

The passage of the canoe through the Great Cataract obliged us to stop two days at Maypures. Father Bernardo Zea, missionary at the Raudales, who had accompanied us to the Rio Negro, though ill, insisted on conducting us with his Indians as far as Atures. One of these Indians, Zerepe, the interpreter, who had been so unmercifully punished at the beach of Pararuma, rivetted our attention by his appearance of deep sorrow. We learned that his grief was caused by the loss of a young girl to whom he was engaged, and that he had lost her in consequence of false intelligence which had been spread respecting the direction of our journey. Zerepe, who was a native of Maypures, had been brought up in the woods by his parents, who were of the tribe of the Macos. He had brought with him to the mission a girl of twelve years of age, whom he intended to marry at our return from the Cataracts. The Indian girl was little pleased with the life of the missions, and she was told that the whites would go to the country of the Portuguese (Brazil), and would take Zerepe with them. Disappointed in her hopes, she seized a boat, and with another girl of her own age, crossed the Great Cataract, and fled *al monte*. The recital of this courageous adventure was the great news of the place. The affliction of Zerepe, however, was not of long duration. Born among the Christians, having travelled as far as the foot of the Rio Negro, understanding Spanish and the language of the Macos, he thought himself superior to the people of his tribe, and he no doubt soon forgot his forest love.

On the 31st of May we passed the rapids of Guahibos and Garcita. The islands which rise in the middle of the waters of the river, were overspread with the purest verdure. The rains of winter had unfolded the spathes of the *vadgiai* palm-tree, the leaves of which rise straight toward the sky. The eye is never wearied of the view of those scenes, where the trees and rocks give the landscape that grand and severe character which we admire in the background of the pictures of Salvator Rosa. We landed before sunset on the eastern bank of the Orinoco, at the *Puerto de la Expedicion*, in order to visit the cavern of Atarupe, which is the place of sepulchre of a whole nation destroyed. I shall attempt to describe this cavern, so celebrated among the natives.