

towards one of its extremities, preceding, and announcing in some sort, a great depression* of the chain. This phenomenon is again observed in the group of the Parime, the loftiest summits of which, the Duida and the Maraguaca, are in the most southerly range of mountains, where the plains of the Cassiquiare and the Rio Negro begin.

These plains or savannahs, which are covered with forests only in the vicinity of the rivers, do not, however, exhibit the same uniform continuity as the Llanos of the Lower Orinoco, of the Meta, and of Buenos Ayres. They are interrupted by groups of hills (Cerros de Daribapa), and by insulated rocks of grotesque form which pierce the soil, and from a distance fix the attention of the traveller. These granitic, and often stratified masses, resemble the ruins of pillars or edifices. The same force which upheaved the whole group of the Sierra Parime, has acted here and there in the plains as far as beyond the equator. The existence of these steep and sporadic hills, renders it difficult to determine the precise limits of a system in which the mountains are not longitudinally ranged as in a vein. As we advance towards the frontier of the Portuguese province of the Rio Negro the high rocks become more rare, and we no longer find the shelves or dykes of gneiss-granite which cause rapids and cataracts in the rivers.

Such is the surface of the soil between $68\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ and $70\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ of longitude, between the meridian of the bifurcation of the Orinoco, and that of San Fernando de Atabapo; further on, westward of the Upper Rio Negro, towards the source of that river, and its tributary streams the Xiè and the Uaupes (lat. 1° — $2\frac{1}{4}^{\circ}$, long. 72° — 74°) lies a small mountainous tableland, in which Indian traditions place a *Laguna de oro*, that is a lake, surrounded with beds of auriferous earth.† At Maroa, the most westerly mission of the Rio Negro, the Indians assured me that that river, as well as the Inirida (a tributary of the Guavare), rises at the distance of five days'

* As seen in Mont Blanc and Chimborazo.

† According to the journals of Acunha and Fritz, the Manao Indians (Manoas) obtained from the banks of the Yquiari (Iguare or Iguare), gold of which they made thin plates. The manuscript notes of Don Apollinario also mention the gold of the Rio Uaupes. (La Condamine, *Voyage à l'Amazone*.) We must not confound the *Laguna de Oro*, which is said