

CHAPTER X.

CHILI—CONTINUED.

1839.

PREVIOUS to my arrival at Valparaiso, the naturalists and some officers on board the *Peacock* and *Relief* had made excursions into the interior. On my arrival, I allowed all those who could be spared, and were desirous of visiting Santiago, sufficient leave to make the trip. Several set out for that city, and some with a view of extending their journey to the Cordilleras beyond.

The bilocheros were eager for opportunities to hire their biloches, a vehicle somewhat resembling a double gig, which is generally used for travelling in Chili. They have a most rickety and worn-out appearance; almost every part appears mended with cords made of hide. They accommodate two passengers; and the time required between Valparaiso and the city (Santiago), is about eighteen or twenty hours. In the shafts a horse is put; a postilion rides one on the left, and sometimes another is placed on the right, both being fastened to the vehicle by lassos of raw-hide proceeding from the saddle. Each vehicle is attended by three bilocheros or drivers, with a drove of twelve or fifteen horses, forming quite a cavalcade.

The bilocheros are very expert at their business. They are excellent riders, having been brought up to this exercise from their infancy, and understand managing their horses, though in a rude way. Their horses are small, but spirited, and bear fatigue well. Their usual speed is about nine or ten miles an hour. Few equipages can compare with these crazy machines, driven, as they sometimes are, pell-mell up hill and down dale, with all their accompaniments of horses, Guachos, &c.; and it affords no small amusement to those on foot, to witness the consternation of the affrighted passengers, in momentary expectation of a break-down, and a broken neck or limbs. It is a