

interior of the group, but in general these mountains, of so wild an aspect, have not the elevation that is assigned to them by the missionaries.

We looked in vain for plants in the clefts of the rocks, which are as steep as walls, and furnish some traces of stratification. We found only an old trunk of *aubletia*,* with large apple-shaped fruit, and a new species of the family of the *apocynæ*.† All the stones were covered with an innumerable quantity of iguanas and geckos with spreading and membranous fingers. These lizards, motionless, with heads raised, and mouths open, seemed to suck in the heated air. The thermometer placed against the rock rose to 50·2°. The soil appeared to undulate, from the effect of mirage, without a breath of wind being felt. The sun was near the zenith, and its dazzling light, reflected from the surface of the river, contrasted with the reddish vapours that enveloped every surrounding object. How vivid is the impression produced by the calm of nature, at noon, in these burning climates! The beasts of the forests retire to the thickets; the birds hide themselves beneath the foliage of the trees, or in the crevices of the rocks. Yet, amidst this apparent silence, when we lend an attentive ear to the most feeble sounds transmitted through the air, we hear a dull vibration, a continual murmur, a hum of insects, filling, if we may use the expression, all the lower strata of the air. Nothing is better fitted to make man feel the extent and power of organic life. Myriads of insects creep upon the soil, and flutter round the plants parched by the heat of the sun. A confused noise issues from every bush, from the decayed trunks of trees, from the clefts of the rocks, and from the ground undermined by lizards, millepedes, and *cecilias*. These are so many voices proclaiming to us that all nature breathes; and that, under a thousand different forms, life is diffused throughout the cracked and dusty soil, as well as in the bosom of the waters, and in the air that circulates around us.

The sensations which I here recall to mind are not unknown to those who, without having advanced to the equator, have visited Italy, Spain, or Egypt. That contrast of motion and silence, that aspect of nature at once calm and

* *Aubletia tiburba*.

† *Allamanda salicifolia*.