

the Red River of Nachitoches, so that the northern part only of the state of Illinois is covered with gramina. This line of demarcation is not only interesting for the geography of plants, but exerts, as we have said above, great influence in retarding culture and population north-west of the Lower Mississippi. In the United States, the prairie countries are more slowly colonized; and even the tribes of independent Indians are forced by the rigour of the climate to pass the winter on the banks of rivers, where poplars and willows are found. The basins of the Mississippi, of the lakes of Canada and the St. Lawrence, are the largest in America; and though the total population does not rise at present beyond three millions, it may be considered as that in which, between latitude 29° and 45° (long. 74° — 94°), civilization has made the greatest progress. It may even be said that in the other basins (of the Orinoco, the Amazon, and Buenos Ayres), agricultural life scarcely exists; it begins, on a small number of points only, to supersede pastoral life, and that of fishing and hunting nations. The plains between the Alleghanies and the Andes of Upper Louisiana are of such vast extent, that like the Pampas of Choco and Buenos Ayres, bamboos (*Ludolfia megala*) and palm-trees grow at one extremity, while the other, during a great part of the year, is covered with ice and snow.

II.—THE BASIN OF THE GULF OF MEXICO, AND OF THE CARIBBEAN SEA. This is a continuation of the basin of the Mississippi, Louisiana, and Hudson's Bay. It may be said, that all the low lands on the coast of Venezuela situated north of the littoral chain, and of the Sierra Nevada de Merida, belong to the submerged part of this basin. If I treat here separately of the basin of the Caribbean Sea, it is to avoid confounding what, in the present state of the globe, is partly above and partly below the ocean. The recent coincidence of the periods of earthquakes observed at Caracas, and on the banks of the Mississippi, the Arkansas, and the Ohio, justifies the geologic theories which regard as one basin the plains bounded on the south, by the littoral Cordillera of Venezuela; on the east, by the Alleghanies and the series of the volcanos of the West Indies; and on the west, by the Rocky Mountains (Mexican Andes) and by the