

the good fortune to live at a period when theories were less numerous; and, like me, he was struck by seeing the natives equally bronzed under the Line, in the cold climate of the Cordilleras, and in the plains. Where differences of colour are observed, they depend on the race. We shall soon find on the burning banks of the Orinoco Indians with a whitish skin. *Durans originis vis est.*

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## CHAPTER X.

Second abode at Cumana.—Earthquakes.—Extraordinary Meteors.

WE remained a month longer at Cumana, employing ourselves in the necessary preparations for our proposed visit to the Orinoco and the Rio Negro. We had to choose such instruments as could be most easily transported in narrow boats; and to engage guides for an inland journey of ten months, across a country without communication with the coasts. The astronomical determination of places being the most important object of this undertaking, I felt desirous not to miss the observation of an eclipse of the sun, which was to be visible at the end of October: and in consequence I preferred remaining till that period at Cumana, where the sky is generally clear and serene. It was now too late to reach the banks of the Orinoco before October; and the high valleys of Caracas promised less favourable opportunities, on account of the vapours which accumulate round the neighbouring mountains.

I was, however, near being compelled by a deplorable occurrence, to renounce, or at least to delay for a long time, my journey to the Orinoco. On the 27th of October, the day before the eclipse, we went as usual, to take the air on the shore of the gulf, and to observe the instant of high water, which in those parts is only twelve or thirteen inches. It was eight in the evening, and the breeze was not yet stirring. The sky was cloudy; and during a dead calm it was excessively hot. We crossed the beach which separates the suburb of the Guayqueria Indians from the embarcadero. I heard some one walking behind us, and on turning, I saw a tall man of the colour of the Zambos, naked to the waist.