

That which confers most celebrity on the valley of Caripe, besides the extraordinary coolness of its climate, is the great *Cueva*, or Cavern of the Guacharo.* In a country where the people love the marvellous, a cavern which gives birth to a river, and is inhabited by thousands of nocturnal birds, the fat of which is employed in the Missions to dress food, is an everlasting object of conversation and discussion. The cavern, which the natives call "a mine of fat," is not in the valley of Caripe itself, but three short leagues distant from the convent, in the direction of west-south-west. It opens into a lateral valley, which terminates at the Sierra del Guacharo.

We set out for the Sierra on the 18th of September, accompanied by the *alcaldes*, or Indian magistrates, and the greater part of the monks of the convent. A narrow path led us at first towards the south, across a fine plain, covered with beautiful turf. We then turned westward, along the margin of a small river which issues from the mouth of the cavern. We ascended during three quarters of an hour, sometimes in the water, which was shallow, sometimes between the torrent and a wall of rocks, on a soil extremely slippery and miry. The falling down of the earth, the scattered trunks of trees, over which the mules could scarcely pass, and the creeping plants that covered the ground, rendered this part of the road fatiguing. We were surprised to find here, at scarcely 500 toises above the level of the sea, a cruciferous plant, *Raphanus pinnatus*. Plants of this family are very rare in the tropics; they have in some sort a northern character, and therefore we never expected to see one on the plain of Caripe at so inconsiderable an elevation. The northern character also appears in the *Galium caripense*, the *Valeriana scandens*, and a sanicle not unlike the *S. marilandica*.

At the foot of the lofty mountain of the Guacharo, we were

* The province of Guacharucu, which Delgado visited in 1534, in the expedition of Hieronimo de Ortal, appears to have been situated south or south-east of Macarapana. Has its name any connexion with those of the cavern and the bird? or is this last of Spanish origin? (Laet, *Nova Orbis*, p. 676). Guacharo means in Castilian "one who cries and laments;" now the bird of the cavern of Caripe, and the guacharaca (*Phasianus parraka*), are very noisy birds.