

their position in society they are less exposed to those vicissitudes of life, changes of place and occupation, which tend to corrupt the primitive purity of language among men. But in the Carib nations the contrast between the dialect of the two sexes is so great, that to explain it satisfactorily we must refer to another cause; and this may perhaps be found in the barbarous custom, practised by those nations, of killing their male prisoners, and carrying the wives of the vanquished into captivity. When the Caribs made an irruption into the archipelago of the West India Islands, they arrived there as a band of warriors, not as colonists accompanied by their families. The language of the female sex was formed by degrees, as the conquerors contracted alliances with the foreign women; it was composed of new elements, words distinct from the Carib words,\* which in the interior of the gynæceums were transmitted from generation to generation, but on which the structure, the combinations, the grammatical forms of the language of the men exercised an influence. There was then manifested in a small community the peculiarity which we now find in the whole group of the nations of the New Continent. The American languages, from Hudson's Bay to the Straits of Magellan, are in general characterized by a total disparity of words combined with a great analogy in their structure. They are like different substances invested with analogous forms. If we recollect that this phenomenon extends over one-half of our planet, almost from pole to pole; if we consider the shades in the grammatical forms (the genders applied to the three persons of the verb, the reduplications, the frequentatives, the duals); it appears highly astonishing to find a uniform tendency in the development of intelligence and language among so considerable a portion of the human race.

We have just seen that the dialect of the Carib women, in the West India Islands, contains the vestiges of a language that was extinct. Some writers have imagined that this extinct language might be that of the Ygneris, or primitive

*enim mulieres incorruptam antiquitatem conservant, quod multorum sermonis expertes ea tenent semper, quæ prima didicerunt.*"

\* The following are examples of the difference between the language of the men (*m*), and the women (*w*); *isle*, *oubao* (*m*), *acaera* (*w*); *man*, *ouekelli* (*m*), *eyeri* (*w*); *but*, *irhen* (*m*), *atica* (*w*).