

The Voyage of the Beagle

by Charles Darwin

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Chapter 6 - Bahia Blanca to Buenos Ayres

SEPTEMBER 18th. -- I hired a Gaucho to accompany me on my ride to Buenos Ayres, though with some difficulty, as the father of one man was afraid to let him go, and another, who seemed willing, was described to me as so fearful, that I was afraid to take him, for I was told that even if he saw an ostrich at a distance, he would mistake it for an Indian, and would fly like the wind away. The distance to Buenos Ayres is about four hundred miles, and nearly the whole way through an uninhabited country. We started early in the morning; ascending a few hundred feet from the basin of green turf on which Bahia Blanca stands, we entered on a wide desolate plain. It consists of a crumbling argillaceous-calcareous rock, which, from the dry nature of the climate, supports only scattered tufts of withered grass, without a single bush or tree to break the monotonous uniformity. The weather was fine, but the atmosphere remarkably hazy; I thought the appearance foreboded a gale, but the Gauchos said it was owing to the plain, at some great distance in the interior, being on fire. After a long gallop, having changed horses twice, we reached the Rio Sauce: it is a deep, rapid, little stream, not above twenty-five feet wide. The second posta on the road to Buenos Ayres stands on its banks, a little above there is a ford for horses, where the water does not reach to the horses' belly; but from that point, in its course to the sea, it is quite impassable, and hence makes a most useful barrier against the Indians.

Insignificant as this stream is, the Jesuit Falconer, whose information is generally so very correct, figures it as a considerable river, rising at the foot of the Cordillera. With respect to its source, I do not doubt that this is the case for the Gauchos assured me, that in the middle of the dry summer, this stream, at the same time with the Colorado has periodical floods; which can only originate in the snow melting on the Andes. It is extremely improbable that a stream so small as the Sauce then was, should traverse the entire width of the continent; and indeed, if it were the residue of a large river, its waters, as in other ascertained cases, would be saline. During the winter we must look to the springs round the Sierra Ventana as the source of its pure and limpid stream. I suspect the plains of Patagonia like those of Australia, are traversed by many water-courses which only perform their proper parts at certain periods. Probably this is the case with the water which flows into the head of Port Desire, and likewise with the Rio Chupat, on the banks of which masses of highly cellular scoriae were found by the officers employed in the survey.

As it was early in the afternoon when we arrived, we took fresh horses, and a soldier for a guide, and started for the Sierra de la Ventana. This mountain is visible from the anchorage at Bahia Blanca; and Capt. Fitz Roy calculates its height to be 3340 feet -- an altitude very remarkable on this eastern side of the continent. I am not aware that any foreigner, previous to my visit, had ascended this mountain; and indeed very few of the soldiers at Bahia Blanca knew anything about it. Hence we heard of beds of coal, of gold and silver, of caves, and of forests, all of which inflamed my curiosity, only to disappoint it. The distance from the posta was about six leagues over a level plain of the same character as before. The ride was, however, interesting, as the mountain began to show its true form. When we reached the foot of the main ridge, we had much difficulty in finding any water, and we thought we should have been obliged to have passed the night without any. At last we discovered some by looking close to the mountain, for at the distance even of a few hundred yards the streamlets were buried and entirely lost in the friable calcareous stone and loose detritus. I do not think Nature ever made a more solitary, desolate pile of rock; -- it well deserves its name of *Hurtado*, or separated. The mountain is steep, extremely rugged, and broken, and so entirely destitute of trees, and even bushes, that we actually could not make a skewer to stretch out our meat over the fire of thistle- stalks. [1] The strange aspect of this mountain is contrasted by the sea-like plain, which not only abuts against its steep sides, but likewise separates the parallel ranges. The uniformity of the colouring gives an extreme quietness to the view, -- the whitish grey of the quartz rock, and the light brown of the withered grass of the plain, being unrelieved by any brighter tint. From custom, one expects to see in the neighbourhood of a lofty and bold mountain, a broken country strewn over with huge fragments. Here nature shows that the last movement before the bed of the sea is changed into dry land may sometimes be one of tranquillity. Under these circumstances I was curious to observe how far from the parent rock any pebbles could be found. On the shores of Bahia Blanca, and near the settlement, there were some of quartz, which certainly must have come from this source: the

distance is forty-five miles.

The dew, which in the early part of the night wetted the saddle-cloths under which we slept, was in the morning frozen. The plain, though appearing horizontal, had insensibly sloped up to a height of between 800 and 900 feet above the sea. In the morning (9th of September) the guide told me to ascend the nearest ridge, which he thought would lead me to the four peaks that crown the summit. The climbing up such rough rocks was very fatiguing; the sides were so indented, that what was gained in one five minutes was often lost in the next. At last, when I reached the ridge, my disappointment was extreme in finding a precipitous valley as deep as the plain, which cut the chain transversely in two, and separated me from the four points. This valley is very narrow, but flat-bottomed, and it forms a fine horse-pass for the Indians, as it connects the plains on the northern and southern sides of the range. Having descended, and while crossing it, I saw two horses grazing: I immediately hid myself in the long grass, and began to reconnoitre; but as I could see no signs of Indians I proceeded cautiously on my second ascent. It was late in the day, and this part of the mountain, like the other, was steep and rugged. I was on the top of the second peak by two o'clock, but got there with extreme difficulty; every twenty yards I had the cramp in the upper part of both thighs, so that I was afraid I should not have been able to have got down again. It was also necessary to return by another road, as it was out of the question to pass over the saddle-back. I was therefore obliged to give up the two higher peaks. Their altitude was but little greater, and every purpose of geology had been answered; so that the attempt was not worth the hazard of any further exertion. I presume the cause of the cramp was the great change in the kind of muscular action, from that of hard riding to that of still harder climbing. It is a lesson worth remembering, as in some cases it might cause much difficulty.

I have already said the mountain is composed of white quartz rock, and with it a little glossy clay-slate is associated. At the height of a few hundred feet above the plain patches of conglomerate adhered in several places to the solid rock. They resembled in hardness, and in the nature of the cement, the masses which may be seen daily forming on some coasts. I do not doubt these pebbles were in a similar manner aggregated, at a period when the great calcareous formation was depositing beneath the surrounding sea. We may believe that the jagged and battered forms of the hard quartz yet show the effects of the waves of an open ocean.

I was, on the whole, disappointed with this ascent. Even the view was insignificant; -- a plain like the sea, but without its beautiful colour and defined outline. The scene, however, was novel, and a little danger, like salt to meat, gave it a relish. That the danger was very little was certain, for my two companions made a good fire -- a thing which is never done when it is suspected that Indians are near. I reached the place of our bivouac by sunset, and drinking much mate, and smoking several cigaritos, soon made up my bed for the night. The wind was very strong and cold, but I never slept more comfortably.

September 10th. -- In the morning, having fairly scudded before the gale, we arrived by the middle of the day at the Sauce posta. In the road we saw great numbers of deer, and near the mountain a guanaco. The plain, which abuts against the Sierra, is traversed by some curious gullies, of which one was about twenty feet wide, and at least thirty deep; we were obliged in consequence to make a considerable circuit before we could find a pass. We stayed the night at the posta, the conversation, as was generally the case, being about the Indians. The Sierra Ventana was formerly a great place of resort; and three or four years ago there was much fighting there. My guide had been present when many Indians were killed: the women escaped to the top of the ridge, and fought most desperately with great stones; many thus saving themselves.

September 11th. -- Proceeded to the third posta in company with the lieutenant who commanded it. The distance is called fifteen leagues; but it is only guess-work, and is generally overstated. The road was uninteresting, over a dry grassy plain; and on our left hand at a greater or less distance there were some low hills; a continuation of which we crossed close to the posta. Before our arrival we met a large herd of cattle and horses, guarded by fifteen soldiers; but we were told many had been lost. It is very difficult to drive animals across the plains; for if in the night a puma, or even a fox, approaches, nothing can prevent the horses dispersing in every direction; and a storm will have the same effect. A short time since, an officer left Buenos Ayres with five hundred horses, and when he arrived at the army he had under twenty.

Soon afterwards we perceived by the cloud of dust, that a party of horsemen were coming towards us; when far distant my companions knew them to be Indians, by their long hair streaming behind their backs. The Indians generally have a fillet round their heads, but never any covering; and their black hair blowing across their swarthy faces, heightens to an uncommon degree the wildness of their appearance. They turned out to be a party of Bernantio's friendly tribe, going to a salina for salt. The Indians eat much salt, their children sucking it like sugar. This habit is very different from that of the Spanish Gauchos, who, leading the same kind of life, eat scarcely any; according to Mungo Park, [\[2\]](#) it is people who live on vegetable food who have an unconquerable desire for salt. The Indians gave us good-humoured nods as they passed at full gallop, driving before them a troop of horses, and followed by a train of lanky dogs.

September 12th and 13th. -- I stayed at this posta two days, waiting for a troop of soldiers, which General Rosas had the kindness to send to inform me, would shortly travel to Buenos Ayres; and he advised me to take the opportunity of the escort. In the morning we rode to some neighbouring hills to view the country, and to examine the geology. After dinner the soldiers divided themselves into two parties for a trial of skill with the bolas. Two spears were stuck in the ground twenty-five yards apart, but they were struck and entangled only once in four or five times. The balls can be thrown fifty or sixty yards, but with little certainty. This, however, does not apply to a man on horseback; for when the speed of the horse is added to the force of the arm, it is said, that they can be whirled with effect to the distance of eighty yards. As a proof of their force, I may mention, that at the Falkland Islands, when the Spaniards murdered some of their own countrymen and all the Englishmen, a young friendly Spaniard was running away, when a great tall man, by name Luciano, came at full gallop after him, shouting to him to stop, and saying that he only wanted to speak to him. Just as the Spaniard was on the point of reaching the boat, Luciano threw the balls: they struck him on the legs with such a jerk, as to throw him down and to render him for some time insensible. The man, after Luciano had had his talk, was allowed to escape. He told us that his legs were marked by great weals, where the thong had wound round, as if he had been flogged with a whip. In the middle of the day two men arrived, who brought a parcel from the next posta to be forwarded to the general: so that besides these two, our party consisted this evening of my guide and self, the lieutenant, and his four soldiers. The latter were strange beings; the first a fine young negro; the second half Indian and negro; and the two others non-descripts; namely, an old Chilian miner, the colour of mahogany, and another partly a mulatto; but two such mongrels with such detestable expressions, I never saw before. At night, when they were sitting round the fire, and playing at cards, I retired to view such a Salvator Rosa scene. They were seated under a low cliff, so that I could look down upon them; around the party were lying dogs, arms, remnants of deer and ostriches; and their long spears were stuck in the turf. Further in the dark background, their horses were tied up, ready for any sudden danger. If the stillness of the desolate plain was broken by one of the dogs barking, a soldier, leaving the fire, would place his head close to the ground, and thus slowly scan the horizon. Even if the noisy *teru-teru* uttered its scream, there would be a pause in the conversation, and every head, for a moment, a little inclined.

What a life of misery these men appear to us to lead! They were at least ten leagues from the *Sauce* posta, and since the murder committed by the Indians, twenty from another. The Indians are supposed to have made their attack in the middle of the night; for very early in the morning after the murder, they were luckily seen approaching this posta. The whole party here, however, escaped, together with the troop of horses; each one taking a line for himself, and driving with him as many animals as he was able to manage.

The little hovel, built of thistle-stalks, in which they slept, neither kept out the wind nor rain; indeed in the latter case the only effect the roof had, was to condense it into larger drops. They had nothing to eat excepting what they could catch, such as ostriches, deer, armadilloes, etc., and their only fuel was the dry stalks of a small plant, somewhat resembling an aloe. The sole luxury which these men enjoyed was smoking the little paper cigars, and sucking mate. I used to think that the carrion vultures, man's constant attendants on these dreary plains, while seated on the little neighbouring cliffs seemed by their very patience to say, "Ah! when the Indians come we shall have a feast."

In the morning we all sallied forth to hunt, and although we had not much success, there were some animated chases. Soon after starting the party separated, and so arranged their plans, that at a certain time of the day (in guessing which they show much skill) they should all meet from different points of the compass on a plain piece of ground, and thus drive together the wild animals. One day I went out hunting at *Bahia Blanca*, but the men there merely rode in a crescent, each being about a quarter of a mile apart from the other. A fine male ostrich being turned by the headmost riders, tried to escape on one side. The *Gauchos* pursued at a reckless pace, twisting their horses about with the most admirable command, and each man whirling the balls round his head. At length the foremost threw them, revolving through the air: in an instant the ostrich rolled over and over, its legs fairly lashed together by the thong. The plains abound with three kinds of partridge, [\[3\]](#) two of which are as large as hen pheasants. Their destroyer, a small and pretty fox, was also singularly numerous; in the course of the day we could not have seen less than forty or fifty. They were generally near their earths, but the dogs killed one. When we returned to the posta, we found two of the party returned who had been hunting by themselves. They had killed a puma, and had found an ostrich's nest with twenty-seven eggs in it. Each of these is said to equal in weight eleven hen's eggs; so that we obtained from this one nest as much food as 297 hen's eggs would have given.

September 14th. -- As the soldiers belonging to the next posta meant to return, and we should together make a party of five, and all armed, I determined not to wait for the expected troops. My host, the lieutenant, pressed me much to stop. As he had been very obliging -- not only providing me with food, but lending me his private horses -- I wanted to make him some remuneration. I asked my guide whether I might do so, but he told me certainly not; that the only answer I should receive, probably would be, "We have meat for the dogs in our country, and therefore do not grudge it to a Christian." It must not be supposed that the rank of lieutenant in such an army would at all prevent the acceptance of payment: it was only the high sense of hospitality, which every traveller is bound

to acknowledge as nearly universal throughout these provinces. After galloping some leagues, we came to a low swampy country, which extends for nearly eighty miles northward, as far as the Sierra Tapalguen. In some parts there were fine damp plains, covered with grass, while others had a soft, black, and peaty soil. There were also many extensive but shallow lakes, and large beds of reeds. The country on the whole resembled the better parts of the Cambridgeshire fens. At night we had some difficulty in finding amidst the swamps, a dry place for our bivouac.

September 15th. -- Rose very early in the morning and shortly after passed the posta where the Indians had murdered the five soldiers. The officer had eighteen chuzo wounds in his body. By the middle of the day, after a hard gallop, we reached the fifth posta: on account of some difficulty in procuring horses we stayed there the night. As this point was the most exposed on the whole line, twenty-one soldiers were stationed here; at sunset they returned from hunting, bringing with them seven deer, three ostriches, and many armadilloes and partridges. When riding through the country, it is a common practice to set fire to the plain; and hence at night, as on this occasion, the horizon was illuminated in several places by brilliant conflagrations. This is done partly for the sake of puzzling any stray Indians, but chiefly for improving the pasture. In grassy plains unoccupied by the larger ruminating quadrupeds, it seems necessary to remove the superfluous vegetation by fire, so as to render the new year's growth serviceable.

The rancho at this place did not boast even of a roof, but merely consisted of a ring of thistle-stalks, to break the force of the wind. It was situated on the borders of an extensive but shallow lake, swarming with wild fowl, among which the black-necked swan was conspicuous.

The kind of plover, which appears as if mounted on stilts (*Himantopus nigricollis*), is here common in flocks of considerable size. It has been wrongfully accused of inelegance; when wading about in shallow water, which is its favourite resort, its gait is far from awkward. These birds in a flock utter a noise, that singularly resembles the cry of a pack of small dogs in full chase: waking in the night, I have more than once been for a moment startled at the distant sound. The *teru-tero* (*Vanellus cayanus*) is another bird, which often disturbs the stillness of the night. In appearance and habits it resembles in many respects our peewits; its wings, however, are armed with sharp spurs, like those on the legs of the common cock. As our peewit takes its name from the sound of its voice, so does the *teru-tero*. While riding over the grassy plains, one is constantly pursued by these birds, which appear to hate mankind, and I am sure deserve to be hated for their never-ceasing, unvaried, harsh screams. To the sportsman they are most annoying, by telling every other bird and animal of his approach: to the traveller in the country, they may possibly, as Molina says, do good, by warning him of the midnight robber. During the breeding season, they attempt, like our peewits, by feigning to be wounded, to draw away from their nests dogs and other enemies. The eggs of this bird are esteemed a great delicacy.

September 16th. -- To the seventh posta at the foot of the Sierra Tapalguen. The country was quite level, with a coarse herbage and a soft peaty soil. The hovel was here remarkably neat, the posts and rafters being made of about a dozen dry thistle-stalks bound together with thongs of hide; and by the support of these Ionic-like columns, the roof and sides were thatched with reeds. We were here told a fact, which I would not have credited, if I had not had partly ocular proof of it; namely, that, during the previous night hail as large as small apples, and extremely hard, had fallen with such violence, as to kill the greater number of the wild animals. One of the men had already found thirteen deer (*Cervus campestris*) lying dead, and I saw their *_fresh_* hides; another of the party, a few minutes after my arrival brought in seven more. Now I well know, that one man without dogs could hardly have killed seven deer in a week. The men believed they had seen about fifteen ostriches (part of one of which we had for dinner); and they said that several were running about evidently blind in one eye. Numbers of smaller birds, as ducks, hawks, and partridges, were killed. I saw one of the latter with a black mark on its back, as if it had been struck with a paving-stone. A fence of thistle-stalks round the hovel was nearly broken down, and my informer, putting his head out to see what was the matter, received a severe cut, and now wore a bandage. The storm was said to have been of limited extent: we certainly saw from our last night's bivouac a dense cloud and lightning in this direction. It is marvellous how such strong animals as deer could thus have been killed; but I have no doubt, from the evidence I have given, that the story is not in the least exaggerated. I am glad, however, to have its credibility supported by the Jesuit Dobrizhoffer, [4] who, speaking of a country much to the northward, says, hail fell of an enormous size and killed vast numbers of cattle: the Indians hence called the place *_Lalegraicavalca_*, meaning "the little white things." Dr. Malcolmson, also, informs me that he witnessed in 1831 in India, a hail-storm, which killed numbers of large birds and much injured the cattle. These hailstones were flat, and one was ten inches in circumference, and another weighed two ounces. They ploughed up a gravel-walk like musket-balls, and passed through glass-windows, making round holes, but not cracking them.

Having finished our dinner, of hail-stricken meat, we crossed the Sierra Tapalguen; a low range of hills, a few hundred feet in height, which commences at Cape Corrientes. The rock in this part is pure quartz; further eastward I understand it is granitic. The hills are of a remarkable form; they consist of flat patches of table-land, surrounded by low perpendicular cliffs, like the outliers of a sedimentary deposit. The hill which I ascended was very small, not above a couple of hundred yards in diameter; but I saw others larger. One

which goes by the name of the "Corral," is said to be two or three miles in diameter, and encompassed by perpendicular cliffs, between thirty and forty feet high, excepting at one spot, where the entrance lies. Falconer [5] gives a curious account of the Indians driving troops of wild horses into it, and then by guarding the entrance, keeping them secure. I have never heard of any other instance of table-land in a formation of quartz, and which, in the hill I examined, had neither cleavage nor stratification. I was told that the rock of the "Corral" was white, and would strike fire.

We did not reach the posta on the Rio Tapalguen till after it was dark. At supper, from something which was said, I was suddenly struck with horror at thinking that I was eating one of the favourite dishes of the country namely, a half-formed calf, long before its proper time of birth. It turned out to be Puma; the meat is very white and remarkably like veal in taste. Dr. Shaw was laughed at for stating that "the flesh of the lion is in great esteem having no small affinity with veal, both in colour, taste, and flavour." Such certainly is the case with the Puma. The Gauchos differ in their opinion, whether the Jaguar is good eating, but are unanimous in saying that cat is excellent.

September 17th. -- We followed the course of the Rio Tapalguen, through a very fertile country, to the ninth posta. Tapalguen, itself, or the town of Tapalguen, if it may be so called, consists of a perfectly level plain, studded over, as far as the eye can reach, with the toldos or oven-shaped huts of the Indians. The families of the friendly Indians, who were fighting on the side of Rosas, resided here. We met and passed many young Indian women, riding by two or three together on the same horse: they, as well as many of the young men, were strikingly handsome, -- their fine ruddy complexions being the picture of health. Besides the toldos, there were three ranchos; one inhabited by the Commandant, and the two others by Spaniards with small shops.

We were here able to buy some biscuit. I had now been several days without tasting anything besides meat: I did not at all dislike this new regimen; but I felt as if it would only have agreed with me with hard exercise. I have heard that patients in England, when desired to confine themselves exclusively to an animal diet, even with the hope of life before their eyes, have hardly been able to endure it. Yet the Gaucho in the Pampas, for months together, touches nothing but beef. But they eat, I observe, a very large proportion of fat, which is of a less animalized nature; and they particularly dislike dry meat, such as that of the Agouti. Dr. Richardson [6] also, has remarked, "that when people have fed for a long time solely upon lean animal food, the desire for fat becomes so insatiable, that they can consume a large quantity of unmixed and even oily fat without nausea:" this appears to me a curious physiological fact. It is, perhaps, from their meat regimen that the Gauchos, like other carnivorous animals, can abstain long from food. I was told that at Tandeel, some troops voluntarily pursued a party of Indians for three days, without eating or drinking.

We saw in the shops many articles, such as horsecloths, belts, and garters, woven by the Indian women. The patterns were very pretty, and the colours brilliant; the workmanship of the garters was so good that an English merchant at Buenos Ayres maintained they must have been manufactured in England, till he found the tassels had been fastened by split sinew.

September 18th. -- We had a very long ride this day. At the twelfth posta, which is seven leagues south of the Rio Salado, we came to the first estancia with cattle and white women. Afterwards we had to ride for many miles through a country flooded with water above our horses' knees. By crossing the stirrups, and riding Arab-like with our legs bent up, we contrived to keep tolerably dry. It was nearly dark when we arrived at the Salado; the stream was deep, and about forty yards wide; in summer, however, its bed becomes almost dry, and the little remaining water nearly as salt as that of the sea. We slept at one of the great estancias of General Rosas. It was fortified, and of such an extent, that arriving in the dark I thought it was a town and fortress. In the morning we saw immense herds of cattle, the general here having seventy-four square leagues of land. Formerly nearly three hundred men were employed about this estate, and they defied all the attacks of the Indians.

September 19th. -- Passed the Guardia del Monte. This is a nice scattered little town, with many gardens, full of peach and quince trees. The plain here looked like that around Buenos Ayres; the turf being short and bright green, with beds of clover and thistles, and with bizcacha holes. I was very much struck with the marked change in the aspect of the country after having crossed the Salado. From a coarse herbage we passed on to a carpet of fine green verdure. I at first attributed this to some change in the nature of the soil, but the inhabitants assured me that here, as well as in Banda Oriental, where there is as great a difference between the country round Monte Video and the thinly-inhabited savannahs of Colonia, the whole was to be attributed to the manuring and grazing of the cattle. Exactly the same fact has been observed in the prairies [7] of North America, where coarse grass, between five and six feet high, when grazed by cattle, changes into common pasture land. I am not botanist enough to say whether the change here is owing to the introduction of new species, to the altered growth of the same, or to a difference in their proportional numbers. Azara has also observed with astonishment this change: he is likewise much perplexed by the immediate appearance of plants not occurring in the neighbourhood, on the borders of any track that leads to a newly-constructed hovel. In another part he says, [8] "ces chevaux (sauvages) ont la manie de preferer les chemins, et le bord des routes pour déposer leurs excremens, dont on trouve des monceaux

dans ces endroits." Does this not partly explain the circumstance? We thus have lines of richly manured land serving as channels of communication across wide districts.

Near the Guardia we find the southern limit of two European plants, now become extraordinarily common. The fennel in great profusion covers the ditch-banks in the neighbourhood of Buenos Ayres, Monte Video, and other towns. But the cardoon (*Cynara cardunculus*) has a far wider range: [9] it occurs in these latitudes on both sides of the, Cordillera, across the continent. I saw it in unfrequented spots in Chile, Entre Rios, and Banda Oriental. In the latter country alone, very many (probably several hundred) square miles are covered by one mass of these prickly plants, and are impenetrable by man or beast. Over the undulating plains, where these great beds occur, nothing else can now live. Before their introduction, however, the surface must have supported, as in other parts, a rank herbage. I doubt whether any case is on record of an invasion on so grand a scale of one plant over the aborigines. As I have already said, I nowhere saw the cardoon south of the Salado; but it is probable that in proportion as that country becomes inhabited, the cardoon will extend its limits. The case is different with the giant thistle (with variegated leaves) of the Pampas, for I met with it in the valley of the Sauce. According to the principles so well laid down by Mr. Lyell, few countries have undergone more remarkable changes, since the year 1535, when the first colonist of La Plata landed with seventy-two horses. The countless herds of horses, cattle, and sheep, not only have altered the whole aspect of the vegetation, but they have almost banished the guanaco, deer and ostrich. Numberless other changes must likewise have taken place; the wild pig in some parts probably replaces the peccari; packs of wild dogs may be heard howling on the wooded banks of the less-frequented streams; and the common cat, altered into a large and fierce animal, inhabits rocky hills. As M. d'Orbigny has remarked, the increase in numbers of the carrion-vulture, since the introduction of the domestic animals, must have been infinitely great; and we have given reasons for believing that they have extended their southern range. No doubt many plants, besides the cardoon and fennel, are naturalized; thus the islands near the mouth of the Parana, are thickly clothed with peach and orange trees, springing from seeds carried there by the waters of the river.

While changing horses at the Guardia several people questioned us much about the army, -- I never saw anything like the enthusiasm for Rosas, and for the success of the "most just of all wars, because against barbarians." This expression, it must be confessed, is very natural, for till lately, neither man, woman nor horse, was safe from the attacks of the Indians. We had a long day's ride over the same rich green plain, abounding with various flocks, and with here and there a solitary estancia, and its one *_ombu_* tree. In the evening it rained heavily: on arriving at a posthouse we were told by the owner, that if we had not a regular passport we must pass on, for there were so many robbers he would trust no one. When he read, however, my passport, which began with "El Naturalista Don Carlos," his respect and civility were as unbounded as his suspicions had been before. What a naturalist might be, neither he nor his countrymen, I suspect, had any idea; but probably my title lost nothing of its value from that cause.

September 20th. -- We arrived by the middle of the day at Buenos Ayres. The outskirts of the city looked quite pretty, with the agave hedges, and groves of olive, peach and willow trees, all just throwing out their fresh green leaves. I rode to the house of Mr. Lumb, an English merchant, to whose kindness and hospitality, during my stay in the country, I was greatly indebted.

The city of Buenos Ayres is large; [10] and I should think one of the most regular in the world. Every street is at right angles to the one it crosses, and the parallel ones being equidistant, the houses are collected into solid squares of equal dimensions, which are called *quadras*. On the other hand, the houses themselves are hollow squares; all the rooms opening into a neat little courtyard. They are generally only one story high, with flat roofs, which are fitted with seats and are much frequented by the inhabitants in summer. In the centre of the town is the Plaza, where the public offices, fortress, cathedral, etc., stand. Here also, the old viceroys, before the revolution, had their palaces. The general assemblage of buildings possesses considerable architectural beauty, although none individually can boast of any.

The great *_corral_*, where the animals are kept for slaughter to supply food to this beef-eating population, is one of the spectacles best worth seeing. The strength of the horse as compared to that of the bullock is quite astonishing: a man on horseback having thrown his lazo round the horns of a beast, can drag it anywhere he chooses. The animal ploughing up the ground with outstretched legs, in vain efforts to resist the force, generally dashes at full speed to one side; but the horse immediately turning to receive the shock, stands so firmly that the bullock is almost thrown down, and it is surprising that their necks are not broken. The struggle is not, however, one of fair strength; the horse's girth being matched against the bullock's extended neck. In a similar manner a man can hold the wildest horse, if caught with the lazo, just behind the ears. When the bullock has been dragged to the spot where it is to be slaughtered, the matador with great caution cuts the hamstrings. Then is given the death bellow; a noise more expressive of fierce agony than any I know. I have often distinguished it from a long distance, and have always known that the struggle was then drawing to a close. The whole sight is horrible and revolting: the ground is almost made of bones; and the horses and riders are drenched with gore.

[1] I call these thistle-stalks for the want of a more correct name. I believe it is a species of *Eryngium*.

[2] *Travels in Africa*, p. 233.

[3] Two species of *Tinamus* and *Eudromia elegans* of A. d'Orbigny, which can only be called a partridge with regard to its habits.

[4] *History of the Abipones*, vol. ii. p. 6.

[5] *Falconer's Patagonia*, p. 70.

[6] *Fauna Boreali-Americana*, vol. i. p. 35.

[7] See Mr. Atwater's account of the Prairies, in *Silliman's N. A. Journal*, vol. i. p. 117.

[8] *Azara's Voyages*, vol. i. p. 373.

[9] M. A. d'Orbigny (vol. i. p. 474) says that the cardoon and artichoke are both found wild. Dr. Hooker (*Botanical Magazine*, vol. iv. p. 2862), has described a variety of the *Cynara* from this part of South America under the name of *inermis*. He states that botanists are now generally agreed that the cardoon and the artichoke are varieties of one plant. I may add, that an intelligent farmer assured me that he had observed in a deserted garden some artichokes changing into the common cardoon. Dr. Hooker believes that Head's vivid description of the thistle of the Pampas applies to the cardoon, but this is a mistake. Captain Head referred to the plant, which I have mentioned a few lines lower down, under the title of giant thistle. Whether it is a true thistle I do not know; but it is quite different from the cardoon; and more like a thistle properly so called.

[10] It is said to contain 60,000 inhabitants. Monte Video, the second town of importance on the banks of the Plata, has 15,000.

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