

said to be subject to long calms, and to frequent though false appearances of gathering rainstorms: we may imagine that the wind, which coming from the eastward is thus banked up by the line of mountains, would become stagnant and irregular in its movements.

Having crossed the Peuquenes, we descended into a mountainous country, intermediate between the two main ranges, and then took up our quarters for the night. We were now in the republic of Mendoza. The elevation was probably not under 11,000 feet, and the vegetation in consequence exceedingly scanty. The root of a small scrubby plant served as fuel, but it made a miserable fire, and the wind was piercingly cold. Being quite tired with my day's work, I made up my bed as quickly as I could, and went to sleep. About midnight I observed the sky became suddenly clouded: I awakened the arriero to know if there was any danger of bad weather; but he said that without thunder and lightning there was no risk of a heavy snowstorm. The peril is imminent, and the difficulty of subsequent escape great, to any one overtaken by bad weather between the two ranges. A certain cave offers the only place of refuge: Mr. Caldcleugh, who crossed on this same day of the month, was detained there for some time by a heavy fall of snow. Casuchas, or houses of refuge, have not been built in this pass as in that of Uspallata, and therefore, during the autumn, the Portillo is little frequented. I may here remark that within the main Cordillera rain never falls, for during the summer the sky is cloudless, and in winter snowstorms alone occur.

At the place where we slept water necessarily boiled, from the diminished pressure of the atmosphere, at a lower temperature than it does in a less lofty country; the case being the converse of that of a Papin's digester. Hence the potatoes, after remaining for some hours in the boiling water, were nearly as hard as ever. The pot was left on the fire all night, and next morning it was boiled again, but yet the potatoes were not cooked. I found out this by overhearing my two companions discussing the cause; they had come to