

of small rocks rise from the plain. These form massy prisms, ruined pillars, and solitary towers fifteen or twenty feet high. Some are shaded by the trees of the forest, others have their summits crowned with palms. These rocks are of granite passing into gneiss. At the confluence of the Vichada the rocks of granite, and what is still more remarkable, the soil itself, are covered with moss and lichens. These latter resemble the *Cladonia pyxidata* and the *Lichen rangiferinus*, so common in the north of Europe. We could scarcely persuade ourselves that we were elevated less than one hundred toises above the level of the sea, in the fifth degree of latitude, in the centre of the torrid zone, which has so long been thought to be destitute of cryptogamous plants. The mean temperature of this shady and humid spot probably exceeds twenty-six degrees of the centigrade thermometer. Reflecting on the small quantity of rain which had hitherto fallen, we were surprised at the beautiful verdure of the forests. This peculiarity characterises the valley of the Upper Orinoco; on the coast of Caracas, and in the Llanos, the trees in winter (in the season called summer in South America, north of the equator) are stripped of their leaves, and the ground is covered only with yellow and withered grass. Between the solitary rocks just described arise some high plants of columnar cactus (*Cactus septemangularis*), a very rare appearance south of the cataracts of Atures and Maypures.

Amid this picturesque scene M. Bonpland was fortunate enough to find several specimens of *Laurus cinnamomoides*, a very aromatic species of cinnamon, known at the Orinoco by the names of *varimacu* and of *canelilla*.* This valuable production is found also in the valley of the Rio Caura, as well as near Esmeralda, and eastward of the Great Cataracts. The Jesuit Francisco de Olmo appears to have been the first who discovered the *canelilla*, which he did in the country of the Piaroas, near the sources of the Cataniapo. The missionary Gili, who did not advance so far as the regions I am now describing, seems to confound the *varimacu*, or *guarimacu*, with the myristica, or nutmeg-tree of America. These barks and aromatic fruits, the cinnamon, the nutmeg, the *Myrtus pimenta*, and the *Laurus pucheri*,

* The diminutive of the Spanish word *canela*, which signifies cinnamon.