

small. Almost all the maps of South America which have appeared since the year 1775 are, in what regards the interior of the country, comprised between the steppes of Venezuela and the river of the Amazons, between the eastern back of the Andes and the coast of Cayenne, a simple copy of the great Spanish map of La Cruz Olmedilla. A line, indicating the extent of country which Don Jose Solano boasted of having discovered and pacified by his troops and emissaries, was taken for the road followed by that officer, who never went beyond San Fernando de Atabapo, a village one hundred and sixty leagues distant from the pretended lake Parima. The study of the work of Father Caulin, who was the historiographer of the expedition of Solano, and who states very clearly, from the testimony of the Indians, "how the name of the river Parima gave rise to the fable of El Dorado, and of an inland sea," has been neglected. No use either has been made of a map of the Orinoco, *three years posterior* to that of La Cruz, and traced by Surville from the collection of true or hypothetical materials preserved in the archives of the *Despacho universal de Indias*. The progress of geography, as manifested on our maps, is much slower than might be supposed from the number of useful results which are found scattered in the works of different nations. Astronomical observations and topographic information accumulate during a long lapse of years, without being made use of; and from a principle of stability and preservation, in other respects praiseworthy, those who construct maps often choose rather to add nothing, than to sacrifice a lake, a chain of mountains, or an interbranching of rivers, which have figured there during ages.

The fabulous traditions of El Dorado and the lake Parima having been diversely modified according to the aspect of the countries to which they were to be adapted, we must distinguish what they contain that is real from what is merely imaginary. To avoid entering here into minute particulars, I shall begin first to call the attention of the reader to those spots which have been, at various periods, the theatre of the expeditions undertaken for the discovery of El Dorado. When we have learnt to know the aspect of the country, our maps of countries the least visited an appearance of exactness, the falsity of which is discovered when we arrive on the spot.