

Rio Congo, and an examination of the circumstances attendant on this phenomenon of coloration, could alone lead to the complete solution of the problem we have discussed. Is this phenomenon independent of the nature of the rocks? I shall content myself with observing, in general, that neither the granitic masses remote from the ancient bed of the Orinoco, but exposed during the rainy season to the alternations of heat and moisture, nor the granitic rocks bathed by the brownish waters of the Rio Negro, assume the appearance of meteoric stones. The Indians say, "that the rocks are black only where the waters are white." They ought, perhaps, to add, "where the waters acquire great swiftness, and strike with force against the rocks of the banks." Cementation seems to explain why the crusts augment so little in thickness.

I know not whether it be an error, but in the Missions of the Orinoco, the neighbourhood of bare rocks, and especially of the masses that have crusts of carbon, oxide of iron, and manganese, are considered injurious to health. In the torrid zone, still more than in others, the people multiply pathogenic causes at will. They are afraid to sleep in the open air, if forced to expose the face to the rays of the full moon. They also think it dangerous to sleep on granite near the river; and many examples are cited of persons, who, after having passed the night on these black and naked rocks, have awakened in the morning with a strong paroxysm of fever. Without entirely lending faith to the assertions of the missionaries and natives, we generally avoided the *laxas negras*, and stretched ourselves on the beach covered with white sand, when we found no tree from which to suspend our hammocks. At Carichana, the village is intended to be destroyed, and its place changed, merely to remove it from the 'black rocks,' or from a site where, for a space of more than ten thousand square toises, banks of bare granite form the surface. From similar motives, which must appear very chimerical to the naturalists of Europe, the Jesuits Olmo, Forneri, and Mellis, removed a village of Jaruros to three different spots, between the Raudal of Tabaje and the Rio Anaveni. I merely state these facts as they were related to me, because we are almost wholly ignorant of the nature of the gaseous mixtures