

them remembered that the great earthquakes of 1766 were preceded by similar phenomena. The Guaiqueris in the Indian suburb alleged "that the bolides began to appear at one o'clock; and that as they returned from fishing in the gulf, they had perceived very small falling stars towards the east." They assured us that igneous meteors were extremely rare on those coasts after two o'clock in the morning.

The phenomenon ceased by degrees after four o'clock, and the bolides and falling stars became less frequent; but we still distinguished some to north-east by their whitish light, and the rapidity of their movement, a quarter of an hour after sunrise. This circumstance will appear less extraordinary, when I mention that in broad daylight, in 1788, the interior of the houses in the town of Popayan was brightly illumined by an aërolite of immense magnitude. It passed over the town, when the sun was shining clearly, about one o'clock. M. Bonpland and myself, during our second residence at Cumana, after having observed, on the 26th of September, 1800, the immersion of the first satellite of Jupiter, succeeded in seeing the planet distinctly with the naked eye, eighteen minutes after the disk of the sun had appeared in the horizon. There was a very slight vapour in the east, but Jupiter appeared on an azure sky. These facts bear evidence of the extreme purity and transparency of the atmosphere in the torrid zone. The mass of diffused light is the less, in proportion as the vapours are more perfectly dissolved. The same cause which checks the diffusion of the solar light, diminishes the extinction of that which emanates either from bolides from Jupiter, or from the moon, seen on the second day after its conjunction. The 12th of November was an extremely hot day, and the hygrometer indicated a very considerable degree of dryness for those climates. The reddish vapour clouded the horizon anew, and rose to the height of 14° . This was the last time it appeared that year; and I must here observe, that it is no less rare under the fine sky of Cumana, than it is common at Acapulco, on the western coast of Mexico.

We did not neglect, during the course of our journey from Caracas to the Rio Negro, to enquire everywhere,