

polyhedron, formed of planes variously inclined, we may conceive by the mere inspection of the maps, that the intersection of these slopes, rising towards the north, the west, and south,\* between San Fernando de Apure, Caycara, and the mouth of the Meta, must cause a considerable depression. The savannahs in this basin are covered with twelve or fourteen feet of water, and present, at the period of rains, the aspect of a great lake. The farms and villages which seem as if situated on shoals, scarcely rise two or three feet above the surface of the water. Everything here calls to mind the inundations of Lower Egypt, and the lake of Xarayes, heretofore so celebrated among geographers, though it exists only during some months of the year. The swellings of the rivers Apure, Meta, and Orinoco, are also periodical. In the rainy season, the horses that wander in the savannah, and have not time to reach the rising grounds of the Llanos, perish by hundreds. The mares are seen, followed by their colts,† swimming during a part of the day to feed upon the grass, the tops of which alone wave above the waters. In this state they are pursued by the crocodiles, and it is by no means uncommon to find the prints of the teeth of these carnivorous reptiles on their thighs. The carcasses of horses, mules, and cows, attract an innumerable quantity of vultures. The zamuros are the ibis of this country, and they render the same service to the inhabitants of the Llanos as the *Vultur percnopterus* to the inhabitants of Egypt.

We cannot reflect on the effects of these inundations without admiring the prodigious pliability of the organization of the animals which man has subjected to his sway. In Greenland the dog eats the refuse of the fisheries; and when fish are wanting, feeds on seaweed. The ass and the

\* The risings towards the north and west are connected with two lines of ridges, the mountains of Villa de Cura and of Merida. The third slope, running from north to south, is that of the land-strait between the Andes and the chain of Parime. It determines the general inclination of the Orinoco, from the mouth of the Guaviare to that of the Apure.

† The colts are drowned everywhere in large numbers, because they are sooner tired of swimming, and strive to follow the mares in places where the latter alone can touch the ground.