

to the spot where he stopped, but the cavern extended still farther. The remembrance of this fact was preserved in the convent of Caripe, without the exact period being noted. The bishop had provided himself with great torches of white Castile wax. We had torches composed only of the bark of trees and native resin. The thick smoke which issued from these torches, in a narrow subterranean passage, hurts the eyes and obstructs the respiration.

On turning back to go out of the cavern, we followed the course of the torrent. Before our eyes became dazzled with the light of day we saw on the outside of the grotto the water of the river sparkling amid the foliage of the trees which shaded it. It was like a picture placed in the distance, the mouth of the cavern serving as a frame. Having at length reached the entrance, we seated ourselves on the bank of the rivulet, to rest after our fatigues. We were glad to be beyond the hoarse cries of the birds, and to leave a place where darkness does not offer even the charm of silence and tranquillity. We could scarcely persuade ourselves that the name of the Grotto of Caripe had hitherto been unknown in Europe;* for the guacharos alone might have sufficed to render it celebrated. These nocturnal birds have been nowhere yet discovered, except in the mountains of Caripe and Cumanacoa. The missionaries had prepared a repast at the entry of the cavern. Leaves of the banana and the vijao,† which have a silky lustre, served us as a table-cloth, according to the custom of the country. Nothing was wanting to our enjoyment, not even remembrances, which are so rare in those countries, where generations disappear without leaving a trace of their existence.

Before we quit the subterranean rivulet and the nocturnal birds, let us cast a last glance at the cavern of the Guacharo, and the whole of the physical phenomena it pre-

* It is surprising that Father Gili, author of the *Saggio di Storia Americana*, does not mention it, though he had in his possession a manuscript written in 1780 at the convent of Caripe. I gave the first information respecting the Cueva del Guacharo in 1800, in my letters to Messrs. Delambre and Delam  therie, published in the *Journal de Physique*.

† *Heliconia bihai*, Linn. The Creoles have changed the *b* of the Haytian word *bihao* into *v*, and the *h* into *j*, agreeably to the Castilian pronunciation.