

animals started of their own accord again. The short breathing from the rarefied atmosphere is called by the Chilenos "puna"; and they have most ridiculous notions concerning its origin. Some say "all the waters here have puna"; others that "where there is snow there is puna"; and this no doubt is true. The only sensation I experienced was a slight tightness across the head and chest, like that felt on leaving a warm room and running quickly in frosty weather. There was some imagination even in this; for upon finding fossil shells on the highest ridge, I entirely forgot the puna in my delight. Certainly the exertion of walking was extremely great, and the respiration became deep and laborious: I am told that in Potosí (about 13,000 feet above the sea) strangers do not become thoroughly accustomed to the atmosphere for an entire year. The inhabitants all recommend onions for the puna; as this vegetable has sometimes been given in Europe for pectoral complaints, it may possibly be of real service:—for my part I found nothing so good as the fossil shells!

When about half-way up we met a large party with seventy loaded mules. It was interesting to hear the wild cries of the muleteers, and to watch the long descending string of the animals; they appeared so diminutive, there being nothing but the bleak mountains with which they could be compared. When near the summit, the wind, as generally happens, was impetuous and extremely cold. On each side of the ridge we had to pass over broad bands of perpetual snow, which were now soon to be covered by a fresh layer. When we reached the crest and looked backward, a glorious view was presented. The atmosphere resplendently clear; the sky an intense blue; the profound valleys; the wild broken forms; the heaps of ruins, piled up during the lapse of ages; the bright-colored rocks, contrasted with the quiet mountains of snow; all these together produced a scene no one could have imagined. Neither plant nor bird, excepting a few condors wheeling around the higher pinnacles, distracted my attention from the inanimate mass. I felt glad that I