

fur. These little animals swarm among the thickets in the valleys, where they cannot for months together taste a drop of water excepting the dew. They all seem to be cannibals; for no sooner was a mouse caught in one of my traps than it was devoured by others. A small and delicately-shaped fox, which is likewise very abundant, probably derives its entire support from these small animals. The guanaco is also in his proper district; herds of fifty or a hundred were common; and, as I have stated, we saw one which must have contained at least five hundred. The puma, with the condor and other carrion-hawks in its train, follows and preys upon these animals. The footsteps of the puma were to be seen almost everywhere on the banks of the river; and the remains of several guanacos, with their necks dislocated and bones broken, showed how they had met their death.

April 24th.—Like the navigators of old when approaching an unknown land, we examined and watched for the most trivial sign of a change. The drifted trunk of a tree, or a boulder of primitive rock, was hailed with joy, as if we had seen a forest growing on the flanks of the Cordillera. The top, however, of a heavy bank of clouds, which remained almost constantly in one position, was the most promising sign, and eventually turned out a true harbinger. At first the clouds were mistaken for the mountains themselves, instead of the masses of vapor condensed by their icy summits.

April 26th.—We this day met with a marked change in the geological structure of the plains. From the first starting I had carefully examined the gravel in the river, and for the last two days had noticed the presence of a few small pebbles of a very cellular basalt. These gradually increased in number and in size, but none were as large as a man's head. This morning, however, pebbles of the same rock, but more compact, suddenly became abundant, and in the course of half an hour we saw, at the distance of five or six miles, the angular edge of a great basaltic platform. When we arrived at its base we found the stream bubbling among the fallen blocks. For the next twenty-eight miles the river-