

his time no person had any knowledge of the course of the Orinoco above the mouth of the Guaviare.

D'Anville, in the first edition of his great map of South America, laid down the Rio Negro as an arm of the Orinoco, that branched off from the principal body of the river between the mouths of the Meta and the Vichada, near the cataract of Atures. That great geographer was entirely ignorant of the existence of the Cassiquiare and the Atabapo; and he makes the Orinoco or Rio Paragua, the Japura, and the Putumayo, take their rise from three branchings of the Caqueta. The expedition of the boundaries, commanded by Iturriaga and Solano, corrected these errors. Solano, who was the geographical engineer of this expedition, advanced in 1756 as far as the mouth of the Guaviare, after having passed the Great Cataracts. He found that, to continue to go up the Orinoco, he must direct his course towards the east; and that the river received, at the point of its great inflection, in latitude $4^{\circ} 4'$, the waters of the Guaviare, which two miles higher had received those of the Atabapo. Interested in approaching the Portuguese possessions as near as possible, Solano resolved to proceed onward to the south. At the confluence of the Atabapo and the Guaviare he found an Indian settlement of the warlike nation of the Guaypunaves. He gained their favour by presents, and with their aid founded the mission of San Fernando, to which he gave the appellation of *villa*, or town.

To make known the political importance of this Mission, we must recollect what was at that period the balance of power between the petty Indian tribes of Guiana. The banks of the Lower Orinoco had been long ensanguined by the obstinate struggle between two powerful nations, the Cabres and the Caribs. The latter, whose principal abode since the close of the seventeenth century has been between the sources of the Carony, the Essequibo, the Orinoco, and the Rio Parima, once not only held sway as far as the Great Cataracts, but made incursions also into the Upper Orinoco, employing portages between the Paruspa* and the Caura, the Erevato and the Ventuari, the

* The Rio Paruspa falls into the Rio Paragua, and the latter into the Rio Carony, which is one of the tributary streams of the Lower Orinoco.