

heated again by the rays of the sun, emits that musky odour which in the torrid zone, is common to animals of very different classes, viz.: to the jaguar, the small species of tiger cat, the cabiai or thick-nosed tapir,* the galinazo vulture,† the crocodile, the viper, and the rattlesnake. The gaseous emanations, which are the vehicles of this aroma, seem to be evolved in proportion only as the mould, containing the spoils of an innumerable quantity of reptiles, worms, and insects, begins to be impregnated with water. I have seen Indian children, of the tribe of the Chaymas, draw out from the earth and eat millepedes or scolopendras‡ eighteen inches long, and seven lines broad. Whenever the soil is turned up, we are struck with the mass of organic substances, which by turns are developed, transformed, and decomposed. Nature in these climates appears more active, more fruitful, we may even say more prodigal, of life.

On this shore, and near the dairies just mentioned, we enjoy, especially at sunrise, a very beautiful prospect over an elevated group of calcareous mountains. As this group subtends an angle of three degrees only at the house where we dwelt, it long served me to compare the variations of the terrestrial refraction with the meteorological phenomena. Storms are formed in the centre of this Cordillera; and we see from afar thick clouds resolve into abundant rains, while during seven or eight months not a drop of water falls at Cumana. The Brigantine, which is the highest part of this chain, raises itself in a very picturesque manner behind Brito and Tataraqual. It takes its name from the form of a very deep valley on the northern declivity, which resembles the interior of a ship. The summit of this mountain is almost bare of vegetation, and is flat like that of Mowna-Roa, in the Sandwich Islands. It is a perpendicular wall, or, to use a more expressive term of the Spanish navigators, a table (mesa). This peculiar form, and the sym-

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stone

* *Cavia capybara*, Lin.; chiguire.

† *Vultur aura*, Lin., Zamuro, or Galinazo: the Brazilian vulture of Buffon. I cannot reconcile myself to the adoption of names, which designate, as belonging to a single country, animals common to a whole continent.

‡ Scolopendras are very common behind the castle of San Antonio, on the summit of the hill.