

it would have been upset by any person rising imprudently from his seat, without warning the rowers. We had suffered severely from the sting of insects, but we had withstood the insalubrity of the climate; we had passed without accident the great number of waterfalls and bars, which impede the navigation of the rivers, and often render it more dangerous than long voyages by sea. After all we had endured, it may be conceived that we felt no little satisfaction in having reached the tributary streams of the Amazon, having passed the isthmus that separates two great systems of rivers, and in being sure of having fulfilled the most important object of our journey, namely, to determine astronomically the course of that arm of the Orinoco which falls into the Rio Negro, and of which the existence has been alternately proved and denied during half a century. In proportion as we draw near to an object we have long had in view, its interest seems to augment. The uninhabited banks of the Cassiquiare, covered with forests, without memorials of times past, then occupied my imagination, as do now the banks of the Euphrates, or the Oxus, celebrated in the annals of civilized nations. In that interior part of the New Continent one may almost accustom one self to regard men as not being essential to the order of nature. The earth is loaded with plants, and nothing impedes their free development. An immense layer of mould manifests the uninterrupted action of organic powers: Crocodiles and boas are masters of the river; the jaguar, the peccary, the dante, and the monkeys traverse the forest without fear and without danger; there they dwell as in an ancient inheritance. This aspect of animated nature, in which man is nothing, has something in it strange and sad. To this we reconcile ourselves with difficulty on the ocean, and amid the sands of Africa; though in scenes where nothing recalls to mind our fields, our woods, and our streams, we are less astonished at the vast solitude through which we pass. Here, in a fertile country, adorned with eternal verdure, we seek in vain the traces of the power of man; we seem to be transported into a world different from that which gave us birth. These impressions are the more powerful in proportion as they are of long duration. A soldier, who had spent his whole