

black crusts than in those which abound in laminae of silvery mica. When walking between the hours of one and three in the afternoon, at Carichana, Atures, or Maypures, among those blocks of stone destitute of vegetable mould, and piled up to great heights, one feels a sensation of suffocation, as if standing before the opening of a furnace. The winds, if ever felt in those woody regions, far from bringing coolness, appear more heated when they have passed over beds of stone, and heaps of rounded blocks of granite. This augmentation of heat adds to the insalubrity of the climate.

Among the causes of the depopulation of the Raudales, I have not reckoned the small-pox, that malady which in other parts of America makes such cruel ravages that the natives, seized with dismay, burn their huts, kill their children, and renounce every kind of society. This scourge is almost unknown on the banks of the Orinoco, and should it penetrate thither, it is to be hoped that its effects may be immediately counteracted by vaccination, the blessings of which are daily felt along the coasts of Terra Firma. The causes which depopulate the Christian settlements are, the repugnance of the Indians for the regulations of the missions, insalubrity of climate, bad nourishment, want of care in the diseases of children, and the guilty practice of preventing pregnancy by the use of deleterious herbs. Among the barbarous people of Guiana, as well as those of the half-civilized islands of the South Sea, young wives are fearful of becoming mothers. If they have children, their offspring are exposed not only to the dangers of savage life, but also to other dangers arising from the strangest popular prejudices. When twins are born, false notions of propriety and family honour require that one of them should be destroyed. "To bring twins into the world," say the Indians, "is to be exposed to public scorn; it is to resemble rats, opossums, and the vilest animals, which bring forth a great number of young at a time." Nay, more, they affirm that "two children born at the same time cannot belong to the same father." This is an axiom of physiology among the Salives; and in every zone, and in different states of society, when the vulgar seize upon an **axiom**, they adhere to it with more steadfastness than the **better-informed men** by whom it was first hazarded. To