

than the sago of India.\* The Indians assured me that the trunks of the *Mauritia*, the *tree of life* so much vaunted by father Gumilla, do not yield meal in any abundance, unless the palm-tree is cut down just before the flowers appear. Thus too the *maguey*,† cultivated in New Spain, furnishes a saccharine liquor, the wine (pulque) of the Mexicans, only at the period when the plant shoots forth its long stem. By interrupting the blossoming, nature is obliged to carry elsewhere the saccharine or amylaceous matter, which would accumulate in the flowers of the *maguey* and in the fruit of the *Mauritia*. Some families of Guaraons, associated with the Chaymas, live far from their native land, in the Missions of the plains or llanos of Cumana; for instance, at Santa Rosa de Ocopi. Five or six hundred of them voluntarily quitted their marshes, a few years ago, and formed, on the northern and southern banks of the Orinoco, twenty-five leagues distant from Cape Barima, two considerable villages, under the names of Zacupana and Imataca. When I made my journey in Caripe, these Indians were still without missionaries, and lived in complete independence. Their excellent qualities as boatmen, their perfect knowledge of the mouths of the Orinoco, and of the labyrinth of branches communicating with each other, give the Guaraons a certain political importance. They favour that clandestine commerce of which the island of Trinidad is the centre. The Guaraons run with extreme address on muddy lands, where the European, the Negro, or other Indians except themselves, would not dare to walk; and it is, therefore, commonly believed, that they are of lighter weight than the rest of the natives. This is also the opinion that is held in Asia of the Burat Tartars. The few Guaraons whom I saw were of middle size, squat, and very muscular. The lightness with which they walk in places newly dried, without sinking in, when even they have no planks tied to their feet, seemed to me the effect of long habit. Though I sailed a considerable time on the Orinoco, I never went so low as its mouth. Future tra-

\* M. Kunth has combined together three genera of the palms, *Calamus*, *Sigus*, and *Mauritia*, in a new section, the *Calameæ*.

† *Agave Americana*, the aloe of our gardens.