

and the two large stars in the feet of the Centaur. I found the latitude of San Balthasar $3^{\circ} 14' 23''$. Horary angles of the sun gave $70^{\circ} 14' 21''$ for the longitude by the chronometer. The dip of the magnetic needle was 27.8° (cent. div.) We left the mission at a late hour in the morning, and continued to go up the Atabapo for five miles; then, instead of following that river to its source in the east, where it bears the name of Atacavi, we entered the Rio Temi. Before we reached its confluence, a granitic eminence on the western bank, near the mouth of the Guasacavi, fixed our attention: it is called *Piedra de la Guahiba*, (Rock of the Guahiba woman), or the *Piedra de la Madre* (Mother's Rock.) We inquired the cause of so singular a denomination. Father Zea could not satisfy our curiosity; but some weeks after, another missionary, one of the predecessors of that ecclesiastic, whom we found settled at San Fernando as president of the missions, related to us an event which excited in our minds the most painful feelings. If, in these solitary scenes, man scarcely leaves behind him any trace of his existence, it is doubly humiliating for a European to see perpetuated by so imperishable a monument of nature as a rock, the remembrance of the moral degradation of our species, and the contrast between the virtue of a savage, and the barbarism of civilized man!

In 1797 the missionary of San Fernando had led his Indians to the banks of the Rio Guaviare, on one of those hostile incursions which are prohibited alike by religion and the Spanish laws. They found in an Indian hut a Guahiba woman with her three children (two of whom were still infants), occupied in preparing the flour of cassava. Resistance was impossible; the father was gone to fish, and the mother tried in vain to flee with her children. Scarcely had she reached the savannah when she was seized by the Indians of the mission, who hunt human beings, like the Whites and the Negroes in Africa. The mother and her children were bound, and dragged to the bank of the river. The monk, seated in his boat, waited the issue of an expedition of which he shared not the danger. Had the mother made too violent a resistance the Indians would have killed her, for everything is permitted for the sake of the conquest of souls (*la conquista espirituel*), and it is particularly