

ransomers,* favoured this inhuman commerce. After having excited the natives to make war, they ransomed the prisoners; and, to give an appearance of equity to the traffic, monks accompanied the troop of ransomers to examine "whether those who sold the slaves had a right to do so, by having made them prisoners in open war." From the year 1737 these visits of the Portuguese to the Upper Orinoco became very frequent. The desire of exchanging slaves (poitos) for hatchets, fish-hooks, and glass trinkets, induced the Indian tribes to make war upon one another. The Guipunaves, led on by their valiant and cruel chief Macapu, descended from the banks of the Inirida towards the confluence of the Atabapo and the Orinoco. "They sold," says the missionary Gili, "the slaves whom they did not eat."† The Jesuits of the Lower Orinoco became uneasy at this state of things, and the superior of the Spanish missions, Father Roman, the intimate friend of Gumilla, took the courageous resolution of crossing the Great Cataracts, and visiting the Guipunaves, without being escorted by Spanish soldiers. He left Carichana the 4th of February, 1744; and having arrived at the confluence of the Guaviare, the Atabapo, and the Orinoco, where the last mentioned river suddenly changes its previous course from east to west, to a direction from south to north, he saw from afar a canoe as large as his own, and filled with men in European dresses. He caused a crucifix to be placed at the bow of his boat in sign of peace, according to the custom of the missionaries when they navigate in a country unknown to them. The whites, who were Portuguese slave-traders of the Rio Negro, recognized with marks of joy the habit of the order of St. Ignatius. They heard with astonishment that the river on which this meeting took place was the Orinoco; and they brought Father Roman by the Cassiquiare to the Brazilian settlements on the Rio Negro. The

* *Tropa de rescate*; from *rescatar*, to redeem.

† "I Guipunavi avventizj abitatori dell' Alto Orinoco, recavan de' danni incredibili alle vicine mansuete nazioni; altre mangiondone, altre conducendone schiave ne' Portoghesi dominj."—"The Guipunaves, at their first arrival on the Upper Orinoco, inflicted incredible injuries on the other peaceable tribes who dwelt near them, devouring some, and selling others as slaves to the Portuguese." (Gili, tom. i, p. 31.)