

do not eat the ants as a luxury, but because, according to the expression of the missionaries, the fat of ants (the white part of the abdomen) is a very substantial food. When the cakes of cassava were prepared, Father Zen, whose fever seemed rather to sharpen than to enfeeble his appetite, ordered a little bag to be brought to him filled with smoked vachacos. He mixed these bruised insects with flour of cassava, which he pressed us to taste. It somewhat resembled rancid butter mixed with crumb of bread. The cassava had not an acid taste, but some remains of European prejudices prevented our joining in the praises bestowed by the good missionary on what he called 'an excellent ant paste.'

The violence of the rain obliged us to sleep in this crowded hut. The Indians slept only from eight till two in the morning; the rest of the time they employed in conversing in their hammocks, and preparing their bitter beverage of cupana. They threw fresh fuel on the fire, and complained of cold, although the temperature of the air was at 21°. This custom of being awake, and even on foot, four or five hours before sunrise, is general among the Indians of Guiana. When, in the *entradas*, an attempt is made to surprise the natives, the hours chosen are those of the first sleep, from nine till midnight.

We left the island of Dapa long before daybreak; and notwithstanding the rapidity of the current, and the activity of our rowers, our passage to the fort of San Carlos del Rio Negro occupied twelve hours. We passed, on the left, the mouth of the Cassiquiare, and, on the right, the small island of Cumarai. The fort is believed in the country to be on the equatorial line; but, according to the observations which I made at the rocks of Culimacari, it is in 1° 54' 11".

We lodged at San Carlos with the commander of the fort, a lieutenant of militia. From a gallery in the upper part of the house we enjoyed a delightful view of three islands of great length, and covered with thick vegetation. The river runs in a straight line from north to south, as if its bed had been dug by the hand of man. The sky being constantly cloudy gives these countries a solemn and gloomy character. We found in the village a few juvia-trees, which furnish the triangular nuts called in Europe