

wind. Clouds of dust whirl in all directions. The streams dry up, and many of the poor cattle and horses of these plains die of thirst.

Then, as the heat and dust are at their worst, there comes a blessed change. Clouds gather in the sky; soon the rain begins to fall, the brooks to gurgle, and the fresh grass to grow. Then, for a time, the wild creatures are happy indeed.

But, as the weeks go by, the streams leave their channels and overflow the whole country. Presently there are several feet of water flooding the plain. There is, at one place, an elevation of a few feet in the plain, which forms the watershed between the Orinoco and the streams flowing to the northwest. The cattle and horses which have taken refuge on this slight rise are safe, but those which have not are drowned. At one season of the year the poor beasts have too much water, and at another season too little.

After the Amazon and the La Plata, the Orinoco is the largest river in South America. You must trace its course on the map, and picture to yourselves the many streams that come dancing down the eastern slopes of the Andes to unite and flow across the level, grassy plains to the marshy coast and the open sea.

The earthy matter that the Orinoco carries along with it chokes its mouth, and so a delta is formed there. The main stream, through which alone the large vessels can pass, is the southernmost channel. Boats that do not sink more than ten feet deep in the water can use the upper channels. The delta is covered with thick forests, something like those of the Amazon. The trees