

crossed the mind of Humboldt when he was engaged in collecting the traditions of the Indians of the Orinoco ; but that on further reflection and inquiry he dismissed the doubt as groundless. He even set himself to examine whether the district was not a fossiliferous one, and whether beds of sea-shells, or deposits charged with the petrified remains of corals or of fishes, might not have originated among the aborigines some mere myth of a great inundation sufficient to account for the appearances in the rocks. But he found that the region was mainly a primary one, in which he could detect only a single patch of sedimentary rock, existing as an unfossiliferous sandstone. And so, though little prejudiced in favour of the Mosaic record, he could not avoid arriving at the conclusion, simply in his character as a philosophic inquirer, who had no other object than to attain to the real and the true, that the legend of the wild Maypures and Tamanacs regarding a great destructive deluge was simply one of the many forms of that oldest of traditions which appears to be well-nigh co-extensive with the human family, and which, in all its varied editions, seems to point at one and the same signal event. Very varied some of these editions are. The inhabitants of Tahiti tell, for instance, that the Supreme God, a long time ago, being angry, dragged the earth through the sea, but that by a happy accident *their* island broke off and was preserved ; the Indians of Terra Firma believe, that when the great deluge took place, one man, with his wife and children, escaped in a canoe ; and the Indians of the North American lakes hold, that the father of all their tribes, being warned in a dream that a flood was coming, built a raft, on which he preserved his family, and pairs of all the animals, and which drifted about for many months, until at length a new earth was made for their reception by the "Mighty Man above."

In that widely-extended portion of the Old World over