THE GREAT MIGRATION

family; and by some botanists it has been classed among the pandanaceas, or screw pines. Growing, as its leaves do, almost  
out of the earth, or with only a short trunk, it bears a very marked resemblance to the cycads; but for all this, it is a true  
palm. Its not having a tall trunk is no reason why it should not be a palm, since many other species of palmaceae are  
equally destitute of a visible stem. It is now, however, acknowledged by the most expert botanists, that the tagua or   
cabeza del negro, as the Peruvians style it is a palm: and it has been honoured as the representative of a genus  
(phytelephas), of which there are but species known the great fruited and little fruited (macrocarpa and macrocarpa). Both  
are natives of the hot valleys of the andes, and differ very little from each other; but it is species with the larger fruit  
that is distinguished by the figurative title of negro’s head. The Peruvian Indians use the pinnate fronds of both species for  
thatching their huts; but it is the nuts of the larger one that have given its great celebrity to the tree. These are of an  
oblong triangular shape; and a great number of them are enclosed in the pericarp, already described. When young, they  
are filled with a watery liquid that has no particular taste: though regarded by the Indians as a most refreshing beverage.  
A little older, this crystal like fluid turns of a milky colour and consistence; and still later it becomes a white paste. When  
fully ripe, it congeals to the whiteness and hardness of ivory itself and. If kept out of water, is even more beautiful in  
texture than, the tusks of the elephant. It has been employed by the Indians from time immemorial in the construction of  
buttons, heads for their pipes, and many other purposes. Of late years it has found its way into the hands of civilised  
artisans and, since it can be procured at a cheaper rate, and is quite equal to the real ivory for many useful and  
ornamental articles, it has become an important item of commerce. But however much the vegetable ivory may be   
esteemed by the Indians, or by bipeds of any kind, there is one quadruped who thinks quite as much of it as they, and that  
is the black bear of the andes (ursus frugilegus). It is not, however, when it has reached the condition of ivory that bruin  
cares for it. Then the nut would be too hard, even for his powerful jaws to crack. It is when it is the milky state or  
rather after it has become coagulated to a paste that he relishes it and with so much avidity does he devour the sweet  
pulp, that at this season he is easily discovered in this midst of his depredations, and will scarce move away from his meal  
even upon the appearance of the hunter while engaged in devouring his favourite negro head, he appears indifferent to  
any danger that may threaten him. Of this our hunters had proof, and very shortly after entering among the tagua trees.  
As the tigrero had predicted, they soon came upon the sign of a bear, and almost in the same instant discovered bruin  
himself browsing upon the fruit. The young hunters, and pouchskin too, were about getting ready to fire upon him;  
when, to their surprise, they saw the tigrero, who was mounted on a prancing little horse, spur out in front of them, and   
gallop towards the bear. They knew that the killing of the animal should have been left to them; but, as they had given  
their guide no notice of this, they said nothing, but looked on leaving the tigrero to manage matters after his own way. It  
 was evident that he intended to attack the bear, and in a peculiar fashion. They knew this by seeing that he carried a coil  
of raw hide rope over his arm, on one end of which there was a ring and loop. They knew, moreover, that this was a   
celebrated weapon of the south americans the lazo, in short; but never having witnessed an exhibition of its use, they  
were curious to do so; and this also influenced them to keep their places. In a few minutes the horseman had galloped  
within some paces of the bear. The latter took the alarm, and commenced trotting off; but with a sullen reluctance,  
which showed that he had no great disposition to shun the encounter. The ground was tolerably clear, the taguas  
standing far apart, and many of them not rising higher than the bear’s back. This gave the spectators an opportunity of  
witnessing the chase. It was not a long the bear perceiving that the horseman was gaining upon him, turned suddenly in  
his tracks, and, with an angry growl rose erect upon his hind legs, and stood facing his pursuer in an attitude of defiance.  
As the horseman drew near, however, he appear to become cowed, and once more turning tail, shambled off through  
the bushes. This time he only ran a few lengths; for the shouts of the opportunity of which the hunter was in expectation;  
and before the bear could lower himself on all fours to charge forward upon the horse, the long rope went spinning  
through the air, and its noose was seen settling over the shoulders of the bear. The huge quadruped, puzzled by this  
mode of attack endeavoured to seize hold of the rope; but so thin was the raw hide thong that he could not clutch it   
with his great unwieldy paws; and by his efforts he only drew the noose tighter around his neck. Meanwhile, the hunter,  
on projecting the lazo, had wheeled, with the quickness of though; and, driving his sharp spurs into the ribs of horse,  
  
 CONFIDENTIAL 2603