

bivouacked in the corner of the same field with them. Carrying an iron pot, we cooked and ate our supper under a cloudless sky, and knew no trouble. My companions were Mariano Gonzales, who had formerly accompanied me in Chile, and an "arriero," with his ten mules and a "madrina." The *madrina* (or godmother) is a most important personage: she is an old steady mare, with a little bell round her neck; and wherever she goes, the mules, like good children, follow her. The affection of these animals for their *madrinas* saves infinite trouble. If several large troops are turned into one field to graze, in the morning the muleteers have only to lead the *madrinas* a little apart, and tinkle their bells; and although there may be two or three hundred together, each mule immediately knows the bell of its own *madrina*, and comes to her. It is nearly impossible to lose an old mule; for if detained for several hours by force, she will, by the power of smell, like a dog, track out her companions, or rather the *madrina*, for, according to the muleteer, she is the chief object of affection. The feeling, however, is not of an individual nature; for I believe I am right in saying that any animal with a bell will serve as a *madrina*. In a troop each animal carries on a level road a cargo weighing 416 pounds (more than 29 stone), but in a mountainous country 100 pounds less; yet with what delicate slim limbs, without any proportional bulk of muscle, these animals support so great a burden! The mule always appears to me a most surprising animal. That a hybrid should possess more reason, memory, obstinacy, social affection, powers of muscular endurance, and length of life than either of its parents, seems to indicate that art has here outdone nature. Of our ten animals, six were intended for riding, and four for carrying cargoes, each taking turn about. We carried a good deal of food, in case we should be snowed up, as the season was rather late for passing the Portillo.

March 19th.—We rode during this day to the last and therefore most elevated house in the valley. The number of inhabitants became scanty; but wherever water could be