

rent. We were assured that a great lamp of massive silver, purchased at the expense of the neophytes, is expected from Madrid. Let us hope that, after the arrival of this treasure, they will think also of clothing the Indians, of procuring for them some instruments of agriculture, and assembling their children in a school. Although there are a few oxen in the savannahs round the mission, they are rarely employed in turning the mill (*trapiche*), to express the juice of the sugar-cane; this is the occupation of the Indians, who work without pay here as they do everywhere when they are understood to work for the church. The pasturages at the foot of the mountains round Santa Barbara are not so rich as at Esmeralda, but superior to those at San Fernando de Atabapo. The grass is short and thick, yet the upper stratum of earth furnishes only a dry and parched granitic sand. The savannahs (far from fertile) of the banks of the Guaviare, the Meta, and the Upper Orinoco, are equally destitute of the mould which abounds in the surrounding forests, and of the thick stratum of clay, which covers the sandstone of the Llanos, or steppes of Venezuela. The small herbaceous mimosas contribute in this zone to fatten the cattle, but are very rare between the Rio Jao and the mouth of the Guaviare.

During the few hours of our stay at the mission of Santa Barbara, we obtained pretty accurate ideas respecting the Rio Ventuari, which, next to the Guaviare, appeared to me to be the most considerable tributary of the Orinoco. Its banks, heretofore occupied by the Maypures, are still peopled by a great number of independent nations. On going up by the mouth of the Ventuari, which forms a delta covered with palm-trees, you find in the east, after three days' journey, the Cumaruita and the Paru, two streams that rise at the foot of the lofty mountains of Cuneva. Higher up, on the west, lie the Mariata and the Maniapiare, inhabited by the Macos and Curacicanas. The latter nation is remarkable for their active cultivation of cotton. In a hostile incursion (*entrada*) a large house was found containing more than thirty or forty hammocks of a very fine texture of spun cotton, cordage, and fishing implements. The natives had fled; and Father Valor informed us, that the Indians of the mission who accompanied him had set fire to