

which the Cordillera appeared before the disk of the rising sun had reached the horizon. The tint of the summits is of a deeper blue, their outline is more strongly marked, and their masses are more detached, as long as the transparency of the air is undisturbed by the vapours, which, after accumulating during the night in the valleys, rise in proportion as the atmosphere acquires warmth.

At the hospital of the Divina Pastora the path turns to north-east, and stretches for two leagues over a soil without trees, and formerly levelled by the waters. We there found not only cactuses, tufts of cistus-leaved tribulus, and the beautiful purple euphorbia,\* but also the avicennia, the allionia, the sesuvium, the thalinum, and most of the portulacaceous plants which grow on the banks of the gulf of Cariaco. This geographical distribution of plants appears to designate the limits of the ancient coast, and to prove that the hills along the southern side of which we were passing, formed heretofore a small island, separated from the continent by an arm of the sea.

After walking two hours, we arrived at the foot of the high chain of the interior mountains, which stretches from east to west; from the Brigantine to the Cerro de San Lorenzo. There, new rocks appear, and with them another aspect of vegetation. Every object assumes a more majestic and picturesque character; the soil, watered by springs, is furrowed in every direction; trees of gigantic height, covered with lianas, rise from the ravines; their bark, black and burnt by the double action of the light and the oxygen of the atmosphere, contrasts with the fresh verdure of the pothos and dracontium, the tough and shining leaves of which are sometimes several feet long. The parasite monocotyledons take between the tropics the place of the moss and lichens of our northern zone. As we advanced, the forms and grouping of the rocks reminded us of Switzerland and the Tyrol. The heliconia, costus, maranta, and other plants of the family of the balisiers (*Canna indica*), which near the coasts vegetate only in damp and low places, flourish in the American Alps at considerable height. Thus, by a singular similitude, in the torrid zone, under the influence of an atmosphere continually loaded with vapours

\* *Euphorbia tithymaloides*.