

described this man's conduct, because he acted under the full impression that they were Indians. As soon, however, as the absurd mistake was found out, he gave me a hundred reasons why they could not have been Indians; but all these were forgotten at the time. We then rode on in peace and quietness to a low point called Punta Alta, whence we could see nearly the whole of the great harbor of Bahia Blanca.

The wide expanse of water is choked up by numerous great mud-banks, which the inhabitants call Cangrejales, or *crabberies*, from the number of small crabs. The mud is so soft that it is impossible to walk over them, even for the shortest distance. Many of the banks have their surfaces covered with long rushes, the tops of which alone are visible at high water. On one occasion, when in a boat, we were so entangled by these shallows that we could hardly find our way. Nothing was visible but the flat beds of mud: the day was not very clear, and there was much refraction, or, as the sailors expressed it, "things loomed high." The only object within our view which was not level was the horizon; rushes looked like bushes unsupported in the air, and water like mud-banks, and mud-banks like water.

We passed the night in Punta Alta, and I employed myself in searching for fossil bones; this point being a perfect catacomb for monsters of extinct races. The evening was perfectly calm and clear; the extreme monotony of the view gave it an interest even in the midst of mud-banks and gulls, sand-hillocks and solitary vultures. In riding back in the morning we came across a very fresh track of a Puma, but did not succeed in finding it. We saw also a couple of Zorillos, or skunks—odious animals, which are far from uncommon. In general appearance the Zorillo resembles a polecat, but it is rather larger, and much thicker in proportion. Conscious of its power, it roams by day about the open plain, and fears neither dog nor man. If a dog is urged to the attack, its courage is instantly checked by a few drops of the fetid oil, which brings on violent sickness