

my part, was afraid lest I should again find the fogs of the Rio Negro in the valley of the Cassiquiare. No one in these missions for half a century past had doubted the existence of communication between two great systems of rivers; the important point of our voyage was confined therefore to fixing by astronomical observations the course of the Cassiquiare, and particularly the point of its entrance into the Rio Negro, and that of the bifurcation of the Orinoco. Without a sight of the sun and the stars this object would be frustrated, and we should have exposed ourselves in vain to long and painful privations. Our fellow travellers would have returned by the shortest way, that of the Pimichin and the small rivers; but M. Bonpland preferred, like me, persisting in the plan of the voyage, which we had traced for ourselves in passing the Great Cataracts. We had already travelled one hundred and eighty leagues in a boat from San Fernando de Apure to San Carlos, on the Rio Apure, the Orinoco, the Atabapo, the Temi, the Tuamini, and the Rio Negro. In again entering the Orinoco by the Cassiquiare we had to navigate three hundred and twenty leagues, from San Carlos to Angostura. By this way we had to struggle against the currents during ten days; the rest was to be performed by going down the stream of the Orinoco. It would have been blamable to have suffered ourselves to be discouraged by the fear of a cloudy sky, and by the mosquitos of the Cassiquiare. Our Indian pilot, who had been recently at Mandavaca, promised us the sun, and "those great stars that eat the clouds," as soon as we should have left the *black waters* of the Guaviare. We therefore carried out our first project of returning to San Fernando de Atabapo by the Cassiquiare; and, fortunately for our researches, the prediction of the Indian was verified. The *white waters* brought us by degrees a more serene sky, stars, mosquitos, and crocodiles.

We passed between the islands of Zaruma and Mini, or Mibita, covered with thick vegetation; and, after having ascended the rapids of the *Piedra de Unumane*, we entered the Rio Cassiquiare at the distance of eight miles from the small fort of San Carlos. The *Piedra*, or granitic rock which forms the little cataract, attracted our attention on account of the numerous veins of quartz by which it is