

of the transverse chains which divide America from east to west, it will be sufficient to notice the general structure of a continent, the extremities of which, though situated in climates little analogous, nevertheless present several features of resemblance. In order to have an exact idea of the plains, their configuration, and their limits, we must know the chains of mountains that form their boundaries. We have already described the Cordillera of the coast, of which the highest summit is the Silla de Caraccas, and which is linked by the Paramo de las Rosas to the Nevada de Merida, and the Andes of New Grenada. We have seen that, in the tenth degree of north latitude, it stretches from Quibor and Barquesimeto as far as the point of Paria. A second chain of mountains, or rather a less elevated but much larger group, extends between the parallels of 3° and 7° from the mouths of the Guaviare and the Meta to the sources of the Orinoco, the Marony, and the Essequibo, towards French and Dutch Guiana. I call this chain the Cordillera of Parime, or of the great cataracts of the Orinoco. It may be followed for a length of two hundred and fifty leagues; but it is less a chain, than a collection of granitic mountains, separated by small plains, without being everywhere disposed in lines. The group of the mountains of Parime narrows considerably between the sources of the Orinoco and the mountains of Demerara, in the Sierras of Quimiropaca and Pacaraimo, which divide the waters between the Carony and the Rio Parime, or Rio de Aguas Blancas. This is the scene of the expeditions which were undertaken in search of El Dorado, and the great city of Manoa, the Timbuctoo of the New Continent. The Cordillera of Parime does not join the Andes of New Grenada, but is separated from them by a space eighty leagues broad. If we suppose it to have been destroyed in this space by some great revolution of the globe (which is scarcely probable) we must admit that it anciently branched off from the Andes between Santa Fé de Bogotá and Pamplona. This remark serves to fix more easily in the memory of the reader the geographical position of a Cordillera till now very imperfectly known. A third chain of mountains unites in 16° and 18° south latitude (by Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the Serranias of Aguapehy, and the famous