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THE CAURA AFFLUENT OF THE ORINOCO.

By E. ANDRÉ.

PART I.—THE CAURA.

IT was in September, 1897, that I paid my first visit to the Caura. On that occasion I had not intended, when I left Trinidad, to be away for more than a couple of months, but I got so interested in the bird-life of the region that I did not return until May, 1898, having spent very nearly eight months on the trip. The furthest point reached then was the island of Cangrejo, just beyond the rapids of Piritu. With the exception of a journey to the mountain of Turagua, which I have described separately, I was all the time in the immediate vicinity of the river itself. During that first visit I collected a considerable number of birds and some orchids. *Cattleya superba* and *Epidendrum Stamfordianum* were the principal plants obtained. Among the men who were with me during those eight months were three Indians from the headwaters of the Caura. One of these men was a new arrival, but the others had been knocking about the Venezuelan settlements for years, and in consequence spoke enough Spanish to make themselves understood. During the frequent conversations I had with these men, I acquired a good deal of information about the country from which they had come. I have referred to this first trip because it led to the expedition undertaken in 1900, the results of which I shall try to embody in the sub-joined article.

As far as Temblador the ascent of the Caura does not present any serious difficulties. In fact, during the rainy season flat-bottomed steamers, even of considerable size, can perform the journey without more risk than attends the navigation of the Orinoco. But beyond Temblador it is impossible for large craft to ascend the river; even in dug-outs its navigation is difficult and dangerous. No doubt it is owing to these difficulties and dangers that the country above this settlement has been so little explored. For the last 40 or 50 miles of its course the Caura flows through rolling plains covered with grass, with belts or patches of forest growth along the streams and in the hollows. These open rolling plains are part of the region of the *llanos*, bounded on the north by that spur of the Andes forming the seaboard on the Caribbean sea, and on the west by the eastern cordillera of the Andes themselves. From its source to Aripao, at which place, roughly speaking, we may say that the *llanos* commence, the Caura flows through one vast forest. This part of Venezuela is known as "*La zona de los bosques*," the region of the woods. According to the accounts of the Indians, only two small *llanos* occur in the whole of this forest region of the Caura—one in the vicinity of the Nichare, the other near the sources of the Caranacuna.

The country on the banks of the Caura from its mouth to the rapids

of Mura is but thinly populated. With the exception of Maripa, scarcely any of the other places can aspire to being called villages; they are merely clearings where rice, sugar-cane, bananas, and a few ground provisions, such as sweet potatoes, manioc, and yams, are grown, with huts scattered here and there for the accommodation of the settlers. At San Isidro and San Pedro there are a few Indians, but they do not appear to belong to any particular tribe. With the exception of these Indians and the small settlement of Waiomgomos, at the rapids of Mura, the inhabitants are Venezuelans, and they are of every shade of colour. These people speak nothing but Spanish. Their principal occupation is collecting tonca beans, the fruit of *Dipterix odorata*. They also do some business in cedar and copaiba oil.

Within recent years there has been a steady decline in the price of tonca beans, which at one time fetched as much as four dollars the pound in the New York market. If I am not mistaken, the value of these beans to-day does not exceed sixty cents. Of course such a decline in prices has seriously affected the people on the Caura, to whom the tonca bean, or *sarrapia* as they call it, means everything. Whereas in former years but little rice was grown, I should say barely enough to meet the requirements of the settlements, to-day there is a considerable surplus, which finds its way to Ciudad-Bolivar. The increase in the cultivation of this grain is the outcome of the decline in value of the product upon which the inhabitants of this part of Venezuela depended for their existence.

In the neighbourhood of the settlements are many hills, some isolated mountains and mountain masses, and a range of considerable extent—the Serrania de Mato, which can be seen from Suapure. All the mountains and hills which I visited during both of my trips are of granitic formation. In fact, all over the district granite predominates. Huge detached masses of this rock are quite common in the middle of the forest. Then there are those open spaces called *lajas* by the natives, and which are nothing else but excrescences of what I cannot help believing to be one extensive substratum of plutonic rock. The same remarks apply to the islands which encumber the Caura, and are the cause of its navigation being so difficult.

Between the mouth of the Caura and the falls of Para the land rises gradually, but the difference in altitude, although of small account, is sufficient to cause the current of the river to be rapid. Mura and Piritu are the places where this incline in the bed of the stream makes itself most felt. The falls of Para constitute a formidable barrier to the navigation of the Caura. Just above the falls the river divides to form an island of between 7 and 9 miles in length. By a succession of cataracts, the two streams rush through gorges on each side of the island to meet at its foot. The right-hand stream is of much greater volume than that on the left, which, after a severe drought, dries almost

completely up. Where the streams meet there is a large deep pool. When the river is low this pool is calm, and its banks are stretches of beautifully white sand, with backgrounds consisting of huge masses of black rock supporting in places a vegetation of flowering shrubs and orchids. It is then a lovely, peaceful-looking spot, even the roar of the falling water being subdued. I must confess that when I saw the falls for the first time I was disappointed. Although the scene was beautiful, it was not the picture I had conjured up when the Indians had described with bated breath the grandeur of Para. The island which divides the river is densely wooded. It is over this island that the portage of the boats was effected, a work which occupied seventeen days. A track having been cut through the forest, round logs were placed crosswise on the ground. The boats were then hauled over these logs by means of pulleys, one attached to the head of the boat, the other to a tree some 20 or 30 yards in front. Had I not brought the pulleys and a coil of strong rope, we should never have succeeded in getting the boats over the island. The first part of the portage is the worst, for the hill rises abruptly from the pool up to 600 feet; then there is a plateau broken by hollows in three places. We had to build two bridges over deep ravines, which added to the difficulties of the undertaking. At last, after seventeen days spent on the island, we were able to continue our journey. The plateau where the falls begin is about 1000 feet above sea-level; so that the land at this spot rises about 800 feet, that is, taking my barometer-readings to be correct. The bed of the stream, for a considerable distance after leaving the falls, is encumbered with islands and masses of rock. At one spot a ledge of granite over 200 yards in width runs across the river, forming a dam over which the current rushes with violence. It took us a whole day to haul the boats over this obstruction. A couple of days' journey beyond the falls are the narrows of Ayaima, one of the most picturesque spots of this picturesque river. The whole volume of the Caura rushes through a gorge not more than 30 feet wide. Above and below this gorge the river expands into large pools dotted with islands. Beyond Ayaima the Caura flows by a perfect labyrinth of channels through hundreds of islands. The place is called Guayarapo, and is most difficult to navigate, being a succession of dangerous rapids. The next serious obstruction in ascending the river is met with at Achaba, where a series of falls necessitate a portage through the forest, but the portage is a short one. From these rapids we had a good view of the mountain of Achaba. It was the first we saw of those flat-topped masses with precipitous sides which form so extraordinary a feature of the landscape of the upper Caura. Above Achaba the river is broad and deep for a considerable distance. Then there are the rapids of Suraima, beyond which the river is again broad and deep.

From the rapids of Arichi can be seen the mountains of Arawa and

Arichi, while in the distance, veiled in bluish haze, the outline of Améha can be just dimly discerned. It takes three days to paddle from Arichi to Améha. Where the Caura, or rather the Merevari, flows past the mountain its banks are 1500 feet above sea-level. From the river the cliffs look so near that one would scarcely believe that it takes a day and a half of steady walking to reach them. Before getting to the slope leading to the precipice, a belt of low-lying tangled growth has to be traversed. The trees of this growth are stunted, and their branches twisted and unshapely. They are covered with mosses and parasites, and appear to be always dripping with moisture. Besides other plants, I noticed two sorts of begonia, some caladiums, and a sobralia. Mounds or hillocks are scattered over this low-lying strip of land. Although the elevation of these mounds or hillocks above the surrounding country is but slight, the vegetation which clothes them is different. In this stretch of low-lying land, interspersed with hillocks, we obtained, in addition to some other birds which I do not know, a remarkably handsome partridge and a quail. Although we found the bald-headed cotinga (*Gymnocephalus clavus*) to be common enough, we did not secure many specimens. The Indians call this bird *koa*, which sounds very much like the Demerara name "quow." The little adouri (*Dasyprocta acuchi*) is one of the commonest of the smaller mammals.

Where the land begins to rise, and for a distance of, I should say, speaking roughly, 2 miles, the ascent is gradual and regular. Close to the cliffs the incline is so steep that we frequently had to crawl on our bellies. We had met with some enormous masses of rock on our way, but along the base of the precipice we found such masses to be quite plentiful. For three days we wandered about the foot of the cliffs, but we did not make much progress on account of the *débris* we encountered almost everywhere. The general colour of the cliffs is a yellowish-grey. In one place where a huge piece of many thousand tons had been recently detached from the main mass, the colour of the freshly exposed surface was a bright red. Probably this after a time would assume the same yellowish-grey tint which is the prevailing colour of the cliffs. The men had built two huts at some distance from the precipice, and there we slept and did our cooking. On the last night of our stay near the cliffs, we witnessed one of those terrific storms which during the rainy season are of daily occurrence on all these mountains. Up to about one o'clock the night had been oppressively still, so still that there was not even a rustle amongst the leaves. In the fitful sleep which I had had up to then, I had noticed every time I woke how black and quiet it was. The first intimation we got of the approaching storm was a blinding flash of lightning, accompanied by a clap of thunder so loud that we all sprang out of our hammocks. Almost simultaneously with the thunder came strong gusts of wind, causing our huts to sway from side to side so that I expected to see

them blown down at any moment. Flash of lightning followed flash with scarcely an interval between the flashes. All the time there was an almost continuous roar of deafening thunder, which made the ground tremble beneath us. The rain came down in torrents, and the wind had increased to such a gale that heavy branches were being snapped off in every direction, while now and again some old monarch of the forest, unable to withstand the force of the wind, would come down with a terrific crash. The men assembled in the largest and strongest of the huts. All we could do was to remain in one place and hope that no tree would fall upon us. Old Maite, the Indian, was in a terrible fright. Whenever there was a lull in the storm which allowed his voice to be heard, he would tell us stories of the wicked spirits who inhabit these mountains, and how they got angry whenever men invaded their precincts. It would have been folly to have tried to explain to this hardened believer in gnomes and demons the phenomena of a thunderstorm. How long this battle of the elements lasted it would be hard to say. Probably we exaggerated its duration. The storm ceased almost as suddenly as it had commenced. A few gusts weaker than the others, and the work of destruction was being carried on lower down, the thunder dying away in the distance.

When I first explored the mountain I was struck by the size and number of the branches strewn about the ground, but after having witnessed one of these storms I found no difficulty in accounting for this state of things. The rainfall at Améha and in its immediate neighbourhood is, I should say, very much greater than that of the surrounding country, and that is saying a great deal considering that in these equatorial forests the rainfall is heavy. In fact, the vigorous vegetation existing over a great part of tropical America depends for its luxuriance on the torrents of rain which for nearly three-fourths of the year are of daily occurrence.

The time to see Améha in its glory is immediately after a heavy shower. The waterfalls, which dwindle away to mere threads after several days of dry weather, are then in all their grandeur. Even at our camp on the banks of the Merevari it was possible, on occasions, to hear the roar of the falling water. The Indians never tire of telling stories about the mountain. Quite a number of legends have been handed down respecting it. On its summit is a large lake, so deep that it cannot be fathomed, and its waters are the abode of strange gigantic creatures not found elsewhere. Gnomes and demons dwell amongst its inaccessible crags, and they it is who cause the lightning, the thunder, and the wind. I very much regret that during my stay at Améha I did not succeed in getting to its summit, but I hope to be able to do so some day. What rich fields for the naturalist and botanist must the tops of these inaccessible mountains be, isolated during countless ages from the country beneath!

We left Améha on April 24. On the 27th the large boat which carried my plants, the seeds, insects, herbarium specimens, samples of rock, and birds collected during the journey, was wrecked in the rapids of Arichi. It would not be within the scope of this article to give a detailed account of the sufferings we endured between the day when we lost our boat and our arrival at La Prision on May 23, twenty-six days after. It is sufficient to mention that out of fourteen men only eight reached the settlement alive.

With the exception of the few Indians living at the rapids of Mura, a distance of about 3 miles above the settlement at La Prision, no human habitation is met with either on the Caura or the Merevari until the large Waiomgomo house or compound on the slopes of the range forming the boundary with Brazil, near where the Emecuni rises, is reached. For a distance of over 200 miles as the crow flies, and for double that distance following the windings of the river, there is nothing but a wilderness of uninhabited forest. It was not so when the Spanish missionaries visited the country and established a station at the mouth of the Erewato, above the falls of Para, which they called San Luis de Erewato. Many tribes then dwelt on the banks of the Caura, but within the short space of time which has elapsed since these tribes came in contact with white men, they have been completely blotted out. Such has been the fate of the American Indian all over the Western Hemisphere. He cannot live alongside the European or his descendants.

Of the numerous tribes which dwelt on the Caura and in its neighbourhood, only the Waiomgomos have survived, and they also, although so far removed from civilization, have, according to Isidor's accounts, decreased to an appalling extent within a comparatively short period. To-day the compound on the Merevari range does not contain more than fifty or sixty people, of whom about two-thirds are women. They are polygamous, some of the men having two or even three wives. In the few books I have read dealing with the Indians of Guiana, these people are referred to as Maionkongs. They call themselves, however, Waiomgomos. I was particularly careful to satisfy myself on this point, and I even mentioned the word Maionkong to Isidor as being the name by which his tribe was known abroad. He told me that the Indians through whom his tribe received such articles as knives and fish-hooks from British Guiana, spoke dialects so different to that of the Waiomgomos, that they would probably find it almost impossible to pronounce certain words correctly. To this must be added the difficulty attending the rendering of names from a language entirely different in structure to any European one, without taking into account the carelessness with which names and words are very often jotted down by travellers.

The Waiomgomos at Mura, who come in frequent contact with
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Venezuelans, have added something in the way of dress to what they were accustomed to at the headwaters of the Merevari. The women are very fond of bright-coloured cloth, a piece of which they wear tied over one shoulder so that it hangs down and covers the breasts. Beads are the favourite ornaments of both men and women. The men, while working, wear nothing but a strip of blue cloth passed between the legs and fastened to a string tied round the waist. To receive us, they always dressed, if the wrapping of a piece of cloth around the body can be called dressing. A long strip of the same cloth is sometimes passed over the shoulders and under the arms in many folds. Both men and women paint their faces and bodies a brick-red, using annatto, and the effect produced when they are well painted is pleasing. The Indians of the distant village on the Merevari do not use annatto, but a pigment obtained from a creeper unknown on the lower Caura. The colour of this pigment is a bright scarlet, much brighter than that of the annatto.

With the exception of rice, which the Indians at Mura have only recently begun to cultivate, and which has not reached the villages on the Merevari, the articles grown, the methods followed in agriculture, the preparation of cassava and *yaraqué*, are similar in both places. The manufacture of cassava cakes from the poisonous manioc (*Manihot utilissima*) has been so frequently and fully described that a detailed account of the process would be a waste of time. *Yaraqué* is the fermented drink made from the cassava, and it is known under different names all over Guiana. Ordinarily, *yaraqué* is prepared only in sufficient quantities every three or four days to meet the requirements of the household. Banana leaves are placed on the ground in a corner of the hut, and upon these leaves the cassava, thoroughly damped with water, is spread in layers. On each layer a powder of a sage-green colour is sprinkled. This powder is called *yaraquéro*, and is prepared from the leaves of a plant of the same name (*Trema micrantha*). The preparation of this powder is simple. The leaves, having been dried on the large slab used for baking cassava, an operation which does not take long, are then reduced to powder by being rubbed between the hands. This powder is kept in well-stopped gourds, as there is a minute red ant which is very fond of it, and will find it out wherever it may be hidden. The mass of damped cassava and *yaraquéro* is then covered over with banana leaves and allowed to ferment. At the end of two or three days the mass becomes slightly sour. In this state it is either eaten or drunk mixed with water and cane-juice. If allowed to ferment for more than three days, it becomes intoxicating. Large quantities of *yaraqué* are consumed during the dances which form part of almost every celebration among the Indians. On these occasions the stuff is prepared on a big scale, generally in dug-outs.

The agriculture on the clearings is carried on in the most primitive

manner. One day I saw one of the Indians planting maize. With a pole sharpened at one end, he walked along, digging little holes at intervals. He was followed by a boy, who dropped a few grains of maize in each hole, and then threw some earth over the grains with his foot. I was often struck by the dexterity with which these Indians use their feet for picking up any small article they may have dropped. Besides food-stuffs, cotton is always grown on the clearings; it is used principally in the manufacture of hammocks. For animal-food, the Indians depend entirely on hunting and fishing. They are very expert fishermen with the bow and arrow, but they also fish with spears and hook and line. All game and fish which have to be kept from one day to the other are smoked. Like most South American Indians, the Waiomgomos are impatient of any sort of control. They are, moreover, an exceedingly unreliable people. In structure they are short, but well set and muscular. They can eat enormous quantities of food when food happens to be plentiful. In fact, they get up frequently during the night to eat. This habit of gorging is acquired during early youth, when the children are allowed to eat as much as they can—that is, when food is abundant.

In the immediate vicinity of the settlements the larger game animals are scarce, although now and again a tapir is killed. Bands of peccaries sometimes visit the provision gardens, when several are killed, but this is not a common occurrence. The howling monkey (*Myctes seniculus*) can be heard almost every day in the morning quite close to the clearings. It is only after passing Cangrejo, however, that game may be said to be plentiful. Between the falls of Para and the mountain of Améha six tapirs were killed, and we could have secured many more had we not been in a hurry to reach the mountain. Curiously enough, on our return we saw only one tapir. It is true that the river had risen considerably, and as the hollows in the forest had water, the animals were not obliged to visit the river. The tapir appears to be more abundant in the vicinity of rapids than elsewhere. And this would appear to bear out the statement of the Indians that these animals feed largely on an aquatic plant which grows in abundance in places where the current is strongest. The plant is *Neolacis corymbosa*. At first sight this neolacis, so soft and delicate, appears out of place, growing as it does exposed to the full force of rushing water in places where a man can barely stand if he attempt to wade up to his knees. But if the plant be closely examined, it will be seen that, while the stems and leaves are soft and pliable and yield to the force of the current, the roots are hard and wiry, and cling with such tenacity to the surface of the rocks that it is almost impossible to remove the entire plant. Any attempt to do so resulted, as I found, in the breaking of the stem at the point where it springs from the roots. This neolacis exists only under water. With the falling of the river the exposed plants die,

leaving a network of white thread-like roots with sharp points, where the stems have dried up. If tapirs feed largely on these aquatic plants, as the Indians affirm, their elongated snouts would be of great use in tearing off the succulent leaves and stems from the uneven surface of the rocks to which the plants attach themselves. Even commoner than the tapir on the banks and islands of the Caura is the capybara (*Hydrochaerus capybara*). We frequently met with whole families of this huge rodent. They are expert swimmers and good divers, but they cannot remain long under water. Of the larger carnivora during the whole trip, I saw only two pumas and heard one jaguar.

The whole of this region over which I travelled is particularly rich in bird-life. It is unfortunate that the collection made above the falls of Para and at Améha should have been lost, as I have no doubt that it would have proved an exceedingly interesting one. About nine hundred birds collected in the neighbourhood of La Prision and on the Nichare were sent to the Tring Museum, and I understand from Dr. Hartert that they will be incorporated in a work now being published on the birds of the Orinoco, a publication which is sure to be of interest to ornithologists.

The large alligator is not found beyond the falls. It is replaced by a much smaller species, called *bava* by the natives. The electric eel (*Gymnotus electricus*) and many fishes abundant in the lower reaches of the Caura do not occur in the river above the falls. On the other hand, the *Aymara*, a large fish with sharp powerful teeth, common above Para, has never been caught, at least so the Indians say, in the river below.

What are the possibilities of the Caura? Its banks are clothed with many valuable tropical woods and forest products. On the Nichare there is an abundance of a *Micrandra*, of which Dr. Britton wrote in September, 1898—

“Referring to the sample of rubber gum, and the accompanying specimens of the foliage and flowers of the tree which you described to me as producing them, I would say that I am informed by Dr. John K. Small, curator of the Herbarium of Columbia University, that the tree is a species of the genus *Micrandra*, natural family Euphorbiaceæ, closely related to the same genus *Hevea*. It appears from Dr. Small’s studies that the species comes nearest to *Micrandra siphonioids* of Brazil, but that it is probably different, and most likely is an undescribed species. All the *Micrandras* hitherto known are Brazilian.”

In a report subsequently made on the rubber obtained from this tree, samples of which had been sent to New York, it was described as being equal to medium Para.

Leaving out of consideration the difficulties attending the actual navigation of the Caura, there remains a reason why any attempts to work the rubber tracts on the Nichare are almost certain to meet with

failure, and that is the utter absence of any population whatever above the rapids of Mura. Should settlements be established as far as the falls of Para, it might be possible to work the undoubtedly rich rubber region which exists on the Nichare with success. Until then even voyages of exploration can be undertaken only at considerable risk.

PART II.—ASCENT OF TURAGUA.

One of the most striking features of the landscape of this part of the Caura is the mountain of Turagua. Immediately after leaving the Mato one can get a good view of it, and from the *lajas* in the forest and the islands in the rapids its triple crest presents an imposing appearance. It is one of those mountains which one feels a longing to climb. In the March of 1898, I got the three Indians who were with me at La Prision to cut a track to its base, a work which took them nine days to perform. I think the trip worth while describing here, although it formed no part of this expedition.

March 11, 1898.—The Indians came early. It was a raw, drizzly morning, with heavy banks of clouds piled up towards the east and appearing to almost touch the tops of the trees. Such threatening weather denoted abundance of rain, and I knew that we would be soaked through and through before getting very far. Nevertheless I decided to start at once, for the trip had been forcibly put off so often, that it seemed at one time as if some strange fatality stood in the way of our long-contemplated journey to the mountain. No time was lost in preparing the packs. Oval frames about 3 feet in length, made of thick pieces of pliable creeper with strips of bark woven between, had been prepared. The articles to form the pack were placed between two of these frames, which were then securely tied together. Each pack weighed from fifty to sixty pounds, and was carried by a broad band of bark stretched across the forehead, the pack resting on the shoulders and back. Several kinds of bark are used in Venezuela for this and various purposes. From the *majagua* (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*), which is common in many parts of the country, good cordage is made. In the northern mountain range, where all the traffic is performed by pack-animals, the trappings of the donkeys and mules are usually plaited from the bark of this hibiscus. The word *majagua* is used indiscriminately in speaking of the tree or the bark obtained from it. On the Caura two sorts of bark are employed, one is called *coco de mono* (*Chytroma rosea*), the other *cabeza negra* (*Apeiba Tibourbou*). These barks, being pliable and strong, are put to many uses by the Indians and Venezuelans.

The method of carrying loads by a broad band across the head is common to most of the American tribes. In certain parts even men and women are carried across the mountains in chairs in this manner

Throwing the body slightly forward, the carriers proceed at a jog trot, and thus cover long distances with a considerable weight.

When we filed out of the settlement our party consisted of the three Indians, Isidor, Maite, and Silvestre, Raoul Turban (a taxidermist), and my boy, Guy. The moment an Indian comes in contact with Venezuelans he adopts some Spanish name. Maite is a corruption of Mateo, and not an Indian name, as one might suppose on first hearing it. Silvestre, who had come from one of the Waiomgomo villages on the Parima mountains only a month or so before my arrival, had been named immediately by the others. I never could induce Isidor or any of the others to tell me their Indian names. All the Indians of Guiana appear to have the same objection to divulging to strangers the names by which they are known to their immediate relations. It was about nine when we passed the last house at the edge of the clearing and entered the forest, and we agreed not to stop before reaching a place called Esperanza, where the tracks of the *sarrapieros* end, and the trail opened by our Indians began. By the time we got to the *Laja de los Perros** the rain had increased to a steady downpour. Near to this *laja* a huge slab of rock resting on two upright masses forms a natural shelter. Old Wachee, one of the La Prision *sarrapieros*, and his wife had taken possession of this rocky protection from the weather. They were collecting tonca beans, for the crop was then at its height, and most of the people from the settlement were staying in the forest. We stopped at this natural *ranchito* and had a chat with the old man and his wife. They were a dilapidated pair. In the days of his youth the man, who, I was told, had been of a turbulent disposition, had had frequent misunderstandings with his neighbours, especially on feast days when the rum-bottle had been circulated more freely than wisely. In one of his encounters he had suffered considerable damage, not the least of which had been the loss of an eye. The woman was a victim to that curse of the Caura, ulcers on the legs. One of these ulcers had eaten deep down into the very bones of her right ankle, and had so crippled her that she was unable to walk. In spite of her affliction, she followed her one-eyed husband for many long miles into the woods, slowly dragging herself on one leg. The sight of this couple, stricken with age and disease, forced to wander about the forest so as to obtain a living, was painful in the extreme. After leaving this scene of misery we proceeded in the direction of the *Laja Grande*.† Many *ranchos* had been built in the vicinity of this *laja*, for its size and the flatness of its surface offered great convenience for the preparation of the beans. We could hear the *sarrapieros* shouting to each other as we followed the narrow path through the forest. We passed three of their huts, but did not stop. The trail lay almost

* "The Rock of the Dogs,"

† "The Great Rock."

due east, and except where a curve had been made to avoid some obstruction, such as a fallen tree, it was straight enough. We trudged wearily along, keeping our eyes down so as to avoid being tripped up by the network of roots and creepers with which the ground was covered. Several streams, some with mud, others with sandy beds, had to be crossed. At first I took my boots off whenever we came to one of these streams, but I soon got tired of this repetition of taking off and putting on my socks and boots every ten minutes, and I resolved to leave them on until we should reach our camping-place. It was all right when the bed of the stream happened to be of mud or earth, but where it was sand, and my boots got filled with particles, I still had to take them off and wash the grit out, or I should have been unable to continue walking. At about one o'clock we halted on the banks of a broad clear stream and had something to eat. The Indians had brought ripe bananas, fresh cassava bread, and boiled turtle-eggs. Off these we made a hasty meal, and then continued our journey. We had got beyond the district where the *sarrapieros* conduct their operations. Within the memory of the people at La Prision no one had ever gone further than the *sarrapial* of Esperanza, and there were no tracks beyond the spot except the newly opened trail made by our Indians. The masterly manner in which the cutting of this trail had been performed was really astonishing. In the thickness of the forest, where it was impossible to see anything 50 yards ahead, these men, without a compass or any other instruments, had succeeded in opening a road to the foot of the mountain, of which even a trained surveyor might have been proud. No deviation from an almost straight line marred the accuracy of their work. It was evident, from the quantity of game we came across, that we had got beyond the haunts of the people on the Caura. Although we were far from being a silent lot, and the men, in getting through the narrow path with their packs, made a good deal of noise, yet we surprised a number of the larger game birds which are so difficult of approach near the settlements. These birds, so wild in the vicinity of La Prision, never having been disturbed in this locality, are quite stupid. I could have shot several curassows had we not been in a hurry to get to a good camping-place before nightfall.

Two varieties of carassows are common in these forests. Both varieties are called without distinction *Pauji*; but when the natives wish to draw attention to the different kinds, they speak of them as *Culo blanco* (*Crax alector*), and *Culo colorado* (*Mitua mitu*), on account of the difference in the colours of the feathers of the belly in each species. These two curassows appear to have similar habits. Both utter the same shrill note of alarm on being disturbed, and they make the same deep humming noise when calling to each other. I have never been able to notice any difference in the humming of the two kinds, although

the native hunters pretend that they can tell one bird from the other by its call note. But as it has happened on more than one occasion, that a hunter, after declaring, upon hearing a bird calling, that he was going to kill a *Culo blanco*, has brought back a *Culo colorado*, I have come to the conclusion that the natives cannot, as they pretend, always distinguish between the call notes of the "white" and "brown" posteriors, as they have, with more reason than delicacy, elected to distinguish the two varieties. During the mating season, in the unfrequented parts of the forest, especially along the banks of the streams, the deep hum of the *Paují* may be heard at almost any time of the day. But it is just before sunrise, and in the early hours of the morning, that the *Paují* appears to be most disposed to hum. It is impossible to describe in writing the peculiar noise which these birds make. The native hunters imitate the *Paují* by saying, "*El muerto esta aquí*" ("The corpse lies here"). It is while uttering in a deep tone this lugubrious chant that the *Paují* usually meets its death, for the hunter can then easily track it to its retreat, when it falls a victim, as the people say, to its own death-song. If the *Paují* gets suspicious it immediately ceases humming, and that is an indication to the hunter that the bird has seen him or scents danger. In such a case the only thing for the sportsman to do is to remain perfectly still. The bird may get reassured after a while, when it again begins to call, and it can be then stealthily approached and killed. If wounded only, the *Paují* usually succeeds in getting away. As these birds pass a part of their lives on the ground, they are fleet of foot, and as they are, moreover, of muscular build and plucky disposition, if not killed outright or very dangerously injured, they make good their escape in the dense undergrowth of the forest. The food of the *Paují* is very varied in its character. It consists principally of the fruits and berries of the forest, of certain kinds of which the birds are passionately fond. Like the domestic fowl, the *Paují* is also much given to scratching among the decayed leaves on the ground in search of worms and insects. On more than one occasion I have seen these birds on the rocky islands in the rapids and on the banks of the rivers, apparently feeding on the small snails which in certain places are fairly abundant. During the mating season the males are prone to be pugnacious, and they engage in combats which sometimes result in the serious injury of one or both combatants. Isidor assured me that he had once come across two male *Paujís* engaged in one of these encounters. So engrossed were they with their fight that they paid no attention to him and he was able to observe them for some time. Eventually he secured both. They were so exhausted and injured that they made no attempt to escape when he put a stop to their duel. The same Indian told me that another but very much rarer *Paují* inhabits the forest on the Caura, but as it is nocturnal in its habits, and retires during the day

to some deep hole which it has burrowed in the ground, it is but rarely seen. No serious attempts appear to have been made to domesticate any of the curassows, although they take very easily to captivity, and become quite tame. I have not heard of any case of their having been induced to breed in a state of domesticity. It is a great pity that persistent and intelligent efforts have not been carried on in this direction, as the addition of these handsome and valuable birds to the other regular denizens of the poultry yard would be most desirable.

It was near sunset when we stopped for the night. While Maite and my boy Guy were preparing dinner, Isidor and Sylvestre constructed a *ranch*o. Poles were lashed to four trees in the form of a square at a height of about 8 feet. Upon these poles others were placed as rafters. A thick covering of palm branches formed the roof. Either palm branches or the long broad leaves of the wild banana are used for this purpose. Our *ranch*o was completed in less than half an hour, and when our hammocks had been slung between the trees under the thick covering of palm branches, the place looked quite snug with the big log fire burning in front of it. Close to our hut one of the men, while collecting firewood, came across the fresh excrement of a full-grown jaguar. The conversation immediately turned upon tigers, as the jaguar is called all over South America, and their doings. Each man had some story to tell of the cunning and audacity of the tiger, and the speaker usually happened to be the principal figure in the story which he was telling. Isidor was an easy winner in this competition of, I am afraid to have to admit, imaginary tiger stories. As he could speak Spanish fairly well, he not only told of his own adventures, but he interpreted the tales of his two friends, and put the finishing touches to them, so as to render them more impressive. It may appear strange that men of the same race who came from villages fairly near to each other should have been utterly unable to carry on a conversation of even a few sentences. Such, however, was the case with Maite and Sylvestre. So different were the dialects of these men, one of whom had come from the mountainous country at the sources of the Erewato, and the other from the Pacaraima range, that they could not exchange even the simplest ideas. It was amusing to observe their futile attempts to carry on a conversation when Isidor, who spoke both dialects and interpreted for them, happened to be absent.

The fact of the members of a small village consisting of but comparatively few individuals speaking a dialect peculiar to themselves is not uncommon amongst the Indians of Guiana. Probably the difficulties of communication in this country of impenetrable forest may, to a certain extent, be responsible for the existence of so great a number of dialects. The prevalence of long-standing blood-feuds between neighbouring villages may also, by the isolation which they tended to produce, have contributed to these divergences from a common language.

As Isidor and his companions told their stories in the ruddy glow of the wood fire, using in their excitement many forcible gestures, they so impressed my boy, Guy, that he got up and removed his hammock from the outer part of the *ranch* where he had slung it, and he begged me to allow him to sleep between the Indians and myself. He was resolved that he, at least, would not be made a meal of by the jaguar, a token of whose presence in the neighbourhood we had seen on our arrival.

Towards midnight it rained heavily, and we congratulated ourselves that we were under shelter.

March 12.—Isidor and Sylvestre were astir early, and woke me by their movements. They were splitting wood, with which they made a torch, while I watched them lazily from my hammock. Although it was quite dark, many curassows were calling in the forest around us, while now and again a tinamu would utter its long-drawn tremulous note. The Indians, having completed their arrangements, started out together. Isidor carried my twelve-bore, while Sylvestre went in front, holding aloft the torch they had made, which cast a bright glare around. They had not been gone many minutes, when a report, followed by a thud, told me that they had succeeded in killing a curassow. After a short while they fired again. When they returned to camp they brought two *Paujis*. They could have shot more, they said, but why waste powder and shot when we had enough game for breakfast and dinner? Indians are, as a rule, poor shots with a gun, yet they rarely miss. I have never seen Isidor or any of the others attempt to fire at a bird on the wing. Why should one fire at birds flying, with a chance of missing, when they can be stalked and potted with certainty at short distances? Powder and shot are commodities too valuable to be wasted in practising difficult shots. But if the Indian be but a poor marksman with a shot-gun, he more than makes up for his lack of skill by his ability as a tracker and hunter. No Indian thinks of wasting a shot until he gets to within but a few yards of his victim.

We made a hasty meal off biscuits and tea, and continued our tramp towards Turagua. The leaves of the undergrowth were dripping with water from the previous night's shower, and we were soon wet to the skin. Almost immediately after leaving our camping-place we got to a part of the forest which the Indians told me had taken them nearly two days to cut through, although I do not suppose that this belt of matted vegetation could have been more than a couple of miles wide. Of the extent of its length we were ignorant. These belts or tracts of tangled creepers and bush are called *bejucales*. They are the dread of all these wanderers in the woods who make a living either by hunting or collecting forest products. Woe to the wretch who gets lost in one of these mazes of interminable creepers—creepers from the size of

one's leg to the thinness of thread—running along the ground, climbing up over the tops of the tallest trees to return again, striking their roots into the damp spongy soil, and with renewed vigour branch away in every direction, a regular spider's web for the poor devil lost in its interminable toils. The *bejucales* are the favourite haunts of tortoises and armadillos. Peccaries, also, are fond of visiting these cool damp resorts where the ground is spongy and soft, and they can dig as much as they please in search of the roots which constitute so large a part of their diet. Many of the larger game-birds are also in the habit of frequenting the *bejucales*. By scratching in the thick bed of rotten leaves covering the ground they obtain the worms and insects which form part of their food, while the trees with their dense overgrowth of creepers afford them good hiding-places. Some of these creepers are fruit-bearing. Of a kind of fruit about the size of a coffee-berry, and yellow in colour, which hangs in clusters from a species of *bejuco*, both *Paujis* and *Pavas* are particularly fond. *Pava* is the native name of one of the penelopes, and it is as common as the *Pauji* in this region. But of all the larger birds none affects these densely wooded parts of the forest more than the *Grulla*, one of the *Psophiidae*. There are few birds more striking in appearance than this trumpeter. It is generally met with in flocks, which at times consist of quite a large number of individuals. If a flock be disturbed while the birds are feeding close together on the ground, as is their habit, they usually make off in a body and go a considerable distance before again alighting; but if they be scattered, each individual, on being alarmed, flies up to some branch of a tree near by, where it utters its call note almost incessantly, so as not to be separated from the other members of the flock to which it belongs. A wild rush into the midst of the flock, if it be a large one, is the best way to scare and divide the birds, when they can be killed singly. In this manner it is possible to secure a good many of the birds before they unite and get away. The flesh of the *Grulla* is very tough, almost as tough as that of an old parrot; but this did not prevent the Indians from eating these birds whenever I killed any. The tinamus, of which there appears to be two or three varieties in this part of South America, are also in the habit of frequenting the *bejucales*. Although these birds are far from being rare, we obtained but few specimens. Living entirely on the ground, and at the least suspicion of danger hiding in the dense undergrowth, it is easy to understand why this bird is rarely seen. If surprised at close quarters, the tinamu rises with a loud whirr, uttering a few quick notes of alarm. At times these birds rise from almost under one's feet, and they make so much noise that one cannot help being startled. A glimpse of a large dark bird as it disappears in the dense foliage is all that the hunter gets, and before he has had time to recover from his surprise, the tinamu has vanished for ever. Although there is considerable difference in

the size and markings of the members of this family, there is a great deal of similarity in their habits. Early in the morning and late in the afternoon the long-drawn plaintive notes of the tinamus can be heard. Towards sunset, on a gloomy rainy day, these birds appear to utter their call more frequently than at any other time. The flesh of all the tinamus is tender and delicate. In this respect no other South American birds can compare with them.

During our march I almost trod on a very large coral snake. The Indians begged me not to kill it. I was surprised at this, because these same men did not appear to have any scruples about destroying other snakes. Tortoises are abundant all over this region. The Indians captured several, which they tied with creepers to the branches of small trees by the side of the track they had cut, to be taken on their return. At La Prision these tortoises are kept in enclosures, and eaten on special occasions. During times of continued drought, numbers of these reptiles are caught by the men and boys who wander along the banks of the streams and pools where there is water. *Morocoy*, as the tortoise is called in Venezuela and Trinidad, is a favourite dish when well prepared. These reptiles can remain a considerable length of time without food. The liver of the tortoise is large compared with its body, and it shrinks in proportion to the length of time during which its owner has been deprived of nourishment; and this has given rise to the belief among the people that the animal eats its liver when it is unable to obtain any other food.

During this day's march we were followed by large gnats, which gave us a good deal of trouble. So persistent were they in their efforts to bite us, that there appeared to be no other means of getting rid of them, except by allowing them to alight, when they could be killed by a sharp slap. They would keep buzzing around our heads until they could settle on some bare spot, when they would nip off a bit of skin and clear out with their booty, to return a few moments afterwards with appetites whetted by the taste of so dainty a morsel. The Indians, who were clothed after the fashion of Adam before he got into trouble, suffered most from their attentions. Embarrassed with their packs, they found it difficult to keep off their tormentors, for they had more than their hands and faces to look after. On this occasion my naked companions must have been convinced that there was some advantage in being clothed. Considering that these Indians undertake journeys, often lasting for months, through dense thorny bush where wasps and ants are plentiful, it is marvellous to note how smooth and free from marks their skins are as a rule. How they can get through certain parts of the forest where the ground is actually littered with thorns has puzzled me. A man accustomed to boots who would dare to attempt such a feat would be lame before he had gone many yards. These Indians all walk with the toes slightly turned in,

and they plant one foot before the other in a straight line. In cutting a track through the forest, much labour is saved if it be made narrow. But the narrower the path the more careful one has to be of the stumps and small trees on its sides. Hence the adoption by the Indians of a system of walking suited to the conditions under which they have to travel.

We ate cassava and turtle-eggs at midday, as we had done the day before. Isidor advised me to drink my fill at the stream where we then were, for we would not, he said, meet with water again until late in the afternoon. He and his companions then set the example by filling themselves up with water as only savages can do. It was necessary that we should hurry on if we meant to reach before nightfall the *ranchito* built by the Indians when they cut the track. Isidor took the lead, with Sylvestre following, and they made the pace. As we proceeded the ground became uneven. The Indians told us that we were nearing the first hill, and that we would have to cross three of these hills before reaching the base of Turagua. The aspect of the country when we reached the foot of the hill was quite different to that which we had left behind us. In place of the luxuriant growth of the forest, we were going through a vegetation similar to that of the *lajas*. These *lajas* and the rocky islands of the rapids appear to be excrescences of one immense substratum of granite of which they are the highest points. Where the rock is of smooth or rounded surface no vegetation exists, but wherever there are hollows in which a bit of mould has collected there is sure to be some sort of growth, and in proportion to the depth of this layer of vegetable matter is the luxuriance of the growth which covers it. The flora of these open masses of plutonic rock is so different to that of the surrounding country, that the traveller might well believe himself to be in another region thousands of miles away from the gloom of the forest with its huge trees through which he had passed but a few minutes before. Several kinds of orchids are met with in such places. Some grow on the rocks alone, while others occur only on the moss-covered branches of the stunted trees, all knotted and gnarled peculiar to this vegetation. *Cattleya superba* and *Epidendrum Stamfordianum*, both of which are abundant in these places, attach themselves to trees and rocks. In the case of the former orchid, however, only a small number of plants are seen on the rocks, by far the greater proportion being found on the branches or trunks of trees. It is the opposite with *Epidendrum Stamfordianum*, which grows in such luxuriant profusion all over the rocks in certain parts of the *lajas* that thousands of plants might be collected in the course of a single day. A very fine *Oncidium* and a large *Catasetum* also form part of this flora, but while the *Catasetum* is fairly abundant, the *Oncidium* is rather rare. *Epidendrum elongatum* is another orchid which grows in large masses on the *lajas*, some of the masses being several square yards in extent. As

this *Epidendrum* is very free in blooming, and its flowers vary in shade from light pink to the darkest scarlet, the effect produced by the brightness of colour against the sombre background of black granite is striking. I seldom saw any orchids in the forest itself, but wherever there happened to be open spots of granite or sandstone formation, orchids and flowering shrubs were plentiful.

In climbing these hills we had to proceed cautiously, as rocks of all sizes and shapes were piled loosely one on top of the other, and in certain cases we found that a slight touch was sufficient to displace masses of considerable weight, which would go rolling down the declivity to the danger of those behind. In the more open parts, patches of a tall coarse grass occurred here and there, and were a source of a good deal of inconvenience to us. The blades of this grass would cling to our faces and hands, and, if not lifted off carefully, cut us painfully when we moved away. Even our clothes suffered from the razor-like edges of this grass.

In the lower part of the valleys between the hills the vegetation again became luxuriant. We found in these hollows quantities of a fruit which in appearance and taste reminded me of the sapodilla (*Sapota achras*), but was somewhat smaller and more regular in size. The tree bearing this fruit is one of the tallest in the forest.

From the top of the second hill I obtained a good view of the cliff forming the highest point of Turagua. At the bottom of this hill we pitched our camp close to a rapid stream of beautifully clear water where the Indians had stayed when they cut the track.

March 13.—The Indians went out before daybreak, as they had done the day before, and they were again successful in bringing back a couple of curassows. Turban and Guy preferred not to attempt the ascent of the mountain, so I sent them out to collect birds and butterflies. The Indians and myself then crossed the last of the three hills which run parallel to the base of the main mass. Between this hill and Turagua there is a dark narrow gorge, at the bottom of which a rivulet trickles, forming pools along its bed. We sat on some rocks near one of these pools and rested a while, for a long stiff climb lay ahead of us. The Indians drank copiously, actually filling themselves up with water, and they advised me to do likewise, as we might not, they said, be able to obtain anything to drink until our return, so they thought it wise to absorb a supply to last for the day. There were a good many butterflies flitting up and down over the pools formed by the rivulet, while quantities of flies kept buzzing around us, settling on our hands and faces, and even getting into our eyes.

The ascent of the slope leading to the peak was at first gradual, but by degrees it became steeper. Low down in the gorge and for some distance after leaving the stream I saw but few rocks, a thick stratum of soil having formed in the bed of the valley, and this

supported a vigorous vegetation similar to that we had passed through before reaching the hills. From the tops of the tallest trees came the call notes of the bell-birds. Judging by the frequency with which the metallic bang was uttered and replied to, this chatterer must be common in this secluded valley. The *Campanero*, "the bellman," as the natives call the bird, is rarely met with in the neighbourhood of cultivated spots. The presence of man appears distasteful to this lover of primeval forests, and if his domain be encroached upon by human beings, he immediately abandons it to retire to some distant recess, where he can enjoy the solitude he loves so well.

The higher we got the more rocks we met with, some of them being of considerable size. I noticed that the masses close to the cliffs were generally larger than those lower down, the blocks decreasing gradually in size in proportion to their distance from the main mass. These smaller rocks lower down in the valley had no doubt been also giants many ages ago when they lay at the foot of the cliffs which then formed the central mass of the mountain covering the spot where we now stood. The rains of ages had reduced their volume. Slowly but surely the rains of the future would continue the work of erosion, until Turagua would have wasted away to an inconspicuous hill like those we had left behind us, while those hills would have disappeared into the surrounding plain.

For a considerable distance we skirted the base of the titanic wall which forms the crest of the mountain, without being able to find any spot by which it would be possible to attempt the ascent to the plateau above. Our progress was slow, for in many places the ground was strewn with the *débris* brought down by the masses of rock in their descent from the cliffs. I sat down and rested while the Indians went ahead to try and find some place by which the peak might be scaled. In about an hour's time they returned. They had seen, they said, a gully which appeared to lead to the top of the mountain, but the ascent by it would be, they thought, difficult and dangerous. Isidor suggested that we should try the other side on the morrow, when we might find some spot offering easier means of access than the gully on this side. I determined, however, to see for myself what chances of success we should have in making the attempt by the gully. I found, on reaching the spot described by the Indians, that they had not exaggerated the difficulties of the ascent by this way. A narrow streak of vegetation, consisting mostly of ferns, marked where a stream had cut a shallow bed in the face of the cliff towering above us. For the first 200 or 300 feet our climb was up a surface almost upright, the deviation out of the perpendicular being so small that it only just allowed us to lie on our faces while holding on to the ferns and roots of the plants which the moist rock supported.

Sylvestre and Maite went first, I was third, and Isidor last. These

Indians are excellent climbers. Even the largest forest trees did not appear to offer difficulties which they could not overcome. If the trunk of the tree they wanted to climb was of such dimensions that they could not embrace it, they would choose some other tree near by, and, passing from branch to branch like monkeys, they soon got to the spot they had decided to reach.

As we proceeded we found the ascent less arduous. After the first 100 yards the gully widened out, nor was it so precipitous as lower down. Although the incline was still steep, we were able to stand up. Many stunted trees like those of the *lajas* grew from between the crevices in the rocks, but everything was greener. The rocks, trunks and branches of the trees were covered with beautiful mosses and ferns nourished by the mist which crept daily up the side of the mountain and shrouded its summit. A stately *Sobralia* grew in clumps in great profusion, while in the glades we met with the same razor-grass which had caused us so much inconvenience when we crossed the three hills. The highest point of Turagua is about 6000 feet above sea-level, and consists of one huge block of granite nearly flat on top. Stunted moss-covered trees overgrown with a scandent shrub formed the vegetation of the plateau, which also supported a dense growth of bromelias. The Indians pronounced the scandent shrub to be the water-vine (*Doliorcarpus*), and as we were exceedingly thirsty they cut pieces of from 3 to 4 feet in length, which produced a small quantity of clear water. It took quite a number of these pieces to quench our thirst.

To get through the field of bromelias overgrowing the plateau, it was necessary to cut a track through them. Closely resembling the pineapple in its growth, the leaves of this bromelia are armed with sharp spikes, and the plants grow in such dense masses that they form a barrier through which it would be impossible to get without the continuous use of the hunting-knife. Even after the track had been cut we had to exercise a good deal of caution in our movements. Many of the plants bore bunches of yellow fruit, of which the Indians and myself ate a good many. The pulp is white, full of small black seeds, and, although sour, is not disagreeable. I suffered for some time after from a painful itching of the lips, tongue, and palate, and whenever I spat my saliva was streaked with blood. The Indians experienced the same sensations. The fruit of the closely allied *Bromelia pinguin* produces similar effects when eaten.

Our track led us to the south-west, and we reached a point on the edge of the cliff from which there was a magnificent view of the country to the south and west. Standing on a rock quite close to the precipice, I looked over the ocean of trees stretching away beneath us. Towards the west was the Serrania de Mato, where the Piaroas dwell, a long range of dark blue melting away in the distant haze. Through the green of the forest we could see stretches of the Caura glistening in

the glare of the afternoon sun. Isidor pointed along the river to the south in the direction of the country from which he had come many years before. It would take several weeks, he said, to get to that distant village on the Merevari mountains, where his people lived. Between us and that small tribe no human habitation existed, nothing but forest, vast and impenetrable, like that which lay beneath us. We skirted the edge of the precipice for some distance with the intention of descending by some other route if practicable, but a dense mist had been creeping up the sides of the mountain, and we were soon enveloped in it, rendering any further exploration along the cliff impossible. It rained heavily, and we got drenched to the skin. The rain was accompanied by violent gusts of wind, which at this altitude, with our soaked clothes clinging to our bodies, made us feel somewhat chilled. As soon as the fog had cleared up, we retraced our steps through the field of bromelias to the spot where the descent began. We sat on some rocks and ate roasted *pauji* and cassava, which the Indians had brought tied up in wild banana leaves. The descent did not take much time, but as we had left the mountain late it was almost dark when we got within sight of our camp, which we could make out at some distance below us by the bright fire kindled by Turban and Guy. We shouted to give notice of our approach, and, hurrying on, we were soon seated within the circle of ruddy light which the burning logs cast around. Turban said that he had been out the greater part of the day, and had returned a couple of hours before us. Both he and Guy were of opinion that it would be impossible for us to remain where our camp was pitched, if we intended to stay in the neighbourhood of the mountain for a few days. On their return from hunting they had found the whole place alive with flies. Never, they said, had they seen so many flies together. The blankets spread out to dry, our clothes and hammocks, a couple of curassows tied to a branch, everything almost which had been left exposed, had been used by these flies for depositing their disgusting larvæ. From the moment of their arrival they had been occupied passing our things over the fire so as to rid them of the filth left by these disagreeable visitors.

Raoul had shot three curassows. We dined off these and roasted ripe bananas, and then retired to our damp hammocks. Although I was very tired I passed a bad night, as the quantity of bush ticks I had collected on my body during our day's tramp kept me awake the greater part of the time.

March 14.—At daybreak we had the usual cup of black coffee, which becomes indispensable after a time. With Maite's assistance I managed to get rid of some of the ticks with which I was covered, and I then had a good long bath so as to allay the irritation caused by the *garrapatas*, as ticks are called by the natives. With sunrise the flies began to arrive, and by eight o'clock they were numerous enough to be

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disagreeable. By the time we had finished breakfast half an hour later they were around us in swarms; it was time to think of getting away. The Indians made up their packs as hastily as they could, and we left without regret this paradise of flies. Although my naked companions were much more heavily laden than Turban, Guy, or myself, we found it difficult to keep up with them until we reached the stream which we had passed two days before. There they left us and hurried on ahead, and we did not see them again until we reached our camp late in the afternoon. It never occurred to them, considering that their track was in places difficult to follow, that we might go astray and get lost in the forest. Probably they expected us to possess some of that instinct for following a trail with which they were so highly gifted. On the way we surprised a flock of trumpeters, and shot three. In addition I killed two penelopes. When we were quite near to our camp it rained heavily, and although we hurried on as fast as we could, we were wet to the skin by the time we reached shelter. The Indians had not forgotten the tortoises left on the way; they were now hanging from the rafters of our *ranch*o.

March 15.—We breakfasted early. The Indians broke the shells of the tortoises with a heavy log of wood. They then picked the pieces of shell off the still quivering mass of flesh, which they wrapped up in banana leaves. After crossing the stream they hurried on as they had done the day before, and when we got to La Prision in the afternoon, I found that they had gone on to Isidor's house, probably to have a night of it, leaving word that they would return in the morning. We proceeded with caution, for had we strayed from the trail we might have got lost in the depths of this interminable forest. Game birds were plentiful; but I decided on not wasting time in following them up, as it would have been too fatiguing to have to carry a number of heavy birds over the distance we still had before us. Perhaps the Indians had left us to avoid having to add to their burdens. I killed only four trumpeters as specimens.

By one o'clock we reached the *Laja Grande*, and shortly afterwards we passed before a large *ranch*o occupied by several people. Two of the men were breaking tonca beans on a slab of rock, while one of the women was mending clothes and another was cooking. They asked us to stay and share their meal. Although we were all very hungry, I thought it best to refuse their invitation; I knew that if we once sat down we should feel more fagged when we should have to resume our tramp. We passed another hut about a mile further on, and reached La Prision late in the day. For a couple of days we were all footsore, and spent most of the time in our hammocks.