

In the Cave of the Guapacos.

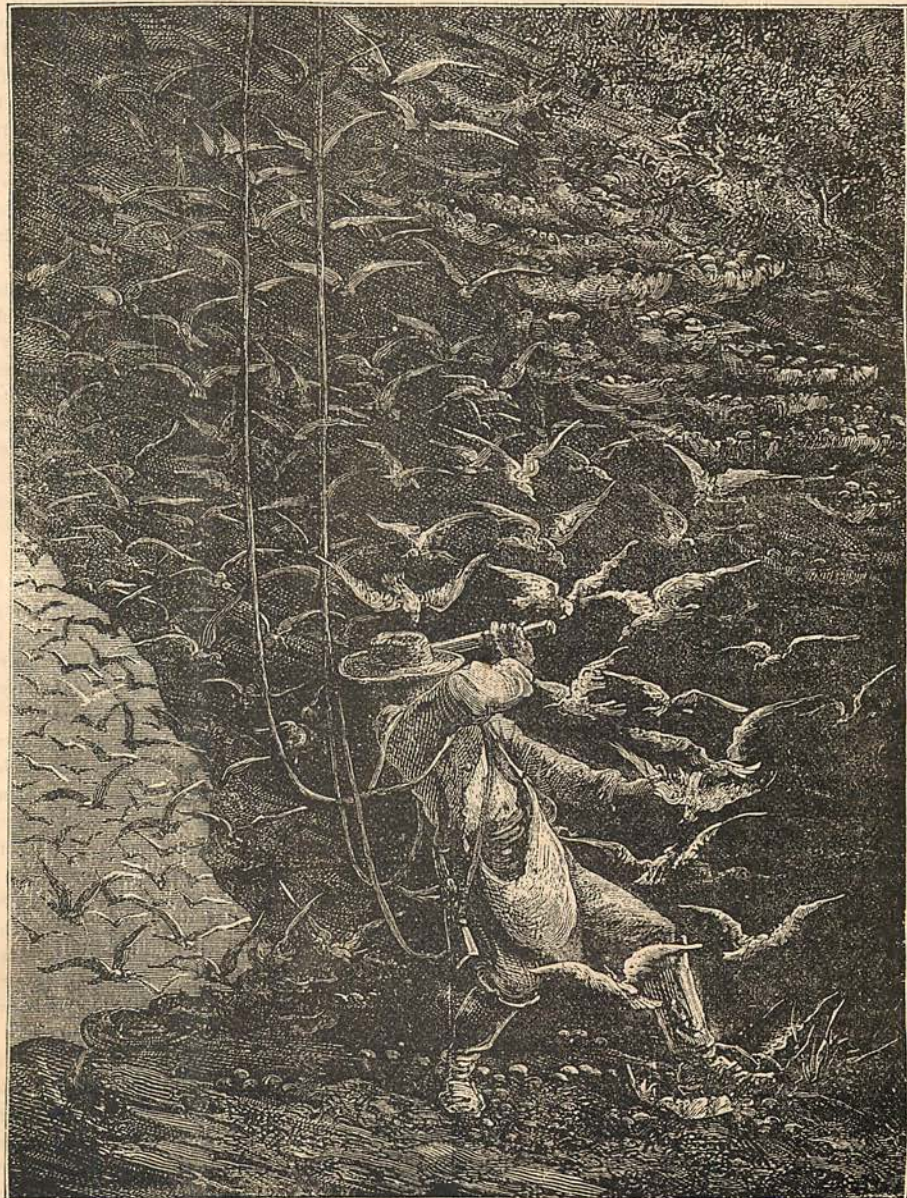
TRAVELERS over the Andes, who are resolved to see all that is to be seen, must make up their minds to meet with some alarming adventures. Moreover, if not possessed of a certain amount of courage, they had better turn their footsteps away from this picturesque, yet dangerous region.

A traveler gives us an interesting account of an encounter he had with the sea-birds—the Guapacos—whose cave he invaded. After passing over some dangerous mountain paths, in a remarkably wild region, the party came to a dark and frowning abyss, inclosed by steep rocky walls, a foaming river roaring and dashing in its stony inclosure as if it would escape its bounds. As the party stepped from rock to rock, gradually descending, their progress was arrested by an immense number of birds, screeching hoarsely and flapping their wings wildly. One of the party, nothing daunted, resolved to enter the abode of these birds, and accordingly was let down by strong leather thongs, fastened around his shoulders and his waist, ten strong men holding on to the other end. He carried with him a gun, a hammer, and a knife, also a thin line, to the end of which was fastened a stone and a piece of paper. In case the roar of the waters should overpower his voice, this line was to be pulled at so that the attention of those above should be drawn to his wish to be hauled up.

On reaching the cave or grotto, he found every rocky ledge occupied by the nests of the birds, eggs and young birds being in all of them. The scared birds, unused to a visitor, fluttered and screamed around him. Having secured a bird which he placed in his pouch, and some eggs, he descended to a lower grotto, where the birds were even more turbulent; and here a projecting rock hid him from his companions. Swinging himself lower down, he landed in the third grotto, and found himself in the midst of thousands of infuriated birds. They attacked him furiously with their talons and beaks, and crowded so closely around him that he could scarcely breathe. With all his efforts, he could not beat them off, and to add to his misfortunes, he accidentally cut the small cord, therefore could not communicate with his friends above. He shouted incessantly until exhausted, but the noise of the birds and the roar of the waters prevented his

voice being heard. He remained for some time in his perilous position, beating at the birds and shouting loudly for help. At length, to his great joy, he felt the rope moving, and himself with it, and it was not long before he was safely landed among his companions, terribly bruised and lacerated by his visit to the cave of the Guapacos.

Humboldt found a cave of these birds, which he calls Guacharos, in the valley of Caripe, in Venezuela. This cave has an entrance fifteen hundred feet above the level of the sea, and extends four thousand feet into the heart of the mountains. This cave is inhabited by thousands of these nocturnal birds, which are about the size of a common fowl. The Indians avoid entering this gloomy cave, believing that the spirits of their ancestors dwell in the mysterious depths of the dark abode. When they are in pursuit of the young birds, which are boiled down for the sake of their oil, they hover about the entrance of the cave, but, unlike the venturesome traveler, are wise enough never to enter it.



THEY ATTACKED HIM FURIOUSLY.