

one hundred and seventy-nine metres, or one thousand one hundred and eighteen toises, above the plain of Esmeralda. The Cerro Duida thus yields but little in height (scarcely eighty or one hundred toises) to the summit of St. Gothard, or the Silla of Caracas on the shore of Venezuela. It is indeed considered as a colossal mountain in those countries; and this celebrity gives a precise idea of the mean height of Parima and of all the mountains of eastern America. To the east of the Sierra Nevada de Merida, as well as to the south-east of the Paramo de las Rosas, none of the chains that extend in the same parallel line reach the height of the central ridge of the Pyrenees.

The granitic summit of Duida is so nearly perpendicular that the Indians have vainly attempted the ascent. It is a well-known fact that mountains not remarkable for elevation are sometimes the most inaccessible. At the beginning and end of the rainy season, small flames, which seem to change their place, are seen on the top of Duida. This phenomenon, the existence of which is borne out by concurrent testimony, has caused this mountain to be improperly called a volcano. As it stands nearly alone, it might be supposed that lightning from time to time sets fire to the brushwood; but this supposition loses its probability when we reflect on the extreme difficulty with which plants are ignited in these damp climates. It must be observed also that these flames are said to appear often where the rock seems scarcely covered with turf, and that the same igneous phenomena are visible, on days entirely exempt from storms, on the summit of Guaraco or Murcielago, a hill opposite the mouth of the Rio Tamatama, on the southern bank of the Orinoco. This hill is scarcely elevated one hundred toises above the neighbouring plains. If the statements of the natives be correct, it is probable that some subterraneous cause produces these flames on the Duida and the Guaraco; for they never appear on the lofty neighbouring mountains of Jao and Maraguaca, so often wrapped in electric storms. The granite of the Cerro Duida is full of veins, partly open, and partly filled with crystals of quartz and pyrites. Gaseous and inflammable emanations, either of hydrogen or of naphtha, may pass through these veins. Of this the mountains of Caramania,