

Missions of the Orinoco, formed the project of founding a city at the mouth of the Meta, under the name of the Villa de San Carlos. Indolence, and the dread of tertian fevers, have prevented the execution of this project; and all that has ever existed of the city of San Carlos, is a coat of arms painted on fine parchment, with an enormous cross erected on the bank of the Meta. The Guahibos, who, it is said, are some thousands in number, have become so insolent, that, at the time of our passage by Carichana, they sent word to the missionary that they would come on rafts, and burn his village. These rafts (*valzas*), which we had an opportunity of seeing, are scarcely three feet broad, and twelve feet long. They carry only two or three Indians; but fifteen or sixteen of these rafts are fastened to each other with the stems of the *paullinia*, the *dolichos*, and other creeping plants. It is difficult to conceive how these small craft remain tied together in passing the rapids. Many fugitives from the villages of the Casanare and the Apure have joined the Guahibos, and taught them the practice of eating beef, and preparing hides. The farms of San Vicente, Rubio, and San Antonio, have lost great numbers of their horned cattle by the incursions of the Indians, who also prevent travellers, as far as the junction of the Casanare, from sleeping on the shore in going up the Meta. It often happens, while the waters are low, that the traders of New Grenada, some of whom still visit the encampment of *Pararuma*, are killed by the poisoned arrows of the Guahibos.

From the mouth of the Meta, the Orinoco appeared to us to be freer of shoals and rocks. We navigated in a channel five hundred toises broad. The Indians remained rowing in the boat, without towing or pushing it forward with their arms, and wearying us with their wild cries. We passed the *Caños* of Uita and Endava on the west. It was night when we reached the *Raudal de Tabaje*. The Indians would not hazard passing the cataract; and we slept on a very incommodious spot, on the shelf of a rock, with a slope of more than eighteen degrees; and of which the crevices sheltered a swarm of bats. We heard the cries of the jaguar very near us during the whole night. They were answered by our great dog in lengthened howlings. I waited the appearance of the stars in vain: the sky was