

considerable receptacles for air, the manati comes so often to the surface of the water to breathe. Its flesh is very savoury, though, from what prejudice I know not, it is considered unwholesome and apt to produce fever. It appeared to me to resemble pork rather than beef. It is most esteemed by the Guamos and the Ottomacs; and these two nations are particularly expert in catching the manati. Its flesh, when salted and dried in the sun, can be preserved a whole year; and, as the clergy regard this mammiferous animal as a fish, it is much sought during Lent. The vital principal is singularly strong in the manati; it is tied after being harpooned, but is not killed till it has been taken into the canoe. This is effected, when the animal is very large, in the middle of the river, by filling the canoe two-thirds with water, sliding it under the animal, and then baling out the water by means of a calabash. This fishery is most easy after great inundations, when the manati has passed from the great rivers into the lakes and surrounding marshes, and the waters diminish rapidly. At the period when the Jesuits governed the Missions of the Lower Orinoco, they assembled every year at Cabruta, below the mouth of the Apure, to have a grand fishing for manatis, with the Indians of their Missions, at the foot of the mountain now called El Capuchino. The fat of the animal, known by the name of manati-butter (*manteca de manati*), is used for lamps in the churches; and is also employed in preparing food. It has not the fetid smell of whale-oil, or that of the other cetaceous animals which spout water. The hide of the manati, which is more than an inch and half thick, is cut into slips, and serves, like thongs of ox-leather, to supply the place of cordage in the Llanos. When immersed in water, it has the defect of undergoing a slight degree of putrefaction. Whips are made of it in the Spanish colonies. Hence the words *latigo* and *manati* are synonymous. These whips of manati-leather are a cruel instrument of punishment for the unhappy slaves, and even for the Indians of the Missions, though, according to the laws, the latter ought to be treated like freemen.

We passed the night opposite the island of Conserva. In skirting the forest we were surprised by the sight of an enormous trunk of a tree seventy feet high, and thickly set with