

mountains are only found more to the east, towards the sources of the Pacimoni, Siapa, and Mavaca. Having arrived on the south of the Raudal of Caravine, we perceived that the Cassiquiare, by the windings of its course, again approached San Carlos. The distance from this fort to the mission of San Francisco Solano, where we slept, is only two leagues and a half by land, but it is reckoned seven or eight by the river. I passed a part of the night in the open air, waiting vainly for stars. The air was misty, notwithstanding the *aguas blancas*, which were to lead us beneath an ever-starry sky.

The mission of San Francisco Solano, situated on the left bank of the Cassiquiare, was founded, as were most of the Christian settlements south of the Great Cataracts of the Orinoco, not by monks, but by military authority. At the time of the expedition of the boundaries, villages were built in proportion as a *subteniente*, or a corporal, advanced with his troops. Part of the natives, in order to preserve their independence, retired without a struggle; others, of whom the most powerful chiefs had been gained, joined the missions. Where there was no church, they contented themselves with erecting a great cross of red wood, close to which they constructed a *casa fuerte*, or block-house, the walls of which were formed of large beams resting horizontally upon each other. This house had two stories; in the upper story two cannon of small calibre were placed; and two soldiers lived on the ground-floor, and were served by an Indian family. Those of the natives with whom they were at peace cultivated spots of land round the *casa fuerte*. The soldiers called them together by the sound of the horn, or a *botuto* of baked earth, whenever any hostile attack was dreaded. Such were the pretended nineteen Christian settlements founded by Don Antonio Santos in the way from Esmeralda to the Erevato. Military posts, which had no influence on the civilization of the natives, figured on the maps, and in the works of the missionaries, as villages (*pueblos*) and *reducciones apostolicas*.\* The preponderance of the military was maintained on the banks of the Orinoco till 1785, when the system of the monks of San Francisco

\* Signifying apostolic conquests or conversions.