

of the rivers. This phenomenon, which will one day be so important for the political connections of nations, unquestionably deserves to be carefully examined.

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#### CHAPTER XXIV.

The Upper Orinoco, from Esmeralda to the confluence of the Guaviare.—  
 Second passage across the Cataracts of Atures and Maypures.—The  
 Lower Orinoco, between the mouth of the Rio Apure, and Angostura  
 the capital of Spanish Guiana.

OPPOSITE to the point where the Orinoco forms its bifurcation, the granitic group of Duida rises in an amphitheatre on the right bank of the river. This mountain, which the missionaries call a volcano, is nearly eight thousand feet high. It is perpendicular on the south and west, and has an aspect of solemn grandeur. Its summit is bare and stony, but, wherever its less steep declivities are covered with mould vast forests appear suspended on its flanks. At the foot of Duida is the mission of Esmeralda, a little hamlet with eighty inhabitants, surrounded by a lovely plain, intersected by rills of black but limpid water. This plain is adorned with clumps of the mauritia palm, the sagotree of America. Nearer the mountain, the distance of which from the cross of the mission I found to be seven thousand three hundred toises, the marshy plain changes to a savannah, and spends itself along the lower region of the Cordillera. Large pine-apples are there found of a delicious flavour; that species of bromelia always grows solitary among the gramina, like our *Colchicum autumnale*, while the *B. karatas*, another species of the same genus, is a social plant, like our whortleberries and heaths. The pine-apples of Esmeralda are cultivated throughout Guiana. There are certain spots in America, as in Europe, where different fruits attain their highest perfection. The sapota-plum (*achra*) should be eaten at the Island of Margareta or at Cumana: the chirimoya (very different from the custard-apple and sweet-sop of the West India Islands) at Loxa in Peru; the grenadilla, or *parcha*, at Caracas; and the pine-apple at Esmeralda, or in the island of Cuba. The pine-