

March 23d.—The descent on the eastern side of the Cordillera is much shorter or steeper than on the Pacific side; in other words, the mountains rise more abruptly from the plains than from the alpine country of Chile. A level and brilliantly white sea of clouds was stretched out beneath our feet, shutting out the view of the equally level Pampas. We soon entered the band of clouds, and did not again emerge from it that day. About noon, finding pasture for the animals and bushes for firewood at Los Arenales, we stopped for the night. This was near the uppermost limit of bushes, and the elevation, I suppose, was between seven and eight thousand feet.

I was much struck with the marked difference between the vegetation of these eastern valleys and those on the Chilean side: yet the climate, as well as the kind of soil, is nearly the same, and the difference of longitude very trifling. The same remark holds good with the quadrupeds, and in a lesser degree with the birds and insects. I may instance the mice, of which I obtained thirteen species on the shores of the Atlantic, and five on the Pacific, and not one of them is identical. We must except all those species which habitually or occasionally frequent elevated mountains; and certain birds which range as far south as the Strait of Magellan. This fact is in perfect accordance with the geological history of the Andes; for these mountains have existed as a great barrier since the present races of animals have appeared; and therefore, unless we suppose the same species to have been created in two different places, we ought not to expect any closer similarity between the organic beings on the opposite sides of the Andes than on the opposite shores of the ocean. In both cases we must leave out of the question those kinds which have been able to cross the barrier, whether of solid rock or salt water.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is merely an illustration of the admirable laws, first laid down by Mr. Lyell, on the geographical distribution of animals, as influenced by geological changes. The whole reasoning, of course, is founded on the assumption of the immutability of species; otherwise the difference in the species in the two regions might be considered as superinduced during a length of time.