

the missionary, was employed in reducing the *dapicho* into black caoutchouc. He had spitted several bits on a slender stick, and was roasting them like meat. The *dapicho* blackens in proportion as it grows soft, and becomes elastic. The resinous and aromatic smell which filled the hut, seemed to indicate that this coloration is the effect of the decomposition of a carburet of hydrogen, and that the carbon appears in proportion as the hydrogen burns at a low heat. The Indian beat the softened and blackened mass with a piece of brazil-wood, formed at one end like a club; he then kneaded the *dapicho* into balls of three or four inches in diameter, and let it cool. These balls exactly resemble the caoutchouc of the shops, but their surface remains in general slightly viscous. They are used at San Balthasar in the Indian game of tennis, which is celebrated among the inhabitants of Uruana and Encaramada; they are also cut into cylinders, to be used as corks, and are far preferable to those made of the bark of the cork-tree.

This use of caoutchouc appeared to us the more worthy notice, as we had been often embarrassed by the want of European corks. The great utility of cork is fully understood in countries where trade has not supplied this bark in plenty. Equinoctial America nowhere produces, not even on the back of the Andes, an oak resembling the *Quercus suber*; and neither the light wood of the bombax, the ochroma, and other malvaceous plants, nor the *rhachis* of maize, of which the natives make use, can well supply the place of our corks. The missionary showed us, before the *Casa de los Solteros* (the house where the young unmarried men reside), a drum, which was a hollow cylinder of wood, two feet long and eighteen inches thick. This drum was beaten with great masses of *dapicho*, which served as drumsticks; it had openings which could be stopped by the hand at will, to vary the sounds, and was fixed on two light supports. Savage notions love noisy music; the drum and the *botuto*, or trumpet of baked earth, in which a tube of three or four feet long communicates with several barrels, are indispensable instruments among the Indians for their grand pieces of music.

The night of the 30th of April was sufficiently fine for observing the meridian heights of α of the Southern Cross,