

formity. The weather was fine, but the atmosphere remarkably hazy; I thought the appearance foreboded a gale, but the Gauchos said it was owing to the plain, at some great distance in the interior, being on fire. After a long gallop, having changed horses twice, we reached the Rio Sauce: it is a deep, rapid, little stream, not above twenty-five feet wide. The second *posta* on the road to Buenos Ayres stands on its banks; a little above there is a ford for horses, where the water does not reach to the horses' belly; but from that point, in its course to the sea, it is quite impassable, and hence makes a most useful barrier against the Indians.

Insignificant as this stream is, the Jesuit Falconer, whose information is generally so very correct, figures it as a considerable river, rising at the foot of the Cordillera. With respect to its source, I do not doubt that this is the case; for the Gauchos assured me that in the middle of the dry summer this stream, at the same time with the Colorado, has periodical floods; which can only originate in the snow melting on the Andes. It is extremely improbable that a stream so small as the Sauce then was should traverse the entire width of the continent; and indeed, if it were the residue of a large river, its waters, as in other ascertained cases, would be saline. During the winter we must look to the springs round the Sierra Ventana as the source of its pure and limpid stream. I suspect the plains of Patagonia, like those of Australia, are traversed by many water-courses, which only perform their proper parts at certain periods. Probably this is the case with the water which flows into the head of Port Desire, and likewise with the Rio Chupat, on the banks of which masses of highly cellular scoriæ were found by the officers employed in the survey.

As it was early in the afternoon when we arrived, we took fresh horses, and a soldier for a guide, and started for the Sierra de la Ventana. This mountain is visible from the anchorage at Bahia Blanca; and Captain Fitz Roy calculates its height to be 3,340 feet—an altitude very remarkable on this eastern side of the continent. I am not aware that any