

the summit of mountains gave birth, among the nations of the Orinoco, to the tradition of some great inundation which extinguished for a time the germs of organic life on our globe. The country that extends from the right bank of the Orinoco to the Cassiquiare and the Rio Negro, is a country of primitive rocks. I saw there one small formation of sandstone or conglomerate; but no secondary limestone, and no trace of petrifications.

A fresh north-east breeze carried us full-sail towards the Boca de la Tortuga. We landed, at eleven in the morning, on an island which the Indians of the Missions of Uruana considered as their property, and which lies in the middle of the river. This island is celebrated for the turtle fishery, or, as they say here, the *cosecha*, 'the harvest [of eggs,]' that takes place annually. We here found an assemblage of Indians, encamped under huts made of palm-leaves. This encampment contained more than three hundred persons. Accustomed, since we had left San Fernando de Apure, to see only desert shores, we were singularly struck by the bustle that prevailed here. We found, besides the Guamos and the Ottomacs of Uruana, who are both considered as savage races, Caribs and other Indians of the Lower Orinoco. Every tribe was separately encamped, and was distinguished by the pigments with which their skins were painted. Some white men were seen amidst this tumultuous assemblage, chiefly *pulperos*, or little traders of Angostura, who had come up the river to purchase turtle oil from the natives. The missionary of Uruana, a native of Alcala, came to meet us, and he was extremely astonished at seeing us. After having admired our instruments, he gave us an exaggerated picture of the sufferings to which we should be necessarily exposed in ascending the Orinoco beyond the cataracts. The object of our journey appeared to him very mysterious. "How is it possible to believe," said he, "that you have left your country, to come and be devoured by mosquitos on this river, and to measure lands that are not your own?" We were happily furnished with recommendations from the Superior of the Franciscan Missions, and the brother-in-law of the governor of Varinas, who accompanied us, soon dissipated the doubts to which our dress, our accent, and our arrival in this sandy island,