

Antilles, that directly below the cultivable land, the bottom of which the inhabitants call lime, is nothing but a composition of shells, madrepores, astroites, and other productions of the sea. These facts would have made me think that shells and other petrified marine productions were to be found in the greatest part of the continent of America, and especially in the mountains, as Woodward asserts; but M. Condamine, who lived several years at Peru, has assured me he could not discover any in the Cordeliers, although he had carefully sought for them. This exception would be singular, and the consequences that might be drawn from it would be still more so; but I own that, in spite of the testimony of this celebrated naturalist, I am much inclined to suppose, that in the mountains of Perù, as well as elsewhere, there are shells and other marine petrifications, although they have not been discovered. It is well known, that in matter of testimonies, two positive witnesses, who assert to have seen a thing, is sufficient to make a complete proof; whereas ten thousand negative witnesses, and who can only assert not to have seen a thing, can only raise a slight doubt. This reason, united with the strength of analogy, induces me to persist in