

fathers had already penetrated beyond the great cataracts of Atures and Maypures, when the Andalusian Capuchins had scarcely reached the plains of Calabozo, from the coast and the valleys of Aragua. It would be difficult to explain these contrasts by the system according to which, the different monastic orders are governed; for the aspect of the country contributes powerfully to the more or less rapid progress of the Missions. They extend but slowly into the interior of the land, over mountains, or in steppes, wherever they do not follow the course of a particular river. It will scarcely be believed, that the Villa de Fernando de Apure, only fifty leagues distant in a direct line from that part of the coast of Caracas which has been longest inhabited, was founded at no earlier a date than 1789. We were shown a parchment, full of fine paintings, containing the privileges of this little town. The parchment was sent from Madrid at the solicitation of the monks, whilst yet only a few huts of reeds were to be seen around a great cross raised in the centre of the hamlet. The missionaries and the secular governments being alike interested in exaggerating in Europe what they have done to augment the culture and population of the provinces beyond sea, it often happens that names of towns and villages are placed on the list of new *conquests*, long before their foundation.

The situation of San Fernando, on a large navigable river, near the mouth of another river which traverses the whole province of Varinas, is extremely advantageous for trade. Every production of that province, hides, cacao, cotton, and the indigo of Mijagual, which is of the first quality, passes through this town towards the mouths of the Orinoco. During the season of rains large vessels go from Angostura as far as San Fernando de Apure, and by the Rio Santo Domingo as far as Toruños, the port of the town of Varinas. At that period the inundations of the rivers, which form a labyrinth of branches between the Apure, the Arauca, the Capanaparo, and the Sinaruco, cover a country of nearly four hundred square leagues. At this point, the Orinoco, turned aside from its course, not by neighbouring mountains, but by the rising of counterslopes, runs eastward instead of following its previous direction in the line of the meridian. Considering the surface of the globe as a