

quent in those regions, and display at that period the greatest intrepidity.

On the following day, the 7th, we passed, on our right, the mouth of the great Rio Auraca, celebrated for the immense number of birds that frequent it; and, on our left, the Mission of Uruana, commonly called *La Concepcion de Urbana*. This small village, which contains five hundred souls, was founded by the Jesuits, about the year 1748, by the union of the Ottomac and Cavere Indians. It lies at the foot of a mountain composed of detached blocks of granite, which, I believe, bears the name of *Saraguaca*. Masses of rock, separated one from the other by the effect of decomposition, form caverns, in which we find indubitable proofs of the ancient civilization of the natives. Hieroglyphic figures, and even characters in regular lines, are seen sculptured on their sides; though I doubt whether they bear any analogy to alphabetic writing. We visited the Mission of Uruana on our return from the Rio Negro, and saw with our own eyes those heaps of earth which the Ottomacs eat, and which have become the subject of such lively discussion in Europe.*

On measuring the breadth of the Orinoco between the islands called Isla de Uruana and Isla de la Manteca, we found it, during the high waters, 2674 toises, which make nearly four nautical miles. This is eight times the breadth of the Nile at Manfalout and Syout, yet we were at the distance of a hundred and ninety-four leagues from the mouth of the Orinoco.

The temperature of the water at its surface was 27.8° of the centigrade thermometer, near Uruana. That of the river Zaire, or Congo, in Africa, at an equal distance from the equator, was found by Captain Tuckey, in the months of July and August, to be only from 23.9° to 25.6° .

The western bank of the Orinoco remains low farther

* This earth is a greasy kind of clay, which, in seasons of scarcity, the natives use to assuage the cravings of hunger; it having been proved by their experience as well as by physiological researches, that want of food can be more easily borne by filling the cavity of the stomach with some substance, even although it may be in itself very nearly or totally innutritious. The Indian hunters of North America, for the same purpose, tie boards tightly across the abdomen; and most savage races are found to have recourse to expedients that answer the same end.