

and tone of pedantry of which the pharmacopologists of Europe were formerly accused. "I know," said he, "that the whites have the secret of making soap, and manufacturing that black powder which has the defect of making a noise when used in killing animals. The *curare*, which we prepare from father to son, is superior to anything you can make *down yonder* (beyond sea). It is the juice of an herb which kills silently, without any one knowing whence the stroke comes."

This chemical operation, to which the old man attached so much importance, appeared to us extremely simple. The liana (*bejuco*) used at Esmeralda for the preparation of the poison, bears the same name as in the forests of Javita. It is the *bejuco de Mavacure*, which is gathered in abundance east of the mission, on the left bank of the Orinoco, beyond the Rio Amaguaca, in the mountainous and rocky tracts of Guanaya and Yumariquin. Although the bundles of *bejuco* which we found in the hut of the Indian were entirely bare of leaves, we had no doubt of their being produced by the same plant of the strychnos family (nearly allied to the rouhamon of Aublet) which we had examined in the forest of Pimichin.* The mavacure is employed fresh or dried indifferently during several weeks. The juice of the liana, when it has been recently gathered, is not regarded as poisonous; possibly it is so only when strongly concentrated. It is the bark and a part of the alburnum which contain this terrible poison. Branches of the mavacure four or five lines in diameter are scraped with a knife, and the bark that comes off is bruised, and reduced into very thin filaments on the stone employed for grinding cassava. The venemous juice being yellow, the whole fibrous mass takes that colour. It is thrown into a funnel nine inches

* I may here insert the description of the *curare* or *bejuco de Mavacure*, taken from a manuscript, yet unpublished, of my learned fellow-labourer M. Kunth, corresponding member of the Institute. "Ramuli lignosi, oppositi, ramulo altero abortivo, teretiusculi, fusciscenti-tomentosi, inter petiolos lineola pilosa notati, gemmula aut processu filiformi (pedunculo?) terminati. FOLIA opposita, breviter petiolata, ovato-oblonga, acuminata, intergerrima, reticulato-triplinervia, nervo medio subtus prominente, membranacea, ciliata, utrinque glabra, nervo medio fusciscente-tomentoso, lacte viridia, subtus pallidiora, 1½-2½ pollices longa, 8-9 lineas lata. PETIOLI lineam longi, tomentosj, inarticulati."