

admired from the bright region above, had poured down torrents of rain. The valley from this point gradually opened, and the hills became mere water-worn hillocks compared to the giants behind: it then expanded into a gently-sloping plain of shingle, covered with low trees and bushes. This talus, although appearing narrow, must be nearly ten miles wide before it blends into the apparently dead level Pampas. We passed the only house in this neighborhood, the Estancia of Chaquaio; and at sunset we pulled up in the first snug corner, and there bivouacked.

March 25th.—I was reminded of the Pampas of Buenos Ayres, by seeing the disk of the rising sun, intersected by a horizon, level as that of the ocean. During the night a heavy dew fell, a circumstance which we did not experience within the Cordillera. The road proceeded for some distance due east across a low swamp; then meeting the dry plain, it turned to the north toward Mendoza. The distance is two very long days' journey. Our first day's journey was called fourteen leagues to Estacado, and the second seventeen to Luxan, near Mendoza. The whole distance is over a level desert plain, with not more than two or three houses. The sun was exceedingly powerful, and the ride devoid of all interest. There is very little water in this "traversia," and in our second day's journey we found only one little pool. Little water flows from the mountains, and it soon becomes absorbed by the dry and porous soil; so that, although we travelled at the distance of only ten or fifteen miles from the outer range of the Cordillera, we did not cross a single stream. In many parts the ground was incrustated with a saline efflorescence; hence we had the same salt-loving plants which are common near Bahia Blanca. The landscape has a uniform character from the Strait of Magellan, along the whole eastern coast of Patagonia, to the Rio Colorado; and it appears that the same kind of country extends inland from this river, in a sweeping line as far as San Luis, and perhaps even further north. To the eastward of this curved line lies the basin of the comparatively damp and