

only four hundred paces from the cavern, without yet perceiving the entrance. The torrent runs in a crevice hollowed out by the waters, and we went on under a cornice, the projection of which prevented us from seeing the sky. The path winds in the direction of the river; and at the last turning we came suddenly before the immense opening of the grotto. The aspect of this spot is majestic, even to the eye of a traveller accustomed to the picturesque scenery of the higher Alps. I had before this seen the caverns of the peak of Derbyshire, where, lying down flat in a boat, we proceeded along a subterranean river, under an arch two feet high. I had visited the beautiful grotto of Treshemienshiz, in the Carpathian mountains, the caverns of the Hartz, and those of Franconia, which are vast cemeteries,\* containing bones of tigers, hyænas, and bears, as large as our horses. Nature in every zone follows immutable laws in the distribution of rocks, in the form of mountains, and even in those changes which the exterior crust of our planet has undergone. So great a uniformity led me to believe that the aspect of the cavern of Caripe would differ little from what I had observed in my preceding travels. The reality far exceeded my expectations. If the configuration of the grottoes, the splendour of the stalactites, and all the phenomena of inorganic nature, present striking analogies, the majesty of equinoctial vegetation gives at the same time an individual character to the aperture of the cavern.

The Cueva del Guacharo is pierced in the vertical profile of a rock. The entrance is towards the south, and forms an arch eighty feet broad and seventy-two high. The rock which surmounts the grotto is covered with trees of gigantic height. The mammee-tree and the genipa,† with large and

\* The mould, which has covered for thousands of years the soil of the caverns of Gaylenreuth and Muggendorf in Franconia, emits even now choke-damps, or gaseous mixtures of hydrogen and nitrogen, which rise to the roof of the caves. This fact is known to the persons who show these caverns to travellers; and when I was director of the mines of the Fichtelberg, I observed it frequently in the summer-time. M. Laugier found in the mould of Muggendorf, besides phosphate of lime, 0·10 of animal matter. I was struck, during my stay at Steeben, with the ammoniacal and foetid smell produced by it, when thrown on a red-hot iron.

† Caruto, *Genipa americana*. The flower, at Caripe, has sometimes five, sometimes six stamens.