

high, with an opening four inches wide. This funnel was of all the instruments of the Indian laboratory that of which the poison-master seemed to be most proud. He asked us repeatedly if, *por alla* (*out yonder*, meaning in Europe), we had ever seen anything to be compared to this funnel (*embudo*). It was a leaf of the plantain-tree rolled up in the form of a cone, and placed within another stronger cone made of the leaves of the palm-tree. The whole of this apparatus was supported by slight frame-work made of the petioles and ribs of palm-leaves. A cold infusion is first prepared by pouring water on the fibrous matter which is the ground bark of the *mavacure*. A yellowish water filters during several hours, drop by drop, through the leafy funnel. This filtered water is the poisonous liquor, but it acquires strength only when concentrated by evaporation, like molasses, in a large earthen pot. The Indian from time to time invited us to taste the liquid; its taste, more or less bitter, decides when the concentration by fire has been carried sufficiently far. There is no danger in tasting it, the *curare* being deleterious only when it comes into immediate contact with the blood. The vapours, therefore, which are disengaged from the pans are not hurtful, notwithstanding all that has been asserted on this point by the missionaries of the Orinoco. Fontana, in his experiments on the poison of the *ticuna* of the Amazon, long since proved that the vapours arising from this poison, when thrown on burning charcoal, may be inhaled without danger; and that the statement of La Condamine, that Indian women, when condemned to death, have been killed by the vapours of the poison of the *ticuna*, is incorrect.

The most concentrated juice of the *mavacure* is not thick enough to stick to the darts; and therefore, to give a body to the poison, another vegetable juice, extremely glutinous, drawn from a tree with large leaves, called *kiracaguero*, is poured into the concentrated infusion. As this tree grows at a great distance from Esmeralda, and was at that period as destitute of flowers and fruits as the *bejuco de mavacure*, we could not determine it botanically. I have several times mentioned that kind of fatality which withholds the most interesting plants from the examination of travellers, while thousands of others, of the chemical properties of which we