

He held almost over my head a *macana*, which is a great stick of palm-tree wood, enlarged to the end like a club. I avoided the stroke by leaping towards the left; but M. Bonpland, who walked on my right, was less fortunate. He did not see the Zambo so soon as I did, and received a stroke above the temple, which levelled him with the ground. We were alone, without arms, half a league from any habitation, on a vast plain bounded by the sea. The Zambo, instead of attacking me, moved off slowly to pick up M. Bonpland's hat, which, having somewhat deadened the violence of the blow, had fallen off and lay at some distance. Alarmed at seeing my companion on the ground, and for some moments senseless, I thought of him only. I helped him to raise himself, and pain and anger doubled his strength. We ran toward the Zambo, who, either from cowardice, common enough in people of this caste, or because he perceived at a distance some men on the beach, did not wait for us, but ran off in the direction of the Tunal, a little thicket of cactus and arborescent *avicennia*. He chanced to fall in running; and M. Bonpland, who reached him first, seized him round the body. The Zambo drew a long knife; and in this unequal struggle we should infallibly have been wounded, if some Biscayan merchants, who were taking the air on the beach, had not come to our assistance. The Zambo seeing himself surrounded, thought no longer of defence. He again ran away, and we pursued him through the thorny cactuses. At length, tired out, he took shelter in a cow-house, whence he suffered himself to be quietly led to prison.

M. Bonpland was seized with fever during the night; but being endowed with great energy and fortitude, and possessing that cheerful disposition which is one of the most precious gifts of nature, he continued his labours the next day. The stroke of the *macana* had extended to the top of his head, and he felt its effect for the space of two or three months during the stay we made at Caracas. When stooping to collect plants, he was sometimes seized with giddiness, which led us to fear that an internal abscess was forming. Happily these apprehensions were unfounded, and the symptoms, at first alarming, gradually disappeared. The inhabitants of Cumana showed us the kindest interest. It was ascertained that the Zambo was a native of one of the