

The Mission near the *raudal* of Maypures was very considerable in the time of the Jesuits, when it reckoned six hundred inhabitants, among whom were several families of whites. Under the government of the Fathers of the Observance the population was reduced to less than sixty. It must be observed that in this part of South America cultivation has been diminishing for half a century, while beyond the forests, in the provinces near the sea, we find villages that contain from two or three thousand Indians. The inhabitants of Maypures are a mild, temperate people, and distinguished by great cleanliness. The savages of the Orinoco for the most part have not that inordinate fondness for strong liquors which prevails in North America. It is true that the Ottomacs, the Jaruros, the Achaguas, and the Caribs, are often intoxicated by the immoderate use of *chiza* and many other fermented liquors, which they know how to prepare with cassava, maize, and the saccharine fruit of the palm-tree; but travellers have as usual generalized what belongs only to the manners of some tribes. We were frequently unable to prevail upon the Guahibos, or the Maco-Piroas, to taste brandy while they were labouring for us, and seemed exhausted by fatigue. It will require a longer residence of Europeans in these countries to spread there the vices that are already common among the Indians on the coast. In the huts of the natives of Maypures we found an appearance of order and neatness, rarely met with in the houses of the missionaries.

These natives cultivate plantains and cavassa, but no maize. Cassava, made into thin cakes, is the bread of the country. Like the greater part of the Indians of the Orinoco, the inhabitants of Maypures have beverages which may be considered nourishing; one of these, much celebrated in that country, is furnished by a palm-tree which grows wild in the vicinity of the mission on the banks of the *Au-vana*. This tree is the *seje*: I estimated the number of flowers on one cluster at forty-four thousand; and that of the fruit, of which the greater part fall without ripening, at eight thousand. The fruit is a small fleshy drupe. It is immersed for a few minutes in boiling water, to separate the kernel from the parenchymatous part of the sarcocarp, which has a sweet taste, and is pounded and bruised in a