

versed. Such were the journeys of the Toltec and Aztec race in the high plains of Mexico, from the sixth to the eleventh century of our era; such probably was also the movement of nations by which the petty tribes of Canada were grouped together. As the immense country between the equator and the eighth degree of north latitude forms one continuous forest, the hordes were there dispersed by following the branchings of the rivers, and the nature of the land compelled them to become more or less agriculturists. Such is the labyrinth of these rivers, that families settled themselves without knowing what race of men lived nearest the spot. In Spanish Guiana a mountain, or a forest half a league broad, sometimes separates hordes who could not meet in less than two days by navigating rivers. In open countries, or in a state of advanced civilization, communication by rivers contributes powerfully to generalize languages, manners, and political institutions; but in the impenetrable forests of the torrid zone, as in the first rude condition of our species, rivers increase the dismemberment of great nations, favour the transition of dialects into languages that appear to us radically distinct, and keep up national hatred and mistrust. Between the banks of the Caura and the Padamo everything bears the stamp of disunion and weakness. Men avoid, because they do not understand each other; they mutually hate, because they mutually fear.

When we examine attentively this wild part of America, we fancy ourselves transported to those primitive times when the earth was peopled by degrees, and we seem to be present at the birth of human societies. In the old world we see that pastoral life has prepared the hunting nations for agriculture. In the New World we seek in vain these progressive developments of civilization, these intervals of repose, these stages in the life of nations. The luxury of vegetation embarrasses the Indians in the chase; and in their rivers, resembling arms of the sea, the depth of the waters prevents fishing during whole months. Those species of ruminating animals, that constitute the wealth of the nations of the Old World, are wanting in the New. The bison and the musk-ox have never been reduced to a domestic state; the breeding of llamas and guanacos has not created the habits of pastoral life. In the temperate