

simplified, and repeated to several individuals under different forms. The variety of idioms spoken on the banks of the Meta, the Orinoco, the Cassiquiare, and the Rio Negro, is so prodigious, that a traveller, however great may be his talent for languages, can never hope to learn enough to make himself understood along the navigable rivers, from Angostura to the small fort of San Carlos del Rio Negro. In Peru and Quito it is sufficient to know the Quichua, or the Inca language; in Chile, the Araucan; and in Paraguay, the Guarany; in order to be understood by most of the population. But it is different in the Missions of Spanish Guiana, where nations of various races are mingled in the same village. It is not even sufficient to have learned the Caribee or Carina, the Guamo, the Guahive, the Jaruro, the Ottomac, the Maypure, the Salive, the Marivitan, the Maquiritare, and the Guaica, ten dialects, of which there exist only imperfect grammars, and which have less affinity with each other than the Greek, German, and Persian languages.

The environs of the Mission of Carichana appeared to us to be delightful. The little village is situated in one of those plains covered with grass that separate all the links of the granitic mountains, from Encaramada to beyond the Cataracts of Maypures. The line of the forests is seen only in the distance. The horizon is everywhere bounded by mountains, partly wooded and of a dark tint, partly bare, with rocky summits gilded by the beams of the setting sun. What gives a peculiar character to the scenery of this country are banks of rock (*laxas*) nearly destitute of vegetation, and often more than eight hundred feet in circumference, yet scarcely rising a few inches above the surrounding savannahs. They now make a part of the plain. We ask ourselves with surprise, whether some extraordinary revolutions may have carried away the earth and plants; or whether the granite nucleus of our planet shows itself bare, because the germs of life are not yet developed on all its points. The same phenomenon seems to be found also in the desert of Shamo, which separates Mongolia from China. Those banks of solitary rock in the desert are called *tsy*. I think they would be real table-lands, if the surrounding plains were stripped of the sand and mould that cover them, and which the waters have accumulated in the lowest places.