

period of the high waters, several months are lost in contending with the currents of the Orinoco, the Apure, and the Rio de Santo Domingo. The boatmen are forced to carry out ropes to the trunks of trees, and thus warp their canoes up. In the great sinuosities of the river whole days are sometimes passed without advancing more than two or three hundred toises. Since my return to Europe, the communications between the mouth of the Orinoco and the provinces situated on the eastern slope of the mountains of Merida, Pamplona, and Santa Fé de Bogotá, have become more active; and it may be hoped that steamboats will facilitate these long voyages on the Lower Orinoco, the Portuguesa, the Rio Santo Domingo, the Orivante, the Meta, and the Guaviare. Magazines of cleft wood might be formed, as on the banks of the great rivers of the United States, sheltering them under sheds. This precaution would be indispensable, as, in the country through which we passed, it is not easy to procure dry fuel fit to keep up a fire beneath the boiler of a steam-engine.

We disembarked below San Rafael del Capuchino, on the right, at the Villa de Caycara, near a cove called Puerto Sedeño. The Villa is merely a few houses grouped together. Alta Gracia, la Ciudad de la Piedra, Real Corona, Borbon, in short all the towns or villas lying between the mouth of the Apure and Angostura, are equally miserable. The presidents of the missions, and the governors of the provinces, were formerly accustomed to demand the privileges of *villas* and *ciudades* at Madrid, the moment the first foundations of a church were laid. This was a means of persuading the ministry, that the colonies were augmenting rapidly in population and prosperity. Sculptured figures of the sun and moon, such as I have already mentioned, are found near Caycara, at the *Cerro del Tirano*.* It is "the work of the old people" (that is of *our fathers*), say the natives. On a rock

* The tyrant after whom these mountains are named is not Lope de Aguirre, but probably, as the name of the neighbouring cove seems to prove, the celebrated *conquistador* Antonio Sedeno, who, after the expedition of Herrera, sought to penetrate by the Orinoco to the Rio Meta. He was in a state of rebellion against the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo. I know not how Sedeno came to Caycara; for historians relate that he was poisoned on the banks of the Rio Tisnado, one of the tributary streams of the Portuguesa.