

their neighbours. Steppes and forests nearly desert separate, at a distance of one hundred and sixty leagues, the cultivated part of the coast from the four missions of Marsa, Tomo, Davipe, and San Carlos, which are all that the Spanish Franciscans could establish along the Rio Negro. Among the Portuguese of Brazil the military system, that of *presides* and *capitanes pobladores*, has prevailed over the government of the missionaries. Grand Para is no doubt far distant from the mouth of the Rio Negro: but the facility of navigation on the Amazon, which runs like an immense canal in one direction from west to east, has enabled the Portuguese population to extend itself rapidly along the river. The banks of the Lower Maraçon, from Vistoza as far as Serpa, as well as those of the Rio Negro from Fort da Bara to San Jose da Maravitanos, are embellished by rich cultivation, and by a great number of large villages and towns.

These local considerations are combined with others, suggested by the moral position of nations. The north-west coast of America furnishes to this day no other stable settlements but Russian and Spanish colonies. Before the inhabitants of the United States, in their progressive movement from east to west, could reach the shore between the latitude 41° and 50° , which long separated the Spanish monks and the Siberian hunters,* the latter had established themselves south of the Columbia River. Thus in New California the Franciscan missionaries, men estimable for their morals, and their agricultural activity, learnt with astonishment, that Greek priests had arrived in their neighbourhood; and that two nations, who inhabit the eastern and western extremities of Europe, were become neighbours on a coast of America opposite to China. In Guiana circumstances were very different: the Spaniards found on their frontiers those very Portuguese, who, by their language, and their municipal institutions, form with them one of the most noble remains of Roman Europe; but whom mistrust, founded on unequal strength, and too great

* The hunters connected with military posts, and dependent on the Russian Company, of which the principal shareholders live at Irkutsk. In 1804 the little fortress (krepost) at the bay of Jakutal was still six hundred leagues distant from the most northern Mexican possessions.