

expedition was to occupy only eight months. Provided with astronomical instruments and able draughtsmen, we were to ascend the Nile as far as Assouan, after minutely examining the positions of the Saïd, between Tentyris and the cataracts. Though my views had not hitherto been fixed on any region but the tropics, I could not resist the temptation of visiting countries so celebrated in the annals of human civilization. I therefore accepted this proposition, but with the express condition, that on our return to Alexandria I should be at liberty to continue my journey through Syria and Palestine. The studies which I entered upon with a view to this new project, I afterwards found useful, when I examined the relations between the barbarous monuments of Mexico, and those belonging to the nations of the old world. I thought myself on the point of embarking for Egypt, when political events forced me to abandon a plan which promised me so much satisfaction.

An expedition of discovery in the South Sea, under the direction of captain Baudin, was then preparing in France. The plan was great, bold, and worthy of being executed by a more enlightened commander. The purpose of this expedition was to visit the Spanish possessions of South America, from the mouth of the river Plata to the kingdom of Quito and the isthmus of Panama. After visiting the archipelago of the Pacific, and exploring the coasts of New Holland, from Van Diemen's Land to that of Nuyts, both vessels were to stop at Madagascar, and return by the Cape of Good Hope. I was in Paris when the preparations for this voyage were begun. I had but little confidence in the personal character of captain Baudin, who had given cause of discontent to the court of Vienna, when he was commissioned to conduct to Brazil one of my friends, the young botanist, Van der Schott; but as I could not hope, with my own resources, to make a voyage of such extent, and view so fine a portion of the globe, I determined to take the chances of this expedition. I obtained permission to embark, with the instruments I had collected, in one of the vessels destined for the South Sea, and I reserved to myself the liberty of leaving captain Baudin whenever I thought proper. M. Michaux, who had already visited Persia and a part of North America, and M. Bonpland, with whom I