

we indulged the hope of at length sleeping in a spot that was inhabited, and of taking some exercise in herbalizing. This anticipation was, however, disturbed at our last resting-place on the Cassiquiare. Whilst we were sleeping on the edge of the forest, we were warned by the Indians, in the middle of the night, that they heard very near us the cries of a jaguar. These cries, they alleged, came from the top of some neighbouring trees. Such is the thickness of the forests in these regions, that scarcely any animals are to be found there but such as climb trees; as, for instance, the monkeys, animals of the weasel tribe, jaguars, and other species of the genus *Felis*.

As our fires burnt brightly, we paid little attention to the cries of the jaguars. They had been attracted by the smell and noise of our dog. This animal (which was of the mastiff breed) began at first to bark; and when the tiger drew nearer, to howl, hiding himself below our hammocks. How great was our grief, when in the morning, at the moment of re-embarking, the Indians informed us that the dog had disappeared! There could be no doubt that it had been carried off by the jaguars.\* Perhaps, when their cries had ceased, it had wandered from the fires on the side of the beach; and possibly we had not heard its moans, as we were in a profound sleep. We have often heard the inhabitants of the banks of the Orinoco and the Rio Magdalena affirm, that the oldest jaguars will carry off animals from the midst of a halting-place, cunningly grasping them by the neck so as to prevent their cries. We waited part of the morning, in the hope that our dog had only strayed. Three days after we came back to the same place; we heard again the cries of the jaguars, for these animals have a predilection for particular spots; but all our search was vain. The dog, which had accompanied us from Caracas, and had so often in swimming escaped the pursuit of the crocodiles,† had been devoured in the forest.

On the 21st May, we again entered the bed of the Orinoco, three leagues below the mission of Esmeralda. It was now a month since we had left that river near the mouth of the Guaviare. We had still to proceed seven

\* See Views of Nature, p. 195.

† Ibid., p. 198.