

were many islets, covered by thorny bushes, and the channels between them were shallow.

April 20th.—We passed the islands and set to work. Our regular day's march, although it was hard enough, carried us on an average only ten miles in a straight line, and perhaps fifteen or twenty altogether. Beyond the place where we slept last night, the country is completely *terra incognita*, for it was there that Captain Stokes turned back. We saw in the distance a great smoke, and found the skeleton of a horse, so we knew that Indians were in the neighborhood. On the next morning (21st) tracks of a party of horse, and marks left by the trailing of the chuzos, or long spears, were observed on the ground. It was generally thought that the Indians had reconnoitred us during the night. Shortly afterward we came to a spot where, from the fresh footsteps of men, children, and horses, it was evident that the party had crossed the river.

April 22d.—The country remained the same, and was extremely uninteresting. The complete similarity of the productions throughout Patagonia is one of its most striking characters. The level plains of arid shingle support the same stunted and dwarf plants; and in the valleys the same thorn-bearing bushes grow. Everywhere we see the same birds and insects. Even the very banks of the river and of the clear streamlets which entered it were scarcely enlivened by a brighter tint of green. The curse of sterility is on the land; and the water flowing over a bed of pebbles partakes of the same curse. Hence the number of waterfowl is very scanty; for there is nothing to support life in the stream of this barren river.

Patagonia, poor as she is in some respects, can, however, boast of a greater stock of small rodents than perhaps any other country in the world. Several species of mice are externally characterized by large thin ears and a very fine

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<sup>1</sup> The deserts of Syria are characterized, according to Volney (tom. i p. 351), by woody bushes, numerous rats, gazelles, and hares. In the landscape of Patagonia, the guanaco replaces the gazelle, and the agouti the hare.