

sound." The poor flighty gentleman looked quite dolorous, at the very recollection of the staking. This is a very severe punishment; four posts are driven into the ground, and the man is extended by his arms and legs horizontally, and there left to stretch for several hours. The idea is evidently taken from the usual method of drying hides. My interview passed away without a smile, and I obtained a passport and order for the government post-horses, and this he gave me in the most obliging and ready manner.

In the morning we started for Bahia Blanca, which we reached in two days. Leaving the regular encampment, we passed by the toldos of the Indians. These are round like ovens, and covered with hides; by the mouth of each, a tapering chuzo was stuck in the ground. The toldos were divided into separate groups, which belonged to the different caciques' tribes, and the groups were again divided into smaller ones, according to the relationship of the owners. For several miles we travelled along the valley of the Colorado. The alluvial plains on the side appeared fertile, and it is supposed that they are well adapted to the growth of corn. Turning northward from the river, we soon entered on a country differing from the plains south of the river. The land still continued dry and sterile; but it supported many different kinds of plants, and the grass, though brown and withered, was more abundant, as the thorny bushes were less so. These latter in a short space entirely disappeared, and the plains were left without a thicket to cover their nakedness. This change in the vegetation marks the commencement of the grand calcareo argillaceous deposit, which forms the wide extent of the Pampas, and covers the granitic rocks of Banda Oriental. From the Strait of Magellan to the Colorado, a distance of about eight hundred miles, the face of the country is everywhere composed of shingle: the pebbles are chiefly of porphyry, and probably owe their origin to the rocks of the Cordillera. North of the Colorado this bed thins out, and the pebbles become exceedingly small, and here the characteristic vegetation of Patagonia ceases.