

avoid the disturbance of conjugal tranquillity, the old female relations of the mother take care, that when twins are born one of them shall disappear. If a new-born infant, though not a twin, have any physical deformity, the father instantly puts it to death. They will have none but robust and well-made children, for deformities indicate some influence of the evil spirit Ioloquiamo, or the bird Tikitiki, the enemy of the human race. Sometimes children of a feeble constitution undergo the same fate. When the father is asked what is become of one of his sons, he will pretend that he has lost him by a natural death. He will disavow an action that appears to him blameable, but not criminal. "The poor boy," he will tell you, "could not follow us; we must have waited for him every moment; he has not been seen again; he did not come to sleep where we passed the night." Such is the candour and simplicity of manners—such the boasted happiness—of man in the state of nature! He kills his son to escape the ridicule of having twins, or to avoid journeying more slowly; in fact, to avoid a little inconvenience.

These acts of cruelty, I confess, are less frequent than they are believed to be; yet they occur even in the Missions, during the time when the Indians leave the village, to retire to the *conucos* of the neighbouring forests. It would be erroneous to attribute these actions to the state of polygamy in which the uncatechized Indians live. Polygamy no doubt diminishes the domestic happiness and internal union of families; but this practice, sanctioned by Ismaelism, does not prevent the people of the east from loving their children with tenderness. Among the Indians of the Orinoco, the father returns home only to eat, or to sleep in his hammock; he lavishes no caresses on his infants, or on his wives, whose office it is to serve him. Parental affection begins to display itself only when the son has become strong enough to take a part in hunting, fishing, and the agricultural labours of the plantations.

While our boat was unloading, we examined closely, wherever the shore could be approached, the terrific spectacle of a great river narrowed and reduced as it were to foam. I shall endeavour to paint, not the sensations we felt, but the aspect of a spot so celebrated among the scenes of