

the trunks of the trees, leap from one rock to another. Afraid of missing their mark, we saw them stop a few minutes to scan the ground, and bring together their four feet like wild goats. If the animal does not reach the nearest block of stone, he sinks half his depth into the soft ochreous clay, that fills up the interstices of the rock. When the blocks are wanting, enormous roots serve as supports for the feet of men and beasts. Some of these roots are twenty inches thick, and they often branch out from the trunks of the trees much above the level of the soil. The Creoles have sufficient confidence in the address and instinct of the mules, to remain in their saddles during this long and dangerous descent. Fearing fatigue less than they did, and being accustomed to travel slowly for the purpose of gathering plants and examining the nature of the rocks, we preferred going down on foot; and, indeed, the care which our chronometers demanded, left us no liberty of choice.

The forest that covers the steep flank of the mountain of Santa Maria, is one of the thickest I ever saw. The trees are of stupendous height and size. Under their bushy, deep green foliage, there reigns continually a kind of dim daylight, a peculiar sort of obscurity, of which our forests of pines, oaks, and beech-trees, convey no idea. Notwithstanding its elevated temperature, it is difficult to believe that the air can dissolve the quantity of water exhaled from the surface of the soil, the foliage of the trees, and their trunks: the latter are covered with a drapery of orchideæ, peperomia, and other succulent plants. With the aromatic odour of the flowers, the fruit, and even the wood, is mingled that which we perceive in autumn in misty weather. Here, as in the forests of the Orinoco, fixing our eyes on the top of the trees, we discerned streams of vapour, whenever a solar ray penetrated, and traversed the dense atmosphere. Our guides pointed out to us among those majestic trees, the height of which exceeded 120 or 130 feet, the *curucay* of Terecen. It yields a whitish liquid, and very odoriferous resin, which was formerly employed by the Cumanagoto and Tagiri Indians, to perfume their idols. The young branches have an agreeable taste, though somewhat astringent. Next to the *curucay* and enormous trunks of *hymenæa*, (the diameter of which was more than nine or ten feet), the trees which