

grass, which was as high as a horse's belly; yet there were square leagues without a single head of cattle. The province of Banda Oriental, if well stocked, would support an astonishing number of animals; at present the annual export of hides from Monte Video amounts to three hundred thousand; and the home consumption, from waste, is very considerable. An estanciero told me that he often had to send large herds of cattle a long journey to a salting establishment, and that the tired beasts were frequently obliged to be killed and skinned; but that he could never persuade the Gauchos to eat of them, and every evening a fresh beast was slaughtered for their suppers! The view of the Rio Negro from the Sierra was more picturesque than any other which I saw in this province. The river, broad, deep and rapid, wound at the foot of a rocky precipitous cliff: a belt of wood followed its course, and the horizon terminated in the distant undulations of the turf-plain.

When in this neighborhood I several times heard of the Sierra de las Cuentas: a hill distant many miles to the northward. The name signifies hill of beads. I was assured that vast numbers of little round stones, of various colors, each with a small cylindrical hole, are found there. Formerly the Indians used to collect them, for the purpose of making necklaces and bracelets—a taste, I may observe, which is common to all savage nations, as well as to the most polished. I did not know what to understand from this story, but upon mentioning it at the Cape of Good Hope to Dr. Andrew Smith, he told me that he recollected finding on the southeastern coast of Africa, about one hundred miles to the eastward of St. John's River, some quartz crystals with their edges blunted from attrition, and mixed with gravel on the sea-beach. Each crystal was about five lines in diameter, and from an inch to an inch and a half in length. Many of them had a small canal extending from one extremity to the other, perfectly cylindrical, and of a size that readily admitted a coarse thread or a piece of fine catgut. Their color was red or dull white. The natives were acquainted with this structure in crystals.