

desirable to capture children, who may be treated in the mission as *poitos*, or slaves of the Christians. The prisoners were carried to San Fernando, in the hope that the mother would be unable to find her way back to her home by land. Separated from her other children who had accompanied their father on the day in which she had been carried off, the unhappy woman showed signs of the deepest despair. She attempted to take back to her home the children who had been seized by the missionary; and she fled with them repeatedly from the village of San Fernando. But the Indians never failed to recapture her; and the missionary, after having caused her to be mercilessly beaten, took the cruel resolution of separating the mother from the two children who had been carried off with her. She was conveyed alone to the missions of the Rio Negro, going up the Atabapo. Slightly bound, she was seated at the bow of the boat, ignorant of the fate that awaited her; but she judged by the direction of the sun, that she was removing farther and farther from her hut and her native country. She succeeded in breaking her bonds, threw herself into the water, and swam to the left bank of the Atabapo. The current carried her to a shelf of rock, which bears her name to this day. She landed and took shelter in the woods, but the president of the missions ordered the Indians to row to the shore, and follow the traces of the Guahiba. In the evening she was brought back. Stretched upon the rock (*la Piedra de la Madre*) a cruel punishment was inflicted on her with those straps of manati leather, which serve for whips in that country, and with which the alcaldes are always furnished. This unhappy woman, her hands tied behind her back with strong stalks of *mavacure*, was then dragged to the mission of Javita.

She was there thrown into one of the caravanserais, called *las Casas del Rey*. It was the rainy season, and the night was profoundly dark. Forests till then believed to be impenetrable separated the mission of Javita from that of San Fernando, which was twenty-five leagues distant in a straight line. No other route is known than that by the rivers; no man ever attempted to go by land from one village to another. But such difficulties could not deter a mother, separated from her children. The Guahiba was