

10th of April; this phenomenon surprised the natives so much the more, as the first swellings are almost imperceptible, and are usually followed in the month of April by a fall for some days. The Orinoco was already three feet higher than the level of the lowest waters. The natives showed us on a granite wall the traces of the great rise of the waters of late years. We found them to be forty-two feet high, which is double the mean rise of the Nile. But this measure was taken in a place where the bed of the Orinoco is singularly hemmed in by rocks, and I could only notice the marks shown me by the natives. It may easily be conceived that the effect and the height of the increase differs according to the profile of the river, the nature of the banks more or less elevated, the number of rivers flowing in that collect the pluvial waters, and the length of ground passed over. It is an unquestionable fact that at Carichana, at San Borja, at Atures, and at Maypures, wherever the river has forced its way through the mountains, you see at a hundred, sometimes at a hundred and thirty feet, above the highest present swell of the river, black bands and erosions, that indicate the ancient levels of the waters. Is then this river, which appears to us so grand and so majestic, only the feeble remains of those immense currents of fresh water which heretofore traversed the country at the east of the Andes, like arms of inland seas? What must have been the state of those low countries of Guiana that now undergo the effects of annual inundations? What immense numbers of crocodiles, manatis, and boas must have inhabited these vast spaces of land, converted alternately into marshes of stagnant water, and into barren and fissured plains! The more peaceful world which we inhabit has then succeeded to a world of tumult. The bones of mastodons and American elephants are found dispersed on the table-lands of the Andes. The megatherium inhabited the plains of Uruguay. On digging deep into the ground, in high valleys, where neither palm-trees nor arborescent ferns can grow, strata of coal are discovered, that still show vestiges of gigantic monocotyledonous plants.

There was a remote period then, in which the classes of plants were otherwise distributed, when the animals were larger, and the rivers broader and of greater depth. There