

The Indians say that these reptiles, slow in their movements when they are not pursued, creep near a man because they are fond of heat. In fact, on the banks of the Magdalena a serpent entered the bed of one of our fellow-travellers, and remained there a part of the night, without injuring him. Without wishing to take up the defence of vipers and rattlesnakes, I believe it may be affirmed that, if these venomous animals had such a disposition for offence as is supposed, the human species would certainly not have withstood their numbers in some parts of America; for instance, on the banks of the Orinoco and the humid mountains of Choco.

We embarked on the 8th of May at sunrise, after having carefully examined the bottom of our canoe. It had become thinner, but had received no crack in the *portage*. We reckoned that it would still bear the voyage of three hundred leagues, which we had yet to perform, in going down the Rio Negro, ascending the Cassiquiare, and re-descending the Orinoco as far as Angostura. The Pimichin, which is called a rivulet (*caño*) is tolerably broad; but small trees that love the water narrow the bed so much that there remains open a channel of only fifteen or twenty toises. Next to the Rio Chagres this river is one of the most celebrated in America for the number of its windings: it is said to have eighty-five, which greatly lengthen it. They often form right angles, and occur every two or three leagues. To determine the difference of longitude between the landing-place and the point where we were to enter the Rio Negro, I took by the compass the course of the Caño Pimichin, and noted the time during which we followed the same direction. The velocity of the current was only 2.4 feet in a second; but our canoe made by rowing 4.6 feet. The *embarcadero* of the Pimichin appeared to me to be eleven thousand toises west of its mouth, and 0° 2' west of the mission of Javita. This Caño is navigable during the whole year, and has but one *raudal*, which is somewhat difficult to go up; its banks are low, but rocky. After having followed the windings of the Pimichin for four hours and a half we at length entered the Rio Negro.

The morning was cool and beautiful. We had now been confined thirty-six days in a narrow boat, so unsteady that