

These physical considerations on the steppes of the New World are linked with others more interesting, inasmuch as they are connected with the history of our species. The great sea of sand in Africa, the deserts without water, are frequented only by caravans, that take fifty days to traverse them.* Separating the Negro race from the Moors, and the Berber and Kabyle tribes, the Sahara is inhabited only in the oases. It affords pasturage only in the eastern part, where, from the effect of the trade-winds, the layer of sand being less thick, the springs appear at the surface of the earth. In America, the steppes, less vast, less scorching, fertilized by fine rivers, present fewer obstacles to the intercourse of nations. The Llanos separate the chain of the coast of Caracas and the Andes of New Grenada from the region of forests; from that woody region of the Orinoco which, from the first discovery of America, has been inhabited by nations more rude, and farther removed from civilization, than the inhabitants of the coast, and still more than the mountaineers of the Cordilleras. The steppes, however, were no more heretofore the rampart of civilization than they are now the rampart of the liberty of the hordes that live in the forests. They have not hindered the nations of the Lower Orinoco from going up the little rivers and making incursions to the north and the west. If, according to the various distribution of animals on the globe, the pastoral life could have existed in the New World,—if, before the arrival of the Spaniards, the Llanos and the Pampas had been filled with those numerous herds of cows and horses that graze there, Columbus would have found the human race in a state quite different. Pastoral nations living on milk and cheese, real nomad races, would have spread themselves over those vast plains which communicate with each other. They would have been seen at the period of great droughts, and even at that of inundations, fighting for the possession of pastures; subjugating one another mutually; and, united by the common tie of manners, language, and worship, they would have risen to that state of demi-civilization which we observe with surprise in the nations of the Mongol and Tartar race.

* This is the maximum of the time, according to Major Rennell. (*Travels of Mungo Park*, vol. ii.)