

is very little land cultivated down the valley; its wide expanse supports a wretched wiry grass, which even the donkeys can hardly eat. This poorness of the vegetation is owing to the quantity of saline matter with which the soil is impregnated. The Port consists of an assemblage of miserable little hovels, situated at the foot of a sterile plain. At present, as the river contains water enough to reach the sea, the inhabitants enjoy the advantage of having fresh water within a mile and a half. On the beach there were large piles of merchandise, and the little place had an air of activity. In the evening I gave my adios, with a hearty goodwill, to my companion Mariano Gonzales, with whom I had ridden so many leagues in Chile. The next morning the "Beagle" sailed for Iquique.

July 12th.—We anchored in the port of Iquique, in lat. $20^{\circ} 12'$, on the coast of Peru. The town contains about a thousand inhabitants, and stands on a little plain of sand at the foot of a great wall of rock, 2,000 feet in height, here forming the coast. The whole is utterly desert. A light shower of rain falls only once in very many years; and the ravines consequently are filled with detritus, and the mountain-sides covered by piles of fine white sand, even to a height of a thousand feet. During this season of the year a heavy bank of clouds, stretched over the ocean, seldom rises above the wall of rocks on the coast. The aspect of the place was most gloomy; the little port, with its few vessels, and small group of wretched houses, seemed overwhelmed and out of all proportion with the rest of the scene.

The inhabitants live like persons on board a ship: every necessary comes from a distance: water is brought in boats from Pisagua, about forty miles northward, and is sold at the rate of nine reals (4s. 6d.) an eighteen-gallon cask: I bought a wine-bottle full for threepence. In like manner firewood, and of course every article of food, is imported. Very few animals can be maintained in such a place: on the ensuing morning I hired with difficulty, at the price of four pounds