

turned out to be small quartz pebbles. We passed through several small villages; and the valley was beautifully cultivated, and the whole scenery very grand. We were here near the main Cordillera, and the surrounding hills were lofty. In all parts of northern Chile, fruit-trees produce much more abundantly at a considerable height near the Andes than in the lower country. The figs and grapes of this district are famous for their excellence, and are cultivated to a great extent. This valley is, perhaps, the most productive one north of Quillota; I believe it contains, including Coquimbo, 25,000 inhabitants. The next day I returned to the hacienda, and thence, together with Don Jose, to Coquimbo.

June 2d.—We set out for the valley of Guasco, following the coast-road, which was considered rather less desert than the other. Our first day's ride was to a solitary house, called Yerba Buena, where there was pasture for our horses. The shower mentioned as having fallen a fortnight ago only reached about half way to Guasco; we had, therefore, in the first part of our journey a most faint tinge of green, which soon faded quite away. Even where brightest, it was scarcely sufficient to remind one of the fresh turf and budding flowers of the spring of other countries. While travelling through these deserts one feels like a prisoner shut up in a gloomy court, who longs to see something green and to smell a moist atmosphere.

June 3d.—Yerba Buena to Carizal. During the first part of the day we crossed a mountainous rocky desert, and afterward a long deep sandy plain, strewn with broken sea-shells. There was very little water, and that little saline: the whole country, from the coast to the Cordillera, is an uninhabited desert. I saw traces only of one living animal in abundance, namely, the shells of a *Bulimus*, which were collected together in extraordinary numbers on the driest spots. In the spring one humble little plant sends out a few leaves, and on these the snails feed. As they are seen only very early in the morning, when the ground is slightly damp with dew, the