

One day the yawl was sent under the command of Mr. Chaffers with three days' provisions to survey the upper part of the harbor. In the morning we searched for some watering-places mentioned in an old Spanish chart. We found one creek, at the head of which there was a trickling rill (the first we had seen) of brackish water. Here the tide compelled us to wait several hours; and in the interval I walked some miles into the interior. The plain as usual consisted of gravel, mingled with soil resembling chalk in appearance, but very different from it in nature. From the softness of these materials it was worn into many gullies. There was not a tree, and, excepting the guanaco, which stood on the hilltop a watchful sentinel over its herd, scarcely an animal or a bird. All was stillness and desolation. Yet in passing over these scenes, without one bright object near, an ill-defined but strong sense of pleasure is vividly excited. One asked how many ages the plain had thus lasted, and how many more it was doomed thus to continue.

None can reply—all seems eternal now.
The wilderness has a mysterious tongue,
Which teaches awful doubt.¹

In the evening we sailed a few miles further up, and then pitched the tents for the night. By the middle of the next day the yawl was aground, and from the shoalness of the water could not proceed any higher. The water being found partly fresh, Mr. Chaffers took the dingy and went up two or three miles further, where she also grounded, but in a fresh-water river. The water was muddy, and though the stream was most insignificant in size, it would be difficult to account for its origin, except from the melting snow on the Cordillera. At the spot where we bivouacked, we were surrounded by bold cliffs and steep pinnacles of porphyry. I do not think I ever saw a spot which appeared more secluded from the rest of the world than this rocky crevice in the wide plain.

¹ Shelley, Lines on M. Blanc.