

the river in ox-carts. I regretted extremely that I had not time to spare to send a party to explore them, in order to have ascertained the extent of the staple commodity of this port.

These salt lakes are known to be numerous throughout the Pampas, and within a few leagues of the town of El Carmen there are four, from two to three leagues in circumference, from which salt has been taken, besides many others of smaller dimensions. From the largest of these, the salt that is exported from the Rio Negro is mostly obtained. In dry weather it is said to form very rapidly, so much so that it may at times be gathered daily, and that it attains the thickness of two inches in twenty-four hours. How far this is true, I will not pretend to vouch. Still more wonderful stories are told of the larger lakes in the interior; of their being ten leagues in circumference; and they are described as being covered with a crust of dazzling whiteness, so strong that a horse and rider may pass over it without leaving an impression. In heavy rains these lakes are converted into morasses of black mud, which, as the water evaporates, becomes encrusted with salt. The salt is beautifully white and finely crystallized, and requires no purification before carrying it to market. The specimens were thought to equal in purity those from our own springs. The general belief relative to these salt lakes is, that the salt is disseminated through the soil, no salt in a solid state having yet been found in any part of the country. No satisfactory information could be obtained relative to their having become weaker, as the only person who was able to give this information was Mr. Adams, who, as I mentioned before, was absent.

It appears that the policy of the present government of Buenos Ayres has been to discourage the raising of cattle and the exportation of hides from this place, in order, it is said, to concentrate the trade at Buenos Ayres. The large herds that were formerly kept in this country are now reduced to comparatively few.

None of the government officers have received any salaries for the last eighteen months.

There are about two thousand inhabitants within a circuit of eighty miles, exclusive of a few roving Indians. The population of Carmen is about five hundred. There are five Americans residing here, who state that they enjoy all the protection that the government can give, and that they are well treated.

The Rio Negro is navigable for boats to the village of Chichula, two hundred miles from its mouth.

The distance across the country to Buenos Ayres is but five hundred miles, yet it requires fifteen days to communicate with it; the