

shining leaves, raise their branches vertically towards the sky; whilst those of the courbaril and the erythrina form, as they extend, a thick canopy of verdure. Plants of the family of pothos, with succulent stems, oxalises, and orchideæ of a singular structure,* rise in the driest clefts of the rocks; while creeping plants waving in the winds are interwoven in festoons before the opening of the cavern. We distinguished in these festoons a bignonia of a violet blue, the purple dolichos, and for the first time, that magnificent solandra,† which has an orange-coloured flower and a fleshy tube more than four inches long.

But this luxury of vegetation embellishes not only the external arch, it appears even in the vestibule of the grotto. We saw with astonishment plantain-leaved heliconias eighteen feet high, the praga palm-tree, and arborescent arums, following the course of the river, even to those subterranean places. The vegetation continues in the cave of Caripe as in those deep crevices of the Andes, half-excluded from the light of day, and does not disappear till, penetrating into the interior, we advance thirty or forty paces from the entrance. We measured the way by means of a cord; and we went on about four hundred and thirty feet without being obliged to light our torches. Daylight penetrates far into this region, because the grotto forms but one single channel, keeping the same direction, from south-east to north-west. Where the light began to fail, we heard from afar the hoarse sounds of the nocturnal birds; sounds which the natives think belong exclusively to those subterraneous places.

The guacharo is of the size of our fowls. It has the mouth of the goat-suckers and procnias, and the port of those vultures whose crooked beaks are surrounded with stiff silky hairs. Suppressing, with M. Cuvier, the order of picæ, we must refer this extraordinary bird to the passereres, the genera of which are connected with each other by almost imperceptible transitions. It forms a new genus, very different from the goatsucker, in the loudness of its voice, in the vast strength of its beak (containing a double

* A dendrobium, with a gold-coloured flower, spotted with black, three inches long.

† Solandra scandens. It is the *gousaticha* of the Chayma Indians.