

instinct. No sooner is the stable opened, than the horses and mules, especially the latter (for the penetration of these animals exceeds the intelligence of the horses), rush into the savannahs. With upraised tails and heads thrown back they run against the wind, stopping from time to time as if exploring space; they follow less the impressions of sight than of smell; and at length announce, by prolonged neighings, that there is water in the direction of their course. All these movements are executed more promptly, and with readier success, by horses born in the Llanos, and which have long enjoyed their liberty, than by those that come from the coast, and descend from domestic horses. In animals, for the most part, as in man, the quickness of the senses is diminished by long subjection, and by the habits that arise from a fixed abode and the progress of cultivation.

We followed our mules in search of one of those pools, whence the muddy water had been drawn, that so ill quenched our thirst. We were covered with dust, and tanned by the sandy wind, which burns the skin even more than the rays of the sun. We longed impatiently to take a bath, but we found only a great pool of feculent water, surrounded with palm-trees. The water was turbid, though, to our great astonishment, a little cooler than the air. Accustomed during our long journey to bathe whenever we had an opportunity, often several times in one day, we hastened to plunge into the pool. We had scarcely begun to enjoy the coolness of the bath, when a noise which we heard on the opposite bank, made us leave the water precipitately. It was an alligator plunging into the mud.

We were only at the distance of a quarter of a league from the farm, yet we continued walking more than an hour without reaching it. We perceived too late that we had taken a wrong direction. Having left it at the decline of day, before the stars were visible, we had gone forward into the plain at hazard. We were, as usual, provided with a compass, and it might have been easy for us to steer our course from the position of Canopus and the Southern Cross; but unfortunately we were uncertain whether, on leaving the farm, we had gone towards the east or the south. We attempted to return to the spot where we had bathed,