

I enjoyed my night's rest here from a reason which will not be fully appreciated in England, namely, the absence of fleas! The rooms in Coquimbo swarm with them; but they will not live here at the height of only three or four thousand feet: it can scarcely be the trifling diminution of temperature, but some other cause which destroys these troublesome insects at this place. The mines are now in a bad state, though they formerly yielded about 2,000 pounds in weight of silver a year. It has been said that "a person with a copper mine will gain; with silver, he may gain; but with gold, he is sure to lose." This is not true: all the large Chilean fortunes have been made by mines of the more precious metals. A short time since an English physician returned to England from Copiapó, taking with him the profits of one share in a silver mine, which amounted to about 24,000 pounds sterling. No doubt a copper mine with care is a sure game, whereas the other is gambling, or rather taking a ticket in a lottery. The owners lose great quantities of rich ores; for no precautions can prevent robberies. I heard of a gentleman laying a bet with another that one of his men should rob him before his face. The ore when brought out of the mine is broken into pieces, and the useless stone thrown on one side. A couple of the miners who were thus employed, pitched, as if by accident, two fragments away at the same moment, and then cried out for a joke, "Let us see which rolls furthest." The owner, who was standing by, bet a cigar with his friend on the race. The miner by this means watched the very point among the rubbish where the stone lay. In the evening he picked it up and carried it to his master, showing him a rich mass of silver-ore, and saying, "This was the stone on which you won a cigar by its rolling so far."

May 23d.—We descended into the fertile valley of Coquimbo, and followed it till we reached a hacienda belonging to a relation of Don Jose, where we stayed the next day. I then rode one day's journey further, to see what were declared to be some petrified shells and beans, which latter