

be seen; but the Agouti (*Cavia Patagonica*) is the commonest quadruped. This animal here represents our hares. It differs, however, from that genus in many essential respects; for instance, it has only three toes behind. It is also nearly twice the size, weighing from twenty to twenty-five pounds. The Agouti is a true friend of the desert; it is a common feature in the landscape to see two or three hopping quickly one after the other in a straight line across these wild plains. They are found as far north as the Sierra Tapalguen (lat. 37° 30'), where the plain rather suddenly becomes greener and more humid; and their southern limit is between Port Desire and St. Julian, where there is no change in the nature of the country. It is a singular fact that although the Agouti is not now found as far south as Port St. Julian, yet that Captain Wood, in his voyage in 1670, talks of them as being numerous there. What cause can have altered, in a wide, uninhabited, and rarely-visited country, the range of an animal like this? It appears also from the number shot by Captain Wood in one day at Port Desire that they must have been considerably more abundant there formerly than at present. Where the Bizcacha lives and makes its burrows the Agouti uses them; but where, as at Bahia Blanca, the Bizcacha is not found, the Agouti burrows for itself. The same thing occurs with the little owl of the Pampas (*Athene cunicularia*), which has so often been described as standing like a sentinel at the mouth of the burrows; for in Banda Oriental, owing to the absence of the Bizcacha, it is obliged to hollow out its own habitation.

The next morning, as we approached the Rio Colorado, the appearance of the country changed; we soon came on a plain covered with turf, which, from its flowers, tall clover, and little owls, resembled the Pampas. We passed also a muddy swamp of considerable extent, which in summer dries, and becomes incrustated with various salts; and hence is called a salitral. It was covered by low succulent plants, of the same kind with those growing on the sea-shore. The Colorado, at the pass where we crossed it, is only about sixty