

latitude with the mouth of the Strait of Magellan; it covers a space of one hundred and twenty by sixty geographical miles, and is a little more than half the size of Ireland. After the possession of these miserable islands had been contested by France, Spain, and England, they were left uninhabited. The government of Buenos Ayres then sold them to a private individual, but likewise used them, as old Spain had done before, for a penal settlement. England claimed her right and seized them. The Englishman who was left in charge of the flag was consequently murdered. A British officer was next sent, unsupported by any power: and when we arrived, we found him in charge of a population, of which rather more than half were runaway rebels and murderers.

The theatre is worthy of the scenes acted on it. An undulating land, with a desolate and wretched aspect, is everywhere covered by a peaty soil and wiry grass, of one monotonous brown color. Here and there a peak or ridge of gray quartz rock breaks through the smooth surface. Every one has heard of the climate of these regions; it may be compared to that which is experienced at the height of between one and two thousand feet, on the mountains of north Wales; having, however, less sunshine and less frost, but more wind and rain.¹

16th.—I will now describe a short excursion which I made round a part of this island. In the morning I started with six horses and two Gauchos: the latter were capital men for the purpose, and well accustomed to living on their own resources. The weather was very boisterous and cold, with heavy hailstorms. We got on, however, pretty well, but, except the geology, nothing could be less interesting than our day's ride. The country is uniformly the same undulating moorland; the surface being covered by light-

¹ From accounts published since our voyage, and more especially from several interesting letters from Captain Sullivan, R.N., employed on the survey, it appears that we took an exaggerated view of the badness of the climate of these islands. But when I reflect on the almost universal covering of peat, and on the fact of wheat seldom ripening here, I can hardly believe that the climate in summer is so fine and dry as it has lately been represented.