

hundred and fifty miles* before reaching Angostura, but we should go with the stream; and this consideration lessened our discouragement. In descending great rivers, the rowers take the middle of the current, where there are few mosquitos; but in ascending, they are obliged, in order to avail themselves of the dead waters and counter-currents, to sail near the shore, where the proximity of the forests, and the remains of organic substances accumulated on the beach, harbour the tipulary insects. The point of the celebrated bifurcation of the Orinoco has a very imposing aspect. Lofty granitic mountains rise on the northern bank; and amidst them are discovered at a distance the Maraguaca and the Duida. There are no mountains on the left bank of the Orinoco, west or east of the bifurcation, till opposite the mouth of the Tamatama. On that spot stands the rock Guaraco, which is said to throw out flames from time to time in the rainy season. When the Orinoco is no longer bounded by mountains towards the south, and when it reaches the opening of a valley, or rather a depression of the ground, which terminates at the Rio Negro, it divides itself into two branches. The principal branch (the Rio Paragua of the Indians) continues its course west-north-west, turning round the group of the mountains of Parime; the other branch forming the communication with the Amazon runs into plains, the general slope of which is southward, but of which the partial planes incline, in the Cassiquiare, to south-west, and in the basin of the Rio Negro, south-east. A phenomenon so strange in appearance, which I verified on the spot, merits particular attention; the more especially as it may throw some light on analogous facts, which are supposed to have been observed in the interior of Africa.

The existence of a communication of the Orinoco with the Amazon by the Rio Negro, and a bifurcation of the Caqueta, was believed by Sanson, and rejected by Father Fritz and by Blaeuw: it was marked in the first maps of De l'Isle, but abandoned by that celebrated geographer towards the end of his days. Those who had mistaken the mode of this communication hastened to deny the communication itself. It is in fact well worthy of remark that, at the time when the

* Of nine hundred and fifty toises each, or two hundred and fifty nautical leagues.