

half a century ago. This region is filled with ruins both ancient and modern, but of the former very few of any size remain. Some of the ranchos have, however, been re-peopled and most of the birds have been obtained in the vicinity of the clearings. At Yok Jonat Ku there is a large forest where the trees are high and the ground comparatively open; here the magnificent turkey *Meleagris ocellata* is still to be found. At one time this bird was distributed all over the peninsula, but owing to the depredations of the Indians, who esteem it highly as an article of food, it is now almost exterminated.

Lagartos is a sea-port town at the mouth of the river, or more properly an arm of the sea bearing the same name, and innumerable streams or—as Dr. Gaumer believed—subterranean rivers find an outlet there. The waters are very salt, and in the dry season are even more saline than the sea itself. This so-called river is broad and shallow, bordered by a dense growth of low bush, behind which lie marshes of salt or brackish water, and here in June and July thousands of flamingoes in their finest plumage were seen by Dr. Gaumer, while swarms of other sea-birds were always in sight. The innumerable hosts of mosquitoes which come with the first rain impeded the work here, and the intermittent and pernicious fevers render collecting both difficult and dangerous. The country generally has no surface water, and the only supply is from the Aguadas and Cenotes (Senotes or Jonats), as they are called by the natives. Fortunately the Aguadas, which are said to be of natural formation, but which appear to have been reconstructed by the ancient Indian races, are very numerous; they consist of a deep excavation in the earth, sometimes circular in form, but giving the idea of having been at one time quadrilateral, and from fifty to one hundred feet in diameter. They contain water all the year round, though never of any great depth. The sides being inclined, they form natural drinking places and are much frequented by animals and birds—so much so, that the collector usually obtains a good number of specimens in the vicinity.

The Cenotes are probably natural openings in the earth with steep walls of limestone frequently sixty feet high; they vary in size and shape, but always contain clear, fresh water. They are believed to be openings to underground rivers, and are frequently found in immense caves with a narrow circular mouth; at the water's edge there is no resting-place and no approach except by the steep sides. Vultures, owls, and similar birds nest in the walls. The caves are also frequented by swallows, bats, and motmots, and reptiles are said to occur in immense numbers. The water contains numerous fish belonging to the Siluridæ, and in the shallow open water-holes near the coast there is said to be another species belonging to the same group, but Dr. Gaumer was, unfortunately, unable to capture a specimen. The distribution of these Siluridæ confirms the belief that underground rivers in Yucatan do exist.

A very interesting description of the climate (in 1878–1879) is given by Dr. Gaumer*,

* See Boucard, P. Z. S. 1883, pp. 434–462.