

ble. All the inhabitants are more or less directly concerned with mines; and mines and ores are the sole subjects of conversation. Necessaries of all sorts are extremely dear; as the distance from the town to the port is eighteen leagues, and the land carriage very expensive. A fowl costs five or six shillings; meat is nearly as dear as in England; firewood, or rather sticks, are brought on donkeys from a distance of two and three days' journey within the Cordillera; and pasturage for animals is a shilling a day: all this for South America is wonderfully exorbitant.

June 26th.—I hired a guide and eight mules to take me into the Cordillera by a different line from my last excursion. As the country was utterly desert, we took a cargo and a half of barley mixed with chopped straw. About two leagues above the town, a broad valley called the "Despoblado," or uninhabited, branches off from that one by which we had arrived. Although a valley of the grandest dimensions, and leading to a pass across the Cordillera, yet it is completely dry, excepting perhaps for a few days during some very rainy winter. The sides of the crumbling mountains were furrowed by scarcely any ravines; and the bottom of the main valley, filled with shingle, was smooth and nearly level. No considerable torrent could ever have flowed down this bed of shingle; for if it had, a great cliff-bounded channel, as in all the southern valleys, would assuredly have been formed. I feel little doubt that this valley, as well as those mentioned by travellers in Peru, were left in the state we now see them by the waves of the sea, as the land slowly rose. I observed in one place, where the Despoblado was joined by a ravine (which in almost any other chain would have been called a grand valley), that its bed, though composed merely of sand and gravel, was higher than that of its tributary. A mere rivulet of water, in the course of an hour, would have cut a channel for itself; but it was evident that ages had passed away, and no such rivulet had drained this great tributary. It was curious to behold the machinery, if