

employed. "When I seeing Padre, Padre to me saying;"* instead of, "when I saw the missionary, he said to me." I have mentioned in another place, how wise it appeared to me in the Jesuits to generalize one of the languages of civilized America, for instance that of the Peruvians,† and instruct the Indians in an idiom which is foreign to them in its roots, but not in its structure and grammatical forms. This was following the system which the Incas, or king-priests of Peru had employed for ages, in order to humanize the barbarous nations of the Upper Marañon, and maintain them under their domination; a system somewhat more reasonable than that of making the natives of America speak Latin, as was gravely proposed in a provincial *concilio* at Mexico.

We were told that the Indians of the Cassiquiare and the Rio Negro are preferred on the Lower Orinoco, and especially at Angostura, to the inhabitants of the other missions, on account of their intelligence and activity. Those of Mandavaca are celebrated among the tribes of their own race for the preparation of the *curare* poison, which does not yield in strength to the *curare* of Esmeralda. Unhappily the natives devote themselves to this employment more than to agriculture. Yet the soil on the banks of the Cassiquiare is excellent. We find there a granitic sand, of a blackish-brown colour, which is covered in the forests with thick layers of rich earth, and on the banks of the river with clay almost impermeable to water. The soil of the Cassiquiare appears more fertile than that of the valley of the Rio Negro, where maize does not prosper. Rice, beans, cotton, sugar, and indigo yield rich harvests, wherever their cultivation has been tried.‡ We saw wild indigo around the missions of San Miguel de Davipe, San Carlos, and Mandavaca. No doubt can exist that several nations of America, particularly the Mexicans, long before the conquest, employed real indigo in their hieroglyphic

* "Quando io mirando Padre, Padre me diciendo."

† The Quichua or Inca language (*Lengua del Inga*).

‡ M. Bonpland found at Mandavaca, in the huts of the natives, a plant with tuberous roots, exactly like cassava (yucca). It is called *cumapana*, and is cooked by being baked on the ashes. It grows spontaneously on the banks of the Cassiquiare.