

affected in the evening by the smallest decline in the intensity of the sun's rays; so that for vegetation, night begins there, as with us, before the total disappearance of the solar disk. But why, in a zone where there is scarcely any twilight, do not the first rays of the sun stimulate the leaves with the more strength, as the absence of light must have rendered them more susceptible? Does the humidity deposited on the parenchyma by the cooling of the leaves, which is the effect of the nocturnal radiation, prevent the action of the first rays of the sun? In our climates, the leguminous plants with irritable leaves awake during the twilight of the morning, before the sun appears.

CHAPTER IX.

Physical Constitution and Manners of the Chaymas.—Their Language.—Filiation of the Nations which inhabit New Andalusia.—Pariagotos seen by Columbus.

I DID not wish to mingle with the narrative of our journey to the Missions of Caripe any general considerations on the different tribes of the indigenous inhabitants of New Andalusia; their manners, their languages, and their common origin. Having returned to the spot whence we set out, I shall now bring into one point of view these considerations which are so nearly connected with the history of the human race. As we advance into the interior of the country, these subjects will become even more interesting than the phenomena of the physical world. The north-east part of equinoctial America, Terra-Firma, and the banks of the Orinoco, resemble in respect to the numerous races of people who inhabit them, the defiles of the Caucasus, the mountains of Hindookho, at the northern extremity of Asia, beyond the Tungouses, and the Tartars settled at the mouth of the Lena. The barbarism which prevails throughout these different regions is perhaps less owing to a primitive absence of all kind of civilization, than to the effects of long degradation; for most of the hordes which we designate under the name of savages, are probably the descendants of nations highly advanced in cultivation. How can we distinguish the prolonged infancy of the human race (if, indeed, it anywhere exists), from that state of moral degradation in which solitude, want, com-