

Sierra Tapalguen. In some parts there were fine damp plains, covered with grass, while others had a soft, black, and peaty soil. There were also many extensive but shallow lakes, and large beds of reeds. The country on the whole resembled the better parts of the Cambridgeshire fens. At night we had some difficulty in finding, amid the swamps, a dry place for our bivouac.

September 15th.—Rose very early in the morning, and shortly after passed the posta where the Indians had murdered the five soldiers. The officer had eighteen chuzo wounds in his body. By the middle of the day, after a hard gallop, we reached the fifth posta: on account of some difficulty in procuring horses we stayed there the night. As this point was the most exposed on the whole line, twenty-one soldiers were stationed here; at sunset they returned from hunting, bringing with them seven deer, three ostriches, and many armadillos and partridges. When riding through the country, it is a common practice to set fire to the plain; and hence at night, as on this occasion, the horizon was illuminated in several places by brilliant conflagrations. This is done partly for the sake of puzzling any stray Indians, but chiefly for improving the pasture. In grassy plains unoccupied by the larger ruminating quadrupeds it seems necessary to remove the superfluous vegetation by fire, so as to render the new year's growth serviceable.

The rancho at this place did not boast even of a roof, but merely consisted of a ring of thistle-stalks, to break the force of the wind. It was situated on the borders of an extensive but shallow lake, swarming with wild fowl, among which the black-necked swan was conspicuous.

The kind of plover which appears as if mounted on stilts (*Himantopus nigricollis*) is here common in flocks of considerable size. It has been wrongfully accused of inelegance; when wading about in shallow water, which is its favorite resort, its gait is far from awkward. These birds in a flock utter a noise that singularly resembles the cry of a pack of small dogs in full chase: waking in the night, I have more