

another place that the mauritia palm-tree, the "tree of life" of the missionaries, not only affords the Guaraons a safe dwelling during the risings of the Orinoco, but that its shelly fruit, its farinaceous pith, its juice, abounding in saccharine matter, and the fibres of its petioles, furnish them with food, wine,\* and thread proper for making cords and weaving hammocks. These customs of the Indians of the delta of the Orinoco were found formerly in the Gulf of Darien (Uraba), and in the greater part of the inundated lands between the Guarapiche and the mouths of the Amazon. It is curious to observe in the lowest degree of human civilization the existence of a whole tribe depending on one single species of palm-tree, similar to those insects which feed on one and the same flower, or on one and the same part of a plant.

The navigation of the river, whether vessels arrive by the *Boca de Navios*, or risk entering the labyrinth of the *bocas chicas*, requires various precautions, according as the waters are high or low. The regularity of these periodical risings of the Orinoco has been long an object of admiration to travellers, as the overflowings of the Nile furnished the philosophers of antiquity with a problem difficult to solve. The Orinoco and the Nile, contrary to the direction of the Ganges, the Indus, the Rio de la Plata, and the Euphrates, flow alike from the south toward the north; but the sources of the Orinoco are five or six degrees nearer to the equator than those of the Nile. Observing every day the accidental variations of the atmosphere, we find it difficult to persuade ourselves, that in a great space of time the effects of these variations mutually compensate each other: that in a long succession of years the averages of the temperature of the humidity, and of the barometric pressure, differ so little from month to month; and that nature, notwithstanding the multitude of partial perturbations, follows a constant type in the series of meteorological phenomena. Great rivers unite in one receptacle the waters which a surface

to establish their aërial cloisters in the country of Treves, in Germany; but the bishops opposed these extravagant and perilous enterprises. (*Mosheim, Instit. Hist. Eccles.*, p. 192.) See Humboldt's *Views of Nature* (Bohn), pages 13, 136.

\* The use of this moriche wine however is not very common. The Guaraons prefer in general a beverage of fermented honey.