

regions, particularly in the hot valleys of the Andes, to conceive how these birds sometimes drown with their voices the noise of the torrents, which dash down from rock to rock.

We left the forests, at the distance of somewhat more than a league from the village of San Fernando. A narrow path led, after many windings, into an open but extremely humid country. In such a site in the temperate zone, the cyperaceous and gramineous plants would have formed vast meadows; here the soil abounded in aquatic plants, with sagittate leaves, and especially in basil plants, among which we noticed the fine flowers of the costus, the thalia, and the heliconia. These succulent plants are from eight to ten feet high, and in Europe one of their groups would be considered as a little wood.

Near San Fernando the evaporation caused by the action of the sun was so great that, being very lightly clothed, we felt ourselves as wet as in a vapour bath. The road was bordered with a kind of bamboo,\* which the Indians call iagua, or guadua, and which is more than forty feet in height. Nothing can exceed the elegance of this arborescent gramen. The form and disposition of its leaves give it a character of lightness which contrasts agreeably with its height. The smooth and glossy trunk of the iagua generally bends towards the banks of rivulets, and it waves with the slightest breath of air. The highest reeds† in the south of Europe, can give no idea of the aspect of the arborescent gramina. The bamboo and fern-tree are, of all the vegetable forms between the tropics, those which make the most powerful impression on the imagination of the traveller. Bamboos are less common in South America than is usually believed. They are almost wanting in the marshes and in the vast inundated plains of the Lower Orinoco, the Apure, and the Atabapo, while they form thick woods, several leagues in length, in the north-west, in New Grenada, and in the kingdom of Quito. It might be said that the western declivity of the Andes is their true country; and, what is remarkable enough, we found them not only in the low regions at the level of the ocean, but also in the lofty valleys of the Cordilleras, at the height of 860 toises.

\* *Bambusa guadua*.

† *Arundo donax*.