

a person following up the course of a stream will always ascend at a greater or less inclination: Mr. Gill, therefore, was much astonished, when walking up the bed of this ancient river, to find himself suddenly going down hill. He imagined that the downward slope had a fall of about 40 or 50 feet perpendicular. We here have unequivocal evidence that a ridge had been uplifted right across the old bed of a stream. From the moment the river-course was thus arched, the water must necessarily have been thrown back, and a new channel formed. From that moment, also, the neighboring plain must have lost its fertilizing stream, and become a desert.

June 27th.—We set out early in the morning, and by midday reached the ravine of Paypote, where there is a tiny rill of water, with a little vegetation, and even a few algarroba trees, a kind of mimosa. From having firewood, a smelting-furnace had formerly been built here: we found a solitary man in charge of it, whose sole employment was hunting guanacos. At night it froze sharply; but having plenty of wood for our fire, we kept ourselves warm.

28th.—We continued gradually ascending, and the valley now changed into a ravine. During the day we saw several guanacos, and the track of the closely-allied species, the *Vicuña*: this latter animal is pre-eminently alpine in its habits; it seldom descends much below the limit of perpetual snow, and therefore haunts even a more lofty and sterile situation than the guanaco. The only other animal which we saw in any number was a small fox: I suppose this animal preys on the mice and other small rodents, which, as long as there is the least vegetation, subsist in considerable numbers in very desert places. In Patagonia, even on the borders of the salinas, where a drop of fresh water can never be found, excepting dew, these little animals swarm. Next to lizards, mice appear to be able to support existence on the smallest and driest portions of the earth—even on islets in the midst of great oceans.