

gerated among the common people, that during three days we could not obtain one, though they are easily caught, and we had promised the Indians two piastres for every strong and vigorous fish. This fear of the Indians is the more extraordinary, as they do not attempt to adopt precautions in which they profess to have great confidence. When interrogated on the effect of the *tembladores*, they never fail to tell the Whites, that they may be touched with impunity while you are chewing tobacco. This supposed influence of tobacco on animal electricity is as general on the continent of South America, as the belief among mariners of the effect of garlic and tallow on the magnetic needle.

Impatient of waiting, and having obtained very uncertain results from an electric eel which had been brought to us alive, but much enfeebled, we repaired to the Caño de Bera, to make our experiments in the open air, and at the edge of the water. We set off on the 19th of March, at a very early hour, for the village of Rastro; thence we were conducted by the Indians to a stream, which, in the time of drought, forms a basin of muddy water, surrounded by fine trees,\* the clusia, the amyris, and the mimosa with fragrant flowers. To catch the gymnoti with nets is very difficult, on account of the extreme agility of the fish, which bury themselves in the mud. We would not employ the *barbasco*, that is to say, the roots of the *Piscidea erithyrna*, the *Jacquinia armillaris*, and some species of *phyllanthus*, which thrown into the pool, intoxicate or benumb the eels. These methods have the effect of enfeebling the gymnoti. The Indians therefore told us that they would "fish with horses," (*embarbasco con caballos*.†) We found it difficult to form an idea of this extraordinary manner of fishing; but we soon saw our guides return from the savannah, which they had been scouring for wild horses and mules. They brought about thirty with them, which they forced to enter the pool.

The extraordinary noise caused by the horses' hoofs, makes the fish issue from the mud, and excites them to the attack. These yellowish and livid eels, resembling large

\* *Amyris lateriflora*, *A. coriacea*, *Laurus pichurin*, *Myroxylon secundum*, *Malpighia reticulata*.

† Meaning to excite the fish by horses.