

The scene on all sides showed desolation, brightened and made palpable by a clear, unclouded sky. For a time such scenery is sublime, but this feeling cannot last, and then it becomes uninteresting. We bivouacked at the foot of the "primera linea," or the first line of the partition of the waters. The streams, however, on the east side do not flow to the Atlantic, but into an elevated district, in the middle of which there is a large salina, or salt lake—thus forming a little Caspian Sea at the height, perhaps, of ten thousand feet. Where we slept, there were some considerable patches of snow, but they do not remain throughout the year. The winds in these lofty regions obey very regular laws: every day a fresh breeze blows up the valley, and at night, an hour or two after sunset, the air from the cold regions above descends as through a funnel. This night it blew a gale of wind, and the temperature must have been considerably below the freezing-point, for water in a vessel soon became a block of ice. No clothes seemed to oppose any obstacle to the air; I suffered very much from the cold, so that I could not sleep, and in the morning rose with my body quite dull and benumbed.

In the Cordillera further southward, people lose their lives from snowstorms; here, it sometimes happens from another cause. My guide, when a boy of fourteen years old, was passing the Cordillera with a party in the month of May; and while in the central parts, a furious gale of wind arose, so that the men could hardly cling on their mules, and stones were flying along the ground. The day was cloudless, and not a speck of snow fell, but the temperature was low. It is probable that the thermometer would not have stood very many degrees below the freezing-point, but the effect on their bodies, ill protected by clothing, must have been in proportion to the rapidity of the current of cold air. The gale lasted for more than a day; the men began to lose their strength, and the mules would not move onward. My guide's brother tried to return, but he perished, and his body was found two years afterward, lying by the side of