

of Cuba, there are both crocodiles and caymans."\* To these valuable observations of Dampier, I may add that the real crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*) is found in the West India Islands nearest the main land, for instance, at the island of Trinidad; at Marguerita; and also, probably, at Curaçao, notwithstanding the want of fresh water. It is observed, further south, in the Neveri, the Rio Magdalena, the Apure, and the Orinoco, as far as the confluence of the Cassiquiare with the Rio Negro (lat. 2° 2'), consequently more than four hundred leagues from Batabano. It would be interesting to verify on the eastern coast of Mexico and Guatemala, between the Mississippi and the Rio Chagres (in the isthmus of Panama), the limit of the different species of carnivorous reptiles.

We set sail on the 9th of March, somewhat incommoded by the extreme smallness of our vessel, which afforded us no sleeping-place but upon deck. The cabin (*camera de pozo*) received no air or light but from above; it was merely a hold for provisions, and it was with difficulty that we could place our instruments in it. The thermometer kept up constantly at 32° and 33° (centesimal.) Luckily these inconveniences lasted only twenty days. Our several voyages in the canoes of the Orinoco, and a passage in an American vessel laden with several thousand arrobas of salt meat dried in the sun had rendered us not very fastidious.

The gulf of Batabano, bounded by a low and marshy coast, looks like a vast desert. The fishing birds, which are generally at their post whilst the small land birds, and the indolent vultures† are at roost, are seen only in small numbers. The sea is of a greenish-brown hue, as in some of the lakes of Switzerland; while the air, owing to its extreme purity, had, at the moment the sun appeared above the horizon, a cold tint of pale blue, similar to that which landscape painters observe at the same hour in the south of Italy, and which makes distant objects stand out in strong relief. Our sloop was the only vessel in the gulf; for the roadstead of Batabano is scarcely visited except by smugglers, or, as they are here politely called, "the traders," (*los tratantes*). The projected canal of Guines will render

\* Dampier's *Voyages and Descriptions* (1599).

† *Vultur aura*.