

ground to the height of twelve or fifteen feet. At Maypures the Indians quit the village at night, to go and sleep on the little islets in the midst of the cataracts. There they enjoy some rest; the mosquitos appearing to shun air loaded with vapours. We found everywhere fewer in the middle of the river than near its banks; and thus less is suffered in descending the Orinoco than in going up in a boat.

Persons who have not navigated the great rivers of equinoctial America, for instance, the Orinoco and the Magdalena, can scarcely conceive how, at every instant, without intermission, you may be tormented by insects flying in the air; and how the multitude of these little animals may render vast regions almost uninhabitable. Whatever fortitude be exercised to endure pain without complaint, whatever interest may be felt in the objects of scientific research, it is impossible not to be constantly disturbed by the mosquitos, zancudos, jejens, and tempraneros, that cover the face and hands, pierce the clothes with their long needle-formed suckers, and getting into the mouth and nostrils, occasion coughing and sneezing whenever any attempt is made to speak in the open air. In the missions of the Orinoco, in the villages on the banks of the river, surrounded by immense forests, the *plaga de las moscas*, or the plague of the mosquitos, affords an inexhaustible subject of conversation. When two persons meet in the morning, the first questions they address to each other are: "How did you find the zancudos during the night? How are we to-day for the mosquitos?"* These questions remind us of a Chinese form of politeness, which indicates the ancient state of the country where it took birth. Salutations were made heretofore in the Celestial empire in the following words, *vou-to-hou*, "Have you been incommoded in the night by the serpents?"

The geographical distribution of the insects of the family of tipulæ presents very remarkable phenomena. It does not appear to depend solely on heat of climate, excess of humidity, or the thickness of forests, but on local cir-

* Que le haz parecido los zancudos de noche? Como stamos hoy de mosquitos?