

as concealing a treasure I had discovered, jointly with the missionary of Carichana, amid the tombs of the Indians. It is asserted that the Jesuits of Santa Fé de Bogotá were apprised beforehand of the destruction of their company; and that, in order to save the riches they possessed in money and precious vases, they sent them, either by the Rio Meta or the Vichada, to the Orinoco, with orders to have them hidden in the islets amid the *raudales*. These treasures I am supposed to have appropriated unknown to my superiors. The Audencia of Caracas brought a complaint before the governor of Guiana, and we were ordered to appear in person. We uselessly performed a journey of one hundred and fifty leagues; and, although we declared that we had found in the cavern only human bones, and dried bats and polecats, commissioners were gravely nominated to come hither and search on the spot for the supposed treasures of the Jesuits. We shall wait long for these commissioners. When they have gone up the Orinoco as far as San Borja, the fear of the mosquitos will prevent them from going farther. The cloud of flies which envelopes us in the *raudales* is a good defence."

The account given by the missionary was entirely conformable to what we afterwards learned at Angostura from the governor himself. Fortuitous circumstances had given rise to the strangest suspicions. In the caverns where the mummies and skeletons of the nation of the Atures are found, even in the midst of the cataracts, and in the most inaccessible islets, the Indians long ago discovered boxes bound with iron, containing various European tools, remnants of clothes, rosaries, and glass trinkets. These objects are thought to have belonged to Portuguese traders of the Rio Negro and Grand Para, who, before the establishment of the Jesuits on the banks of the Orinoco, went up to Atures by the portages and interior communications of rivers, to trade with the natives. It is supposed that these men sunk beneath the epidemic maladies so common in the *raudales*, and that their chests became the property of the Indians, the wealthiest of whom were usually buried with all they possessed most valuable during their lives. From these very uncertain traditions the tale of hidden treasures has been fabricated. As in the Andes of Quito every ruined