

whether the meteors of the 12th of November had been perceived. In a wild country, where the greater number of the inhabitants sleep in the open air, so extraordinary a phenomenon could not fail to be remarked, unless it had been concealed from observation by clouds. The Capuchin missionary at San Fernando de Apure,* a village situated amid the savannahs of the province of Varinas; the Franciscan monks stationed near the cataracts of the Orinoco and at Maroa,† on the banks of the Rio Negro; had seen numberless falling-stars and bolides illumine the heavens. Maroa is south-west of Cumana, at one hundred and seventy-four leagues distance. All these observers compared the phenomenon to brilliant fireworks; and it lasted from three till six in the morning. Some of the monks had marked the day in their rituals; others had noted it by the proximate festivals of the Church. Unfortunately, none of them could recollect the direction of the meteors, or their apparent height. From the position of the mountains and thick forests which surround the Missions of the Cataracts and the little village of Maroa, I presume that the bolides were still visible at 20° above the horizon. On my arrival at the southern extremity of Spanish Guiana, at the little fort of San Carlos, I found some Portuguese, who had gone up the Rio Negro from the Mission of St. Joseph of the Maravitans. They assured me that in that part of Brazil the phenomenon had been perceived at least as far as San Gabriel das Cachoeiras, consequently as far as the equator itself.‡

I was forcibly struck by the immense height which these bolides must have attained, to have rendered them visible simultaneously at Cumana, and on the frontiers of Brazil, in a line of two hundred and thirty leagues in length. But what was my astonishment, when, on my return to Europe, I learned that the same phenomenon had been perceived

* N. lat. 7° 53' 12"; W. long. 70° 20'.

† N. lat. 2° 42' 0"; W. long. 70° 21'.

‡ A little to the north-west of San Antonio de Castanheiro. I did not meet with any persons who had observed this meteor, at Santa Fé de Bogotá, at Popayan, or in the southern hemisphere, at Quito and Peru. Perhaps the state of the atmosphere, so changeable in these western regions, prevented observation.