

A great number of the plants and animals were absolutely the same as, or most closely allied to, those of Patagonia. We here have the agouti, bizcacha, three species of armadillo, the ostrich, certain kinds of partridges and other birds, none of which are ever seen in Chile, but are the characteristic animals of the desert plains of Patagonia. We have likewise many of the same (to the eyes of a person who is not a botanist) thorny stunted bushes, withered grass, and dwarf plants. Even the black slowly-crawling beetles are closely similar, and some, I believe, on rigorous examination, absolutely identical. It had always been to me a subject of regret that we were unavoidably compelled to give up the ascent of the S. Cruz River, before reaching the mountains: I always had a latent hope of meeting with some great change in the features of the country; but I now feel sure that it would only have been following the plains of Patagonia up a mountainous ascent.

March 24th.—Early in the morning I climbed up a mountain on one side of the valley, and enjoyed a far extended view over the Pampas. This was a spectacle to which I had always looked forward with interest, but I was disappointed: at the first glance it much resembled a distant view of the ocean, but in the northern parts many irregularities were soon distinguishable. The most striking feature consisted in the rivers, which, facing the rising sun, glittered like silver threads, till lost in the immensity of the distance. At midday we descended the valley and reached a hovel where an officer and three soldiers were posted to examine passports. One of these men was a thoroughbred Pampas Indian: he was kept much for the same purpose as a bloodhound, to track out any person who might pass by secretly, either on foot or horseback. Some years ago, a passenger endeavored to escape detection by making a long circuit over a neighboring mountain; but this Indian, having by chance crossed his track, followed it for the whole day over dry and very stony hills, till at last he came on his prey hidden in a gully. We here heard that silvery clouds, which we had