

Water is extremely scarce, and, where found, is almost invariably brackish. The vegetation is scanty; and although there are bushes of many kinds, all are armed with formidable thorns, which seem to warn the stranger not to enter on these inhospitable regions.

The settlement is situated eighteen miles up the river. The road follows the foot of the sloping cliff, which forms the northern boundary of the great valley, in which the Rio Negro flows. On the way we passed the ruins of some fine "estancias," which a few years since had been destroyed by the Indians. They withstood several attacks. A man present at one gave me a very lively description of what took place. The inhabitants had sufficient notice to drive all the cattle and horses into the "corral"<sup>1</sup> which surrounded the house, and likewise to mount some small cannon. The Indians were Araucanians from the south of Chile; several hundreds in number, and highly disciplined. They first appeared in two bodies on a neighboring hill; having there dismounted, and taken off their fur mantles, they advanced naked to the charge. The only weapon of an Indian is a very long bamboo or chuzo, ornamented with ostrich feathers, and pointed by a sharp spear-head. My informer seemed to remember with the greatest horror the quivering of these chuzos as they approached near. When close, the cacique Pincheira hailed the besieged to give up their arms, or he would cut all their throats. As this would probably have been the result of their entrance under any circumstances, the answer was given by a volley of musketry. The Indians, with great steadiness, came to the very fence of the corral: but to their surprise they found the posts fastened together by iron nails instead of leather thongs, and, of course, in vain attempted to cut them with their knives. This saved the lives of the Christians: many of the wounded Indians were carried away by their companions; and at last one

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<sup>1</sup> The corral is an inclosure made of tall and strong stakes. Every estancia, or farming estate, has one attached to it.