

situations of the christian settlements on the Atabapo, the Guayaверо, and the Caqueta.*

Everything changes on entering the Rio Atabapo; the constitution of the atmosphere, the colour of the waters, and the form of the trees that cover the shore. You no longer suffer during the day the torment of mosquitos; and the long-legged gnats (zancudos) become rare during the night. Beyond the mission of San Fernando these nocturnal insects disappear altogether. The water of the Orinoco is turbid, and loaded with earthy matter; and in the coves, from the accumulation of dead crocodiles and other putrescent substances, it diffuses a musky and faint smell. We were sometimes obliged to strain this water through a linen cloth before we drank it. The water of the Atabapo, on the contrary, is pure, agreeable to the taste, without any trace of smell, brownish by reflected, and of a pale yellow by transmitted light. The people call it light, in opposition to the heavy and turbid waters of the Orinoco. Its temperature is generally two degrees, and when you approach the mouth of the Rio Temi, three degrees, cooler than the temperature of the Upper Orinoco. After having been compelled during a whole year to drink water at 27° or 28° , a lowering of a few degrees in the temperature produces a very agreeable sensation. I think this lowering of the temperature may be attributed to the river being less broad, and without the sandy beach, the heat of which, at the Orinoco, is by day more than 50° , and also to the thick shade of the forests which are traversed by the Atabapo, the Temi, the Tuamini, and the Guainia, or Rio Negro.

The extreme purity of the black waters is proved by their limpidity, their transparency, and the clearness with which they reflect the images and colours of surrounding objects. The smallest fish are visible in them at a depth of twenty or thirty feet; and most commonly the bottom of the river may be distinguished, which is not a yellowish or brownish mud, like the colour of the water, but a quartzose and granitic sand of dazzling whiteness. Nothing can be compared to the beauty of the banks of the Atabapo. Loaded with plants, among which rise the palms with feathery leaves; the banks are reflected in the waters, and this

* The Caqueta bears, lower down, the name of the Yupurà.