

which I traced in another work shortly after my return to Europe.* The savannahs of Atures, covered with slender plants and grasses, are really meadows resembling those of Europe. They are never inundated by the rivers, and seem as if waiting to be ploughed by the hand of man. Notwithstanding their extent, these savannahs do not exhibit the monotony of our plains; they surround groups of rocks and blocks of granite piled on one another. On the very borders of these plains and this open country, glens are seen scarcely lighted by the rays of the setting sun, and hollows where the humid soil, loaded with arums, heliconias, and lianas, manifests at every step the wild fecundity of nature. Everywhere, just rising above the earth, appear those shelves of granite completely bare, which we saw at Carichana, and which I have already described. Where springs gush from the bosom of these rocks, verrucarias, psoras, and lichens are fixed on the decomposed granite, and have there accumulated mould. Little euphorbias, peperomias, and other succulent plants, have taken the place of the cryptogamous tribes; and evergreen shrubs, rhexias, and purple-flowered melastomas, form verdant isles amid desert and rocky plains. The distribution of these spots, the clusters of small trees with coriaceous and shining leaves scattered in the savannahs, the limpid rills that dig channels across the rocks, and wind alternately through fertile places and over bare shelves of granite, all call to mind the most lovely and picturesque plantations and pleasure-grounds of Europe. We seem to recognise the industry of man, and the traces of cultivation, amid this wild scenery.

The lofty mountains that bound the horizon on every side, contribute also, by their forms and the nature of their vegetation, to give an extraordinary character to the landscape. The average height of these mountains is not more than seven or eight hundred feet above the surrounding plains. Their summits are rounded, as for the most part in granitic mountains, and covered with thick forests of the laurel-tribe. Clusters of palm-trees,† the leaves of which, curled like feathers, rise majestically at an angle of seventy degrees, are dispersed amid trees with horizontal branches.

* Views of Nature, p. 153 (Bohn's edition).

† El cucurito.