

tory of the World, Theory of the Earth, or Physical Geography. The last of these two objects seemed to me the most important. I was passionately devoted to botany and certain parts of zoology, and I flattered myself that our investigations might add some new species to those already known, both in the animal and vegetable kingdoms; but preferring the connection of facts which have been long observed, to the knowledge of insulated facts, although new, the discovery of an unknown genus seemed to me far less interesting than an observation on the geographical relations of the vegetable world, on the migrations of the social plants, and the limit of the height which their different tribes attain on the flanks of the Cordilleras.

The natural sciences are connected by the same ties which link together all the phenomena of nature. The classification of the species, which must be considered as the fundamental part of botany, and the study of which is rendered attractive and easy by the introduction of natural methods, is to the geography of plants what descriptive mineralogy is to the indication of the rocks constituting the exterior crust of the globe. To comprehend the laws observed in the position of these rocks, to determine the age of their successive formations, and their identity in the most distant regions, the geologist should be previously acquainted with the simple fossils which compose the mass of mountains, and of which the names and character are the object of oryctognostical knowledge. It is the same with that part of the natural history of the globe which treats of the relations plants have to each other, to the soil whence they spring, or to the air which they inhale and modify. The progress of the geography of plants depends in a great measure on that of descriptive botany; and it would be injurious to the advancement of science, to attempt rising to general ideas, whilst neglecting the knowledge of particular facts.

I have been guided by these considerations in the course of my inquiries; they were always present to my mind during the period of my preparatory studies. When I began to read the numerous narratives of travels, which compose so interesting a part of modern literature, I regretted that travellers, the most enlightened in the insulated branches of natural history, were seldom possessed of sufficient variety of knowledge to avail themselves of every advantage arising from their position. It appeared to me, that the importance of the results hitherto obtained did not keep pace with the immense progress which, at the end of the eighteenth century, had been made in several departments of science, particularly geology, the history of the modifications of the atmosphere, and the physiology of animals and plants. I saw with regret, (and all scientific men have shared this feeling) that whilst the number of accurate instruments was daily in-