

those equatorial regions where it always rains, being so full of sap, that they will scarcely burn. There being no bare shore, it is hardly possible to procure old wood, which the Indians call wood *baked in the sun*. However, fire was necessary to us only as a defence against the beasts of the forest; for we had such a scarcity of provision that we had little need of fuel for the purpose of preparing our food.

On the 18th of May, towards evening, we discovered a spot where wild cacao-trees were growing on the bank of the river. The nut of these cacaos is small and bitter; the Indians of the forest suck the pulp, and throw away the nut, which is picked up by the Indians of the missions, and sold to persons who are not very nice in the preparation of their chocolate. "This is the *Puerto del Cacao*" (Cacao Port), said the pilot; "it is here our Padres sleep, when they go to Esmeralda to buy *sarbacans*\* and *juvias* (Brazil nuts). Not five boats, however, pass annually by the Cassiquiare; and since we left Maypures (a whole month previously), we had not met one living soul on the rivers we navigated, except in the immediate neighbourhood of the missions. To the south of lake Duractumuni we slept in a forest of palm-trees. It rained violently, but the pothoses, arums, and lianas, furnished so thick a natural trellis, that we were sheltered as under a vault of foliage. The Indians whose hammocks were placed on the edge of the river, interwove the helicónias and other musaceæ, so as to form a kind of roof over them. Our fires lighted up, to the height of fifty or sixty feet, the palm-trees, the lianas loaded with flowers, and the columns of white smoke, which ascended in a straight line toward the sky. The whole exhibited a magnificent spectacle; but to have enjoyed it fully, we should have breathed an air clear of insects.

The most depressing of all physical sufferings are those which are uniform in their duration, and can be combated only by long patience. It is probable, that in the exhalations of the forests of the Cassiquiare M. Bonpland imbibed the seeds of a severe malady, under which he nearly sunk on our arrival at Angostura. Happily for him and for me, nothing led us to presage the danger with which he was

\* The bamboo tubes furnished by the *Arundinaria*, used for projecting the poisoned arrows of the natives.—See *Views of Nature* p. 180.