

are formed. Some old Indians pretend to be better instructed than others on points regarding divinity; and to them is confided the famous *botuto*, of which I have spoken, and which is sounded under the palm-trees that they may bear abundance of fruit. On the banks of the Orinoco there exists no idol, as among all the nations who have remained faithful to the first worship of nature, but the *botuto*, the sacred trumpet, is an object of veneration. To be initiated into the mysteries of the *botuto*, it is requisite to be of pure morals, and to have lived single. The initiated are subjected to flagellations, fastings, and other painful exercises. There are but a small number of these sacred trumpets. The most anciently celebrated is that upon a hill near the confluence of the Tomo and the Guainia. It is pretended, that it is heard at once on the banks of the Tuamini, and at the mission of San Miguel de Davipe, a distance of ten leagues. Father Cereso assured us, that the Indians speak of the *botuto* of Tomo as an object of worship common to many surrounding tribes. Fruit and intoxicating liquors are placed beside the sacred trumpet. Sometimes the Great Spirit himself makes the *botuto* resound; sometimes he is content to manifest his will through him to whom the keeping of the instrument is entrusted. These juggleries being very ancient (from the fathers of our fathers, say the Indians), we must not be surprised that some unbelievers are already to be found; but they express their disbelief of the mysteries of the *botuto* only in whispers. Women are not permitted to see this marvellous instrument; and are excluded from all the ceremonies of this worship. If a woman have the misfortune to see the trumpet, she is put to death without mercy. The missionary related to us, that in 1798 he was happy enough to save a young girl, whom a jealous and vindictive lover accused of having followed, from a motive of curiosity, the Indians who sounded the *botuto* in the plantations. "They would not have murdered her publicly," said father Cesero, "but how was she to be protected from the fanaticism of the natives, in a country where it is so easy to give poison? The young girl told me of her fears, and I sent her to one of the missions of the Lower Orinoco." If the people of Guiana had remained