

the eastern bank, the Sanariapo, and on the western, the Cameji and the Toparo. Opposite the village of Maypures, the mountains fall back in an arch, and, like a rocky coast, form a gulf open to the south-east. The irruption of the river is effected between the mouths of the Toparo and the Sanariapo, at the western extremity of this majestic amphitheatre.

The waters of the Orinoco now roll at the foot of the eastern chain of the mountains, and have receded from the west, where, in a deep valley, the ancient shore is easily recognized. A savannah, scarcely raised thirty feet above the mean level of the river, extends from this valley as far as the cataracts. There the small church of Maypures has been constructed. It is built of trunks of palm-trees, and is surrounded by seven or eight huts. The dry valley, which runs in a straight line from south to north, from the Cameji to the Toparo, is filled with granitic and solitary mounds, all resembling those found in the shape of islands and shoals in the present bed of the river. I was struck with this analogy of form, on comparing the rocks of Keri and Oco, situated in the deserted bed of the river, west of Maypures, with the islets of Ouivitari and Caminitamini, which rise like old castles amid the cataracts to the east of the mission. The geological aspect of these scenes, the insular form of the elevations farthest from the present shore of the Orinoco, the cavities which the waves appear to have hollowed in the rock Oco, and which are precisely on the same level (twenty-five or thirty toises high) as the excavations perceived opposite to them in the isle of Ouivitari; all these appearances prove that the whole of this bay, now dry, was formerly covered by water. Those waters probably formed a lake, the northern dike preventing their running out: but, when this dike was broken down, the savannah that surrounds the mission appeared at first like a very low island, bounded by two arms of the same river. It may be supposed that the Orinoco continued for some time to fill the ravine, which we shall call the valley of Keri, because it contains the rock of that name; and that the waters retired wholly toward the eastern chain, leaving dry the western arm of the river, only as they gradually diminished. Coloured stripes, which no doubt owe their black tint to the oxides of iron and