

We climbed with difficulty, and not without some danger, a steep rock of granite, entirely bare. It would have been almost impossible to fix the foot on its smooth and sloping surface, if large crystals of feldspar, resisting decomposition, did not stand out from the rock, and furnish points of support. Scarcely had we attained the summit of the mountain when we beheld with astonishment the singular aspect of the surrounding country. The foamy bed of the waters is filled with an archipelago of islands covered with palm-trees. Westward, on the left bank of the Orinoco, the wide-stretching savannahs of the Meta and the Casanare resembled a sea of verdure. The setting sun seemed like a globe of fire suspended over the plain, and the solitary Peak of Uniana, which appeared more lofty from being wrapped in vapours which softened its outline, all contributed to augment the majesty of the scene. Immediately below us lay a deep valley, enclosed on every side. Birds of prey and goatsuckers winged their lonely flight in this inaccessible circus. We found a pleasure in following with the eye their fleeting shadows, as they glided slowly over the flanks of the rock.

A narrow ridge led us to a neighbouring mountain, the rounded summit of which supported immense blocks of granite. These masses are more than forty or fifty feet in diameter; and their form is so perfectly spherical, that, as they appear to touch the soil only by a small number of points, it might be supposed, at the least shock of an earthquake, they would roll into the abyss. I do not remember to have seen any where else a similar phenomenon, amid the decompositions of granitic soils. If the balls rested on a rock of a different nature, as in the blocks of Jura, we might suppose that they had been rounded by the action of water, or thrown out by the force of an elastic fluid; but their position on the summit of a hill alike granitic, makes it more probable that they owe their origin to the progressive decomposition of the rock.

The most remote part of the valley is covered by a thick forest. In this shady and solitary spot, on the declivity of a steep mountain, the cavern of Atarupe opens to the view. It is less a cavern than a jutting rock in which the waters have scooped a vast hollow when, in the ancient revolutions