

been settled for two hundred and fifty years on the banks of the Orinoco; and during this long period of time, according to a tradition which has been propagated from generation to generation, the periodical oscillations of the river (the time of the beginning of the rising, and that when it attains its maximum) have never been retarded more than twelve or fifteen days.

When vessels that draw a good deal of water sail up toward Angostura in the months of January and February, by favour of the sea-breeze and the tide, they run the risk of taking the ground. The navigable channel often changes its breadth and direction; no buoy, however, has yet been laid down, to indicate any deposit of earth formed in the bed of the river, where the waters have lost their original velocity. There exists on the south of Cape Barima, as well by the river of this name as by the Rio Moroca and several estuaries (esteres) a communication with the English colony of Essequibo. Small vessels can penetrate into the interior as far as the Rio Poumaron, on which are the ancient settlements of Zealand and Middleburg. Heretofore this communication interested the government of Caracas only on account of the facility it furnished to an illicit trade; but since Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo, have fallen into the hands of a more powerful neighbour, it fixes the attention of the Spanish Americans as being connected with the security of their frontiers. Rivers which have a course parallel to the coast, and are nowhere farther distant from it than five or six nautical miles, characterize the whole of the shore between the Orinoco and the Amazon.

Ten leagues distant from Cape Barima, the great bed of the Orinoco is divided for the first time into two branches of two thousand toises in breadth. They are known by the Indian names of Zacupana and Imataca. The first, which is the northernmost, communicates on the west of the islands Congrejos and del Burro with the *bocas chicas* of Lauran, Nuina, and Mariusas. As the Isla del Burro disappears in the time of great inundations, it is unhappily not suited to fortifications. The southern bank of the *brazo* Imataca is cut by a labyrinth of little channels, into which the Rio Imataca and the Rio Aquire flow. A long series of little granitic hills rises in the fertile savannahs between the Ima-