

holds nature under an unexpected aspect. He feels, at every step, that he is not on the confines but in the centre of the torrid zone; not in one of the West India Islands, but on a vast continent where everything is gigantic,—mountains, rivers, and the mass of vegetation. If he feel strongly the beauty of picturesque scenery he can scarcely define the various emotions which crowd upon his mind; he can scarcely distinguish what most excites his admiration, the deep silence of those solitudes, the individual beauty and contrast of forms, or that vigour and freshness of vegetable life which characterize the climate of the tropics. It might be said that the earth, overloaded with plants, does not allow them space enough to unfold themselves. The trunks of the trees are everywhere concealed under a thick carpet of verdure; and if we carefully transplanted the orchideæ, the pipers, and the pothoses, nourished by a single courbaril, or American fig-tree,* we should cover a vast extent of ground. By this singular assemblage, the forests, as well as the flanks of the rocks and mountains, enlarge the domains of organic nature. The same lianas which creep on the ground, reach the tops of the trees, and pass from one to another at the height of more than a hundred feet. Thus, by the continual interlacing of parasite plants, the botanist is often led to confound one with another, the flowers, the fruits, and leaves, which belong to different species.

We walked for some hours under the shade of these arcades, which scarcely admit a glimpse of the sky; the latter appeared to me of an indigo blue, the deeper in shade because the green of the equinoctial plants is generally of a stronger hue, with somewhat of a brownish tint. A great fern tree,† very different from the *Polypodium arboreum* of the West Indies, rose above masses of scattered rocks. In this place we were struck for the first time with the sight of those nests in the shape of bottles, or small bags, which are suspended from the branches of the lowest trees, and which attest the wonderful industry of the orioles, which mingle their warbling with the hoarse cries of the parrots and the macaws. These last, so well known for their vivid colours, fly only in pairs, while the real parrots wander about in flocks of several hundreds. A man must have lived in those

* *Ficus nymphæifolia*.

† Possibly our *Aspidium caducum*.