

tered tufts of brown wiry grass are supported, and, still more rarely, some low thorny bushes. The weather is dry and pleasant, and the fine blue sky is but seldom obscured. When standing in the middle of one of these desert plains and looking toward the interior, the view is generally bounded by the escarpment of another plain, rather higher, but equally level and desolate; and in every other direction the horizon is indistinct from the trembling mirage which seems to rise from the heated surface.

In such a country the fate of the Spanish settlement was soon decided; the dryness of the climate during the greater part of the year, and the occasional hostile attacks of the wandering Indians, compelled the colonists to desert their half-finished buildings. The style, however, in which they were commenced shows the strong and liberal hand of Spain in the old time. The result of all the attempts to colonize this side of America south of  $41^{\circ}$  have been miserable. Port Famine expresses by its name the lingering and extreme sufferings of several hundred wretched people, of whom one alone survived to relate their misfortunes. At St. Joseph's Bay, on the coast of Patagonia, a small settlement was made; but during one Sunday the Indians made an attack and massacred the whole party, excepting two men, who remained captives during many years. At the Rio Negro I conversed with one of these men, now in extreme old age.

The zoology of Patagonia is as limited as its Flora.<sup>1</sup> On the arid plains a few black beetles (*Heteromera*) might be seen slowly crawling about, and occasionally a lizard darted from side to side. Of birds we have three carrion hawks, and in the valleys a few finches and insect-feeders. An

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<sup>1</sup> I found here a species of cactus, described by Professor Henslow under the name of *Opuntia Darwinii* (*Magazine of Zoology and Botany*, vol. i. p. 466), which was remarkable by the irritability of the stamens, when I inserted either a piece of stick or the end of my finger in the flower. The segments of the perianth also closed on the pistil, but more slowly than the stamens. Plants of this family, generally considered as tropical, occur in North America (*Lewis and Clarke's Travels*, p. 221), in the same high latitude as here, namely, in both cases, in  $47^{\circ}$ .