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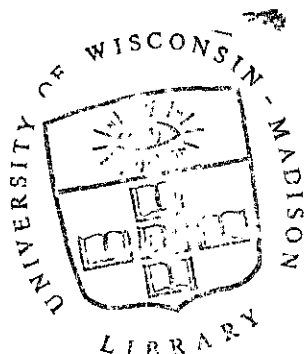


HISTORY
OF A VOYAGE TO
THE LAND OF BRAZIL,
OTHERWISE CALLED
AMERICA

Containing the Navigation and the Remarkable
Things Seen on the Sea by the Author; the Behav-
ior of Villegagnon in That Country; the Customs
and Strange Ways of Life of the American Sav-
ages; Together with the Description of Various
Animals, Trees, Plants, and Other
Singular Things Completely
Unknown over Here

translation and introduction by
JANET WHATLEY

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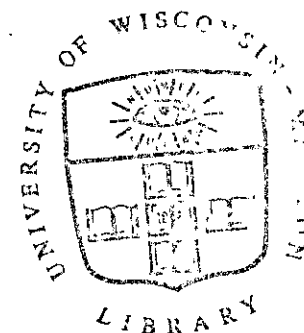
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For my mother
ELINOR CHAPPLE SALTUS





OF THE NATURAL QUALITIES, STRENGTH, STATURE, NUDITY, DISPOSITION AND ORNAMENTATION OF THE BODY OF THE BRAZILIAN SAVAGES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, WHO LIVE IN AMERICA, AND WHOM I FREQUENTED FOR ABOUT A YEAR

Thus far I have recounted both what we saw on the sea on our way to the land of Brazil, and what took place on the Island and Fort of Coligny, where Villegagnon was staying while we were there; I have also described the bay called *Guanabara*. Since I have gone so far into these matters, before reembarking for France I also want to discuss what I have observed concerning the savages' way of life, as well as other singular things, unknown over here, that I have seen in their country.

In the first place then (so that I begin with the chief subject, and take things in order), the savages of America who live in Brazil, called the *Tupinamba*, whom I lived among and came to know for about a year, are not taller, fatter, or smaller in stature than we Europeans are; their bodies are neither monstrous nor prodigious with respect to ours. In fact, they are stronger, more robust and well filled-out, more nimble, less subject to disease; there are almost none among them who are lame, one-eyed, deformed, or disfigured.¹

Furthermore, although some of them reach the age of a hundred or a hundred twenty years (for they know how to keep track of their ages and count them by moons), few of the elderly among them have white or gray hair. Now this clearly shows not only the benign air and temperature of their country (in which, as I have said elsewhere, there are no frosts or great cold, and the woods, plants, and fields are always greening), but

also—for they all truly drink at the Fountain of Youth—the little care or worry that they have for the things of this world. And indeed, as I will later show in more detail, since they do not in any way drink of those murky, pestilential springs, from which flow so many streams of mistrust, avarice, litigation, and squabbles, of envy and ambition, which eat away our bones, suck out our marrow, waste our bodies, and consume our spirits—in short, poison us and kill us off before our due time—nothing of all that torments them, much less dominates or obsesses them.²

As for their natural color, considering the hot region where they live, they are not particularly dark, but merely of a tawny shade, like the Spanish or Provençals.

Now this next thing is no less strange than difficult to believe for those who have not seen it: the men, women, and children do not hide any parts of their bodies; what is more, without any sign of bashfulness or shame, they habitually live and go about their affairs as naked as they come out of their mother's womb. And yet, contrary to what some people think, and what others would have one believe, they are by no means covered with hair;³ in fact, they are not by nature any hairier than we are over here in this country. Furthermore, as soon as the hair begins to grow on any part of the body, even the beard and eyelashes and eyebrows, it is plucked out, either with their fingernails, or, since the arrival of the Christians, with tweezers that the latter have given them—which makes their gaze seem wall-eyed, wandering, and wild. It has been written that the inhabitants of the island of Cumana in Peru do the same.⁴ As for our *Tupinamba*, they make an exception only of the hair on the head, which on all the males, from their youth onward, is shaved very close from the forehead to the crown, like the tonsure of a monk; behind, in the style of our forefathers or of those who let their hair grow, they have it trimmed on the neck.

To leave nothing out (if that is possible), I will also add this. There are certain grasses in that land with leaves about two fingers wide, which grow slightly curved both around and lengthwise, something like the sheath that covers the ear of the grain that we call "Saracen wheat." I have seen old men (but not all of them, and none of the young men or children) take two leaves of these grasses and arrange them together and bind them with cotton thread around their virile member; sometimes they wrapped it with handkerchiefs and other small pieces of cloth that we

¹[Gómara,] *Histoire*, Book 2, Chapter 79.

gave them. It would seem, on the face of it, that there remains in them some spark of natural shame, if indeed they did this on account of modesty, but, although I have not made closer inquiry, I am still of the opinion that it is rather to hide some infirmity that their old age may cause in that member.⁴

To go on, they have the custom, which begins in the childhood of all the boys, of piercing the lower lip just above the chin; each of them usually wears in the hole a certain well-polished bone, as white as ivory, shaped like one of those little pegs that we play with over here, that we use as tops to spin on a table. The pointed end sticks out about an inch, or two fingers' width, and is held in place by a stop between the gums and the lip; they can remove it and put it back whenever they please. But they only wear this bodkin of white bone during their adolescence; when they are grown, and are called *conomi-ouassou* (that is, big or tall boy), they replace it by mounting in the lip-hole a green stone (a kind of false emerald), also held in place inside by a stop, which appears on the outside to be of the roundness and width of a testoon, with twice its thickness.^a There are some who wear a stone as long and round as a finger (I brought one such stone back to France). Sometimes when these stones are removed, our Tupinamba amuse themselves by sticking their tongues through that slit in the lip, giving the impression to the onlooker that they have two mouths; I leave you to judge whether it is pleasant to see them do that, and whether that deforms them or not. What is more, I have seen men who, not content with merely wearing these green stones in their lips, also wore them in both cheeks, which they had likewise had pierced for the purpose.⁵

As for the nose: our midwives over here pull on the noses of newborn babies to make them longer and more handsome; however, our Americans, for whom the beauty of their children lies in their being pug-nosed, have the noses of their children pushed in and crushed with the thumb as soon as they come out of their mothers' wombs (just as they do in France with spaniels and other puppies). Someone else has said that there is a certain part of Peru where the Indians have such outlandishly long noses that they set in them emeralds, turquoises, and other white and red stones with gold thread.^b

Our Brazilians often paint their bodies in motley hues; but it is

^a[In French, *teston*; in English, "testoon," a silver coin.]

^b[Gómara,] *Histoire*, Book 4, Chapter 108.

especially their custom to blacken their thighs and legs so thoroughly with the juice of a certain fruit, which they call *genipap*,^a that seeing them from a little distance, you would think they had donned the hose of a priest; and this black dye is so indelibly fixed on their skin that even if they go into the water, or wash as much as they please, they cannot remove it for ten or twelve days.

They also have crescent shaped pendants, more than half a foot long, made of very even-textured bone, white as alabaster, which they name *y-aci*, from their name for the moon; they wear them hung from the neck by a little cord made of cotton thread, swinging flat against the chest.

Similarly, they take innumerable little pieces of a seashell called *vignol*, and polish them for a long time on a piece of sandstone, until they are as thin, round, and smooth as a penny; these they pierce through the center and string onto cotton threads to make necklaces that they call *boüre*, which they like to wear twisted around their necks, as we do over here with gold chains. I think this is what some people call "porcelain shell";^b we see many women over here wearing belts of it. When I arrived back in France, I had more than fifteen feet of it, as fine as you might ever see. The savages also make these *boüre* of a certain kind of black wood, which is very well suited to this since it is almost as heavy and shiny as jet.

Our Americans have a great many ordinary hens, which the Portuguese introduced among them and for which they have a use that I will now describe. They pluck the white ones, and after they have boiled the feathers and the down and dyed them red with brazilwood, they cut them up finer than mincemeat (with iron tools since they have acquired them—before that with sharpened stones). Having first rubbed themselves with a certain gum that they keep for this purpose, they cover themselves with these, so that they are feathered all over: their bodies, arms, and legs all bedecked; in this condition they seem to be all downy, like pigeons or other birds newly hatched. It is likely that some observers, who upon their arrival saw these people thus adorned, went back home without any further acquaintance with them, and proceeded to spread the rumor that the savages were covered with hair. But, as I have said above, they are not so in their natural state; that rumor has been based on ignorance and too easily accepted.

^a*Genipa americana* L.

^b[In modern usage, the cowrie.]

In the same vein, someone has written that the people of Cumana anoint themselves with a certain gum or sticky unguent, and then cover themselves with feathers of various colors; they are not unhandsome in such a costume.^a

As for the head ornaments of our Tupinenquins,^{b,6} aside from the tonsure in the front and the hair hanging down in back, which I have mentioned, they bind and arrange wing feathers of rosy or red hues, or other colors, to make adornments for their foreheads somewhat resembling the real or false hair, called "rackets" or "batwings," with which the ladies and young girls of France and of other countries over here have been decorating their heads; you would say that they have acquired this invention from our savages, who call this device *yempenambi*.

They also have pendants in their ears, made from white bone, of almost the same kind as the bodkin that the young boys wear in their pierced lips. Furthermore, they have in their country a bird that they call *toucan*, which (as I will later describe more fully) has a plumage as black as a crow's, except for a patch under the neck, which is about four fingers' width long and three wide, all covered with fine little yellow feathers, edged with red on the bottom. They skin off these patches (which they also call *toucan*, from the name of the bird that bears them), of which they have a large supply; after these are dry, they attach them with a wax that they call *yra-yetic*, one on each side of the face in front of the ears. These yellow plaques, worn on their cheeks, seem like two ornaments of gilded copper on the ends of the bit of a horse's bridle.

If our Brazilians go off to war, or if—as I will recount elsewhere—they ceremonially kill a prisoner in order to eat him, they want to be more gallantly adorned and to look more bold and valiant, and so they put on robes, headdresses, bracelets, and other ornaments of green, red and blue feathers, and of other various true and natural colors of extreme beauty. When these feathers have been mixed and combined, and neatly bound to each other with very small pieces of cane and cotton thread (there is no featherworker in France who could handle them better, nor arrange them more skillfully), you would judge that the clothes made of them were of a deep-napped velvet. With the same workmanship they make the ornaments for their wooden swords and clubs, which, decorated and adorned

^a[Gómara,] *Histoire*, Book 2, Chapter 79.

^b[Léry means Tupinamba. See note 6.]

with these feathers so well suited and fashioned to this use, are a marvelous sight.

To finish off their outfitting: they procure from their neighbors great gray-hued ostrich feathers (which shows that there are some of these huge, heavy birds in certain parts of those lands, where, however, not to misrepresent anything, I myself have not seen any).⁷ Binding all the quill ends together, with the other ends of the feathers spread out like a little tent, or like a rose, they make a great cluster of plumes that they call *araroye*. They tie this around their hips with a cotton string, the narrow part next to the flesh, and the spread-out feathers facing outward. When they are rigged out in this you would say (as it has no other purpose) that they were carrying a chicken-coop attached to their buttocks.

I will explain more fully in another place how the greatest warriors among them, in order to show their valor—especially to show how many enemies they have killed, and how many prisoners they have massacred to eat—make incisions in their breast, arms, and thighs; they then rub these slashes with a certain black powder, which makes the scars visible for life, as if they were wearing hose and doublets slit with great gashes in the Swiss fashion.

If it is a question of leaping, drinking and *caouinage*⁸ (which is just about their daily occupation), to have—besides their voices and the chants that they customarily use in their dances—something more to arouse their spirits, they gather a certain rather firm-skinned fruit of the size and approximately the shape of a water-chestnut. When these are dried and the pits removed, they put little stones inside them and string several of them together, making leggings that, when tied on, make as much noise as snail shells—indeed, almost as much as the bells we have over here (which they greatly covet).

They have a kind of tree in that region, which bears a fruit as big as an ostrich-egg, and of the same shape.^a The savages pierce it through the middle (as you see children in France pierce big walnuts to make rattles), then hollow it out and put little round stones into it, or else kernels of their coarse grain (of which I will speak later); they then pass a stick about a foot and a half long through it. In this way they make an instrument that they call a *maraca*, which rattles louder than a pig bladder full of peas, and which our Brazilians usually have in hand. When I discuss their religion, I will tell you the idea they have about this *maraca* and its

^aThe calabash tree, *Crescentia cuhete* L.

sound once they have adorned it with beautiful feathers and consecrated it to the use that we will see.

There you have their natural condition, and the accoutrements and ornaments with which our Tupinamba customarily outfit themselves in their country. Besides all that, since we had carried in our ships a great quantity of cloth in red, green, yellow, and other colors, we had coats and multicolored breeches made for them, which we exchanged for food supplies, monkeys, parrots, cotton, long peppers, and other things of their region with which our seamen usually load their ships. Now some, with nothing else on their bodies, would sometimes put on these wide, sailor-style trousers, while others, on the contrary, would leave aside the trousers and put on only the jackets, which came down just to their buttocks. After they had gawked at each other a while and paraded around in these outfits (which gave us our fill of laughing), they would take them off and leave them in their houses until the desire came to don them again; they also did this with the hats and shirts we gave them.

Now that I have fully treated what can be said concerning the exterior of the bodies of the American men and of the male children, if you would picture to yourself a savage according to this description, you may imagine in the first place a naked man, well formed and proportioned in his limbs, with all the hair on his body plucked out; his hair shaved in the fashion I have described; the lips and cheeks slit, with pointed bones or green stones set in them; his ears pierced, with pendants in the holes; his body painted; his thighs and legs blackened with the dye that they make from the *genipap* fruit that I mentioned; and with necklaces made up of innumerable little pieces of the big seashell that they call *vignol*. Thus you will see him as he usually is in his country, and, as far as his natural condition is concerned, such as you will see him portrayed in the following illustration, wearing only his crescent of polished bone on his breast, his stone in the hole in his lip, and, to show his general bearing, his unbent bow and his arrows in his hands. To fill out this plate, we have put near this Tupinamba one of his women, who, in their customary way, is holding her child in a cotton scarf, with the child holding on to her side with both legs. Next to the three is a cotton bed, made like a fishing net, hung in the air, which is how they sleep in their country. There is also the figure of the fruit that they call *ananas*,^a which, as I shall describe hereafter, is one of the best produced in this land of Brazil.

^a[Pineapple.]



For the second contemplation of a savage, remove all the flourishes described above, and after rubbing him with a glutinous gum, cover his whole torso, arms, and legs with little feathers minced fine, like red-dyed down; when you have made him artificially hairy with this fuzzy down, you can imagine what a fine fellow he is.

In the third place, whether he remains in his natural color, or whether he is painted or covered with feathers, attire him again in his garments, headdresses and bracelets so laboriously wrought of these beautiful natural feathers of various colors that I have described to you; when he is thus outfitted, you might say that he is in his full Papal splendor.⁹

For the fourth description, leave him half-naked and half-dressed, in the way I have described him; give him the breeches and jackets of our colored cloth, with one of the sleeves green and the other yellow; you will judge that he no longer needs anything but a fool's bauble.

Finally, if you add to these the instrument called the *maraca* in his hand, the plumed harness that they call *araroye* on his hips, and his rattles made of fruits around his legs, you will then see him (as I will show him again later) equipped as he is when he dances, leaps, drinks, and capers about.

As for the rest of the devices that the savages use to bedeck and adorn their bodies, according to the description that I have just given: you would need several illustrations to represent them well, and even then you could not convey their appearance without adding painting, which would require a separate book. However, beyond what I have already said about them, when I come to speak of their wars and their arms, lacerating their bodies, and putting in their hands their wooden swords (or clubs), and their bows and arrows, I will portray them as more furious.

But for now let us leave a little to one side our Tupinamba in all their magnificence, frolicking and enjoying the good times that they know so well how to have, and see whether their wives and daughters, whom they call *quoniam* (and in some parts, since the arrival of the Portuguese, *Maria*) are better adorned and decked out.

First, besides what I said at the beginning of this chapter—that they ordinarily go naked as well as the men—they also share with them the practice of pulling out all body hair, as well as the eyelashes and eyebrows. They do not follow the men's custom regarding the hair of the head: for while the latter, as I have said above, shave their hair in front and clip it in the back, the women not only let it grow long, but also (like the women over here), comb and wash it very carefully; in fact, they tie it

up sometimes with a red-dyed cotton string. However, they more often let it hang on their shoulders, and go about wearing it loose.

They differ also from the men in that they do not slit their lips or cheeks, and so they wear no stones in their faces. But as for their ears, they have them pierced in so extreme a fashion for wearing pendants that when they are removed, you could easily pass a finger through the holes; what is more, when they wear pendants made of that big scallop shell called *vignol*, which are white, round, and as long as a medium-sized tallow candle, their ears swing on their shoulders, even over their breasts; if you see them from a little distance, it looks like the ears of a bloodhound hanging down on each side.

As for their faces, this is how they paint them. A neighbor woman or companion, with a little brush in hand, begins a small circle right in the middle of the cheek of the one who is having her face painted; turning the brush all around to trace a scroll or the shape of a snail-shell, she will continue until she has adorned and bedizened the face with various hues of blue, yellow, and red; also (as some shameless women in France likewise do), where the eyelashes and eyebrows have been plucked, she will not neglect to apply a stroke of the brush.

Moreover, they make big bracelets, composed of several pieces of white bone, cut and notched like big fish-scales, which they know how so closely to match and so nicely to join—with wax and a kind of gum mixed together into a glue—that it could not be better done. When the work is finished, it is about a foot and a half long; it could be best compared to the cuff used in playing ball over here. Likewise, they wear the white necklaces (called *boïre* in their language) that I have described above, but they do not wear them hung around the neck, as you have heard that the men do; they simply twist them around their arms. That is why, for the same use, they find so pretty the little beads of glass that they call *mauroubi*, in yellow, blue, green, and other colors, strung like a rosary, which we brought over there in great number for barter. Indeed, whether we went into their villages or they came into our fort, they would offer us fruits or some other commodity from their country in exchange for them, and with their customary flattering speech, they would be after us incessantly, pestering us and saying "*Mair, deagatorem, amabé mauroubi*":¹⁰ that is, "Frenchman, you are good; give me some of your bracelets of glass beads." They would do the same thing to get combs from us, which they call *guap* or *kuap*, mirrors, which they call *aroua*, and all the other goods and merchandise we had that they desired.

But among the things doubly strange and truly marvelous that I

observed in these Brazilian women, there is this: although they do not paint their bodies, arms, thighs, and legs as often as the men do, and do not cover themselves with feathers or with anything else that grows in their land, still, although we tried several times to give them dresses and shifts (as I have said we did for the men, who sometimes put them on), it has never been in our power to make them wear clothes: to such a point were they resolved (and I think they have not changed their minds) not to allow anything at all on their bodies. As a pretext to exempt themselves from wearing clothes and to remain always naked, they would cite their custom, which is this: whenever they come upon springs and clear rivers, crouching on the edge or else getting in, they throw water on their heads with both hands, and wash themselves and plunge in with their whole bodies like ducks—on some days more than a dozen times; and they said that it was too much trouble to get undressed so often. Is that not a fine and pertinent excuse? But whatever it may be, you have to accept it, for to contest it further with them would be in vain, and you would gain nothing by it.

This creature delights so much in her nakedness that it was not only the Tupinamba women of the mainland, living in full liberty with their husbands, fathers, and kinsmen, who were so obstinate in refusing to dress themselves in any way at all; even our women prisoners of war, whom we had bought and whom we held as slaves to work in our fort—even they, although we forced clothing on them, would secretly strip off the shifts and other rags, as soon as night had fallen, and would not be content unless, before going to bed, they could promenade naked all around our island. In short, if it had been up to these poor wretches, and if they had not been compelled by great strokes of the whip to dress themselves, they would choose to bear the heat and burning of the sun, even the continual skinning of their arms and shoulders carrying earth and stones, rather than to endure having any clothes on.

And there you have a summary of the customary ornaments, rings, and jewelry of the American women and girls. So, without any other epilogue here, let the reader, by this narration, contemplate them as he will.

When I treat the marriage of the savages, I will recount how their children are equipped from birth. As for the children above the age of three or four years, I especially took great pleasure in watching the little boys, whom they call *conomi-miri*; plump and chubby (much more so than those over here), with their bodkins of white bone in their split lips, the hair shaved in their style, and sometimes with their bodies painted,

they never failed to come dancing out in a troop to meet us when they saw us arrive in their villages. They would tag behind us and play up to us, repeating continually in their babble, "*Contoüassat, amabé pinda*": that is, "My friend and my ally, give me some fishhooks." If thereupon we yielded (which I have often done), and tossed ten or twelve of the smallest hooks into the sand and dust, they would rush to pick them up; it was great sport to see this swarm of naked little rascals stamping on the earth and scratching it like rabbits.

During that year or so when I lived in that country, I took such care in observing all of them, great and small, that even now it seems to me that I have them before my eyes, and I will forever have the idea and image of them in my mind. But their gestures and expressions are so completely different from ours, that it is difficult, I confess, to represent them well by writing or by pictures. To have the pleasure of it, then, you will have to go see and visit them in their own country. "Yes," you will say, "but the plank is very long." That is true, and so if you do not have a sure foot and a steady eye, and are afraid of stumbling, do not venture down that path.

We have yet to see more fully, as the matters that I treat present themselves, what their houses are like, and to see their household utensils, their ways of sleeping, and other ways of doing things.

Before closing this chapter, however, I must respond both to those who have written and to those who think that the frequenting of these naked savages, and especially of the women, arouses wanton desire and lust. Here, briefly, is what I have to say on this point. While there is ample cause to judge that, beyond the immodesty of it, seeing these women naked would serve as a predictable enticement to concupiscence; yet, to report what was commonly perceived at the time, this crude nakedness in such a woman is much less alluring than one might expect. And I maintain that the elaborate attire, paint, wigs, curled hair, great ruffs, farthingales, robes upon robes, and all the infinity of trifles with which the women and girls over here disguise themselves and of which they never have enough, are beyond comparison the cause of more ills than the ordinary nakedness of the savage women—whose natural beauty is by no means inferior to that of the others. If decorum allowed me to say more, I make bold to say that I could resolve all the objections to the contrary, and I would give reasons so evident that no one could deny them. Without going into it further, I defer concerning the little that I have said about this to those who have made the voyage to the land of Brazil, and who, like me, have seen both their women and ours.¹¹

I do not mean, however, to contradict what the Holy Scripture says about Adam and Eve, who, after their sin, were ashamed when they recognized that they were naked, nor do I wish in any way that this nakedness be approved; indeed, I detest the heretics who have tried in the past to introduce it over here, against the law of nature (which on this particular point is by no means observed among our poor Americans).¹²

But what I have said about these savages is to show that, while we condemn them so austere-ly for going about shamelessly with their bodies entirely uncovered, we ourselves, in the sumptuous display, superfluity, and excess of our own costume, are hardly more laudable. And, to conclude this point, I would to God that each of us dressed modestly, and more for decency and necessity than for glory and worldliness.



OF THE BIG ROOTS AND THE MILLET OF WHICH THE SAVAGES MAKE FLOUR THAT THEY EAT INSTEAD OF BREAD; AND OF THEIR DRINK, WHICH THEY CALL *CAOUIN*¹

Since we have heard in the preceding chapter how our savages are outwardly adorned and equipped, to relate things in order it seems to me appropriate to treat next their common and ordinary sources of food. In the first place, one must note that although they do not have, and therefore do not sow or plant, wheat or vines in their country, nevertheless, as I have seen and experienced, they dine and feast well without bread or wine.

In their country our Americans have two kinds of root, which they call *aypi* and *maniot*,² which in three or four months grow as big around as a man's thigh, and about a foot and a half long. Once they have pulled them up, the women—for the men don't concern themselves with this—dry these roots over a fire on the *boucan* (which I shall describe later), or else sometimes take them green, and grate them on a flat piece of wood in which certain little pointed stones have been set, just as we grate cheese and nutmeg; thus they reduce them to a flour as white as snow. This raw flour, like the white juice that comes out of it (of which I shall speak in a moment) has the fragrance of starch made of pure wheat soaked a long time in water, when it is still fresh and liquid. After I came back over here, whenever I happened to be in a place where starch was being made, the scent of it made me remember the odor one usually picks up in the savages' houses when they are making root flour.

To prepare it, the Brazilian women then take big earthen pots that hold more than a bushel each, which they themselves make very skillfully for this use, and put them on the fire, with a quantity of flour in them;



OF THE ANIMALS, KINDS OF VENISON, BIG LIZ- ARDS, SNAKES, AND OTHER MON- STROUS BEASTS OF AMERICA¹

Concerning the four-footed animals, I will say first of all that in general and without exception there is not a single one in that land of Brazil in America that is in all respects exactly like any of ours; what is more, our Tupinamba rarely raise any domestic ones. So to describe the wild animals of their country—for which their generic name is *sóo*²—I will begin with those that are edible. The first and most common one, which has a reddish and rather long coat, they call *tapiroussou*.³ It is of about the height, bulk, and shape of a cow; however, it has no horns, and has a shorter neck, longer and more pendant ears, thinner and more agile legs, and an unsplit hoof shaped like that of a donkey. In fact, you could say that it partakes of both, and is half cow and half donkey.³ But it is entirely different from either, in its tail, which is very short (there are many animals in America that have almost none at all), and in its teeth, which are much more cutting and sharp; however, since it has no means of resistance other than flight, it is not at all dangerous. The savages kill it and various other animals with arrows, or else they catch it in traps and with other devices that they make quite skillfully.

This animal is immensely valued by them because of its skin; when they flay it, they cut all the hide off the back in a circle, and after it is dry they make disks from it as big as the bottom of a medium-sized barrel, which serve as shields against the arrows of their enemies when they go to war. Indeed this skin, dried and prepared, is so tough that there is, I think, no arrow, however forcefully shot, that could pierce it. I was bringing two of these shields back to France as curiosities; but during our return we were afflicted with famine on the sea, and after all our food supplies

¹[The tapir. The suffix *-oussou* or *-ouassou* means "big."]

had been used up, and the monkeys, parrots, and other animals that we were bringing back from that country had been used for nourishment, we finally had to eat our leather shields grilled over coals—in fact, as I shall recount at the right moment, we ate all the other leather and all the skins that we had in the ship.

The flesh of this *tapiroussou* has almost the same taste as beef; but as for the way of preparing and cooking it, our savages usually have it *boucané*. Now I have mentioned before and shall often need to repeat this term, *boucaner*, and since the occasion presents itself conveniently, to end the reader's suspense, let me explain this way of doing things.

Our Americans first stick four wooden forks deep into the earth, each fork as big as an arm, to form a square about three feet on a side, and about two and a half feet high; across these forks they place sticks at intervals of about an inch, or two fingers' width. In this manner they make a big wooden grill, which in their language they call *boucan*.⁴ They have several of these planted in their houses. Those who have some meat put it on the grill in pieces, and with very dry wood, which doesn't give off much smoke, they make a slow little fire underneath; turning the meat over and over, twice every quarter-hour, they let it cook until it suits them. Since they don't salt their meat to make it keep, as we do over here, they have no other way of preserving it except to cook it; so if in one day they were to take thirty wild beasts, or other animals that we will describe in this chapter, to avoid having it stink they would immediately place the meat in pieces in the *boucan*. Turning it over and over again as I have described, they leave it there sometimes more than twenty-four hours, and until it is cooked all the way through to the bone, the middle as well as the outside. They do the same thing with fish; when they have a great quantity (especially of those that they call *piraparati*, which are a kind of mullet, of which I will speak again elsewhere), they thoroughly dry them and make flour of them. In short, these *boucans* serve them as salting tubs, drying-hooks, and cupboards. You could hardly enter their villages without seeing them not only furnished with venison or fish, but also most often (as we shall see later) you would find them covered with thighs, arms, legs, and other big pieces of human flesh from the prisoners of war whom they ordinarily kill and eat.

And there you have the *boucan* and *boucanerie*, that is, the rotisserie of our Americans. By the way (with all due respect to him who has written otherwise), they do not abstain from boiling their meat whenever that suits them.⁵

To pursue the description of their animals. The biggest that they

have after the donkey-cow, of which I have just spoken, are certain kinds of deer that they call *seouassous*.^a Besides being not nearly as big as ours, and having much smaller horns, they are also different in having a coat as long as that of the goats over here.

The boar of that country, which the savages call *taiassou*,^b in its shape resembles those of our forests. Its body, head, ears, legs, and feet are also the same, as well as its teeth, which are long, hooked, pointed, and consequently very dangerous; however, it is much thinner and more scraggy, and has a horrible grunting cry. It also has another strange deformity: a natural opening on the back, like the one that the porpoise has on its head, through which it blows, breathes, and takes in air whenever it wants to. Lest you find that so strange, the author of the *General History of the Indies* says that there are also pigs in the country of Nicaragua, near the kingdom of New Spain, that have the navel on the backbone, which are surely of the same kind as those that I have just described.^c The three animals just mentioned, the *tapiroussou*, the *seouassou*, and the *taiassou*, are the biggest in the land of Brazil.

Going on to other wild game of our Americans, there is a russet-colored beast that they call *agouti*,^d about as big as a month-old pig, which has a cleft foot, a very short tail, and a muzzle and ears almost like those of a hare; it is very good to eat. There are others of two or three kinds, which they call *tapitis*,^e all rather like our hares, and of about the same taste; but their coat is more reddish. In the woods they also catch certain rats, as big as squirrels, and with almost the same reddish coat, whose flesh is as delicate as that of rabbits.

Pag, or *pague*^f (one can hardly distinguish which of the two they are uttering) is an animal about as big as a medium-sized pointer, with an irregular and badly shaped head. Its flesh tastes almost like veal; its skin is very beautiful, dappled with white, gray, and black, and if we had any like them over here, they would be highly valued as fur.

There is another in the form of a polecat, with a grayish coat, which

^a[The generic Tupi name for deer.]

^b[The peccary, of the genus *Tayassu*. The opening on the back is not an orifice for breathing, but a gland producing strong-smelling secretions.]

^c[Gómara, *Histoire*,] Book 5, Chapter 204.

^d[The modern English term is the same.]

^e[The *tapiti* (*Sylvilagus minensis*) is of the same genus as the cottontail rabbit.]

^f[The paca, or spotted cavy: a large rodent.]

the savages call *sarigoy*,^a but it stinks so that they don't willingly eat of it. We skinned several of them, however, and when we realized that it is only the fat over the kidneys that gives off the foul odor, we removed it and went ahead and ate the meat, which in fact is tender and good.

As for the *tatou*^b of the land of Brazil, this animal (like the hedgehogs over here) usually drags itself through the brush and cannot run as fast as some others; but to compensate, it is so well armed, and covered with scales so strong and hard that I think even a sword-blow would have no effect. When it is skinned, the scales move and can be handled with the skin, from which the savages make little containers that they call *caramemo*; you would say, seeing it folded, that it was an armored gauntlet. The flesh is white, and of rather good flavor. But as for its form, if the animal that Belon, in the third book of his *Observations*, calls the *tatou* of Brazil is indeed mounted as high on its four legs as he has shown it in a picture there, I have seen none of them in this country.^c

Besides all these animals, which are the commonest ones for the sustenance of our Americans, they also eat crocodiles, which they call *jacaré*, and which are as thick as a man's thigh and correspondingly long. But they are so far from being dangerous that, on the contrary, I have seen the savages on several occasions carry them home alive, and their children would play around them without being hurt. I have heard the old men say, however, that as they travel through the country they are sometimes attacked, and have to defend themselves with their arrows against a kind of *jacaré*, huge and monstrous, which, when it has perceived them and picked up their scent from a distance, comes out from the reeds of the watery places where they have their dens.

While we are on the subject, aside from what Pliny and others tell of those of the Egyptian Nile,⁷ the author of the *General History of the Indies* says that near the city of Panama, crocodiles have been killed that were more than one hundred feet long, which is almost incredible. I have noticed that the medium-sized ones that I have seen have a deep-cut mouth, long thighs, and a tail that is neither rounded nor pointed, but flat and thin at the end. I must confess that I have not carefully noted whether, as is commonly maintained, they can move their upper jaw.^c

Our Americans also catch lizards, which they call *touous*; not green

^a[The opossum.]

^b[The armadillo.]

^c[The crocodile in fact cannot move its upper jaw.]

ones like ours, but gray and with a smooth skin, like our little lizards. They are four to five feet long, proportionately thick, and of a shape hideous to see; however, they ordinarily stay on the riverbanks and in marshy places, and are no more dangerous than the frogs that live there. I must add that when you have skinned, gutted, and cleaned them, and cooked them thoroughly (their flesh being as white, delicate, tender, and flavorful as the white meat of a capon), it is one of the best kinds of meat that I have eaten in America. It is true that at the beginning I was horrified at the notion, but after I had tasted it, as far as meat was concerned, I sang the praises of nothing but lizards.

Our Tupinamba also have certain big toads, which when they are *boucané* with the skin, tripe, and entrails, serve as food. Our physicians teach, and people back over here generally believe, that the flesh, blood, and whole body of the toad are deadly; however, from what I have said about those of Brazil, the reader can easily gather that either because of the temperature of the country, or perhaps for some other reason that I am unaware of, they are not vile, venomous or dangerous as ours are.^a

They also eat snakes as big as your arm and about three feet long; and (as I said they do with crocodiles) I have seen the savages drag back some of them that are streaked with black and red, which they would throw alive in the middle of their houses among their wives and children, who instead of being afraid of them would grasp them with both hands. They prepare and cook these big terrestrial eels in sections; but from what I know of it, the meat has an insipid, sweetish taste.

It isn't that there are not other kinds of snakes: especially in the rivers one finds certain long, slender ones, as green as a beet, whose sting is extremely venomous; and in the story I am about to tell, you will hear that, besides these *touous* I just spoke of, there are other and larger lizards in the forest that are very dangerous.

One day two other Frenchmen and I were rash enough to set forth to visit the region without the savages whom we customarily had along as guides. Having lost our way in the woods, as we were going along a deep valley, we heard the sound of a beast making its way toward us. Thinking that it was some savage, we continued on our path without disquiet and thought no more about it. But suddenly on our right, and about thirty feet from us, we saw on a little rise a lizard much bigger

^a[Some toads of Brazil are poisonous and some are harmless; the same is true for various parts of their bodies.]

than a man's body, six or seven feet long, which seemed covered with whitish scales, as sharp and rough as oyster shells; with one of its front feet lifted, its head raised high and its eyes gleaming, it stopped short to look at us.⁸ We had not a single harquebus or pistol among us, but only our swords, and, savage-fashion, each a bow and arrows in hand—weapons that could not serve us very well against such a furious and well-armed animal. Seeing him, and fearing that if we took flight he would outrun us and, having caught us, would swallow us up and devour us, we looked at each other stunned, and remained stock-still. This monstrous and terrible lizard opened its maw; because of the great heat (for the sun was shining and it was about noon), it was breathing so hard that we could easily hear it. After it had stared at us for about a quarter of an hour, it suddenly turned around; crashing through the leaves and branches where it passed—with a noise greater than that of a stag running through a forest—it fled back uphill. As for us, we had had such a scare that we had no desire to run after it; praising God for delivering us from this danger, we went on our way. It has occurred to me since, in accord with the opinion of those who say that the lizard takes delight in the human face, that this one had taken as much pleasure in looking at us as we had felt fear in gazing upon it.

There is also in that country a predatory beast that the savages call *jan-ou-are*,^a which is almost as long-legged and light-footed as a greyhound. It has long hairs around the chin, and a beautiful spotted skin like that of a lynx, which in general it closely resembles. The savages have great fear of this beast, and not without cause; for since it lives off its prey, like the lion, if it catches them it does not fail to kill them and then to tear them to pieces and eat them. And for their part, too, being cruel and vindictive against anything that hurts them, when they can catch one in a trap (which they do often), they do their worst: they pierce and wound it with arrows, and make it linger in its misery for a long while in the pit where it has fallen, before they finish it off. So that you can better understand how this beast deals with them: one day when five or six other Frenchmen and I were passing by the big island, the savages warned us to look out for the *jan-ou-are*, which, that very week, had eaten three people in one of their villages.

To go on, there is a great abundance of those little black monkeys, which the savages call *cây*, in the land of Brazil; but since they are to be

^a[The jaguar. It holds an important place in Tupi myths and ceremonies.]

seen in fair numbers over here I won't give any further description of them. Nevertheless, I will mention this: being forest-dwellers, their natural inclination is to stay in the tops of certain trees which bear a fruit with pods almost like our big beans, from which they get nourishment. They often gather there in troops, especially in time of rain (as cats sometimes do on rooftops over here); it is quite a sport to hear them calling out and crashing around up in the trees.

This animal gives birth to only one infant at a time; the little one has the innate ability to embrace and cling to the neck of its mother or father as soon as it is out of the womb. If they are pursued by hunters, they can save it by leaping from branch to branch, carrying it. For that reason the savages cannot easily take either the young ones or the old ones; they have no other means of catching them but by knocking them out of the trees with arrows or other missiles. They fall to the ground stunned and sometimes wounded; after the savages have healed their wounds and tamed them a little in their houses, they barter them for various merchandise with the foreigners who are traveling over there. I say "tamed" advisedly: when these monkeys are first caught, they are so wild that they bite your fingers, even putting their teeth clear through the hands of those who are holding them; the pain is so great that one is compelled to stun them with blows to make them let go.

There is also in the land of Brazil a marmoset, which the savages call *sagouin*, no bigger than a squirrel and having the same kind of russet fur. It has the face, neck, front, and almost all the rest of the body like a lion, with the same proud bearing; he is the prettiest little animal that I have seen over there. And indeed, if he were as easy to take across the ocean as the monkey is, he would be much more valued.^a But besides being so delicate that he cannot tolerate the tossing of the ship on the sea, he is so proud and touchy that for the slightest offense offered him, he lets himself die of chagrin. There are some to be seen over here, however, and I think that this is the animal Marot^d is referring to when, writing of how his servant Fripelipes answered a certain Sagon who had accused him of something, he says:

Combien que Sagon soit un mot
Et le nom d'un petit marmot.
[Although Sagon is a word
And the name of a little marmoset.]

^a[The *sagouin*, or marmoset, is in fact a species of monkey.]

I must confess that, in spite of my curiosity, I have not observed all the animals of the land of America as well as I had wished. But to conclude, I want to describe two that are stranger and more curious in form than all the others.

The bigger of these, which the savages call *hay*,^a is of the size of a big spaniel, with a face rather like a monkey's, approaching the human; it has a belly hanging down like that of a pregnant sow, a gray coat with a smoky-brown tinge like the wool of a black sheep, a very short tail, hairy legs like those of a bear, and very long claws. And although when he is in the woods he is very wild, once he is caught, he is not hard to tame. It is true, nevertheless, that his claws are so sharp that our Tupinamba, who are always naked, do not take much pleasure in playing with him. Now this may sound like a tall tale, but I have heard not only from the savages but also from the interpreters who had lived a long time in that country, that no man has ever seen this animal eat, either in the fields or in a house; so that some think that he lives on air.¹⁰

The other animal that I also want to speak about, called *coati*,^b by the savages, is of the height of a big hare, with a short coat, sleek and dappled, and small, erect, pointed ears. Its head is not very large; its muzzle from the eyes down is more than a foot long, round as a stick, and suddenly narrowing, being no bigger high up than it is at the mouth (which is so small that you could scarcely put the tip of your little finger in it). This muzzle resembles the drone or the pipe of the bagpipe, and could hardly be more curious or more monstrous in shape. When this beast is caught, it holds all four feet tight together, and thus is always leaning over to one side or the other, or else it lets itself fall flat; you can't make it stand up, and you can't make it eat anything except ants, which are what it ordinarily lives on in the woods. About a week after we had arrived in the island where Villegagnon was staying, the savages brought us one of these *coati*, which, as you can imagine, was greatly admired by all of us. Since all these animals are strangely defective with respect to those of our Europe, I would often ask a certain Jean Gardien, of our company, who was expert in the art of portraiture, to draw this one, as well as many others that are not only rare but even completely unknown over here; to my great regret, however, he was never willing to set himself to it.

^a[The sloth.]

^b[Léry has described the *tamandua*, or lesser anteater, not what is now called the *coati*, which is an animal closely related to the raccoon.]



OF THE TREES, HERBS, ROOTS, AND EXQUISITE FRUITS PRODUCED BY THE LAND OF BRAZIL¹

Having already treated the four-footed animals as well as the birds, fish, reptiles, and things having life, movement, and feeling that are to be seen in America, before I speak of religion, war, civil order, and other customs of our savages that are still to be dealt with, I will continue by describing the trees, herbs, plants, fruits, roots—all the things commonly said to have a vegetative soul—which are to be found in that country.

First, since brazilwood (from which this land has taken the name that we use for it) is among the most famous trees, and now one of the best known to us and (because of the dye made from it) is the most valued, I will describe it here.² This tree, which the savages call *araboutan*, ordinarily grows as high and branchy as the oaks in the forests of this country; some are so thick that three men could not embrace a single trunk. While we are speaking of big trees, the author of the *General History of the West Indies* says that two have been seen in those countries, one of which had a trunk more than eight arm lengths around, and the other a trunk of more than sixteen. On top of the first one, he said, which was so high that you couldn't throw a stone to the top of it, a *cacique* had built a little lodge (the Spaniards who saw him nesting up there like a stork burst out laughing); they also described the second tree as a marvelous thing. The same author also recounts that in the country of Nicaragua there is a tree called *cerba*,^a which grows so big that fifteen men could not embrace it.^b

To return to our brazilwood: it has a leaf like that of boxwood, but

^a[Probably *Ceiba pentandra* (L.) Gaertn., the kapok or silk-cotton tree, which can reach seventy meters in height and have huge buttresses.]

^b[Gómara,] Chapters 61, 85, and 204.

of a brighter green, and it bears no fruit. As for the manner of loading it on the ships, take note that both because of the hardness of this wood and the consequent difficulty of cutting it, and because, there being no horses, donkeys, or other beasts to carry, cart, or draw burdens in that country, it has to be men who do this work: if the foreigners who voyage over there were not helped by the savages, they could not load even a medium-sized ship in a year. In return for some frieze garments, linen shirts, hats, knives, and other merchandise that they are given, the savages not only cut, saw, split, quarter, and round off the brazilwood, with the hatchets, wedges, and other iron tools given to them by the French and by others from over here, but also carry it on their bare shoulders, often from a league or two away, over mountains and difficult places, clear down to the seashore by the vessels that lie at anchor, where the mariners receive it. I say expressly that it is only since the French and Portuguese have been frequenting their country that the savages have been cutting their brazilwood; for before that time, as I have heard from the old men, they had almost no other way of taking down a tree than by setting fire to the base of it. There are people over here who think that the round logs that you see at the merchants' are of the natural thickness of the trees; to show that they are mistaken, besides saying that these trees are often very thick, I have added that the savages round them off and shape them so that they are easier to carry and to handle in the ships.

During the time that we were in that country we made fine fires of this brazilwood; I have observed that since it is not at all damp, like most other wood, but rather is naturally dry, it gives off very little smoke as it burns. One day one of our company decided to bleach our shirts, and, without suspecting anything, put brazilwood ash in with the lye; instead of whitening them, he made them so red that although they were washed and soaped afterward, there was no means of getting rid of that tincture, so that we had to wear them that way.

If the gentlemen over here with their perfectly starched pleats—those who send to Flanders to have their shirts whitened—choose not to believe me, they have my permission to do the experiment for themselves, and, for quicker results, the more to brighten their great ruffs (or rather, those dribble-catchers more than half a foot wide that they are wearing these days), they can dye them green if they please.

Our Tupinamba are astonished to see the French and others from distant countries go to so much trouble to get their *araboutan*, or brazilwood. On one occasion one of their old men questioned me about it: "What does it mean that you *Mairs* and *Peros* (that is, French and Portu-

guese) come from so far for wood to warm yourselves? Is there none in your own country?" I answered him yes, and in great quantity, but not of the same kinds as theirs; nor any brazilwood, which we did not burn as he thought, but rather carried away to make dye, just as they themselves did to redden their cotton cord, feathers, and other articles. He immediately came back at me: "Very well, but do you need so much of it?" "Yes," I said (trying to make him see the good of it), "for there is a merchant in our country who has more frieze and red cloth, and even" (and here I was choosing things that were familiar to him) "more knives, scissors, mirrors, and other merchandise than you have ever seen over here; one such merchant alone will buy all the wood that several ships bring back from your country." "Ha, ha!" said my savage, "you are telling me of wonders." Then, having thought over what I had said to him, he questioned me further, and said, "But this man of whom you speak, who is so rich, does he never die?" "Certainly he does," I said, "just as others do." At that (since they are great discourses, and pursue a subject out to the end) he asked me, "And when he is dead, to whom belong all the goods that he leaves behind?" "To his children, if he has any, and if there are none, to his brothers, sisters, or nearest kinsmen." "Truly," said my elder (who, as you will judge, was no dullard), "I see now that you *Mairs* (that is, Frenchmen) are great fools; must you labor so hard to cross the sea, on which (as you told us) you endured so many hardships, just to amass riches for your children or for those who will survive you? Will not the earth that nourishes you suffice to nourish them? We have kinsmen and children, whom, as you see, we love and cherish; but because we are certain that after our death the earth which has nourished us will nourish them, we rest easy and do not trouble ourselves further about it."

And there you have a brief and true summary of the discourse that I have heard from the very mouth of a poor savage American. This nation, which we consider so barbarous, charitably mocks those who cross the sea at the risk of their lives to go seek brazilwood in order to get rich; however blind this people may be in attributing more to nature and to the fertility of the earth than we do to the power and the providence of God, it will rise up in judgment against those despoilers who are as abundant over here, among those bearing the title of Christians, as they are scarce over there, among the native inhabitants. Therefore, to take up what I said elsewhere—that the Tupinamba mortally hate the avaricious—would to God that the latter might be imprisoned among them, so that they might even in this life serve as demons and furies to torment those

whose maws are insatiable, who do nothing but suck the blood and marrow of others. To our great shame, and to justify our savages in the little care that they have for the things of this world, I had to make this digression in their favor.

I think it is appropriate to add here what the historian of the West Indies has written of a certain nation of savages living in Peru. When the Spanish were first roaming up and down that country, because they were bearded, and because they were so swaggering and so foppish, the savages did not want to receive them, fearing that that they would corrupt and alter their ancient customs; they called them "seafoam," fatherless people, men without repose, who cannot stay in any one place to cultivate the land to provide themselves with food.^a

To continue to speak of the trees of this land of America: there are four or five kinds of palm trees; among the most common is one called by the savages *gerau*, and another called *yri*; since I have never seen dates in either of them, I think they produce none. However, the *yri* does bear round fruit resembling sloes, in tight clusters like big grapes, so that in a single bunch there are as many as a man can lift and carry with one hand; but it is only the kernel, no bigger than that of a cherry, that is any good. There is also a white tendril between the leaves at the top of the young palm trees, which we would cut for eating; the *Sieur du Pont*, who was subject to hemorrhoids, said that it served as a remedy, but that I leave up to the physicians.

There is another tree which the savages call *airy*;³ it has leaves like those of the palm tree and a trunk with thorns all around it, fine and sharp as needles. It bears a fruit of medium size, in which there is a kernel as white as snow, which, however, is not good to eat. In my opinion it is a kind of ebony; for it is black, and it is so hard that the savages use it for wooden swords and maces, as well as for some of their arrows (which I will describe when I speak of their wars). It can be worked to a very smooth and gleaming finish, and is so dense that it sinks in water.

Furthermore, before I go on, there are many kinds of colored woods in this land of America, but I don't know the names of all of the trees that produce them. Among others, I have seen some as yellow as boxwood; others naturally violet, some sticks of which I brought back to France; some white as paper; and other kinds red as brazilwood, from which the savages also make wooden swords and bows. Then there is one that they

^a[Gómara,] *Histoire*, Book 4, Chapter 108.

name *copa-u*,⁴ which not only resembles the walnut as a standing tree (although it bears no nuts), but when it is made into wooden furniture, its boards show the same kind of grain. There are some that have leaves thicker than a testoon; others have leaves a foot and a half wide. There are several other kinds, which would be tedious to describe in detail.

But above all, there is a particular tree in that country that is not only beautiful but smells so wonderfully good that if, while the joiners were whittling or planing it, we picked up the chips or shavings, we could smell the true fragrance of a fresh rose. On the other hand, there is another wood, which the savages call *aouai*,⁵ which stinks so strongly of garlic that when you cut it or put it in the fire, you can't stay near it; this last tree has leaves like those of an apple tree, but its fruit (which somewhat resembles a water-chestnut), and especially the pit, is so venomous that whoever eats it suddenly feels the effects of a true poison. Nevertheless it is from this fruit that our Americans make the rattles that they put around their legs, and for that reason they value it highly. It must be noted here that although the land of Brazil (as we will see in this chapter) produces many good and excellent fruits, there are several trees whose fruit is wonderfully beautiful but that nonetheless is not good to eat. Particularly on the seashore there are many shrubs whose fruits resemble our medlar pear, but which are very dangerous to eat. The savages, seeing the French and other foreigners approach these trees to gather the fruit, say to them in their language "*Ypochi*," that is "It isn't good," thus warning them to be careful.

*Hivourae*⁶ has bark about a half a finger thick, that is rather agreeable to eat, especially when it comes fresh off the tree; I have heard from two apothecaries, who came over with us, that it is a kind of guaicum. The savages use it to treat a disease that they call *pians*,^a which, as I will recount elsewhere, is as dangerous among them as the pox is among us over here.

The tree that the savages call *choyne*^b is of medium size. Its leaves are of about the shape of our laurel leaves, and are of the same green; it bears a fruit as big as a child's head, and shaped like an ostrich egg, but which is not good to eat. Because this fruit has a hard rind, our Tupinambas keep some of them whole; piercing them clear through lengthwise, they make from them the instrument called the *maraca* (which I

^a[Yaws (see Chap. XIX).]

^b[The calabash (*Crescentia cujete* L.) (Lussagnet 233, n. 3).]

have already mentioned, and of which I will speak again); they also hollow them out and split them through the middle to make drinking cups and other little vessels.

Continuing to speak of the trees of the land of Brazil, there is one that the savages call *sabaucaië*,^a bearing a fruit that is bigger than two fists, and made in a cup-like shape, and in which there are little pits like almonds, and of almost the same taste. The shell of this fruit is well suited to making vessels; I think that these are what we call "Indian nuts," which, when they are appropriately turned and shaped, we often have set in silver over here. When we were over there, a certain Pierre Bourdon, an excellent turner who had made several handsome dishes and other vessels both of this *sabaucaië* and of other wood, presented some of these to Villegagnon, who valued them highly; however, the poor man was so ill rewarded by him (as I will recount in due time) as to be one of those whom he caused to be drowned in the sea because of the Gospel.

There is also in that country a tree which grows very high, like our service trees, and bears a fruit that the savages call *acajou*,^b which is of the size and shape of a hen's egg. When this fruit has come to maturity, and is yellower than a quince, it is good to eat; also, it has a slightly tart but pleasant-tasting juice, and when you are hot this liquor refreshes you more agreeably than any other. However, since it is difficult to beat them down off these tall trees, we had hardly any unless the monkeys, climbing up to eat them, knocked enough of them down for us to gather.

Paco-aire^c is a shrub that usually grows ten or twelve feet high; although there are some that have a trunk almost as big as a man's thigh, it is so soft that you could cut it down with a single stroke of a well-sharpened sword. Its fruit, which the savages call *paco*, is more than half a foot long; when it is ripe, it is yellow and rather resembles a cucumber. Twenty or twenty-five of them grow close together on a single branch; our Americans gather them in big bunches, as many as they can support with one hand, and carry them off in this way to their houses.

As for the goodness of this fruit, when it has come to its proper ripeness, and the skin lifts off like that of a fresh fig, it is slightly gritty, and as you eat it you would indeed say that it is a fig. For that reason, we

^a[The sapucaia nut (*Lecythis zabucajo* Aubl.). The nut has a lid that falls off to leave a cup-like receptacle.]

^b[Acaju, an edible fruit of the *Spondias* genus.]

^c[The banana. Native to southeast Asia; in Léry's time, recently introduced into Brazil.]

Frenchmen called these *pacos* figs; however, they taste even sweeter and more flavorful than the very best figs of Marseilles, and must be considered one of the finest and best fruits of the land of Brazil. The histories recount that when Cato returned from Carthage to Rome, he brought back figs of amazing size;⁷ but since the ancients made no mention of the one I am speaking about, it is likely that they were not the same ones.

The leaves of the *paco-aire* are rather similar to those of *Lapathum aquaticum*;^a but they are so extraordinarily big—each one is commonly six feet long, and more than two feet wide—that I don't believe leaves of such size are to be found in Europe, Asia, or Africa. For although I have heard an apothecary affirm that he had seen lagwort leaves a yard and a quarter wide, that is (since this herb is round) three and three-quarters yards in circumference, still, it doesn't approach that of our *paco-aire*: It is true that the leaves are not thick in proportion to their size, but rather very thin, and rising straight up; when the wind is at all strong (which often happens in that land of America), only the stem in the middle of the leaf holds firm; the rest of the leaf splits so that if you saw these shrubs from a distance you would think that they were decked out in great ostrich plumes.

As for cotton trees, which grow to a medium height, there are many of them in the land of Brazil. The flower comes in little yellow bells like that of our gourds or pumpkins, but when the fruit is formed it has a shape like that of the beechnuts of our forests; when it is ripe, it splits into four, and the cotton (which the Americans call *ameni-jou*) comes out in tufts as big as tennis balls, in the middle of which there are black seeds in a tight bundle in the shape of a kidney, no thicker or longer than a bean. The savage women are skilled at gathering together the cotton and spinning it to make beds of a style that I will describe elsewhere.

Formerly (or so I have heard) there were neither orange nor lemon trees in America; however, the Portuguese have planted and raised some, on or near the seashores that they frequented, which have not only greatly multiplied but also bear sweet oranges (which the savages call *morgou-ia*) as big as two fists, and lemons, which are still bigger and in even greater abundance.

Sugarcane grows very well and in great quantity in that country, but when we were there, we Frenchmen did not yet have either the appropriate people or the necessary things for extracting the sugar from it (as the

^a[The herbalists' name for a species of dock, probably *Rumex hydrolapathum*.]

Portuguese have in the places that they possess over there). So, as I said in the ninth chapter concerning the savages' drink, we simply soaked the cane in water to sweeten it, or else if you wanted to you could suck and eat the pith of the stalks. While I'm on the subject, I will mention something which some may marvel at. In spite of the quality of sugar—which, as everyone knows, is sweeter than anything else—we sometimes deliberately left some sugar cane to age and get musty; when it had thus decayed, we left it to soak for a while in water, and it became sour enough to serve us as vinegar.

In certain places in the woods grow many reeds and canes, as big as a man's leg; but, although while they are standing, as I said of the *paco-aire*, they are so soft that you can easily cut one down with a single stroke of the sword, when they are dry they are so hard that the savages split them in quarters, shape them into lancets or serpents' tongues, and arm the tips of their arrows with them so well that when they let fly with them they stop a wild beast at the first hit. Speaking of canes and reeds, Chalcondyle in his history of the Turkish War^a says that some are found in East India which are of such exceeding height and thickness that you can make skiffs from them for crossing the rivers—in fact, he said, entire boats that can each hold twenty *mines* of wheat, each *mine* being about ten bushels according to the Greek measure.

Mastic also comes in little bushes in our land of America; along with innumerable other odiferous plants and flowers, it gives the earth the sweetest fragrance.

Where we were, under the tropic of Capricorn, while there are great thunderstorms (which the savages call *Toupan*), downpours, and strong winds, nevertheless it never freezes, snows or hails, and therefore the trees are not attacked or damaged by cold and storms as ours are over here; you will never see them bare and stripped of their leaves, and all year long the forests are as green as the laurel in our France.

Since I am on the subject, over here our shortest days are in December, when, benumbed with cold, we blow on our fingers, and have icicles hanging from our noses. But it is then that our Americans have their longest days, and it is so hot in their country that, as my voyage companions and I found by experiment, we could go bathing there at Christmas to cool ourselves off. However, as those who understand the globe can comprehend, the days are neither as long nor as short in the tropics as

^a[*Rebus Gestis Turcorum*.] Book III, Chapter 14.

they are in our climate. So those who live there have days of more equal length, and (although the ancients thought otherwise) the seasons are incomparably more temperate.

And that is what I had to say about the trees of the land of Brazil.

As for the plants and herbs, which I also want to mention, I will begin with those which, because of their fruits and their effects, seem to me the most excellent. First, the plant that produces the fruit called by the savages *ananas*,^a has a form like that of a gladiolus, but with leaves slightly curved and hollowed all around, more like the aloe's. It grows compacted like a great thistle; its fruit, related to our artichoke, is as big as a medium-sized melon, and shaped like a pinecone, but does not hang or bend to one side or the other.

When these *ananas* have come to maturity, and are of an iridescent yellow, they have such a fragrance of raspberry that when you go through the woods and other places where they grow, you can smell them from far off; and as for the taste, it melts in your mouth, and it is naturally so sweet that we have no jams that surpass them; I think it is the finest fruit in America. When I was over there I pressed one of them, and extracted almost a glassful of juice, that seemed to me no less good than malmsey. The savage women brought them to us in great baskets, which they call *panacons*, along with *pacos*, which I have already mentioned, and other fruits, which we got from them in exchange for a comb or a mirror.

As for the herbs produced by that land of Brazil, there is one that our Tupinamba call *petun*,^b which grows a little higher than our sorrel; its leaves are rather similar, but resemble even more those of *Consolida major*.^c This herb is greatly prized among the savages because of a singular property, which you will hear about. Here is what they do with it. After they have gathered it and hung it by little handfuls to dry in their houses, they take four or five leaves of it, and wrap them in another big leaf of a tree, like a spice cornet. Then they set the small end of it on fire, and, putting it slightly lit into their mouths, they draw on the smoke, which, though it comes back out through their nostrils and through their pierced lips, nonetheless sustains them so well that if they go off to war, and necessity presses them, they will go three or four days without nourishing themselves on anything else. They use it for another purpose as

^a[The pineapple. The other early chroniclers also wrote of it ecstatically.]

^b[Tobacco.]

^c[The herbalists' name for comfrey (*Symphytum officinale* L.).]

well: because it distills the superfluous humors from the brain, not only will you hardly ever see one of them without a cornet of this herb hanging from his neck, but, to enhance their presence while they are speaking with you, they inhale the smoke, which, as I have said, comes back out through the nose and the split lips as from an incense-burner; the smell of it is not unpleasant. I have not, however, seen it used by the women, and I don't know why. I can say, having tried this *petun* smoke myself, that it seemed to satisfy and ward off hunger.

Furthermore, although nicotiana (or the "Queen's herb") is now called *petun* over here, it is by no means the herb I am speaking of; on the contrary, these two plants have nothing in common, either in form or in property. The author of *The Country House*,⁸ Book Two, Chapter 79, affirms that nicotiana—which, he says, gets this name from Monsieur Nicot, who first sent it from Portugal to France—was brought from Florida, more than a thousand leagues from our land of Brazil (for the whole Torrid Zone lies between the two). Although I have searched in several gardens where it was claimed that *petun* was growing, I have as yet seen none in our France. And lest he who has lately treated us to his *angoumoise*, which he says is true *petun*, should think that I am ignorant of what he has written about it: if the nature of the herb that he mentions resembles the picture that he had done for his *Cosmography*, I will say about it just what I did about nicotiana. So in this case I do not concede what he claims: that is, that he was the first to bring the *petun* seed to France, where I judge that, because of the cold, this herb could grow only with difficulty.⁹

I have also seen over there a kind of cabbage, which the savages call *cajou-a*,^a from which they sometimes make soup; it has leaves as large and of the same shape as those of the water lily that grows in the marshes of this country.

As for roots, besides those of *maniot* and *aypi*, from which, as I said in the Chapter IX, the savage women make flour, they have still others that they call *hetich*,^b which grow in as great abundance in the land of Brazil as turnips in Limousin or Savoie; they are usually as big as two fists, and about a foot and a half long. When you see them pulled out of the ground, you would think at first, from their appearance, that they were all of one kind; however, seeing that during cooking some become

^a[Perhaps *taióba* (*Colocasia esculenta* (L.) Schott).]

^b[The sweet potato, *Ipomoea batatas*.]

violet, like certain carrots of this country, others yellow as quinces, and others whitish, I think that there are three kinds of them. But whatever the case may be, I can assure you that when they are cooked in ashes, especially the ones that turn yellow, they are no less good to eat than the best pears that we have. As for their leaves, which trail on the ground like *Hedera terrestris*,^a they are very similar to those of cucumbers, or the largest spinach leaves that are to be seen over here; but they are not so green, for their color is closer to that of *vitis alba*.^b Because they bear no seeds, the savage women, taking as much care as possible to make them multiply, do nothing other (and here is a wonderful work of agriculture) than to cut them up into little pieces, as we cut up carrots here to make salads; when they have sown them through the fields, after a certain time they have as many big *hetich* roots as they have sown little pieces. However, seeing that it is the greatest manna of that land of Brazil, and that as you travel through the country you see almost nothing else, I think that for the most part it grows without anyone putting a hand to it.

The savages have likewise a kind of fruit that they call *manobi*,^c which grows in the earth like truffles, and are connected to each other by little filaments; the kernel is no bigger than that of our hazelnuts, and has the same taste. They are of a grayish color, and the husk is no harder than the shell of a pea; but as to whether they have leaves and seeds, even though I have eaten of this fruit many times, I must confess that I didn't observe it well enough, and I don't remember.

There is also a quantity of a certain long pepper, which the merchants back over here use only for dye; but our savages skillfully pound it and crush it with salt, keeping sea water in ditches for that very purpose. They call this mixture *ionquet*, and they use it as we do table salt. They do not, however, salt their pieces of meat or fish before putting them in their mouths as we do; instead, they first take the piece separately, and then take a pinch of this *ionquet* in their mouths with each bite to give flavor to their meat.

Finally, there grows in that country a kind of bean as thick and wide as a thumb, which the savages call *commanda-ouassou*, as well as little black and gray peas, which they call *commanda-miri*, and certain round pumpkins, called *marongans*,¹⁰ which are very sweet to eat.

^a[The herbalists' name for ground ivy.]

^b[Apparently the herbalists' name for white bryony, in the gourd family.]

^c[The peanut (*Arachis hypogaea* L.).]

And there you have not all that could be said of the trees, herbs, and fruits of that land of Brazil, but what I observed during the year I lived there. To conclude, just as I declared before—that there are no four-footed beasts, birds, fish, or any other animals in America that completely resemble in all respects those that we have in Europe—so too, I will say that, as I have carefully observed going and coming through the woods and fields of that country, except for three herbs—purslane, basil, and fern, which grow in several places—I have seen no trees, herbs, or fruits that are not different from ours. Therefore every time that the image of this new world which God has let me see presents itself before my eyes, and I consider the serenity of the air, the diversity of the animals, the variety of the birds, the beauty of the trees and the plants, the excellence of the fruits, and, in short, the riches that adorn this land of Brazil, the exclamation of the Prophet in Psalm 104 comes to my mind: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."¹¹

Thus, happy would be the people who dwell there, if they knew the Author and Creator of all these things; but I am about to treat matters which will show how far removed they are from such knowledge.