

are ignorant, are found loaded with flowers and fruits. In travelling rapidly, even within the tropics, where the flowering of the ligneous plants is of such long duration, scarcely one-eighth of the trees can be seen furnishing the essential parts of fructification. The chances of being able to determine, I do not say the family, but the genus and species, is consequently as one to eight; and it may be conceived that this unfavourable chance is felt most powerfully when it deprives us of the intimate knowledge of objects which afford a higher interest than that of descriptive botany.

At the instant when the glutinous juice of the kiracaguero-tree is poured into the venomous liquor well concentrated, and kept in a state of ebullition, it blackens, and coagulates into a mass of the consistence of tar, or of a thick syrup. This mass is the *curare* of commerce. When we hear the Indians say that the *kiracaguero* is as necessary as the *bejuco de mavacure* in the manufacture of the poison, we may be led into error by the supposition that the former also contains some deleterious principle, while it only serves (as the *algarrobo*, or any other gummy substance would do) to give more body to the concentrated juice of the *curare*. The change of colour which the mixture undergoes is owing to the decomposition of a hydruret of carbon; the hydrogen is burned, and the carbon is set free. The *curare* is sold in little calabashes; but its preparation being in the hands of a few families, and the quantity of poison attached to each dart being extremely small, the best *curare*, that of Esmeralda and Mandavaca, is sold at a very high price. This substance, when dried, resembles opium; but it strongly absorbs moisture when exposed to the air. Its taste is an agreeable bitter, and M. Bonpland and myself have often swallowed small portions of it. There is no danger in so doing, if it be certain that neither lips nor gums bleed. In experiments made by Mangili on the venom of the viper, one of his assistants swallowed all the poison that could be extracted from four large vipers of Italy, without being affected by it. The Indians consider the *curare*, taken internally, as an excellent stomachic. The same poison prepared by the Piraoas and Salives, though it has some celebrity, is not so much esteemed as that of Esmeralda. The process of this preparation appears to be everywhere