'Through Patagonia'

By
W O Campbell

CHAPTER I

Life in Patagonia—Its Geography and History—The Indians —Climate—Attractions of Patagonia—The Rivers—Animal Life

It is said that the average Englishman will take his pleasures sadly—and such pleasures! —to go hungry and cold, to wander beneath the tropical sun of Ecuador, or climb and search out the cold fastnesses of the hitherto unexplored Andes. All are alike to him: he is at home wherever he puts his foot. To the every-day tourist who must have every stage of his journey mapped out for him, to whom a good dinner and a bottle of wine are a sine qua non, I have nothing to say. His way is made easy, step by step a kindly and sufficient police will watch over and protect him, all he requires is money; this book of directions and warnings can he of no use to him.

But to the man who would see for himself a country as it was left by the Creator before the hand of man has touched it — who will voluntarily put himself back many generations to live for awhile the life of his more primitive ancestors; who will care to live with the sky as his boundary and to sleep with the stars for a roof, as, with his feet stretched to the camp fire he thinks of far-off home and distant scenes, whilst ever and anon the stillness of the night is broken by the bark of the fox or the cry of some wandering puma seeking his prey—to him I can offer a vast field and scope for his wanderings, a life free for a short while from the daily worries and conventionalities of civilisation, where his time and his way are his own, to choose how he will and to go where he will; and I hope that he may find this small book of some assistance to him before he sets out.

Patagonia, or Tehuelia, as it is sometimes called, from the Tehuelche Indians who chiefly inhabit it, lies between the parallels of Lat. 39 S. and 57 S.; that is to say, is bounded by the Rio Negro on the north and by the Straits of Magellan on the south — so named after a certain Magellan who first visited this coast and entered the Strait in 1519—on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, on the west by the ranges of the Cordilleras, or Andes, comprising in all some 322,000 square miles. Magellan, in his short account of the country, remarks nothing of note but the extraordinary size of the Indians, and he is borne out in this by Captain Byron, who examined the coast line in 1764, the former naming the country from the "Patagonies," or large foot prints, which he observed near his first landing place at St. Julian; but both these accounts are superficial and extremely inaccurate. A few years ago this was a country almost entirely deserted, except for the one or two settlements dotted here and there wherever the grass would afford sufficient grazing for the flocks, and situated many weeks' journey from each other; but within the last three

years small ranches and estancias have begun to spring up, most of these pioneers being Englishmen, where a hearty and hospitable welcome may always be relied on by the new corner if only in exchange for the items of news brought from the outside world. And indeed this hospitality will be found even among the Indian tribes who, although naturally of a silent and taciturn disposition, will show strangers the greatest hospitality. There is, however, a certain etiquette on entering an Indian toldo—or encampment—which it is well to observe, I remember once riding up with a friend who was only just out from England, and, unaware of offence, he jumped from his horse, shook hands all round, talked away, and distributed tobacco to the astonished savages. I happened to have known the cacique—or chief—before, and was able to explain to him how my friend was unused to their ways, and I was pleased to see that he took the affair in good part.

The proper and polite way is to ride up to the door, but on no account get off the horse until invited to do so. The host will then seat himself and invite his guest to do likewise, all this time being passed in perfect silence until the "matte cup" has been passed round, which, by the way, must not be refused, when conversation will begin and tobacco will be gratefully accepted. It is not necessary, as in some countries, to leave the rifle and revolver outside before entering the hut; nor, indeed, is it wise to do so, since the Indian is, I am sorry to say, far from trustworthy, and a quarrel very soon springs up amongst them, when it is always well to have one's weapons ready to hand.

Many fables have been told about these same Indians, old books of travel describing them as giants of enormous stature and hideously tatooed. This latter art is indeed absolutely unknown amongst Patagonians, the only decoration in that way being daubs of coloured clay smeared on the faces of some of the women; whilst in height, although very much above the average— some indeed reaching the height of 6 ft.4 in. and all being broad and muscular— they have been greatly exaggerated, for, being very long in the body, they seem to tower above the European whilst sitting on horseback. They are short in the legs, and when standing on the ground do not on an average come over about 5ft.llin. They are a quiet, friendly, though wandering race, supposed to be descended from the people of the Canary Islands, and though all of the Tehuelche tribe are divided into two factions the northern ranging over the plains from the Rio Negro almost to the Santa Cruz river, whilst the southern race, who are of a finer build and expert hunters, extend their influence to the Strait of Magellan, occupying the remainder of the country — they are in reality one race.

It is interesting, too, to notice the difference between these Patagonian Indians and their near neighbours, the Indians of Tierra del Fuego. The former, as I

have said, are a large, muscular, and fierce people, living a wild out-of-door life, and in face not ill-looking; whilst the latter, though only separated by a few miles of water from these giants, are extremely diminutive in stature and live in holes dug in the ground whilst in ugliness and lowness of caste they surpass even the aborigines of Australia.

The Patagonians for the most part spend their time in hunting with the bolas, which they throw with great skill and accuracy, being also splendid swimmers and long distance walkers; whilst the women spend their time in drying and scraping the skins and in fashioning arrows and bolas for their lords' use. Their complexion is of a reddish (or, rather, yellowish) brown, whilst their eyes are of a fine brown and their hair long, black, and coarse. The head is of a very extraordinary shape; for, being always carried as children strapped to a long board, the skull has become very short and flat at the back, being, according to scientists, second only to the heads of the Lapps in this respect. Their gods are of a very simple nature, simply a good and a bad spirit, whom they propitiate twice a year—about the time of the equinoxes—by prayer and offerings; although they will on no account allow a white man to be present at these observances, and I have never been able to witness the festival myself.

It must not be thought that these savages were always so peacefully employed; for many men now living can tell dreadful tales of their cruelty, and can remember when they were ravaging up to the doors of Bahia Bianca, aye, and even penetrated far into the province of Buenos Aires itself. It is to General Roca (now President) that the honour is due of finally driving them back into Patagonia, killing such numbers that their power was completely crippled and their armies scattered.

In the north of Patagonia the climate is extremely warm in summer, but as one journeys further south one finds it getting colder, with icy blasts blowing from the Cordilleras; and in Punta Arenas the cold is intense nearly all the year round, scarcely a day passing without rain, sleet or snow. Perhaps the most curious phenomenon of the Patagonian climate is the continual wind blowing ever from the south-west with great force, and proving at first very trying to those unaccustomed to it; although it is this wind which, as is afterwards shown, is of the greatest assistance to the traveller, and it will in the future be the great agent for raising the all too scarce water from beneath the earth.

It may very easily he asked, "What beside the attraction of aimless wandering would be likely to induce the traveller to choose Patagonia as a field for travel?

People travel for so many different reasons that this question is difficult to answer; but I will maintain that, for every variety of amusement or employment, there is no country in the world which can offer so many attractions as the Republic of Argentina, and in that Republic there is no district like Patagonia.

Do you want a healthy climate, you will find climates of every description in this land —the high cold altitudes of the mountains, or the dry heat of the Pampas; whilst the long seaboard furnishes even sea air blowing straight from the Atlantic, should that be required. Do you want, sport, you will find every variety of game here whilst, as every one knows, the mountains of the Andes ate a very paradise to the mountaineer.

The agricultural and pastoral capabilities of the country are of course vast, and furnish a quick return to the investor; whilst quite lately an expedition has set out into the interior bent upon capturing and bringing back the giant sloth, a beast less rare in prehistoric times than nowadays, and about which much-discussed topic I must here warn my readers that I absolutely decline to be drawn or express an opinion one way or the other.

It is a curious fact that when the Patagonian Indians were first met with it was not uncommon to find the caciques using bits and stirrups of almost pure gold, and this has given rise to the suspicion that somewhere hidden away from the eye of man there are mines of such vast wealth and richness as even to surpass those of Klondyke. I will confess that I myself believe that this is so, and that I once spent many weeks and much fire "water trying" to coax the secret of its where-abouts from one of the caciques, who, however, except furnishing me with much food for thought at the intemperance of native races—when that intemperance was made easy by the hospitality of a gringo loco, or mad Englishman—sent me away as ignorant as I came. Nor have I ever in my wanderings been able to locate this El Dorado.

There are in all only six rivers of any size or importance which flow into the sea on the eastern side of the continent—the Rivers Negro, Chubut, Santa Cruz, IDeseado, Coyly and Gallegos—although the Rio Negro and Rio Chubut are fed by fair-sized streams which rise from the springs in the Cordilleras.

Another curious feature of this inhospitable land is the entire absence of vegetation for more than a league on either side of the rivers, therefore rendering them unfit for travel; and this fact should be remembered, since travellers have often gone many leagues, tiring themselves and exhausting their horses, to gain one of these rivers, only to find on arriving there a barren

waste of sand for many miles round, and often the banks too steep to allow the horses to get to the water.

It is of course this scarcity of water and pasture in the plains of Patagonia that limits the game which inhabits these parts to those which are able to go for long times and distances without dying of thirst, and able to subsist upon the scantiest of food. The most common animal met with is the guanaco, a species of llama and not unlike a camel, with a long slender neck and hump on its back. This beast, though very shy and wary, is like all its kind very curious and inquisitive so that the hunter who has the patience to lie for sonic time on the ground in their sight will eventually be rewarded with a good shot, the very raising of the rifle to take aim only increasing their curiosity and inducing them to approach even nearer to examine such a—to them—strange phenomenon.

Good sport can also be obtained in the months of December and January by riding after the young guanacos before they are old enough to outstrip a home, end either catching them wit the lasso or bolas, or, if the hunter be expert enough, shooting them from horseback with rifle or revolver. In this way the Indians catch many thousands every year, the skins being saleable In the towns, where they are traded for yerba, coffee and sugar; and many a mad gallop and exciting finish have I had whilst hunting with these wild gentry.

Ostriches—or, more properly, emus —are also very plentiful; but except to old and practised hands and those experienced in their ways they are hard to get close to, although to the hungry man they form a pleasant change to the evening meal either in the shape of soup or roasted, their flesh being not unlike that of the turkey.

In the forest at the foot of the Cordilleras a small deer is to be found in great numbers—a pretty, graceful animal with long slender horns, quite worth the trouble of procuring; but these never enter into the plains below, partly on account of their hereditary enemy, the puma, and partly, no doubt, preferring the cool, shady, and well-watered pastures of the mountains to the dry, burning pampas of the east coast. This latter animal — the puma, or South American lion—is to be found all over the continent from Panama to the Strait of Magellan, and is especially plentiful where the scrub and undergrowth will afford him shelter and hiding; for he is a shy, timid beast and a great coward, and unless wounded and brought to bay ha very seldom been known to attack a man unprovoked, although he will be found a great curse to the traveller, who may be awakened in the night by a roar and stampede of hoofs, which will be explained to him in the morning by finding his "tropilla" of horses scattered for many miles around.

Another curious inhabitant of these parts is the Patagonian hare. Never shall I forget my first introduction to this fellow.

It was on a bright moonlight night when, from almost under my feet, sprang a most strange and comical looking beast Not unlike the English hare in colour, it stands very nearly as high as a retriever dog, with long thin legs and large protruding eyes, and goes bounding over the ground like a kangaroo in a most ungainly manner, quite appalling in its grotesque ugliness, and seeming iii the moonlight a more fit inhabitant of Mr. Rudyard Kipling's "Nuit Blanche" than of this matter-of-fact planet.

Of the smaller species, the fox is by far the most common. The plains of Patagonia simply swarm with the small silver sort, whilst in the Cordilleras the large red fox is more often met with. They are bold and mischievous brutes; and woe betide the traveller who neglects to place all his leather belongings either on a bush or beneath his bed, for he will awake in the morning to find them gnawed through and through, for which attention he will only have Mr. Fox to thank.

The armadillo, a small shelled hedgehog with a head the shape of a miniature pig's, is also very plentiful, and when properly cooked on red hot stones or in the ashes of the fire they form a great luxury and are considered a delicacy in Buenos Aires, where they are exposed for sale at $1, i.e. 1s. 3d., apiece. In the rivers otters are to be found, whilst of the birds the condor (a large black vulture feeding on carrion), three different kinds of hawk, the ordinary partridge, the martinetti (a bird the size of a guineafowl and, like that bird, carrying a tuft of feathers on its head), and many varieties of duck, are the only specimens worthy of mention. These latter indeed are very plentiful and of every variety of colour, rising from pools or marshy ground in clouds, accompanied probably by wild geese and swans, on the approach of man.

It will thus be seen that the adventurous traveller need be in no fear as to food; he cannot starve so long as he has his gun or his rifle in good order, and even if these should fail he will soon learn from his peon a thousand different ways of snaring animals for food and of procuring armadillos and other small fry which, although not very sustaining to the hungry hunter, will always serve to keep body and soul together.

CHAPTER II

Preparation—An Agent advisable—Choice of a Saddle—Bedding —A Cold Experience—Clothing, etc.—A Peon—A Christmas Story—The Commisariat—The Buying and Choice of Horses—A Warning to the Careless.

We must now assume that our reader is anxious to travel in and examine for himself the wonders and matters—of interest to be found in this vast unexplored territory, and is also willing and ready to run the risks and undergo the hardships which this must inevitably entail.

There are of course no railways to assist him, and the services of the few wagon routes are of the scantiest. There but remains man's friend, the horse, to carry him faithfully through his wanderings; and it must be therefore his first care to select horses which he can rely upon, and to take the very greatest care of them whilst on the march. Let us suppose then that he is now in Buenos Aires, where he must buy most of the necessaries for his trip.

The language must at this stage prove a great difficulty, since in very few of the shops will anything but Spanish be spoken, although when I first arrived in Argentina I found French would go a long way. Within the last year or two a firm—Kincaid and Eborall, having an office at the Hotel Universelle, Calle San Martin No. 138—have made a speciality of assisting persons who have newly arrived in the country, and not only are their charges on commission extremely moderate, but Mr. Kincaid will be found a most interesting *raconteur* of all things Patagonian. His experiences date back to the very early days when the Argentine Republic was in its infancy, so that it can be little wondered at that his office has become a general meeting place of Patagonian estancieros and others, who never tire of listening to the stories told there and comparing past and present events.

A saddle will, of course, be his first and greatest want. It will have to become his home, his bed, and his luggage earner; therefore he cannot take too much trouble in the selection of this all-important factor. All idea of the ordinary English saddle must at once be abandoned, it being in the first place unsuited to the shape of the horse which he will have to use, and, more important still, it is of no use in carrying anything in the form of a bed. Another alternative is the *racado*, or saddle used by the natives of the country. This really answers every purpose for which it is wanted, consisting of two rolls of leather placed on each side of the backbone of the horse. These are securely fastened on with a broad girth or synch, secured with a running knot, and capable of being done up very tight should the rider wish; whilst over this, so as to form a seat, are placed the rugs or

Bedding.- This should be of as light a nature as consists with warmth and comfort, one *quillanga*, or fur rug, one horse cloth (which is best carried under the saddle), to lie on at night, and a thick *poncho*, or rug with a hole in the middle to admit the head, being all that is necessary. A mackintosh sheet is also a luxury, since the ground is often sopping wet, and tents are never, or very rarely, carried in Patagonia, owing to the high wind.

To give an experience of my own folly, I was once persuaded that to carry my ponchos, etc., on my saddle was needless, and accordingly for many days I placed my bedding amongst the impedimenta on the pack horse. I was crossing the Andes from Chili into Argentina at the time, and for the first few days all went well. I arrived at the summit of the pass about six o'clock in the afternoon, the troop of horses going quietly on in front of me. I was just preparing to begin the descent so as to be able to pass the night at a lower altitude, when by ill luck the pack horse missed its footing and fell some two hundred feet down a *crevasse*. I saw the poor brute had broken its legs and could not move, so that all hope of saving it was impossible, and I was looking out for a path to descend and save my baggage when, with the exasperating suddenness which the sun has in those parts of setting, I was suddenly left in darkness. It was impossible to continue my journey and so seek a warmer climate than the summit of the Andes in which to pass the night, and it was too dark to think of climbing down to the fallen pack horse. One thing I was able to do, namely, to send three merciful bullets one after the other from my repeater to put an end to the poor brute's sufferings. After that there was nothing to be done but scrape a cave in the snow and creep into it, thus keeping myself as warm as possible under the circumstances. Never as long as I live shall I forget that night. The cold was intense, and I spent the greater part of the time walking up and down to keep myself from being frozen to death. The next morning, with the return of daylight, I was able to climb down and retrieve my lost bedding and other baggage, and I was pleased to notice that although firing only in a half light my shots the night before must have brought an instant and merciful death to the poor wounded horse.

I may here mention that this was the last occasion on which I allowed myself to be parted from my ponchos, and can only hope that my cold experience may serve as a warning to my readers.

Bridles, etc.—An ordinary English bridle with a goad strong curb is as useful as any other, but a native bridle made of raw hide is much cheaper and perhaps more reliable. At the same time, with this a head stall and *cabaresta*, or long strip of raw hide, for tethering the horse, must be bought, together

with a pair of hobbles, which should always be kept fixed to the saddle in case of need.

As to clothes, one cannot presume to lay down any hard and fast rule in the matter; but, still, a small list of what I myself generally take whilst on these expeditions may act as a guide to the novice:

Two pairs of breeches or strong cloth trousers.
Two flannel shirts.
Four pairs of thick socks.
A strong coat, a wideawake hat, and a pair of field boots.

A pair of smoked glasses with side guards for dust will also be found a comfort from the glare of the sun, whilst a pair of *alpagartas*, or *basque* shoes, though unsightly in a town, are a great relief after a long day's ride.

It is also wise to procure a leather water bag in Buenos Aires, care being taken that it be thoroughly washed out with weak spirits and water.

This list comprises all things that will have to be bought in Buenos Aires; any other necessaries can be purchased at the starting point, where a *peon*, or servant, must also be hired.

This question of a peon is, I think, worth a word or two, since so many men go into a town and take the first man—preferably an Englishman—who may offer himself. No greater mistake can be made. In the first place, the novice will require a man who will be thoroughly trustworthy and will make the interests of his "padron" his own, and for his own sake will advise his master as to the horses and see that everything that is necessary is taken, without giving in to the extortionate demands of the small storekeepers. For this reason a native of the country is preferable who is thoroughly accustomed to the life in these parts, and will be able to teach his employer the ins and outs of the life without taking advantage of his ignorance.

I can remember a peon I had once whose behaviour led me into a rather amusing adventure. His name was Munos, a man of mixed nationality and overwhelming arrogance, but, however, one of the best peons I ever had in the management of horses.

I was at the time guiding a Mr. Mavrogordato over the Andes into Chili, and until we had crossed the mountains and arrived on Christmas night close to a little village in Chili, Munos's behaviour had been all that the most exacting padron could expect. It was therefore with no misgivings that I gave him leave to walk into the village and celebrate his Christmas. My trust was,

however, sadly misplaced, for I subsequently learned that my well-behaved friend had marched up to the peaceful village, and, after drinking several healths, had announced himself an Argentine subject and quite ready and willing to take on any two Chilians. This informal challenge had been promptly accepted, knives were drawn, and a general affray ensued. The first intimation we received of the affair was early in the morning of the next day, when we received a pressing invitation brought by a sergeant and guard to attend that day the trial of my peon for wounding two Chilian subjects. The trial was extremely informal, the main point turning on whether Munos was of good behaviour generally or not. I accordingly went into the witness-box and gave strong evidence in favour of my peon. Chilian Spanish, however, is slightly different from that spoken on the other side of the Andes, so that very often the prisoner was called upon to translate my very laudatory references to himself to the Court. Happily the magistrate was a very good sort, and seeing the inconvenience I should be put to by the loss of my peon, he was good enough to consider that the case was one which could be dealt with by a caution only, and we were all set at liberty to pursue our way.

Food.—Here, for instance, the advice of the peon must be taken as to quantity, since this depends on the length of the journey and the route taken. Suffice it to say that for meat the traveller must depend on his gun and rifle, although it is always wise to take a few kilos of jerked (i.e., dried in the sun) meat for emergencies, only to be drawn on as a last resource and when absolutely necessary, when it will be found to have kept good for two or three months and to be, though unappetising, a most sustaining and strengthening food.

Bread is of no use owing to its bulk, but *galletas* (hard dry biscuits in the shape of a dinner roll) can be packed in a small compass, whilst half of one will be found sufficient at each meal.

Yerba.—This yerba, or Paraguayan tea, is drunk very largely all over the Republic, but nowhere is it so precious as to the traveller, to whom it is both meat and drink, serving as a tonic when thoroughly tired out and as a sedative against the pangs of hunger. It is either made like tea, or more usually is sucked from a gourd cup through a tube called a "bombilla." These are the only necessaries; but sugar, tea, or coffee break the monotony of the meals, whilst a tin of Van Houten's cocoa I have found of inestimable service as a pick-me-up after a long and hard day, when food has been scarce and the water dirty and brackish.

For cooking utensils, a small saucepan, a kettle and two clips, which must all be of metal, and therefore unbreakable, are quite sufficient, since these articles are always heavy and of an unwieldy shape for packing purposes.

Before starting, the traveller must be sure that the certificates which he receives with his horses are in order, and that the brands and colours bear out the written description in the certificate. The law of horses is rather complicated, and should be understood by the owner before he takes over the troop so as to save him future annoyance by the way. All horses have some brand, either on the shoulder or rump of the near side of the animal, but should this brand appear twice on the same animal the brand is considered cancelled. For instance, suppose a troop of six horses, all white in colour, the certificate would run:

"Yo certifico que ha vendido seis caballos blancos de siguente marca (here follows a small drawing of the brand) y de mi propiedad a, etc., which means in English:

"I certify that I have sold six white horses of the following brand . . . and being my property to, etc." This document is then signed by the vendor, and, if possible, it is well to take the paper to the Alcalde, or magistrate of the district, who will add his stamp and signature. The best kind of horse to select is the criollo, or native mustang of the country. Small, wiry, and tough, it is capable of standing any amount of fatigue far better than the more pampered kind, and will travel for hours at a stretch at a steady jog, now and then breaking into a canter, and only asking to be rewarded for its fidelity by being allowed to feed at will among the grass when the camping ground is reached.

The number of horses necessary will depend on the number of the expedition, and also on the state of the country to be passed over; but a very fair estimate is to allow four horses per man, and, if a large amount of impedimenta be carried, it will be necessary to buy an extra horse, and one accustomed to carry packs. These horses, after two or three days on the road, will become firm friends, and will always keep in a troop, never straying far from the mare—which is always sold with a number of horses—-carrying a bell, and thus serving the double purpose of attracting the other horses to her and of advising her owner of her whereabouts.

Not to frighten the would-be explorer, but to show how all important is the continual care of the horse as to tethering, etc., I may mention that I was once travelling along at the foot of the Andes when my horse's hoof struck against something which rattled ominously. I got down to examine this, and found that there was a human skeleton lying across my path. This, in itself, is not an uncommon sight, but I could see by the shape of the skull that this was no wandering Indian who had died in these solitudes. A few yards away was the skeleton of a horse which, on examination, I found had had its leg broken by a pair of bolas, which were lying close near. From these few trivial points it was

not hard to guess at the awful scene which had been enacted there perhaps many years before.

One could picture a man wandering alone in this great wilderness, and perhaps through carelessness in hobbling his bell mare he lost his horses. For a whole day he may have followed the troop, and at last managed to come within about twenty yards of one of them. Eagerly he must - have unslung his bolas, and with a few short, sharp twists sent them whistling through the air as he had so often done before, but never, perhaps, with so heavy an issue at stake. Nor, apparently, was his aim bad, for he must have seen with joy the fatal knots tie themselves about the horse's feet and bring it to a standstill but when he realised that the heavy lead balls had—-as sometimes they do—broken the horse's leg, he must have known that, left alone and on foot in this deserted land, nothing but a miracle could save him. It would not be hard to picture his frenzied wanderings, nor how at last he - had wandered back to his wounded horse, and there, alone and untended, had started on a journey from which no man has yet returned to point out the track. I managed to dig a shallow grave and give some sort of a burial to what I had found, and then remounting my horse I rode on, glad to get away from the depressing scene; but I can remember now with what care I hobbled out my own horses that night and for many nights to follow.

The would-be explorer now has his stores and his "tropilla" of horses, with the country before him, over which to wander whither he will. His chief difficulty will be scarcity of water, but further on I have endeavoured to jot down a few hints on this and one or two other subjects, which I hope will make comparatively easy many difficulties and obstacles which he may now look upon as almost insurmountable.

CHAPTER III

The Gobernacion of the Rio Negro—Its Rivers and Towns—Its Trade and Industry—Boon—The Neuquen Route to Chili— Crossing a Patagonian River—Lake Nahuelhuapi—The Return by Water—The Strawberry and Apple Beds— Viedema to Chubut

I have here divided Patagonia into three different sections, and have tried as far as possible to trace out not the only, but the more usual, routes used by travellers from place to place.

At the beginning of the book will be found a small tracing of the country, with the few towns and rivers marked as accurately as possible, and the easiest and more ordinary routes shown by red, lines.

The Gobernacion of the Rio Negro is the most northerly of the provinces of Patagonia, bounded as it is by the Rio Negro on the north, running from west to east across the continent, parallel with the Rio Colorado, and separated by a hundred miles of desert from that river, and fed from the springs in the Cordilleras by its tributaries, the Limay and Neuquen.

This river is by far the largest and swiftest in Patagonia, and indeed is second only to the La Plata in the whole Republic of Argentina; and when the summer suns are melting the snows of the Andes it becomes a rushing torrent carrying all before it, and often sweeping away the frail ferry boats which have been established at intervals along its banks.

The Neuquen, its more northern tributary, rises in the very heart of the Andes, being chiefly fed by the lakes "Las Lagunas," situated above Chosmala, and being absolutely dependent upon the melting of the ice and snow on the mountain tops it can in many places be easily forded in winter.

The Limay—the more southern tributary of the Rio Negro—is fed chiefly by the Lake of Nahuelhuapi and the abundance of rain which falls near its source, winding its way in a northerly direction until it meets with the Nenquen just above the town of Roea, and together form the Rio Negro.

Of the towns in this province there is only one of any importance, namely, Patagones, founded as long ago as 1780, and divided into two townships, Carmen de Patagones on the north bank of the river and Yiedemna on the south shore, having a good natural harbour and doing a small but satisfactory trade in fruit, farm produce and salt, the latter industry being rapidly on the increase under the management of a large Company just formed for the purpose.

The lead in this movement was taken by Mr. Kincaid, whom I have mentioned before as an authority on things Patagonian, and who was one of the earliest settlers on the Jib Negro.

The salt is collected in large pans some few miles from the coast, and was at first brought down in wagons to the harbour there to be shipped to the markets of the world; but a new scheme is now in contemplation of bringing the water down to near the port in pipes and there collecting the salt, thus saving both much delay and considerable expense which a wagon service entails.

Patagones is connected with Buenos Aires by a frequent steamer service, and with Bahia Blanca by a *galera*, or coach, which runs three times a week, and is quite one of the sights of the place when it starts in the morning with its sixteen or eighteen horses—some of which have never been in harness before—going at full speed the whole time over the rough road and changing cattle every two hours, thus taking two days to accomplish the journey.

The fruit of the Rio Negro Valley has by now become quite famous, the land round Patagones being especially favourable for its cultivation. The river for twenty miles up is dotted with islands, where peaches and cherries and fruit of every description are grown in great abundance; whilst on the banks on each side, wherever irrigation has been tried, the attempts to grow fruit have been equally successful. And indeed this is the secret of the whole of the valley of the Rio Negro, stretching as it does about two miles broad on each side of the river near the town of Roca, and broadening out considerably as it nears Patagones and the coast. To a casual observer it gives the impression, of a thoroughly inhospitable and dried-up land, with no possibility about it of inducing vegetation of any sort; but when one has once seen some of the farms where irrigation has been tried, one cannot help being filled with wonder at the lucerne and hay—or indeed anything else which may have been sown—so luxuriant are the fields.

With the object of encouraging farming in this district, the Government a few years back dug a small canal from the confluence of the Limay and Neuquen to below Roca but, although much money was spent upon it, the canal is not a success, owing to the small quantity of water it is able to carry and also to the laws which hamper the farmer in the regulation of the water supply.

Roca, the only other town in the province, is situated on the Rio Negro, some three hundred miles from Patagones or about fifteen days' on horseback—and connected with the latter town by a paddle-wheel steamer service. It is, however, purely a military station, founded some years ago by General Roca

(from whom it takes its name), as a point of vantage from which to cope with the Indian raids, and it now serves as a good starting point for the journey overland to Chili, via the Cordilleras.

The first route lies along the north bank of the Rio Neuquen to the fort of Potoco, up to which point the road is more or less easy, the river affording sufficiency of water. After this point, however, the Neuquen takes a bend southwards, and a course must be taken due north-west, passing for three days over a bare and parched desert with but little water, and still less food, for horse or man, until the river is again struck, when a plain road will be found leading direct to the small town of Chosmala, distant from Roca some seventy five leagues. No words of mine can describe the loneliness and desolation of this desert, which must be passed over to reach the town. Not a tree, not a scrub, to serve as a landmark just one unbroken line of waste glaring beneath the scorching sun— for little or no rain falls here—broker at intervals by some glittering sheet of salt encrusted lake. Scorched with the sun and choked with the dust, the traveller will not he sorry to reach the town of Chosmala, which, however, will be found uninviting enough for a stay; so that, having replenished his stores, he had better push on for a few leagues until he gets among the mountains, where he can select a good camping ground, with plenty of food and water, and where both man and beast may enjoy a much needed and well-earned rest.

The road is now well defined into Chili, and the pass which leads by the mines over the river, and so by the Los Angeles or Las Lagunas passes, will be found easy between the months of November and March.

It was in crossing the river at the mines that I once had a near shave of losing all my horses. It happened in this way. The ferry boat at the mines had been washed away in a recent flood, whilst the ferry house, in which the ferry man lived, was on the other side of the river. It therefore became necessary for us to establish communication from our side to his. We accordingly tied a lasso to the tail of one horse and swam him over the river with the rest of the troop, luckily keeping back one horse in case of emergencies. The poor beast only just managed to reach other side, weighed down as he was with the lasso, and then, just as we gave a cheer, thinking our troubles were over, twang! the lasso snapped in the middle. We now only had one horse left—a big, raw-boned bay with, however, tremendously muscular legs and shoulders—and to his tail we securely fastened the end of a long coil of wire. The gallant beast plunged in, eager to rejoin his friends on the other side, and bravely faced the swollen current, only to be turned over and over and carried swiftly down. Nothing daunted, he struggled gamely on, dragging the by this time heavy weight of the wire behind him, and at last, getting into the back current,

managed to scramble ashore completely exhausted. To pull over another and stronger wire was now easy, and on this improvised cable we swung ourselves and our baggage over to rejoin our horses. I heard afterwards that an Argentine soldier, trying the sane trick a few days later, lost his horses and his own life in the endeavour.

But to return from this deviation.. Route No. 2 crosses the Rio Negro at the confluence after leaving Roca, and either crosses the Rio Limay and pursues a route along the south bank of the Neuquen—in which case both water and pasture will be found in plenty — and thus over the pass of Louquimai into the Chilian Republic, or else continues along the western shore of the Rio Limay as far as the Lake of Nahuelhuapi—this latter way being a journey of some three weeks from the confluence over uninteresting, but not difficult, country.

This Lake of Nahuelhuapi is rightly described as the Trossachs of South America, with its sheet of water varying with ever changing colours and dotted with numerous small islands. And truly it is a magnificent sight. To the south of the lake may be seen snow-capped Mount Tronador rising 10,000 ft. from the lake, and wooded almost up to the snow line, whilst to the westward the vast sheet of water stretches away into the pass among the mountains, the whole rendering a picture which will well repay the trouble and fatigue of the journey over parched, arid pampas.

On the eastern side of the lake a small settlement has sprung up, consisting of a few farms, a store or two, and a boatbuilder, from the latter of whom a boat can be bought for $100 paper (about £9 sterling) and if the traveller wishes to vary his experiences he may here sell his horses and return to Roca by water, the swift current taking him back in about ten days. But he should remember that he may find it difficult to procure food by the way, and a sufficient quantity of jerked meat should be taken in the boat, and whilst on the journey a bright lookout must be kept for snags and rapids, the former being very numerous and dangerous, either of which causes would be sufficient to upset his frail craft, in which case, even if he escaped to watery grave, he

would find himself left on foot in a lonely spot many days' journey from any habitation perhaps, and with no means save his own wits of procuring game or food to eat. Should he, however, decide to continue his journey, he may do so by passing over the Nahuelhuapi Pass at an altitude of about 8,000 ft., in which case he will gain some experience of some of the ordinary hardships of the explorer. The rain, or at best a drizzle, is almost continuous in this locality. The traveller, tired and hungry, decides to camp for the night, only to find the ground sopping wet, making the lighting of a fire a difficult task. So that any

cooking that is attempted is of a very superficial and smoky kind; and on awaking in the morning he does so to find his bed wringing wet, and when he comes to put on his clothes they are in no better case. Should he then fight shy of these hardships, he may follow a route passing to the east of the great lake and running due south, journeying through a country surely only known in fairy books, covered for acres and acres with wild strawberries, the fruit being as large as sparrows' eggs. So thick are they that I have seen a white horse roll in the luxuriant beds, and rise completely changed in colour to a blood-red, covered from head to tail in the rich red juice. A little further on apple trees are found similar quantities, supposed to have been planted originally by some monks who had a mission station here many years ago, and who must at least have known how to select a good eating apple, if one may judge by the apples on -the trees, which are delicious. The march - will now be found both interesting and easy, the best way lying along the foot of the Cordilleras, where game will be found of every variety among the bush and scrub with which the way is studded; whilst both pasture and little streams will be found in plenty so as to form ideal camping places, sheltered by the giant mountains of the Cordilleras from the ever-constant wind,and by the trees which clothe their sides from the burning sun at mid-day.

Ten days of this delightful travelling will bring our adventurer to the colony of Chubut, or Chupat, of which place it is not the province of this chapter to deal, lying as it does within the Gobernacion of Chubut.

There is yet another way leading southwards from Patagones, which I have purposely left till the last.

It lies, as will be seen by following the red line on the map of the Rio Negro province, from Viedema along the coast line to Rawson, and enjoys a more unenviable reputation as a line of march than any other in Patagonia. The first two days out from Viedema a *travasia*, or desert of twenty four leagues, must be negotiated without a drop of water. A dreary waste of stones and sand, throwing up a hot dust as horse and man pass over, with hanging head and blistered tongue (the latter, if he be an old hand at the game, sucking pebbles to relieve

his raging thirst); a landscape unbroken by undulation or scrub, with the sun beating down with tropical force and rendering the ground so hot that it can barely be touched with the naked hand. Such is the country that must be passed through for the first two days.

The next six days, though better in respect of water will take the traveller through the same dreary scenery, except that the country begins to become

slightly more broken until the *Dos Posos*, or two springs, be reached. Here it will be advisable to rest the by now jaded horses for a day, so as to prepare for the last sixteen leagues of desert which lie between this place and Watson. This is almost a repetition of the first two days, except for the more uneven appearance of the country and the patches of low scrub here arid there.

Altogether this is not a road to be advised for the beginner, unless he really wishes to see for himself what kind of experiences the regular explorer must be always ready to expect. Should he for this or any other reason determine to try this way, he will find it far less trying, both on himself and on his horses, to travel through the cool of the night and rest whilst the sun is at its strongest in the daytime.

So much for the Gobernacion of the Rio Negro, the most populated of all the provinces of Patagonia, with its thriving town and port, its railway in construction, and its fertile river bed; all these as yet of course only in their infancy, but destined, I believe, in the future to become a valuable acquisition to the Argentine Republic.

CHAPTER IV

Chubut—The Welsh Colony—The Early Settlers—The Road to the Andes—The Southern Route—The Gringo Gaucho— Estancia Lochiel—Indian Graves.

The Gobernacion of Chubut——so called from the Welsh colony of that name—lies south of the Rio Negro, the line which separates them from each other being the Rio Chubut. Until about three years ago, except for the above-mentioned colony, this country was almost deserted, or, at any rate, but sparsely populated, with ranchers living at great distances from each other, or by wandering flocks of sheep and horses, herded by some gaucho, who, like the old Australian drovers, only camped for a time—as long as the pasture for the flocks held out—and then moved on to new fields, only coming near civilisation and the haunts of man once a year to sell his wool and count over stock, at the same time combining business and pleasure by celebrating his yearly spree, or, more properly speaking, carouse. Within the last year or two, however, the Argentine Government has held out great inducements to settlers, which have brought a certain amount of individual colonisation to the place; the lead in this movement being taken by Messrs. Cameron and Greenshields, an English firm which have bought a large tract of country, on which they have established an estancia near to the Gulf of St. George. The country is, however, not very favourable for stocking purposes owing to the frequent droughts experienced there, especially in the summer months, and it must be many years before anything like regular settlement is seen in the interior of the province. The chief, and, in fact, the only town, is Chubut — or Chupat — founded, as has been mentioned, by a party of Welsh colonists, and is remarkable, if for no other reason, as a proof of the indefatigable industry and untiring energy displayed by these hardy settlers. The first colonists were put down from their ship in the year 1865, at what is now the Port of Madryn, a hundred and eighty strong, under the leadership of one Lewis Jones (now known by the name of "the Lion of Trelew "), but scantily provisioned and imperfectly provided with arms and necessary accoutrements for their battle with man and nature. For two months they lived in two caves on the sea shore, which can still be seen, then moving south to the point where the town of Rawson now stands they commenced their work of cultivation and building.

Without horses, proper arms or ammunition, and with seed grain of an inferior quality, these adventurers were neither able to procure food for themselves nor to withstand the repeated attacks of hostile tribes of Indians, and must have assuredly perished had not one tribe of Indians stood their friend, and not only hunted game to provide the helpless settlers with food, but even fought their battles for them and drove off the other marauding

tribes from their doors. Many stories of escape and adventure can be, and are, told to this day by some of the original pioneers; and it can be little wondered at that the colony of Chubut looked upon itself as under Divine protection and were accordingly encouraged to persevere in overcoming the many obstacles which beset them. They were finally relieved from their perilous position by an English gunboat which, taking the news of their struggles to the English Minister in Buenos Aires, compelled the Argentine Government to send a ship to fetch them back to safety, and the next year to fit them out afresh with grain and all necessaries and to send them back to Chubut. From that time all went well with the new colony, and a fair-sized town may now be seen standing where, fifty years ago, all was bare desert. The town is, in reality, divided into two distinct parts, distanced nine miles from each other — Rawson, the principal or Government centre, and Trelew, the commercial part and depot for the railway, which carries the produce from the settlement to the Port of Madryn, and of which the Welshmen are justly proud.

The people of Chubut have within the last two years resisted a petition to Lord Salisbury, praying him to recognise their rights as free colonists, or at any rate to annex the valley of the Chubut as an English colony. The question is indeed almost on a par with that of the Transvaal, although, of course, in a lesser degree. The original Welsh settlers, finding their own land too crowded and small for the full scope of those powers of going ahead which they have proved themselves to possess to a remarkable degree, set out to find fields and pastures new in which to set up for themselves a small republic, where they

could form for themselves a home unmolested by outside rule of government, to administer their own laws, to worship as they saw fit, and to live a quiet patriarchal life among their flocks and herds. What do we see? A tract of land almost a desert has been converted by the perseverance and exertions of a few men into a cultivated and fertile land; this no sooner being accomplished than the Government of Argentina despatches a governor and soldiers, hoists the Argentine flag, and subjects these poor struggling people to its rule and laws, at the same time depriving them of many of the advantages for which they toiled and fought. With the advent of President Roca their hopes have again risen, and we can only hope that under his powerful and kindly rule they may attain those simple rights and privileges which they ask for and which they so justly deserve.

The Rio Chubut is the largest river in the province—a broad muddy stream fed by the springs and snows of the Cordilleras, and by the Rio Sengel, which flows through the Coluguape lakes. These lakes —Lake Musters and Lake Colhue — though large, are without any attraction, and form a great contrast

to Nahuelhuapi, the water being of a thick chalky colour, and the outline of the high muddy banks unrelieved by trees or greenery of any kind. They were first discovered by Musters in 1870—from whom one of the lakes takes its name — who thoroughly explored Patagonia, journeying from south to north, and wrote a most interesting book of his experiences entitled, "Among the Patagonians," giving an account of his many adventures by the way, and telling many strange stories of the Indians with whom he came in contact.

It must not be supposed that the colonists of Chubut have confined themselves entirely to the coast. One of their first works was an irrigation canal running parallel with Rio Chubut, aided by which they have raised

crops of wheat which are supposed to excel all others in quality. A small settlement has also been started at the foot of the Andes, and a road will be found quite practicable for wagon traffic from the town of Rawson, lying along the north bank of the river to the *Paso de los Indios*, or Pass of the Indians, where it may either be followed to the settlement, or if the traveller wishes he may cross the river here and so on to Lake Fontana. Both these routes will be found easy, with here and there a small ranche or settlement; whilst the monotony of the way may be beguiled by hunting puma or guanaco, both of which animals are very plentiful in these parts. Chubut is, in fact, the best hunting-ground for game of every sort, the dense underscrub affording excellent cover for the puma, who will be found here to be far more savage than in any other part, since I have even known him to attack man unprovoked, he has also become a great annoyance to the farmer, his love of killing being evidently not confined by want of food, but seeming to take a delight in the sport of sheep hunting for its own sake. By far the most interesting journey to take lies due south from Rawson. The first twenty leagues of the road—although by now plainly visible—runs over a *pampa*, or tableland, covered only by a low bare scrub not unlike the Karoo bush of South Africa, only without having the valuable qualities for stock purposes which that plant possesses, and without spring or drop of water by the way.

To the westward can be seen the "Cerro Triste" rising straight up from the plain, to the east a glimpse of the blue ocean may now and then be caught, whilst in front and behind stretches the rolling pampa overhung by a blue haze, which is always seen on these great deserts during hot weather, the horizon seeming to retreat as we approach until, alter close on seventy miles, the road descends abruptly to the *Dos Posos*, or two springs. Here for many years has lived an old Scotchman known by the nickname of the *Gringo Gaucho*, or Englishman cowboy, and bearing the reputation of being the best rider and horse-breaker in Patagonia. A picturesque figure this, dressed in his gaucho costume with lasso and bolas hanging to the saddle-cloth of his wiry

little broncho (for he uses no saddle fit to be called by such a name); he is monarch of all he surveys—no law ties him, no boundary encloses him; he lives the life of the aborigine, unshackled and unbound by civilisation, hunting for his simple wants and tending his few sheep and goats. The passing traveller is his great delight, from whom he exacts toll by joining in the evening meal; nor is he anything but welcome, for his stories of Patagonia are grotesque and strange in the extreme, and should his host have trouble in finding his horses in the morning no one is so ready to lend a helping hand, especially to Englishmen, as the Gringo Gaucho.

The road from the Dos Posos continues to run in a southerly direction, passing a ranche or two by the way, and winding through a long cañon, the land on either side of the road being sprinkled with a fine glistening salt. On the fourth or fifth day out from Chubut, Estancia Lochiel is reached, lying some eight leagues inland from the coast and Camerones Bay, belonging to Messrs. Cameron and Greenshields and taking its name from the chief of the Clan Cameron. Here a few days' stay would be thoroughly enjoyed, and a little guanaco or puma shooting might be entered upon or a visit might be paid to the sea shore, where if lucky, the *camarone*, or prawn— from which the bay is called—will be found a pleasant change and relish after tough guanaco and stringy ostrich. The estancia itself is worth examining, and one cannot but be struck when one sees fine farm buildings and every modern convenience and improvement in this far away place; and one may almost be able to look ahead many years and see the shearing shed thronged with Australian shearers and hear the whirr of the machine shears and the whistle of the distant locomotive come to take away the wool grown in the district. What a dream of the future; and one I fear, if realised, will only be so when too late for us to see it! From here the route lies due south for another six leagues to Cape Melaspina, where, if the traveller wishes, he may branch off to the Colhuewapi lakes and visit a tribe of Indians who live there, and who will receive him with all courtesy and friendliness, which will be greatly increased should he bring tobacco or any small present in his hand.

There is no road, or even track, after leaving Estancia Lochiel, and after a glance at the map and the compass great care must be taken in the way mentioned later on to keep in a direct course and not to go in curves or circles round to the place from which a start was made, as is so common with novices unaccustomed to this kind of going. From the lakes an easy and pleasant route may be taken, following the north bank of the Rio Chico—as the upper waters of the Rio Sengel are called -right up to the foot of the Cordilleras and the upper colony of Chubut. On the road, game of every kind abounds; and it is here that duck and partridge can be shot in great numbers, the only drawback, and one found all over the continent, being the numbers

of *tiro-tiros*, a grey bird the size of a pigeon, with sharp spurs attached to its wings, and which, being very shy, rises with its peculiar cry of "tiro-tiro," and thus gives warning to the other game that anenemy is near at hand.

A curious fact, and one worth bearing in mind about all this part of Patagonia, is the entire absence of both pasture and water anywhere within eight leagues of the coast line; whilst about this distance inland a long chain of low hills will be found running north and south right away to Santa Cruz following the irregularities of the sea shore and offering good water and camping places at frequent intervals.

All this coast will form a happy hunting ground for geologists; and Darwin, in his book, "The Voyage of H.M.S. *Beagle*," mentions finding many shells and fossils of great interest, and gives it as his opinion that the whole of Eastern Patagonia has probably been raised above the sea level in the Tertiary period. With a little trouble, too, old Indian graves can be found very often filled with arrow heads made from flint lying beside the skeleton. It was the custom of the Indians to bury their dead on the coast in order, I believe, that they might be able to look for ever towards the land from which they sprung; and certainly, however this may be, all the skeletons of Indians which I have come across have been usually in a sitting posture with their feet pointing towards the east, whilst the weapons which they have used in life lay ready to their hand; also, most of these graves are situated upon some bill or mound with the scrub burned away for a little space round, apparently in order to give the dead the better view of the old home on arising from their long sleep.

CHAPTER V

The Province of Santa Cruz—Its Rivers—The Coast Route— The Lakes—The Devil's Country —Punta Arenas—The Convicts Rise in Revolt—The English Doctor—A Clever Ruse—Law and Order Re-established—Western Patagonia.

SANTA CRUZ, the province of Patagonia immediately south of that of Chubut, is less far advanced in colonisation than any other part of the Argentine Republic, whilst being at the same time well supplied with water and pasture for stock purposes.

The Rio Santa Cruz, the second largest river after the Rio Negro, was first discovered and explored by Captain Stokes, who, however, only ascended about twenty miles, being driven back by the swift current and want of provisions; to be followed by Darwin a few years later in H.I1VLS. Beagle, who with a party of men ascended the river towing their boats for eight days, this great scientist forming the opinion that the Rio Santa Cruz had. at some remote period joined the Pacific to the South Atlantic Ocean, forming a strait, and cutting a piece off the continent of South America like the Strait of Magellan at the present day.

Two years ago Dr. Moreno ascended the same river with a party of engineers in two steam launches, reaching as far as the Lao Argentino, where he was engaged in making surveys for the disputed Chilian boundary. He describes the water as of a white, milky appearance, on an average about 17 ft. deep, with high banks on either side, and running through a fertile country densely covered by a low scrub, and very well stocked with game and the water with fish of a large coarse kinds

Latterly a ferry boat has been built near to the small town and settlement of Santa Cruz, so that anyone wishing to cross the river, will find it necessary to journey to this point in order to do so.

The town of Santa Cruz itself is nothing more than a military and forwarding station, with, however, a fine sheltered and natural harbour, in which vessels can lie in perfect security from the gales which so often rage round this coast. The town contains in all some 200 inhabitants, who, if one may judge by appearances, "must eke out a precarious existence by taking in each other's washing"; for when I was there I could see no other trace of any sort of business, and I think I have scarcely ever seen so lazy and dismal a place.

The Rio Chico, with its tributary, the Rio de Shenen, lies to the north of the Santa Cruz River, rising in the Cordilleras and falling into the bay of Santa Cruz like its larger neighbour.

Further north still is the Rio Deseado (or Desire), fed by the lake of Buenos Aires and disgorging itself at the port of Deseado, where also stands a small and thinly populated settlement and military station.

To the south of the Santa Crux lies the little river of Coyly, and further south still the larger river of Gallegos, at the mouth of which stands a fair-sized town of the same name with some 800 inhabitants, where lives the Governor of the Gobernacion of Santa Cruz, and where the seat of Government is.

This province possesses, except in one part—viz., north-east of the Rio Chico— easy country over which to journey. Well watered and pastured, the country abounds with game of every description; whilst from the *vegas*, or swamps, in the more southern portion, ducks and waterfowl of every variety and colour rise in clouds on the approach of man, circling round and round inquisitively and affording easy and repeated shots.

The route which we left at Melaspina can be seen traced on the map running ever due south, about eight leagues from the coast line, to St. Julian, where is a small estancia belonging to a Mr. Hope, who has the reputation of knowing more about Patagonia, with its moods and changes, than any other man in the country.

From St. Julian to Santa Cruz water becomes a little more scarce, although the "going" is not bad enough to deter the by now well accustomed traveller, who will have learned by this time to do without any guidance or advice which this small book can offer.

The other route marked will be seen also to be a continuation of the line from Lago Fontana to Lake Buenos Aires, lying in against the range of the Cordilleras all the way to the upper waters of the Rio Chico, which, although deep, is quite narrow in many parts, and after a suitable place has been found will offer no obstacle which a bold plunge and steady nerve cannot overcome.

From here Lakes San Martin, Viedema, and Argentino may be visited, and will indeed well repay the journey, lying smooth and sheltered as they do amongst the mountains and wooded slopes of the Andes, from which a thousand cascades and mountain torrents foam and dash to join them, winding their way from the snowy tops to the valley, thousands of feet beneath. To the west of Lake Sari Martin will be seen the smoking summit of Chalten, vomiting its black smoke into the blue depths of the cloudless sky, and seeming to stand like some grim sentinel over these private and unvisited solitudes.

It will perhaps have been noticed that the land lying just north of the Rio Chico has been carefully avoided as a line of march, and it is this tract of country which I have already mentioned as the exception to an otherwise favourable land. For close on a hundred square miles it stretches—a wild, weird, desolate region, covered with huge boulders, and absolutely devoid of pasture or flora of any kind. So that it has rightly earned for itself the name of "The Devils Country" among the Indians, who have to this day such a horror of this (as they believe) demon infested land, that they cannot be induced to enter or cross it.

A second glance at the map will show the reader that the red lines which mark the more likely routes for travel end abruptly at the Santa Cruz river, which is solely on account of the fact that south of this river the traveller may wander wherever he wishes with impunity, his only trouble being the swamps and morasses, which, however, change their locality so often that no marked line could be of any assistance to him where he must pick his own way wherever he may best find a road.

These chapters practically conclude Argentine Patagonia, since the boundary with Chili lies about fifteen leagues to the south of the Rio Gallegos. But it may not be out of place to give some short description of Chilian Patagonia, since our reader, having come so far, will very naturally feel inclined to visit the town of Punta Arenas

After crossing the boundary the country becomes more broken and densely wooded, and when within about ten leagues of Punta Arenas itself the most southern spur of the Cordilleras is sighted, at the foot of which this town is situated. This is the last mountain of that great range which stretches without a break from Central America through Ecuador, Bolivia and Chili, from the tropical latitudes to the cold south, rising in some places to over 20,000 ft., a vast rugged barrier and landmark—holding its secrets in defiance of man, forming a massive and natural division between country and country, and seeming to say to the aggressor, "Thus far shalt thou come and no farther".

At the very southernmost point then of this colossal range nestles the small town of Punta Arenas, with a small natural harbour—or, more properly speaking, road-stead —where the great liners of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company and other vessels touch on their way to and from the west coast of America and Chili. Founded in the year 1851, it was used for many years as a convict settlement by the Chilian Governnient, who mined for coal and exported wood, which latter grows in large and valuable quantities on the mountains and hills which overlook the town.

About thirty years ago, however, the convicts, goaded to fury by the cruelties of the then Governor, made common cause with their soldier-guards, who for their part, always ripe for any disturbance, and being also incensed on account of their arrears of pay being very much overdue, were only too ready to lend a willing ear to their tempters, and both together rose in revolt. The doors of the prison were thrown open, and the convicts, snatching up the first weapons which came to their hands, and drunk with elation at gaining their freedom and the lust for blood, broke through all restraint and fell upon the unprotected townspeople, killing and plundering all that came within their reach. They made, however, one exception- the English doctor from whom they had received kindness and consideration. To him the Governor, being the especial object of hatred to the revolutionary party, fled and implored protection. Nor was he refused by this gallant Englishman, who not only gave him shelter, but when the undisciplined mob came and courteously hut firmly insisted on searching the house he persuaded his wife and sister-in-law to feign hysterics on the sofa, under which the fugitive was hidden; so that when the searchers burst into the room they were easily persuaded not to molest or go near the apparently terrified ladies, and soon after gave tip the search and left the house.

What must have been the terror of this guilty, hunted man, stretched beneath the sofa, hardly daring to breathe, and expecting every moment to be dragged forth and cruelly despatched by the knives of his would-be assassins, and dependent for his life on the consummate acting of these two courageous foreigners! Or what the anxiety of these heroic ladies, who knew only too well that the lives, not only of the concealed Governor, but of themselves and all they held nearest and dearest, hung on a thread which might be cut at any instant should they falter in their task or cease from their magnificent though trying performance!

Meanwhile events in the town had been going ahead apace. Those of the inhabitants who had received warning in time had fled to the woods around the town, where they lay hid for many days, with little food and no shelter from the piercing winds and drenching rains. One man alone managed to escape by a small boat which lay on the beach, and making his way along the coast fell in with a large passenger steamer, to the captain and crew of which he told his tale. This captain must have been a man of resource, for he proceeded on his way, dropped anchor outside Punta Arenas, and signalled for the captain of the port as usual, as if he knew nothing of what had been going forward in the town.

On the approach of the apparently friendly boat, however, he did not let down the gangway, making some excuse or other for not doing so, but let

down a rope ladder instead, up which the unsuspecting cutthroats came in single file, only to be bound and gagged one by one as they reached the deck.

Almost immediately after this event, first an American, then an English, and then a Chilian gunboat hove in sight, which on being apprised of the state of affairs quickly landed a sufficient force and retook the town, driving out the insurgents and re-establishing law and order.

These latter now found that the locality was fast becoming too hot to hold them, and, daily expecting that reinforcements would come from Chili to capture them, took fright and started away due north in a large body, and might indeed have been able to stand at bay for many years in the fastnesses of Patagonia and the Cordilleras had they not wantonly attacked a tribe of Indians, thereby raising a hornet's nest which harassed them continually, cutting off stragglers and preventing game and food from being obtained. For more than a year these wretched outcasts continued their journey northwards, till at last a remnant only of their once numerous body reached Chubut, ragged and footsore, where they surrendered unconditionally to the Argentine authorities, who shortly afterwards delivered them over to the vengeance of Chili. Very few of these poor wretches escaped; nor indeed can we feel much regret on that score, for although they had no doubt received great provocation, they had committed a thousand cruelties in reprisal and richly deserved their fate. The story is told—though with what truth I cannot say—that one of these escaped convicts managed to make his way to Santa Cruz, and that it was he who afterwards murdered the same Governor whom he had sought for so eagerly in Punta Arenas.

The colony in Chilian Patagonia consists for the most part of English and Germans, who are doing well in the fanning line, the country, stretching as it does as far as Last Hope Inlet, being truly magnificent for stock purposes.

Western Patagonia, extending from Chiloe to the Strait of Magellan, comprises some 60,000 square miles of rugged and precipitous coast line with numerous islands and peninsulas, the principal of these islands being Chiloe island, the Chonos Archipelago, Wellington Island and Hanover Island, all apparently belonging to the system of the Cordilleras.

The winds in this desolate region blow ever from the west, laden with moisture from the Pacific Ocean, and bring with them constant rain, sleet, and snow, and produce in consequence thick forests, from which is obtained abundant and valuable timber.

In spite, or rather on account, of this heavy rainfall, the west coast shows a remarkably small difference in its mean temperature, since even at Lat. 48° south the mean temperature in summer is seldom above 50° or in winter below 330°

The great drawback to this otherwise beautiful country is the terrible swarms of mosquitoes, which not only annoy the settlers here but even attack cattle and horses, causing them sometimes to stampede into the bush, pursued by their insatiable tormentors.

This, then, concludes a cursory account of this vast continent, the details being gathered, I may add, mostly from personal observation during many wanderings in these lonely and interesting regions. From the fertile slopes of the Pacific to the bare, stony pampas of the Atlantic—from the scorched and blistered banks of the Rio Negro to the cold, damp forests of the Strait of Magellan——through all these scenes of varied interest I have tried to trace a route which the reader of these few lines may be able to follow.

CHAPTER VI

A few Last Words—The Water Difficulty—Keeping Direction— Tethering—Tracking—Firearms and Ammunition—Division of Time—One or Two Hints by the Way—Adios.

LET us now suppose that the intended route has been decided upon, the various necessaries bought, the horses in the corral, and the peon waiting ready for his padron to give the word to mount and march. But, before the start is made, let me say just a word of advice and warning for the road.

As has already been said, water will form the greatest difficulty by the way, so that a word on this subject in the first place will not be amiss.

To the practised eye the presence of water can be detected at some distance. A small *cañon*, or valley, where luxuriant grass is growing is the first sign. This cañon should be followed up to its narrowest end until a small green reed is seen growing apparently on bare, soft looking ground. Water will not be now far off—most probably in some ravine leading into the cañon, or on the side of the hill above. As a last resource it is quite possible to dig in the place where the reeds are seen, when without doubt the precious fluid will be found within two or three feet of the surface.

One of the curses of this country in this respect is the amount of saltpetre and salt in the ground, causing the water to taste quite brackish, and often rendering it unfit to drink. Often I have seen lakes of shining water which I have found, to my disappointment, to be quite salt and undrinkable.

Put through all these setbacks the traveller must persevere—never despair, press on and keep cool, trusting to your luck to carry you through. To turn back is very often as dangerous an undertaking as to go forward, since the aspect of the country is so very similar that to find one's way back to any given spot or spring of water is a matter of great difficulty even to the experienced traveller, unless he be an exceptionally good tracker. Once, when very short of water myself, I as a last resource allowed the troop of horses to go where they would and followed patiently after them until their unfailing instinct guided them to water. This plan, however, should never be adopted except on an emergency, since horses when roaming at will invariably travel in curves or circles, and thus all sense of direction is easily lost.

Whilst on this subject, the *modus operandi* of keeping in a direct line through country so unvaried as Patagonia is might here be explained. After the direction has been taken with a compass or by the sun, the traveller should take some bush or other mark in the line to be followed, and then a second

mark two or three hundred yards further on. On coming near to mark No. 1 a third spot should be taken in the same line, this being kept up through the day, thus saving constant reference to the compass, which is always so difficult and unreliable on horseback. Although this may be found a bit trying at first, the mind quickly becomes used to the process and continues working almost automatically.

More than half the disasters which occur in this lonely land are due to carelessness in tethering out the horses at night; therefore the greatest care should be taken to see that the bell mare is securely hobbled, whilst one horse at least is kept tied to some bush or stake with sufficient rope to allow him to get some feed, so that on waking in the morning this horse will be at hand to carry the peon who has to bring in the other horses for the Jay's march.

Should the troop have wandered far during the night it will be necessary to follow their tracks.

No book can lay down any fixed rule in this science, for it is nothing less, and it is partly for this reason that I have advocated the employment of a peon thoroughly up to camp ways, in order that he may be relied upon in these emergencies until the inexperienced traveller shall have learned—which he will in a very short time—the ins and outs of this task which he has set himself.

One or two hints, however, may be borne in mind which, if it be imperative at any time to pick up a track, may prove of some service to the beginner. Do not hunt aimlessly about for horses' foot-prints, but take a long sweeping circle round the place where the horses were last seen, picking your way over soft ground and taking plenty of time; examine every yard carefully. When you have found what you believe to be the hoof-prints, examine them carefully and try to pick out any particular distinction, such as a broken hoof, a clearly-defined frog, etc., so that you may have something to go on. Also try to count how many horses have passed. These marks must now be followed as quickly and ably as the explorer is able, whilst such signs as a tuft of grass pulled out by the roots, or a misplaced stone, must not be overlooked. Should the tracks become lost or too dim to follow, take another circle in the same way as before and try to pick them up again. Should the horses be shod, this work will of course be comparatively easy; but shoes for horses are rarely used on the pampas of Patagonia, owing to the scarcity of smiths and forges.

I have purposely left the matter of firearms to this part of my book, since every one of my readers no doubt has his own ideas on this subject, whilst a man accustomed to shooting will have been able to glean from the account of

the game in Patagonia what sort he ought to carry. This chance, however, to say my say upon a favourite topic is irresistible, and I must give my vote against small-bore fanny rifles and revolvers. The rifle for these parts, whatever it may be required for, must be one that will stop and kill on the spot, at the same time being fairly light to carry. Mr. Selous, the great South African hunter, in all his books deprecates the practice of taking long-distance shots; and it has always seemed to me that the hunter who can patiently stalk his game to within two or three hundred yards has more to congratulate himself upon than the man who, more by a fluke than anything else, brings down his game at some great distance. Now the Winchester Arms Company have manufactured and patented a rifle, calibre 44, which with a short, sharp twist will come in two parts, being in this way very easy to pack or carry. It is a repeater of twelve shots, with a mechanism so simple and yet so perfect that I have never yet known it to jamb. It is a rifle easily kept clean and in order, at the same time capable of throwing a heavy flat-nosed bullet with good smashing force accurately up to 400 yards. I have repeatedly at 200 yards put a bullet from this rifle clean through the body of a guanaco, and have in the Grand Chaco district shot *tiqre*, or jaguar, stone dead with one shot at 300 yards' distance. In selecting the ammunition it must be remembered that cordite and all smokeless powders foul a gun more than black powder does, so that, in a land where constant cleaning is not only a nuisance but is often impossible, the advantage of the latter is easily discerned.

For a ball some people will always advocate a nickel-coated bullet. If these are preferred the dum-dum, or soft-nosed bullets, are of course the ones to use; but it has always seemed to me that we shall never improve upon the lead bullet made to expand upon meeting resistance.

My remarks about rifles also apply to revolvers, the "Colt's frontier" or "Webley's Army pattern" being in my opinion the best, the latter having a slight advantage in quickness for reloading.

Many travellers in Patagonia do not carry a rifle, but take a shot-gun instead, which weapon is certainly more useful for pot hunting, but will of course be useless for shooting large game such as puma, guanaco, or deer. In shooting these guanacos I must warn my reader that to hit one of these beasts in the shoulder is almost useless unless the heart is reached, for I have frequently seen one get away from a fast horse with shoulder completely smashed and leg swinging.

The puma, on the other hand, if once wounded ever so slightly, will at once turn at bay, and then becomes extremely dangerous, being able with one blow of its powerful paw to kill a man or rip him open with its claws. Should this

animal by a mischance ever come to close quarters, it will be found that a blow at the back of its head will render the beast unconscious, so soft is its skull.

This same puma has a most extraordinary aversion, or fondness, whichever it may be, lot dog, and it is always unwise to take a dog with one an a trip in Patagonia, since the puma is invariably attracted to the camp by the dog, and thus the horses are frightened and often stampeded.

Another most important matter is the division of time; and, although this must very much depend upon the kind of country passed over, a regular time-table to come and go on is invaluable.

The sun when it rises ought to see the horses saddled, a cup of coffee or matte drunk, and all ready for the march. At half-past ten the sun will be found hot, and the horses ought to be turned free to graze, and the breakfast got ready; whilst a couple of hours' siesta will prove beneficial for both man and beast. At two in the afternoon the march should again commence, and be kept up till about seven. In these ten hours, on fair level ground, about ten leagues (or thirty miles) will have been covered; and with three days' rest in each

week both horse and man should be able to keep going for many weeks without showing fatigue. Should the horses, however, show signs of falling away in condition, or of sickness, they should be the first consideration; and if a suitable camping ground can be found with plenty of grass and water a four days' spell of rest will be found, in the long run, not to have been wasted.

The condition of the horses' feet must also give much and continual cause for anxiety; the mud, impregnated as it is with salt, will harden and crust round the fetlocks, and as it peels off will cause great irritation in that part of the leg. A little fat taken from some animal, rendered over the fire and smeared on the parts affected, will, however, speedily relieve this trouble, provided the irritation has not gone too deep.

The next matter on which a hint may not be out of place is a purely personal affair. The wind blowing so strongly from the Andes and over dry and sandy deserts will be found to render the skin extremely sore and the lips to crack, causing the greatest pain and discomfort. A small tube of Lanoline will take up but little space in the pocket, and will be found a great relief for this small trouble.

Still one matter more. Small tabloids of meat juice can be procured, manufactured by Liebig and Co. Often and often, when thoroughly exhausted from want of food and yet unable to halt for a moment owing to the scarcity

of water, I have found one of these of the greatest use as a sustainer and to partially allay the pangs of hunger.

The would-be -explorer must now shift for himself. A book, however complete, can be of no further use to him; he must learn from that hardest of taskmasters, "experience," how to meet difficulties and dangers on their own ground and to grapple with them on equal terms without the aid of the vast powers of science and civilisation to help him in overcoming them.

And yet, if these few pages have drawn aside the curtain, so as to show just a glimpse of the interior life of this great mysterious land, and if these few words of advice and direction have served to make the path of the wanderer a little bit smoother or not (1uite so intricate; or even if the stay-at-home who reads these same pages as he sits by his comfortable fireside, disturbed only by the rain which patters on the window panes or drips on the roof, has been able to picture to himself the great continent as it stretches in undisturbed solitudes far from the roar and traffic of the great city, and to put himself for one short hour in the place of the wanderer in all his successes and disappointments, and can feel with him in the dull strain of anxiety or the quick sigh of relief—if these things are brought about, then I think that this book will not have been written in vain.