

tember, we continued our descent towards the gulf of Cariaco. Beyond Santa Cruz a thick forest again appears; and in it we found, under tufts of melastomas, a beautiful fern, with osmundia leaves, which forms a new genus of the order of polypodiaceous plants.*

Having reached the mission of Catuaro, we were desirous of continuing our journey eastward by Santa Rosalia, Casanay, San Josef, Carupano, Rio Carives, and the Montaña of Paria; but we learnt with great regret, that torrents of rain had rendered the roads impassable, and that we should run the risk of losing the plants we had already gathered. A rich planter of cacao-trees was to accompany us from Santa Rosalia to the port of Carupano; but when the time of departure approached, we were informed that his affairs had called him to Cumana. We resolved in consequence to embark at Cariaco, and to return directly by the gulf, instead of passing between the island of Margareta and the isthmus of Araya. The Mission of Catuaro is situated on a very wild spot. Trees of full growth still surround the church, and the tigers come by night to devour the poultry and swine belonging to the Indians. We lodged at the dwelling of the priest, a monk of the congregation of the Observance, to whom the Capuchins had confided the Mission, because priests of their own community were wanting.

At this Mission we met Don Alexandro Mexia, the corregidor of the district, an amiable and well-educated man. He gave us three Indians, who, armed with their machetes, were to precede us, and cut our way through the forest. In this country, so little frequented, the power of vegetation is such at the period of the great rains, that a man on horseback can with difficulty make his way through narrow paths, covered with lianas and intertwining branches. To our great annoyance, the missionary of Catuaro insisted on conducting us to Cariaco; and we could not decline the proposal. The movement for independence, which had nearly broken out at Caracas in 1798, had been preceded and followed by great agitation among the slaves at Coro, Maracaibo, and Caraico. At the last of these places an unfortunate negro had been condemned to die, and our host, the vicar of Catuaro, was going thither to offer him spiritual comfort. During

* Polybotya.