

mountains?* or have these walls of rock, these turrets of granite, been upheaved by the elastic forces that still act in the interior of our planet? We may be permitted to meditate a little on the origin of mountains, after having seen the position of the Mexican volcanos, and of trachyte summits on an elongated crevice; having found in the Andes of South America primitive and volcanic rocks in a straight line in the same chain; and when we recollect the island, three miles in circumference, and of a great height, which in modern times issued from the depths of the ocean near Oonalaska.

The banks of the Cassiquiare are adorned with the *chiriva* palm-tree with pinnate leaves, silvery on the under part. The rest of the forest furnishes only trees with large, coriaceous, glossy leaves, that have plain edges. This peculiar physiognomy † of the vegetation of the Guainia, the Tuamini, and the Cassiquiare, is owing to the preponderance of the families of the guttiferæ, the sapotæ, and the laurineæ, in the equatorial regions. The serenity of the sky promising us a fine night, we resolved, at five in the evening, to rest near the *Piedra de Culimacari*, a solitary granite rock, like all those which I have described between the Atabapo and the Cassiquiare. We found by the bearings of the sinuosities of the river, that this rock is nearly in the latitude of the mission of San Francisco Solano. In those desert countries, where man has hitherto left only fugitive traces of his existence, I constantly endeavoured to make my observations near the mouth of a river, or at the foot of a rock distinguishable by its form. Such points only as are immutable by their nature can serve for the basis of geographical maps. I obtained, in the night of the 10th of May, a good observation of latitude by *a* of the Southern Cross; the longitude was determined, but with less precision, by the chronometer,

* The Sierra de la Parime, or of the Upper Orinoco, and the Sierra (o: Campos) dos Parecis, are part of the mountains of Matto Grosso, and form the northern back of the Sierra de Chiquitos. I here name the two chains of mountains running from east to west, and bordering the plains or basins of the Cassiquiare, the Rio Negro, and the Amazon, between 5° 30' north, and 14° south latitude.

† This physiognomy struck us forcibly, in the vast forests of Spanish Guiana, only between the second and third degrees of north latitude.