

dred toises of height; and when examining the question whether we may consider the stratum of clouds that envelops the mountains as a horizontal continuation of the stratum which we see immediately above us in the plains.

The Orinoco, full of islands, begins to divide itself into several branches, of which the most western remain dry during the months of January and February. The total breadth of the river exceeds two thousand five hundred or three thousand toises. We perceived to the East, opposite the island of Javanavo, the mouth of the Caño Aujacoa. Between this Caño and the Rio Paruasi or Paruati, the country becomes more and more woody. A solitary rock, of extremely picturesque aspect, rises in the midst of a forest of palm-trees, not far from the Orinoco. It is a pillar of granite, a prismatic mass, the bare and steep sides of which attain nearly two hundred feet in height. Its point, which overtops the highest trees of the forest, is terminated by a shelf of rock with a horizontal and smooth surface. Other trees crown this summit, which the missionaries call the peak, or *Mogote de Cocuyza*. This monument of nature, in its simple grandeur recalls to mind the Cyclopean remains of antiquity. Its strongly-marked outlines, and the group of trees and shrubs by which it is crowned, stand out from the azure of the sky. It seems a forest rising above a forest.

Further on, near the mouth of the Paruasi, the Orinoco narrows. On the east is perceived a mountain with a bare top, projecting like a promontory. It is nearly three hundred feet high, and served as a fortress for the Jesuits. They had constructed there a small fort, with three batteries of cannon, and it was constantly occupied by a military detachment. We saw the cannon dismounted, and half-buried in the sand, at Carichana and at Atures. This fort of the Jesuits has been destroyed since the dissolution of their society; but the place is still called El Castillo. I find it set down, in a manuscript map, lately completed at Caracas by a member of the secular clergy, under the denomination of "Trinchera del despotismo monacal."*

The garrison which the Jesuits maintained on this rock, was not intended merely to protect the Missions against

* Intrenchment of monachal despotism.