nu­bia in 1500. It abounded also at Thebes, on the Nile, and in the northern parts of Africa, about the same period.

There is reason to believe that the sugar-cane was intro­duced into Europe during the crusades; expeditions which, however romantic in their plan, and unsuccessful in their execution, were certainly productive of many advantages to the nations of Europe. Albertus Aquensis, a monkish writer, observes that the Christian soldiers in the Holy Land fre­quently derived refreshment and support during a scarcity of provisions, by sucking the canes. This plant also flourish­ed in the Morea, and in the islands of Rhodes and Malta, from which it was transported into Sicily. The date of this transaction it is not easy to ascertain ; but we are sure that sugar was cultivated in that island previously to the year 1166; for Lafitau the Jesuit, who wrote a history of the Portuguese discoveries, mentions a donation made that year to the monastery of St Bennet, by William II., king of Sicily, of a mill for grinding sugar-canes, with all its rights, members, and appurtenances. From Sicily, where the su­gar-cane still flourishes, on the sides of Mount Hybla, it was conveyed to Spain, Madeira, the Canary and Cape de Verd Islands, soon after they were discovered in the 15th century.@@3

An opinion has prevailed that the sugar cane is not a native of the western continent, or its adjacent islands the West Indies, but was conveyed thither by the Spaniards or Portuguese soon after the discovery of America by Colum­bus. From the testimony of Peter Martyr, in the third book of his first decade, composed during Columbus’s se­cond voyage, which commenced in 1493 and ended in 1495, it appears that the sugar-cane was known at that time in Hispaniola. It may be said that it was brought thither by Columbus, but for this assertion we have found no direct evidence ; and though we had direct evidence, this would not prove that the sugar-cane was not an indigenous plant of the West Indies. There are authors of learning who, after investigating this subject with attention, do not hesi­tate to maintain that it is a native both of the islands and of the continent of America.

Labat has supported this opinion with much appear­ance of truth ;@@4 and, in particular, he appeals to the testi­mony of Thomas Gage, an Englishman, who visited New Spain in 1625. Gage enumerates sugar-canes among the provisions with which the Charaibes of Guaduloupe sup­plied his ship. “ Now,” says Labat, “ it is a fact that the Spaniards had never cultivated an inch of ground in the smaller Antilles. Their ships commonly touched at those islands, indeed, for wood and water ; and they left swine in the view of supplying with fresh provisions such of their countrymen as might call there in future ; but it would be absurd in the highest degree to suppose that they would plant sugar-canes, and at the same time put hogs ashore to destroy them. Neither had the Spaniards any motive for bestowing this plant on islands which they considered as of no kind of importance, except for the purpose that has been mentioned ; and to suppose that the Charaibes might have cultivated, after their departure, a production of which they knew nothing, betrays a total ignorance of the Indian dis­position and character.

“ But,” continues Labat, “ we have surer testimony, and such as proves, beyond all contradiction, that the sugar-cane is the natural production of America. For, besides the evidence of Francis Ximenes, who, in a treatise on American Plants, printed at Mexico, asserts that the sugar-cane grows without cultivation, and to an extraordinary size, on the banks of the river Plata, we are assured by Jean de Lery, a Protestant minister, who was chaplain in 1556 to the Dutch garrison in the fort of Coligny, on the river Janeiro, that he himself found sugar-canes in great abundance in many places on the banks of that river, and in situations never visited by the Portuguese. Father Hen- nepen and other voyagers bear testimony in like manner to the growth of the cane near the mouth of the Mississip­pi ; and Jean de Laet to its spontaneous production in the island of St Vincent. It is not for the plant itself, therefore, but for the secret of making sugar from it, that the West Indier are indebted to the Spaniards and Portuguese ; and these to the nations of the east.” Such is the reason­ing of Labat, which the learned Lafitan has pronounced in­controvertible ; and it is greatly strengthened by recent dis­coveries, the sugar-cane having been found in many of the islands of the Pacific Ocean by our late illustrious naviga­tor Captain Cook.

The sugar-cane, or saccharum officinarum of botanists, is a jointed reed, commonly measuring (the flag part not included) front three feet and a half to seven feet in height, but sometimes rising to twelve feet. When ripe it is of a fine straw colour inclining to yellow, producing leaves or blades, the edges of which are finely and sharply serrated, and terminating in an arrow decorated with a panicle. The joints in one stalk arc from forty to sixty in number, and the stalks rising from one root are sometimes very numer­ous. The young shoot ascends from the earth like the point of an arrow ; the shaft of which soon breaks, and the two first leaves, which had been enclosed within a quadruple sheath of seminal leaves, rise to a considerable height.@@4

As the cane is a rank succulent plant, it must require a

@@@, Lib. ii. prob. 79.

@@@\* For a more minute account of the history of sugar in the early and middle ages, the reader may consult a paper by Falconer, in the Manchester Transactions, vol. iv.

@@@1 D’Orville’s Travels.

@@@, Tom. iii. c. xv.

@@@\* “ A field of canes, when standing, in the month of November, when it is in arrow or full blossom (says Mr Reckford in his Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica), is one of the most beautiful productions that the pen or pencil can possibly describe. It in common rises from three to eight feet or more in height ; a difference of growth that very strongly marks the difference of soil or the varieties of culture. It is when ripe of a bright and golden yellow ; and where obvious to the sun, is in many parts very beautifully streaked with red : the top is of a darkish green ; but the more dry it becomes, from either an excess of ripeness or a continuance of drought, of a russet yel­low, with long and narrow leaves depending ; from the centre of which shoots up an arrow like a silver wand from two to six feel in height, and from the summit of which grows out a plume of white feathers, which are delicately fringed with lilac dye, and indeed is in its appearance not much unlike the tuft that adorns this particular and elegant tree.”