

lute want of wind render the air more burning and more irritating in its contact with the skin.

“How comfortable must people be in the moon!” said a Salive Indian to Father Gumilla; “she looks so beautiful and so clear, that she must be free from mosquitos.” These words, which denote the infancy of a people, are very remarkable. The satellite of the earth appears to all savage nations the abode of the blessed, the country of abundance. The Esquimaux, who counts among his riches a plank or trunk of a tree, thrown by the currents on a coast destitute of vegetation, sees in the moon plains covered with forests; the Indian of the forests of Orinoco there beholds open savannahs, where the inhabitants are never stung by mosquitos.

After proceeding further to the south, where the system of yellowish-brown waters commences,\* on the banks of the Atabapo, the Tuni, the Tuamini, and the Rio Negro, we enjoyed an unexpected repose. These rivers, like the Orinoco, cross thick forests, but the tipulary insects, as well as the crocodiles, shun the proximity of the *black waters*. Possibly these waters, which are a little colder, and chemically different from the white waters, are adverse to the larvæ of tipulary insects and gnats, which may be considered as real aquatic animals. Some small rivers, the colour of which is deep blue, or yellowish-brown (as the Toparo, the Mataveni, and the Zama), are exceptions to the almost general rule of the absence of mosquitos over the *black waters*. These three rivers swarm with them; and the Indians themselves fixed our attention on the problematic causes of this phenomenon. In going down the Rio Negro, we breathed freely at Maroa, Daripe, and San Carlos, villages situated on the boundaries of Brazil. But this improvement of our situation was of short continuance; our sufferings recommenced as soon as we entered the Cassiquiare. At Esmeralda, at the eastern extremity of the Upper Orinoco, where ends the known world of the Spaniards, the clouds of mosquitos are almost as thick as at the Great Cataracts. At Mandavaca we found an old missionary, who told us with an air of sadness, that he had had “his twenty years of mosquitos”\* in America.

\* Generally called ‘black waters’ (*aguas negras*).

† “Yo tengo mis veinte años de mosquitos.”