

carelessly guarded in the caravanserai. Her arms being wounded, the Indians of Javita had loosened her bonds, unknown to the missionary and the alcaldes. Having succeeded by the help of her teeth in breaking them entirely, she disappeared during the night; and at the fourth sunrise was seen at the mission of San Fernando, hovering around the hut where her children were confined. "What that woman performed," added the missionary, who gave us this sad narrative, "the most robust Indian would not have ventured to undertake!" She traversed the woods at a season when the sky is constantly covered with clouds, and the sun during whole days appears but for a few minutes. Did the course of the waters direct her way? The inundations of the rivers forced her to go far from the banks of the main stream, through the midst of woods where the movement of the water is almost imperceptible. How often must she have been stopped by the thorny lianas, that form a network around the trunks they entwine! How often must she have swum across the rivulets that run into the Atabapo! This unfortunate woman was asked how she had sustained herself during four days. She said that, exhausted with fatigue, she could find no other nourishment than those great black ants called *vachacos*, which climb the trees in long bands, to suspend on them their resinous nests. We pressed the missionary to tell us whether the Guahiba had peacefully enjoyed the happiness of remaining with her children; and if any repentance had followed this excess of cruelty. He would not satisfy our curiosity; but at our return from the Rio Negro we learned that the Indian mother was again separated from her children, and sent to one of the missions of the Upper Orinoco. There she died, refusing all kind of nourishment, as savages frequently do in great calamities.

Such is the remembrance annexed to this fatal rock, the *Piedra de la Madre*. In this relation of my travels I feel no desire to dwell on pictures of individual suffering—evils which are frequent wherever there are masters and slaves, civilized Europeans living with people in a state of barbarism, and priests exercising the plenitude of arbitrary power over men ignorant and without defence. In describing the countries through which I passed, I generally confine