

mountain. We there had great difficulties to overcome, occasioned by the force of the vegetation. A botanist would not readily guess that the thick wood covering this valley is formed by the assemblage of a plant of the musaceous family.* It is probably a maranta, or a heliconia; its leaves are large and shining; it reaches the height of fourteen or fifteen feet, and its succulent stalks grow near one another like the stems of the reeds found in the humid regions of the south of Europe.† We were obliged to cut our way through this forest. The negroes walked before with their cutlasses or machetes. The people confound this alpine scitamineous plant with the arborescent gramina, under the name of *carice*. We saw neither its fruit nor flowers. We are surprised to meet with a monocotyledonous family, believed to be exclusively found in the hot and low regions of the tropics, at eleven hundred toises of elevation; much higher than the andromedas, the thibaudias, and the rhododendron of the Cordilleras.‡ In a chain of mountains no less elevated, and more northern (the Blue Mountains of Jamaica), the *Heliconia of the parrots* and the *bihai*, rather grow in the alpine shaded situations.§

Wandering in this thick wood of musaceæ or arborescent plants, we constantly directed our course towards the eastern peak, which we perceived from time to time through an opening. On a sudden we found ourselves enveloped in a thick mist; the compass alone could guide us; but in advancing northward we were in danger at every step of finding ourselves on the brink of that enormous wall of rocks, which descends almost perpendicularly to the depth of six thousand feet towards the sea. We were obliged to halt. Surrounded by clouds sweeping the ground, we began to doubt whether we should reach the eastern peak before night. Happily, the negroes who carried our water and provisions, rejoined us, and we resolved to take some refreshment. Our repast did not last long. Possibly the Capuchin father had not thought of the great number of persons who

* Scitamineous plants, or family of the plantains.

+ *Arundo donax*.

‡ *Befaria*.

§ *Heliconia psittacorum*, and *H. bihai*. These two heliconias are very common in the plains of Terra Firma.