

by the name of *peones llaneros*, are partly freed-men and partly slaves. They are constantly exposed to the burning heat of the tropical sun. Their food is meat, dried in the air, and a little salted; and of this even their horses sometimes partake. Being always in the saddle, they fancy they cannot make the slightest excursion on foot. We found an old negro slave, who managed the farm in the absence of his master. He told us of herds composed of several thousand cows, that were grazing in the steppes; yet we asked in vain for a bowl of milk. We were offered, in a calabash, some yellow, muddy, and fetid water, drawn from a neighbouring pool. The indolence of the inhabitants of the Llanos is such that they do not dig wells, though they know that almost everywhere, at ten feet deep, fine springs are found in a stratum of conglomerate, or red sandstone. After suffering during one half of the year from the effect of inundations, they quietly resign themselves, during the other half, to the most distressing deprivation of water. The old negro advised us to cover the cup with a linen cloth, and drink as through a filter, that we might not be incommoded by the smell, and might swallow less of the yellowish mud suspended in the water. We did not then think that we should afterwards be forced, during whole months, to have recourse to this expedient. The waters of the Orinoco are always loaded with earthy particles; they are even putrid, where dead bodies of alligators are found in the creeks, lying on banks of sand, or half-buried in the mud.

No sooner were our instruments unloaded and safely placed, than our mules were set at liberty to go, as they say here, *para buscar agua*, that is, "to search for water." There are little pools round the farm, which the animals find, guided by their instinct, by the view of some scattered tufts of *mauritia*, and by the sensation of humid coolness, caused by little currents of air amid an atmosphere which to us appears calm and tranquil. When the pools of water are far distant, and the people of the farm are too lazy to lead the cattle to these natural watering-places, they confine them during five or six hours in a very hot stable before they let them loose. Excess of thirst then augments their sagacity, sharpening as it were their senses and their