

ordinary visual horizon. I need not mention those tracts destitute of vegetation, which appear like large lakes with an undulating surface. This phenomenon, observed in very remote times, has occasioned the mirage to receive in Sanscrit the expressive name of *desire of the antelope*. We admire the frequent allusions in the Indian, Persian, and Arabic poets, to the magical effects of terrestrial refraction. It was scarcely known to the Greeks and Romans. Proud of the riches of their soil, and the mild temperature of the air, they would have felt no envy of this poetry of the desert. It had its birth in Asia; and the oriental poets found its source in the nature of the country they inhabited. They were inspired with the aspect of those vast solitudes, interposed like arms of the sea or gulfs, between lands which nature had adorned with her most luxuriant fertility.

The plain assumes at sunrise a more animated aspect. The cattle, which had reposed during the night along the pools, or beneath clumps of mauritias and rhopalas, were now collected in herds; and these solitudes became peopled with horses, mules, and oxen, that live here free, rather than wild, without settled habitations, and disdaining the care and protection of man. In these hot climates, the oxen, though of Spanish breed, like those of the cold table-lands of Quito, are of a gentle disposition. A traveller runs no risk of being attacked or pursued, as we often were in our excursions on the back of the Cordilleras, where the climate is rude, the aspect of the country more wild, and food less abundant. As we approached Calabozo, we saw herds of roebucks browsing peacefully in the midst of horses and oxen. They are called *matacani*; their flesh is good; they are a little larger than our roes, and resemble deer with a very sleek skin, of a fawn-colour, spotted with white. Their horns appear to me to have single points. They had little fear of the presence of man: and in herds of thirty or forty we observed several that were entirely white. This variety, common enough among the large stags of the cold climates of the Andes, surprised us in these low and burning plains. I have since learned, that even the jaguar, in the hot regions of Paraguay, sometimes affords albino varieties, the skin of which is of such uniform white.