

gentines cordially detest. Very soon we crossed a rushing stream on a bridge of ice forming a complete arch, and strong enough to support a regiment of cavalry. We crossed the glacier from which this stream issues, and saw traces of several avalanches which had swept down from the heights, carrying with them tons of rock and earth, over which we had to climb. Vegetation of a different kind from that in Chili began to crop up, but the mountains around were all along massive accumulations of fantastic rocks of bright colors, showing the entire geological formation of the Cordillera.

At 5 p. m. we came to the next inn, surrounded by extensive corn-fields, and I was glad to rest my weary limbs after a ride and march of fifteen hours. The innkeeper was an unmannerly Argentine *gaucho*, who, taking me for a Chilean, treated me with much contempt until I convinced him that I was not one of his born enemies. I managed to get a bed put into one of his wretched rooms, and found my companions to be the Russian engineer, Mr. L., and an American railroad contractor, whom I had met in Chili eight years ago. Mr. L. kindly invited us to share the soup and fowl he had ordered, for which we were very grateful, and we decided to pursue our journey next day in company. The American, a man of immense strength, measuring six feet five inches in his stockings, and accompanied by an enormous mastiff, proved to be a most agreeable traveling companion, while Mr. L., a perfect gentleman of high breeding, gave us some interesting accounts of his life in Chili while trying to arrange a contract with the government for some eight or ten miles of railway. He had been unsuccessful, an enterprising American company having underbid him by nearly one million pounds sterling. The contract had been signed a few days previous to our meeting for the lump sum of three and one-quarter million pounds.

After a fair rest in rather tumble-down beds, we started down the valley at 8 a. m. A young Argentine, who had arrived from Mendoza the evening before, had found portions of the road washed away, and had lost three horses over the cliff, only managing to save the animal he rode, as he drove the others before him. However, we found the road broader and better, as a whole, than any we had yet met with; but the river, much swollen, had washed the road away wherever it approached the bank, so that we often had to climb the cliffs, and at one place the path along the precipice was so narrow that the pack mules could not pass, and had to be unloaded, the men carrying the luggage over piecemeal on their backs. But soon all danger was past; the road broadened and the descent became easier. It was very hot, and water was scarce, for the river water was too muddy for drinking.

The scenery was by no means lovely, yet majestic, the snow-crowned

mountains we had crossed the previous day rising behind us. The burning sun seemed to have extinguished all vegetable and animal life. This valley, so full of land-slips, with its frequently flooded river and treacherous avalanches, seemed the worst place for the projected railway; and my companions had their doubts whether the contractors would be able to carry through their enormous work. Towards evening we came to a rather respectable house enclosed with trees, and had to ford the river to reach it. Some gipsies had pitched their camp close by, and we had no sooner dismounted than we were surrounded by these picturesque people, and the usual begging and fortune-telling commenced. We could not help admiring the beauty of two or three of the women and girls, who would have rejoiced the hearts of many a painter, and who, with their dazzling white teeth, sunny eyes, elastic gait, and jet-black hair, interlaced with many coins, reminded me of the numerous pictures of which their kindred have been the inspiration. These people, so fond of travel, are not kept back by the greatest obstacles, and I have met with a troop in Chili, which had somewhat brought its carts, horses, babies, and dogs across the Andes.

Our luggage was examined in the Argentine custom-house close by, after which we ate a wretched meal and retired to rest. Next morning, on the proposition of Mr. L., we despatched our men and mules at 4 a. m., and hired a carriage to take us some thirty miles along a fair road. We started across a wide plain, scantily diversified by a few shrubs and dwarfed trees. The road was heavy, and our driver continually flogged and shouted at the mules which dragged our old-fashioned carriage. Then we climbed up some hills we had to cross in order to reach the road down to the prairie-land of Mendoza. At the top we overtook our animals and halted, for the carriage could proceed no further. Here the view was overpoweringly magnificent. Below us lay an immense tract of softly undulating country, covered with low shrubs and cacti; and away in the far east was a flat stretch of misty expanse, which at first I mistook for the sea, but knew must be the wide pampas of the Argentine Republic. Here and there on the hills we saw herds of horses and cattle, and our men had sighted three ostriches and eleven guanacos, the small kind of llama which abounds in the Cordillera, and especially in Patagonia, and the skins of which make such nice rugs. The ostriches, which are easily tamed, are smaller than the African species and without tall plumes. At about 11 a. m. we were again on horseback and overtook our Chilean friends, one of whom had had a bad fall while crawling over the stony pass the day before, and was suffering much. After passing over some twenty miles of rough steep road, the pampas always in sight, we came to a very neat and clean inn, quite an exception to the preceding ones,

where the owners were very kind, all owing, I suppose, to the fact that the landlord had a wife to help him, the first Argentine woman we met with. Her kind welcome made us forget the insolence we had had to endure from her countrymen nearer the frontiers.

The poor wounded Chilean was in such pain that he gave up all idea of proceeding on horseback. Mr. L. tended and doctored him, and then left us, wishing to catch that night's train at Mendoza for Buenos Ayres. He had ordered a carriage to wait for him at the foot of the hills, whence he had still to drive more than forty miles before night-fall. We were sorry to lose him, and I hope to meet him again when I return to Chili.

We took a good lunch, and passed the heat of the day in practising with our revolvers, in which exercise my American friend showed great skill. I had a long conversation with the wounded Chilean, who turned out to be a wealthy farmer from Los Andes, well-bred, and straight-forward, and we made friends at once. He lent me one of his horses to ride to Mendoza, as a change from my jogging mule, and sent his friend and a servant along with us, asking us to order him a carriage next day to the nearest point; but I was doubtful if he would not have to rest several days before being well enough to proceed.

At 3 p. m. we started again, passing some three hours through a rich valley, clothed with wild peach trees, and gay with innumerable flowers; on its steep sides grazed much cattle. From it we issued into open country, gradually descending to join the pampas below. We could trace the yellow line of the road to Mendoza amid the green bushes of the pampas. Far away a dark patch of trees showed where the city of Mendoza lay, and beyond that point, like a troubled sea, stretched the whole vast expanse of flat pasture land, bounded by a level horizon, over which some angry-looking clouds were gathering. In the middle of the yellow road moved a cloud of dust which we knew to be caused by Mr. L.'s carriage, rolling on to its destination. We made sure he would never catch his train, but found afterwards that he actually did so, owing to its having started two hours behind time. We hastened forward, having still forty miles to ride on tired animals, and part of the time in the dark. When we got into the straight road across the pampas vivid flashes of lightning illuminated the clouds on the horizon, and by the time night fell they had increased in frequency and intensity, accompanied by distant thunder. I have never in my life seen grander or more incessant lightning than that which now lasted for four hours. Sometimes a flash would run in a serpentine line along the horizon; then another would approach the earth and turn back to the clouds; at other moments a whole bunch of forked tongues would dart out of a cloud to the ground, or a broad straight flash would cause us to fear damage to some place or person. By-and-by a