

the *chaparro*, which affords shade, is considered a highly valuable plant. The corypha spreads through the Llanos of Caracas from Mesa de Peja as far as Guayaval; farther north and north-west, near Guanare and San Carlos, its place is taken by another species of the same genus, with leaves alike palmate but larger. It is called the 'royal palm of the plains' (*palma real de los Llanos*).\* Other palm-trees rise south of Guayaval, especially the piritu with pinnate leaves,† and the moriche (*Mauritia flexuosa*), celebrated by Father Gumilla under the name of *arbol de la vida*, or tree of life. It is the sago-tree of America, furnishing flour, wine, thread for weaving hammocks, baskets, nets, and clothing. Its fruit, of the form of the cones of the pine, and covered with scales, perfectly resembles that of the *Calamus rotang*. It has somewhat the taste of the apple. When arrived at its maturity it is yellow within and red without. The araguato monkeys eat it with avidity; and the nation of the Guaraounos, whose whole existence, it may be said, is closely linked with that of the moriche palm-tree, produce from it a fermented liquor, slightly acid, and extremely refreshing. This palm-tree, with its large shining leaves, folded like a fan, preserves a beautiful verdure at the period of the greatest drought. The mere sight of it produces an agreeable sensation of coolness, and when loaded with scaly fruit, it contrasts singularly with the mournful aspect of the *palma de cobija*, the foliage of which is always grey and covered with dust. The Llaneros believe that the former attracts the vapours in the air;‡ and that for this reason, water is constantly found at its foot, when dug for to a certain depth. The effect is confounded with the cause. The moriche grows best in moist places; and it may rather be said that the water attracts the tree. The natives of the Orinoco, by analogous reasoning, admit, that the great serpents contribute to preserve humidity in a province. "You would look in vain for water-serpents," said an old

\* This palm-tree of the plains must not be confounded with the *palma real* of Caracas and of Curiepe, with pinnate leaves.

† Perhaps an *Aiphanes*.

‡ If the head of the moriche were better furnished with leaves than it generally is, we might perhaps admit that the soil round the tree preserves its humidity through the influence of the shade.