

CHAPTER XII

Valparaiso—Excursion to the Foot of the Andes—Structure of the Land—Ascend the Bell of Quillota—Shattered Masses of Greenstone—Immense Valleys—Mines—State of Miners—Santiago—Hot-baths of Cauquenes—Gold-mines—Grinding-mills—Perforated Stones—Habits of the Puma—El Turco and Tapacolo—Humming-birds

CENTRAL CHILE

JULY 23D.—The "Beagle" anchored late at night in the bay of Valparaiso, the chief seaport of Chile. When morning came everything appeared delightful. After Tierra del Fuego, the climate felt quite delicious—the atmosphere so dry, and the heavens so clear and blue with the sun shining brightly, that all nature seemed sparkling with life. The view from the anchorage is very pretty. The town is built at the very foot of a range of hills, about 1,600 feet high, and rather steep. From its position, it consists of one long, straggling street, which runs parallel to the beach, and wherever a ravine comes down, the houses are piled up on each side of it. The rounded hills, being only partially protected by a very scanty vegetation, are worn into numberless little gullies, which expose a singularly bright red soil. From this cause, and from the low whitewashed houses with tile roofs, the view reminded me of St. Cruz in Teneriffe. In a northeasterly direction there are some fine glimpses of the Andes: but these mountains appear much grander when viewed from the neighboring hills; the great distance at which they are situated can then more readily be perceived. The volcano of Aconcagua is particularly magnificent. This huge and irregularly conical mass has an elevation greater than that of Chimborazo; for, from measurements made by the officers in the "Beagle," its height is no less than 23,000 feet. The Cordillera, however, viewed