

In the morning we sent for the horses very early, and started for another exhilarating gallop. We passed the Cabeza del Buey, an old name given to the head of a large marsh which extends from Bahia Blanca. Here we changed horses, and passed through some leagues of swamps and saline marshes. Changing horses for the last time, we again began wading through the mud. My animal fell, and I was well soused in black mire—a very disagreeable accident, when one does not possess a change of clothes. Some miles from the fort we met a man who told us that a great gun had been fired, which is a signal that Indians are near. We immediately left the road, and followed the edge of a marsh, which when chased offers the best mode of escape. We were glad to arrive within the walls, when we found all the alarm was about nothing, for the Indians turned out to be friendly ones, who wished to join General Rosas.

Bahia Blanca scarcely deserves the name of a village. A few houses and the barracks for the troops are inclosed by a deep ditch and fortified wall. The settlement is only of recent standing (since 1828); and its growth has been one of trouble. The government of Buenos Ayres unjustly occupied it by force, instead of following the wise example of the Spanish Viceroy, who purchased the land near the older settlement of the Rio Negro from the Indians. Hence the need of the fortifications; hence the few houses and little cultivated land without the limits of the walls: even the cattle are not safe from the attacks of the Indians beyond the boundaries of the plain on which the fortress stands.

The part of the harbor where the "Beagle" intended to anchor being distant twenty-five miles, I obtained from the Commandant a guide and horses to take me to see whether she had arrived. Leaving the plain of green turf, which extended along the course of a little brook, we soon entered on a wide level waste consisting either of sand, saline marshes, or bare mud. Some parts were clothed by low thickets, and others with those succulent plants which luxuriate only where salt abounds. Bad as the country was, ostriches,