

are not many spaces of two hundred yards square where some little bush, cactus or lichen may not be discovered by careful examination; and in the soil seeds lie dormant ready to spring up during the first rainy winter. In Peru real deserts occur over wide tracts of country. In the evening we arrived at a valley in which the bed of the streamlet was damp: following it up, we came to tolerably good water. During the night, the stream, from not being evaporated and absorbed so quickly, flows a league lower down than during the day. Sticks were plentiful for firewood, so that it was a good place of bivouac for us; but for the poor animals there was not a mouthful to eat.

June 11th.—We rode without stopping for twelve hours, till we reached an old smelting-furnace, where there was water and firewood; but our horses again had nothing to eat, being shut up in an old courtyard. The line of road was hilly, and the distant views interesting from the varied colors of the bare mountains. It was almost a pity to see the sun shining constantly over so useless a country: such splendid weather ought to have brightened fields and pretty gardens. The next day we reached the valley of Copiapó. I was heartily glad of it; for the whole journey was a continued source of anxiety; it was most disagreeable to hear, while eating our own suppers, our horses gnawing the posts to which they were tied, and to have no means of relieving their hunger. To all appearance, however, the animals were quite fresh; and no one could have told that they had eaten nothing for the last fifty-five hours.

I had a letter of introduction to Mr. Bingley, who received me very kindly at the Hacienda of Potrero Seco. This estate is between twenty and thirty miles long, but very narrow, being generally only two fields wide, one on each side the river. In some parts the estate is of no width, that is to say, the land cannot be irrigated, and therefore is valueless, like the surrounding rocky desert. The small quantity of cultivated land in the whole line of valley does not so much depend on inequalities of level, and consequent unfitness for