

turned to the woods, weary of the regulations of the mission. Epidemic fevers, which prevailed with violence at the entrance of the rainy season, contributed greatly to this unexpected flight. In 1799 the mortality was very considerable at Carichana, on the banks of the Meta, and at the Raudal of Atures. The Indian of the forest conceives a horror of the life of the civilized man, when, I will not say any misfortune befalls his family settled in the mission, but merely any disagreeable or unforeseen accident. Natives, who were neophytes, have been known to desert for ever the Christian establishments, on account of a great drought; as if this calamity would not have reached them equally in their plantations, had they remained in their primitive independence.

The fevers which prevail during a great part of the year in the villages of Atures and Maypures, around the two Great Cataracts of the Orinoco, render these spots highly dangerous to European travellers. They are caused by violent heats, in combination with the excessive humidity of the air, bad nutriment, and, if we may believe the natives, the pestilent exhalations rising from the bare rocks of the Raudales. These fevers of the Orinoco appeared to us to resemble those which prevail every year between New Barcelona, La Guayra, and Porto Cabello, in the vicinity of the sea; and which often degenerate into adynamic fevers. "I have had my little fever (*mi calenturita*) only eight months," said the good missionary of the Atures, who accompanied us to the Rio Negro; speaking of it as of an habitual evil, easy to be borne. The fits were violent, but of short duration. He was sometimes seized with them when lying along in the boat under a shelter of branches of trees, sometimes when exposed to the burning rays of the sun on an open beach. These tertian agues are attended with great debility of the muscular system; yet we find poor ecclesiastics on the Orinoco, who endure for several years these *calenturitas*, or *tercianas*: their effects are not so fatal as those which are experienced from fevers of much shorter duration in temperate climates.

I have just alluded to the noxious influence on the salubrity of the atmosphere, which is attributed by the natives, and even the missionaries, to the bare rocks. This opinion is the more worthy of attention, as it is connected with