

foreigner, previous to my visit, had ascended this mountain; and indeed very few of the soldiers at Bahia Blanca knew anything about it. Hence we heard of beds of coal, of gold and silver, of caves, and of forests, all of which inflamed my curiosity, only to disappoint it. The distance from the posta was about six leagues, over a level plain of the same character as before. The ride was, however, interesting, as the mountain began to show its true form. When we reached the foot of the main ridge, we had much difficulty in finding any water, and we thought we should have been obliged to have passed the night without any. At last we discovered some by looking close to the mountain, for at the distance even of a few hundred yards the streamlets were buried and entirely lost in the friable calcareous stone and loose detritus. I do not think Nature ever made a more solitary, desolate pile of rock—it well deserves its name of *Hurtado*, or separated. The mountain is steep, extremely rugged, and broken, and so entirely destitute of trees, and even bushes, that we actually could not make a skewer to stretch out our meat over the fire of thistle-stalks.¹ The strange aspect of this mountain is contrasted by the sea-like plain, which not only abuts against its steep sides, but likewise separates the parallel ranges. The uniformity of the coloring gives an extreme quietness to the view—the whitish gray of the quartz rock, and the light brown of the withered grass of the plain, being unrelieved by any brighter tint. From custom, one expects to see in the neighborhood of a lofty and bold mountain a broken country strewn over with huge fragments. Here nature shows that the last movement before the bed of the sea is changed into dry land may sometimes be one of tranquillity. Under these circumstances I was curious to observe how far from the parent rock any pebbles could be found. On the shores of Bahia Blanca, and near the settlement, there were some of quartz, which certainly must have come from this source: the distance is forty-five miles.

¹ I call these thistle-stalks for the want of a more correct name. I believe it is a species of *Eryngium*.