

horse, originally natives of the cold and barren plains of Upper Asia, follow man to the New World, return to the wild state, and lead a restless and weary life in the burning climates of the tropics. Pressed alternately by excess of drought and of humidity, they sometimes seek a pool in the midst of a bare and dusty plain, to quench their thirst; and at other times flee from water, and the overflowing rivers, as menaced by an enemy that threatens them on all sides. Tormented during the day by gadflies and mosquitos, the horses, mules, and cows find themselves attacked at night by enormous bats, which fasten on their backs, and cause wounds that become dangerous, because they are filled with acaridæ and other hurtful insects. In the time of great drought the mules gnaw even the thorny cactus* in order to imbibe its cooling juice, and draw it forth as from a vegetable fountain. During the great inundations these same animals lead an amphibious life, surrounded by crocodiles, water-serpents, and manatis. Yet, such are the immutable laws of nature, that their races are preserved in the struggle with the elements, and amid so many sufferings and dangers. When the waters retire, and the rivers return again into their beds, the savannah is overspread with a beautiful scented grass; and the animals of Europe and Upper Asia seem to enjoy, as in their native climes, the renewed vegetation of spring.

During the time of great floods, the inhabitants of these countries, to avoid the force of the currents, and the danger arising from the trunks of trees which these currents bring down, instead of ascending the beds of rivers in their boats, cross the savannahs. To go from San Fernando to the villages of San Juan de Payara, San Raphael de Atamaica, or San Francisco de Capanaparo, they direct their course due south, as if they were crossing a single river of twenty leagues broad. The junctions of the Guarico, the Apure, the Cabullare, and the Arauca with the Orinoco, form, at a hundred and sixty leagues from the coast of Guiana, a kind of interior Delta, of which hydrography furnishes few examples in the Old World. According to the height of the

* The asses are particularly adroit in extracting the moisture contained in the Cactus melocatus. They push aside the thorns with their hoofs; but sometimes lame themselves in performing this feat.