

unite with the river, and swell into actual inland seas ; the animals seek an asylum on the summits of the lofty trees ; and the Indians who inhabit the shore encamp on floating rafts.

“ Towards the eighth of July, when the river begins to sink, the natives have new dangers to contend with ; the waters returning within their accustomed channel, undermine the long-flooded banks, slowly gnaw them away, and suddenly huge masses of earth, many hundreds and even thousands of yards in area, are carried away by the turbid tide, involving trees and animals in hopeless ruin.

“ These landslips take place so frequently that the riverine trees have no time to attain their complete development, and the voyagers who navigate the Amazons river descry but a few of the colossal trunks they had hoped to see. The cultivation of a field on the river-bank is, accordingly, a perilous attempt ; and if he would not behold his house, and his farmstead, and his crops swept away in some chaotic convulsion, the colonist will not establish himself in the vicinity of the river until he has thoroughly studied its formidable characteristics.

“ The very islands are exposed to sudden destruction : when the rows of wrecked trunks which serve them as breakwaters have yielded to the fury of the headlong current, a few hours, or even minutes, will suffice for their disappearance, crumbling away before the flood ; you see them melt away in the twinkling of an eye, and the Indians who had stationed themselves thereon to collect turtles' eggs, or dry the products of their fishing, are compelled to take refuge immediately in their canoes from a terrible death.

“ Then in the swirl of the current pass along huge rafts of entangled trunks, which now twine together and now break loose, now accumulate round every headland now gather upon the shore in colossal piles. Around these immense trains of trees which, under the weight of the waters, roll and plunge heavily, like marine monsters or dismasted ships, float vast tracts of the *cannarana* herb, converting certain portions of the river-surface into flourishing and verdurous meadows. We may comprehend, then, the religious terror experienced by the travellers who make their way up the river of the Amazons, and behold at work these yellow whirlpools of sand, eating into the shores, overthrowing the trees, sweeping away the islets to reconstruct them anew, and dragging downwards to the ocean immense convoys of trunks and branches. ‘ The great river was terrible to contemplate,’ says Herndon, the American traveller ; ‘ it rolled through the solitudes with a solemn and majestic air. The waters seemed wrathful, malicious, pitiless, and the general aspect of the landscape awoke in the soul emotions of dread and horror similar to those which funeral solemnities produce, when, with the minute-gun firing, the tempest howling, or the waves wildly dashing, the crew assemble upon deck to bury the dead in a storm-tost sea.’ ”

The river-banks are incessantly attacked and transformed by the inundations of which we have elsewhere spoken, as well as by the *prororoca*.

The embouchure of the *Orinoco*—another shoreless lake—lies to the south of the West Indian Archipelago, on the coast of Guiana. In many respects this river is like the Nile. Like the great African stream, it has its cataracts, its periodical floods, and its crocodiles, and it has still, as the Nile once had, its unknown sources.