

part of whom are cannibals. It is not yet two hundred years since civilization and the light of a more humane religion have pursued their way along the banks of these ancient canals traced by the hand of nature; long, however, before the introduction of agriculture, before communications for the purposes of barter were established among these scattered and often hostile tribes, the knowledge of extraordinary phenomena, of falls of water, of volcanic fires, and of snows resisting all the ardent heat of summer, was propagated by a thousand fortuitous circumstances. Three hundred leagues from the coast, in the centre of South America, among nations whose excursions do not extend to three days' journey, we find an idea of the ocean, and words that denote a mass of salt water extending as far as the eye can discern. Various events, which repeatedly occur in savage life, contribute to enlarge these conceptions. In consequence of the petty wars between neighbouring tribes, a prisoner is brought into a strange country, and treated as a *poito* or *mero*, that is to say, as a slave. After being often sold, he is dragged to new wars, escapes, and returns home; he relates what he has seen, and what he has heard from those whose tongue he has been compelled to learn. As on discovering a coast, we hear of great inland animals, so, on entering the valley of a vast river, we are surprised to find that savages, who are strangers to navigation, have acquired a knowledge of distant things. In the infant state of society, the exchange of ideas precedes, to a certain point, the exchange of productions.

The two great cataracts of the Orinoco, the celebrity of which is so far-spread and so ancient, are formed by the passage of the river across the mountains of Parima. They are called by the natives *Mapara* and *Quittuna*; but the missionaries have substituted for these names those of Atures and Maypures, after the names of the tribes which were first assembled together in the nearest villages. On the coast of Caracas, the two Great Cataracts are denoted by the simple appellation of the two *Raudales*, or rapids; a denomination which implies that the other falls of water, even the rapids of Camiseta and of Carichana, are not considered as worthy of attention when compared with the cataracts of Atures and Maypures.