

it could not fail to be as salt as brine, for the whole surrounding country is incrustated with various saline substances. We must therefore conclude that it percolates under ground from the Cordillera, though distant many leagues. In that direction there are a few small villages, where the inhabitants, having more water, are enabled to irrigate a little land, and raise hay, on which the mules and asses, employed in carrying the saltpetre, are fed. The nitrate of soda was now selling at the ship's side at fourteen shillings per hundred pounds: the chief expense is its transport to the sea-coast. The mine consists of a hard stratum, between two and three feet thick, of the nitrate mingled with a little of the sulphate of soda and a good deal of common salt. It lies close beneath the surface, and follows for a length of one hundred and fifty miles the margin of a grand basin or plain; this, from its outline, manifestly must once have been a lake, or more probably an inland arm of the sea, as may be inferred from the presence of iodic salts in the saline stratum. The surface of the plain is 3,300 feet above the Pacific.

19th.—We anchored in the Bay of Callao, the seaport of Lima, the capital of Peru. We stayed here six weeks, but, from the troubled state of public affairs, I saw very little of the country. During our whole visit the climate was far from being so delightful as it is generally represented. A dull heavy bank of clouds constantly hung over the land, so that during the first sixteen days I had only one view of the Cordillera behind Lima. These mountains, seen in stages, one above the other, through openings in the clouds, had a very grand appearance. It is almost become a proverb that rain never falls in the lower part of Peru. Yet this can hardly be considered correct; for during almost every day of our visit there was a thick drizzling mist, which was sufficient to make the streets muddy and one's clothes damp; this the people are pleased to call Peruvian dew. That much rain does not fall is very certain, for the houses are covered only with flat roofs made of hardened mud; and on the mole