

lines and the main Cordillera a succession of level basins, generally opening into each other by narrow passages, extend far to the southward: in these the principal towns are situated, as San Felipe, Santiago, San Fernando. These basins or plains, together with the transverse flat valleys (like that of Quillota) which connect them with the coast, I have no doubt are the bottoms of ancient inlets and deep bays, such as at the present day intersect every part of Tierra del Fuego and the western coast. Chile must formerly have resembled the latter country in the configuration of its land and water. The resemblance was occasionally shown strikingly when a level fog-bank covered, as with a mantle, all the lower parts of the country: the white vapor curling into the ravines, beautifully represented little coves and bays; and here and there a solitary hillock peeping up, showed that it had formerly stood there as an islet. The contrast of these flat valleys and basins with the irregular mountains gave the scenery a character which to me was new and very interesting.

From the natural slope to seaward of these plains, they are very easily irrigated, and in consequence singularly fertile. Without this process the land would produce scarcely anything, for during the whole summer the sky is cloudless. The mountains and hills are dotted over with bushes and low trees, and excepting these the vegetation is very scanty. Each landowner in the valley possesses a certain portion of hill-country, where his half-wild cattle, in considerable numbers, manage to find sufficient pasture. Once every year there is a grand "rodeo," when all the cattle are driven down, counted, and marked, and a certain number separated to be fattened in the irrigated fields. Wheat is extensively cultivated, and a good deal of Indian corn: a kind of bean is, however, the staple article of food for the common laborers. The orchards produce an overflowing abundance of peaches, figs, and grapes. With all these advantages, the inhabitants of the country ought to be much more prosperous than they are.

16th.—The major-domo of the Hacienda was good enough