

the Amazon, embraces a superficial area nine or ten times greater than that of the United Kingdom, more than six times the size of France. Its northern boundary, roughly speaking, is the 7th parallel of north latitude; its southern, the 18th parallel of south latitude. It is, therefore, an inter-tropical realm of luxuriant vegetation; the very storehouse and treasury of prodigal Nature.*

[In the Virgin Forest of the Amazons the soil, fattened for untold

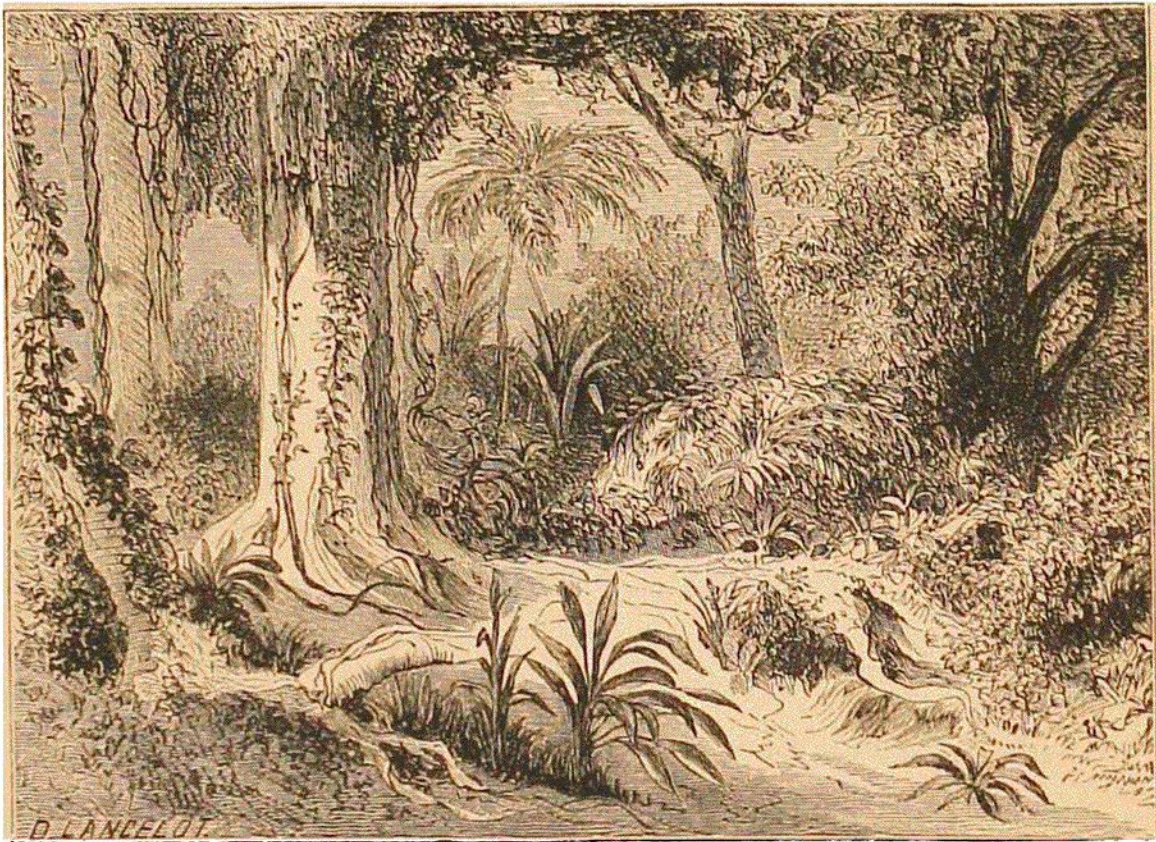


FIG. 84.—THE VIRGIN FOREST.

ages by the ruin and débris of an inexhaustible vegetation, consists of the richest mould. The trees grow to an enormous stature, frequently to 120 and 150 feet, and their girth is of equally colossal proportions. Immense ferns and brilliant orchids clothe their feet, and from bough to bough creep the rarest and most beautiful lianas,—the whole forming an almost impassable maze of creeping and climbing plants, of

* [Of late years our knowledge of this wonderful country has been largely increased by the researches of Wallace; H. W. Bates ("A Naturalist on the River Amazons"); Captain Burton ("The Highlands of the Brazils," 1869); and Agassiz ("Brazil," published by Trübner and Co., 1860).]