

not suiting their taste. When the crops and gizzards of the young birds are opened in the cavern, they are found to contain all sorts of hard and dry fruits, which furnish, under the singular name of guacharo seed (*semilla del guacharo*), a very celebrated remedy against intermittent fevers. The old birds carry these seeds to their young. They are carefully collected, and sent to the sick at Cariaco, and other places of the low regions, where fevers are generally prevalent.

As we continued to advance into the cavern, we followed the banks of the small river which issues from it, and is from twenty-eight to thirty feet wide. We walked on the banks, as far as the hills formed of calcareous incrustations permitted us. Where the torrent winds among very high masses of stalactites, we were often obliged to descend into its bed, which is only two feet deep. We learned with surprise, that this subterranean rivulet is the origin of the river Caripe, which, at the distance of a few leagues, where it joins the small river of Santa Maria, is navigable for canoes. It flows into the river Areo under the name of Caño de Terezen. We found on the banks of the subterranean rivulet a great quantity of palm-tree wood, the remains of trunks, on which the Indians climb to reach the nests hanging from the roofs of the cavern. The rings, formed by the vestiges of the old footstalks of the leaves, furnish as it were the steps of a ladder perpendicularly placed.

The Grotto of Caripe preserves the same direction, the same breadth, and its primitive height of sixty or seventy feet, to the distance of 472 metres, or 1458 feet, accurately measured. We had great difficulty in persuading the Indians to pass beyond the anterior portion of the grotto, the only part which they annually visit to collect the fat. The whole authority of 'los padres' was necessary to induce them to advance as far as the spot where the soil rises abruptly at an inclination of sixty degrees, and where the torrent forms a small subterranean cascade.\* The natives connect mystic ideas with this cave, inhabited by nocturnal birds; they believe that the souls of their ancestors sojourn in the deep

\* We find the phenomenon of a subterranean cascade, but on a much larger scale, in England, at Yordas Cave, near Kingsdale in Yorkshire.