

Rio Negro (lat. 38° – 39°) groups of mountains seem to rise in the form of islands, in the middle of a muriatiferous plain. A tribe of Indians of the south (Tehuellet), have there long borne the characteristic name of "men of the mountains" (Callilehet) or Serranos. From the parallel of the mouth of the Rio Negro to that of Cabo Blanco (lat. 41° – 47°), scattered mountains on the eastern Patagonian coast denote more considerable inequalities inland. All that part, however, of the Straits of Magellan, from the Virgins' Cape to the North Cape, on the breadth of more than 30 leagues, is surrounded by savannahs or Pampas; and the Andes of western Patagonia only begin to rise near the latter cape, exercising a marked influence on the direction of that part of the strait nearest the Pacific, proceeding from S.E. to N.W.

If we have given the plains or great basins of South America the names of the rivers that flow in their longitudinal furrows, we have not meant by so doing to compare them to mere valleys. In the plains of the Lower Orinoco and the Amazon, all the lines of the declivity doubtless reach a principal recipient, and the tributaries of tributary streams, that is the basins of different orders, penetrate far into the group of the mountains. The upper parts or high valleys of the tributary streams must be considered in a geological table, as belonging to the mountainous region of the country, and beyond the plains of the Lower Orinoco and the Amazon. The views of the geologist are not identical with those of the hydrographer. In the basin of the Rio de la Plata and Patagonia, the waters that follow the lines of the greatest declivities have many issues. The same basin contains several valleys of rivers; and when we examine nearly the polyedric surface of the Pampas and the portion of their waters which, like the waters of the steppes of Asia, do not go to the sea, we conceive that these plains are divided by small ridges or lines of elevation, and have alternate slopes, inclined, with reference to the horizon, in opposite directions. In order to point out more clearly the difference between geological and hydrographic views, and to prove that in the former, abstracting the course of the waters which meet in one recipient, we obtain a far more general point of view, I shall here again recur to the hydrographic basin of the Orinoco. That immense river rises on the southern slope of the Sierra Parime;