

self in vain; and regretted that I was not provided with a mercurial horizon. On the 7th of June, good absolute altitudes of the sun gave me  $69^{\circ} 40'$  for the longitude. We had advanced from Esmeralda  $1^{\circ} 17'$  toward the west, and this chronometric determination merits entire confidence on account of the double observations, made in going and returning, at the Great Cataracts, and at the confluence of the Atabapo and of the Apure.

The situation of the mission of Uruana is extremely picturesque. The little Indian village stands at the foot of a lofty granitic mountain. Rocks everywhere appear in the form of pillars above the forest, rising higher than the tops of the tallest trees. The aspect of the Orinoco is nowhere more majestic, than when viewed from the hut of the missionary, Fray Ramon Bueno. It is more than two thousand six hundred toises broad, and it runs without any winding, like a vast canal, straight toward the east. Two long and narrow islands (*Isla de Uruana* and *Isla vieja de la Manteca*) contribute to give extent to the bed of the river; the two banks are parallel, and we cannot call it divided into different branches. The mission is inhabited by the Ottomacs, a tribe in the rudest state, and presenting one of the most extraordinary physiological phenomena. They eat earth; that is, they swallow every day, during several months, very considerable quantities, to appease hunger, and this practice does not appear to have any injurious effect on their health. Though we could stay only one day at Uruana, this short space of time sufficed to make us acquainted with the preparation of the *poya*, or balls of earth. I also found some traces of this vitiated appetite among the Guamos; and between the confluence of the Meta and the Apure, where everybody speaks of dirt-eating as of a thing anciently known. I shall here confine myself to an account of what we ourselves saw or heard from the missionary, who had been doomed to live for twelve years among the savage and turbulent tribe of the Ottomacs.

The inhabitants of Uruana belong to those nations of the savannahs called wandering Indians (*Indios andantes*), who, more difficult to civilize than the nations of the forest (*Indios del monte*), have a decided aversion to cultivate the land, and live almost exclusively by hunting and fishing.