

thirty wild horses and mules to take the water. The Indians surround the basin into which they are driven, armed with long canes, or harpoons; some mount the trees whose branches hang over the water, all endeavouring by their cries and instruments to keep the horses from escaping: for a long time the victory seems doubtful, or to incline to the fishes. The mules, disabled by the frequency and force of the shocks, disappear under the water; and some horses, in spite of the active vigilance of the Indians, gain the banks, and, overcome by fatigue and benumbed by the shocks they have encountered, stretch themselves at their length on the ground. There could not, says Humboldt, be a finer subject for a painter; groups of Indians surrounding the basin; the horses, with their hair on end, and terror and agony in their eyes, endeavouring to escape the tempest that has overtaken them; the eels, yellowish and livid, looking like great aquatic serpents, swimming on the surface of the water in pursuit of their enemy.

In a few minutes two horses were already drowned: the eel, more than five feet long, gliding under the belly of the horse or mule, made a discharge of its electric battery on the whole extent, attacking at the same instant the heart and the viscera. The animals, stupified by these repeated shocks, fall into a profound lethargy, and, deprived of all sense, sink under the water, when the other horses and mules passing over their bodies, they are soon drowned. The *Gymnoti* having thus discharged their accumulation of the electric fluid, now become harmless, and are no longer dreaded: swimming half out of the water, they flee from the horses instead of attacking them; and if they enter it the day after the battle, they are not molested, for these fishes require repose and plenty of food to enable them to accumulate a sufficient supply of their galvanic electricity. It is probable that they can act at a distance, and that their