



CORDILLERAS, FROM CUESTA DEL PRADA.

vehicles, mules, &c., threading their way up and down the mountain-side, laden with foreign and domestic products. This is the only road of any extent for wheel-carriages in the country. It is kept in good repair by convicts, who are seen working in chains. A moveable prison or lock-up house, somewhat resembling the cages used in caravans of wild beasts, is used for their accommodation and security at night.

The heavy merchandise is for the most part transported in ox-carts of enormous dimensions. Their wheels are clumsy and without tires, and the whole frame is made strongly with timber pinned together. Their perpendicular sides and rounded tops are wattled with cane and covered with bull's-hide. No iron is used in their structure; wooden pins and raw-hide lashings seem to answer the purpose better. The yoke is set on the heads of the oxen, behind the horns, and fastened to them. The creaking of these carts may be heard for miles, as the drivers never think of greasing the axles to lessen the friction. They are generally drawn by four or eight oxen. The wood-cut, at the end of this chapter, from a sketch taken by Mr. Drayton, will complete the description.

Lighter articles are transported by mules, and immense numbers of these animals are seen on the road at all times.