

portages between the Rio Paragua, the Caura, and the Ventuario. The Caribs, when they arrived amid the numerous tribes of the Upper Orinoco, divided themselves into several bands, in order to reach, by the Cassiquiare, the Cababury, the Itinivini, and the Atabapo, on a great many points at once, the banks of the Guainia or Rio Negro, and carry on the slave-trade with the Portuguese. Thus the unhappy natives, before they came into immediate contact with the Europeans, suffered from their proximity. The same causes produce everywhere the same effects. The barbarous trade which civilized nations have carried on, and still partially continue, on the coast of Africa, extends its fatal influence even to regions where the existence of white men is unknown.

Having quitted the mouth of the Conorichite and the mission of Davipe, we reached at sunset the island of Dapa, lying in the middle of the river, and very picturesquely situated. We were astonished to find on this spot some cultivated ground, and on the top of a small hill an Indian hut. Four natives were seated round a fire of brushwood, and they were eating a sort of white paste with black spots, which much excited our curiosity. These black spots proved to be *vachacos*, large ants, the hinder parts of which resemble a lump of grease. They had been dried, and blackened by smoke. We saw several bags of them suspended above the fire. These good people paid but little attention to us; yet there were more than fourteen persons in this confined hut, lying naked in hammocks hung one above another. When Father Zea arrived, he was received with great demonstrations of joy. The military are in greater numbers on the banks of the Rio Negro than on those of the Orinoco, owing to the necessity of guarding the frontiers; and wherever soldiers and monks dispute for power over the Indians, the latter are most attached to the monks. Two young women came down from their hammocks, to prepare for us cakes of cassava. In answer to some enquiries which we put to them through an interpreter, they answered that cassava grew poorly on the island, but that it was a good land for ants, and food was not wanting. In fact, these *vachacos* furnish subsistence to the Indians of the Rio Negro and the Guainia. They