

extent. It can only be accounted for by the circumstance that this retired part of the country is seldom visited by foreigners. I was asked whether the earth or sun moved; whether it was hotter or colder to the north; where Spain was, and many other such questions. The greater number of the inhabitants had an indistinct idea that England, London, and North America were different names for the same place; but the better informed well knew that London and North America were separate countries close together, and that England was a large town in London! I carried with me some promethean matches, which I ignited by biting; it was thought so wonderful that a man should strike fire with his teeth that it was usual to collect the whole family to see it: I was once offered a dollar for a single one. Washing my face in the morning caused much speculation at the village of Las Minas; a superior tradesman closely cross-questioned me about so singular a practice; and likewise why on board we wore our beards; for he had heard from my guide that we did so. He eyed me with much suspicion; perhaps he had heard of ablutions in the Mohammedan religion, and knowing me to be a heretic, probably he came to the conclusion that all heretics were Turks. It is the general custom in this country to ask for a night's lodging at the first convenient house. The astonishment at the compass, and my other feats in jugglery, was to a certain degree advantageous, as with that, and the long stories my guides told of my breaking stones, knowing venomous from harmless snakes, collecting insects, etc., I repaid them for their hospitality. I am writing as if I had been among the inhabitants of Central Africa: Banda Oriental would not be flattered by the comparison; but such were my feelings at the time.

The next day we rode to the village of Las Minas. The country was rather more hilly, but otherwise continued the same; an inhabitant of the Pampas no doubt would have considered it as truly Alpine. The country is so thinly inhabited that during the whole day we scarcely met a single person. Las Minas is much smaller even than Maldonado.