

bute this difference to the shelter afforded by the palm-trees, in preventing the solar rays from drying and burning up the soil. I have seen, it is true, trees of this family, in the forests of the Orinoco, spreading a tufted foliage; but we cannot say much for the shade of the palm-tree of the llanos, the *palma de cobija*,* which has but a few folded and palmate leaves, like those of the *chamærops*, and of which the lowermost are constantly withered. We were surprised to see that almost all these trunks of the corypha were nearly of the same size, viz., from twenty to twenty-four feet high, and from eight to ten inches diameter at the foot. Nature has produced few species of palm-trees in such prodigious numbers. Amidst thousands of trunks loaded with olive-shaped fruits we found about one hundred without fruit. May we suppose that there are some trees with flowers purely monœcious, mingled with others furnished with hermaphrodite flowers?

The Llaneros, or inhabitants of the plains, believe that all these trees, though so low, are many centuries old. Their growth is almost imperceptible, being scarcely to be noticed in the lapse of twenty or thirty years. The wood of the *palma de cobija* is excellent for building. It is so hard, that it is difficult to drive a nail into it. The leaves, folded like a fan, are employed to cover the roofs of the huts scattered through the Llanos; and these roofs last more than twenty years. The leaves are fixed by bending the extremity of the footstalks, which have been beaten beforehand between two stones, so that they may bend without breaking.

Beside the solitary trunks of this palm-tree, we find dispersed here and there in the steppes a few clumps, real groves (*palmares*), in which the corypha is intermingled with a tree of the proteaceous family, called *chaparro* by the natives. It is a new species of *rhopala*,† with hard and resonant leaves. The little groves of *rhopala* are called *chaparales*; and it may be supposed that, in a vast plain, where only two or three species of trees are to be found,

* The roofing palm-tree (*Corypha tectorum*).

† Resembling the *Embothrium*, of which we found no species in South America. The *embothriums* are represented in American vegetation by the genera *Lomatia* and *Oreocallis*.