

## CHAPTER XIX.

Junction of the Apure and the Orinoco.—Mountains of Encaramada.—Uruana.—Baraguan.—Carichana.—Mouth of the Meta.—Island of Panumana.

ON leaving the Rio Apure we found ourselves in a country presenting a totally different aspect. An immense plain of water stretched before us like a lake, as far as we could see. White-topped waves rose to the height of several feet, from the conflict of the breeze and the current. The air resounded no longer with the piercing cries of herons, flamingos, and spoonbills, crossing in long files from one shore to the other. Our eyes sought in vain those water-fowls, the habits of which vary in each tribe. All nature appeared less animated. Scarcely could we discover in the hollows of the waves a few large crocodiles, cutting obliquely, by the help of their long tails, the surface of the agitated waters. The horizon was bounded by a zone of forests, which nowhere reached so far as the bed of the river. A vast beach, constantly parched by the heat of the sun, desert and bare as the shores of the sea, resembled at a distance, from the effect of the mirage, pools of stagnant water. These sandy shores, far from fixing the limits of the river, render them uncertain, by enlarging or contracting them alternately, according to the variable action of the solar rays.

In these scattered features of the landscape, in this character of solitude and of greatness, we recognize the course of the Orinoco, one of the most majestic rivers of the New World. The water, like the land, displays everywhere a characteristic and peculiar aspect. The bed of the Orinoco resembles not the bed of the Meta, the Guaviare, the Rio Negro, or the Amazon. These differences do not depend altogether on the breadth or the velocity of the current; they are connected with a multitude of impressions which it is easier to perceive upon the spot than to define with precision. Thus, the mere form of the waves, the tint of