

post consisting of eight men, under the command of a Spanish serjeant. It was an hospital, built by the side of a powder-magazine. When Cumana, after the capture of Trinidad by the English, in 1797, was threatened with an attack, many of the inhabitants fled to Cumanacoa, and deposited whatever articles of value they possessed in sheds hastily constructed on the top of the Impossible. It was then resolved, in case of any unforeseen invasion, to abandon the castle of San Antonio, after a short resistance, and to concentrate the whole force of the province round the mountains, which may be considered as the key of the Llanos.

The top of the Impossible, as nearly as I could perceive, is covered with a quartzose sandstone, free from petrifications. Here, as on the ridge of the neighbouring mountains, the strata pretty regularly take the direction from N. N. E. to S. S. W. This direction is also most common in the primitive formations in the peninsula of Araya, and along the coasts of Venezuela. On the northern declivity of the Impossible, near the Peñas Negras, an abundant spring issues from sandstone, which alternates with a schistose clay. We remarked on this point fractured strata, which lie from N. W. to S. E., and the dip of which is almost perpendicular.

The *Llaneros*, or inhabitants of the plains, send their produce, especially maize, leather, and cattle, to the port of Cumana by the road over the Impossible. We continually saw mules arrive, driven by Indians or mulattoes. Several parts of the vast forests which surround the mountain, had taken fire. Reddish flames, half enveloped in clouds of smoke, presented a very grand spectacle. The inhabitants set fire to the forests, to improve the pasturage, and to destroy the shrubs that choke the grass. Enormous conflagrations, too, are often caused by the carelessness of the Indians, who neglect, when they travel, to extinguish the fires by which they have dressed their food. These accidents contribute to diminish the number of old trees in the road from Cumana to Cumanacoa; and the inhabitants observe justly, that, in several parts of their province, the dryness has increased, not only because every year the frequency of earthquakes causes more crevices in the soil; but also because it is now less thickly wooded than it was at the time of the conquest.

I arose during the night to determine the latitude of the