

examining the spot where the *barbacoa*, or couch, was placed, the cause of this strange adventure was easily discovered. The ground was disturbed to a considerable depth. It was dried mud, which had covered the crocodile in that state of lethargy, or summer-sleep, in which many of the species lie during the absence of the rains in the Llanos. The noise of men and horses, perhaps the smell of the dog, had aroused the crocodile. The hut being built at the edge of the pool, and inundated during part of the year, the crocodile had no doubt entered, at the time of the inundation of the savannahs, by the same opening at which it was seen to go out. The Indians often find enormous boas, which they call *uji*, or water-serpents,* in the same lethargic state. To reanimate them, they must be irritated, or wetted with water. Boas are killed, and immersed in the streams, to obtain, by means of putrefaction, the tendinous parts of the dorsal muscles, of which excellent guitar-strings are made at Calabozo, preferable to those furnished by the intestines of the alouate monkeys.

The drought and heat of the Llanos act like cold upon animals and plants. Beyond the tropics the trees lose their leaves in a very dry air. Reptiles, particularly crocodiles and boas, having very indolent habits, leave with reluctance the basins in which they have found water at the period of great inundations. In proportion as the pools become dry, these animals penetrate into the mud, to seek that degree of humidity which gives flexibility to their skin and integuments. In this state of repose they are seized with stupefaction; but possibly they preserve a communication with the external air; and, however little that communication may be, it possibly suffices to keep up the respiration of an animal of the saurian family, provided with enormous pulmonary sacs, exerting no muscular motion, and in which almost all the vital functions are suspended. It is probable that the mean temperature of the dried mud, exposed to the solar rays, is more than 40°. When the north of Egypt, where the coolest month does not fall below 13·4°, was inhabited by crocodiles, they were often found torpid with cold. They were subject to a winter-sleep, like the Euro-

* *Culebra de agua*, named by the common people *traga-venado*, 'the swallower of stags.' The word *uji* belongs to the Tamanac language.