

metrical arrangement of a few cones which surround the Brigantine, made me at first think that this group, which is wholly calcareous, contained rocks of basaltic or trappean formation.

The governor of Cumana sent, in 1797, a band of determined men to explore this entirely desert country, and to open a direct road to New Barcelona, by the summit of the Mesa. It was reasonably expected that this way would be shorter, and less dangerous to the health of travellers, than the route taken by the couriers along the coasts; but every attempt to cross the chain of the mountains of the Brigantine was fruitless. In this part of America, as in Australia* to the west of Sydney, it is not so much the height of the mountain chains, as the form of the rocks, that presents obstacles difficult to surmount.

The longitudinal valley formed by the lofty mountains of the interior and the southern declivity of the Cerro de San Antonio, is intersected by the Rio Manzanares. This plain, the only thoroughly wooded part in the environs of Cumana, is called the Plain of the Charas,† on account of the numerous plantations which the inhabitants have begun, for some years past, along the river. A narrow path leads from the hill of San Francisco across the forest to the hospital of the Capuchins, a very agreeable country-house, which the Aragonese monks have built as a retreat for old infirm missionaries, who can no longer fulfil the duties of their ministry. As we advance to the west, the trees of the forest become more vigorous, and we meet with a few monkeys,‡ which, however, are very rare in the environs of Cumana. At the foot of the cappariss, the bauhinia, and the zygophyllum with flowers of a golden yellow, there extends a carpet of Bromelia,§ akin to the *B. karatas*, which from the odour and coolness of its foliage attracts the rattlesnake.

* The Blue Mountains of Australia, and those of Carmarthen and Lansdowne, are not visible, in clear weather, beyond fifty miles.—Péron, *Voyage aux Terres Australes*, page 389. Supposing the angle of altitude half a degree, the absolute height of these mountains would be about 620 toises.

† *Chacra*, by corruption *chara*, signifies a hut or cottage surrounded by a garden. The word *ipure* has the same signification.

‡ The common *machi*, or weeping monkey.

§ *Chihuchihue*, of the family of the ananas.