

have power to raise its waves to a height of some hundreds of yards. One vast green plain occupies all the southern extremity of this continent, over an area of nearly 30° of latitude.

Patagonia is a succession of horizontal platforms rising in stages to the base of the Andes, where winds the Rio Colorado. On the east it is, to use Mr. Darwin's expressive term, "a desert of shingle," diversified only by brackish streams, low spiny bushes, black masses of basalt, and glittering incrustations of salt. The temperature is subject to extreme variations, and tumultuous winds wither the arid soil.

To the north of the Rio Colorado begin the pampas of La Plata.

The red calcareous earth which composes their soil is almost destitute of water, and without tree or bush, except the indigenous *ambú*. The herbaceous vegetation, however, is very abundant, and renewed by heavy and continuous rains. The tufted grasses form an ocean of uniform verdure, unbroken by any "flowering isles," any picturesque oases, in the shape of broken and wooded hills.

West of Buenos Ayres the pampas\* are clothed with rigid thistles of a peculiarly deep green, and with breadths of lucern not less vivid in hue, so long as the soil retains a degree of moisture. But at the beginning of the hot season the verdure fades; the thistles scatter abroad their seeds, and spring up to a height of ten or twelve feet, so as to intercept the wayfarer's view, and impede his steps with a rampart of impassable spines. Their stems are soon reduced to dust by the burning heat of summer, and the wind seizes upon it, and dissipates it afar.

During the long dry seasons of the pampas, the wild horses, tormented by an intolerable thirst, can only slake their parched lips and weary limbs in the brackish water of the brooklets, and they perish by hundreds. During the *Gran Chaco* (that is, "the great dryness"), which prevailed from 1827 to 1830, Buenos Ayres lost a million heads of cattle; a single farmer lost a herd of 20,000 oxen. Ex-

\* [See Sir Edmund Head's "Ride across the Pampas," Sir Woodbine Parish's "Residence at Buenos Ayres," and Mr. M'Cann's "Argentine Provinces," for details respecting this remarkable region.]