

the bed of the river. Our canoe remained fast for some minutes between two trunks of trees; and it was no sooner disengaged than we reached a spot where several paths, or small channels, crossed each other, so that the pilot was puzzled to distinguish the most open path. We navigated through a forest so thick that we could guide ourselves neither by the sun nor by the stars. We were again struck during this day by the want of arborescent ferns in that country; they diminish visibly from the sixth degree of north latitude, while the palm-trees augment prodigiously towards the equator. Fern-trees belong to a climate less hot, and a soil but little mountainous. It is only where there are mountains that these majestic plants descend towards the plains; they seem to avoid perfectly flat grounds, as those through which run the Cassiquiare, the Temi, Inirida, and the Rio Negro. We passed in the night near a rock, called the *Piedra de Astor* by the missionaries. The ground from the mouth of the Guaviare constantly displays the same geological formation. It is a vast granitic plain, in which from league to league the rock pierces the soil, and forms, not hillocks, but small masses, that resemble pillars or ruined buildings.

On the 1st of May the Indians chose to depart long before sunrise. We were stirring before them, however, because I waited (though vainly) for a star ready to pass the meridian. In those humid regions covered with forests, the nights became more obscure in proportion as we drew nearer to the Rio Negro and the interior of Brazil. We remained in the bed of the river till daybreak, being afraid of losing ourselves among the trees. At sunrise we again entered the inundated forest, to avoid the force of the current. On reaching the junction of the Temi with another little river, the Tuamini, the waters of which are equally black, we proceeded along the latter to the southwest. This direction led us near the mission of Javita, which is founded on the banks of the Tuamini; and at this christian settlement we were to find the aid necessary for transporting our canoe by land to the Rio Negro. We did not arrive at San Antonio de Javita till near eleven in the morning. An accident, unimportant in itself, but which shows the excessive timidity of the little sagoins,