

of blue-black smoke, the front part of which was defined with extraordinary sharpness. The effect was rather peculiar, the sky being all the morning serene except for one or two light flosky cloudlets, and all at once to see these great heavy masses of cloud come pouring into the valley, and career down it from west to east like a gigantic wave! The expanses of blue sky contracted and soon disappeared altogether; it was as though night were about to fall, in fact it was twilight. Whilst the storm lasted the thunder crashed deafeningly, though the lightning flashes were few and far between. The season had clearly begun in which the earth does not get time to dry between showers. The storm lasted until 10 p.m., and during the ensuing night not the slightest speck of cloud dimmed the wonderful brilliancy of the stars. It may indeed be laid down as a general rule, that the days were blowy, with plenty of rain or snow, while the nights were still and bright. After the actual rainy season set in, it rained or snowed also during the night.

July 12th. During the night we had a violent snowstorm, the snow being very wet, and in the morning the sky was everywhere covered with thick impenetrable clouds. Yet, contrary to expectation, it neither rained nor snowed during the day, though all the greater was the quantity that fell upon the red mountains.

The next stage led us south-east, diagonally across the great valley and gradually nearer to the immense range on the south, and as we advanced, the scenery essentially changed its character. Hitherto we had moved along the bottom of the great broad, open valley, with an uninterrupted view of the mountain-ranges on both north and south; now however we became entangled amongst stretches of small rounded hills and ridges, drawn out partly from east to west, partly from south-west to north-east, and generally restricting our range of vision. This country was clearly more unfavourable, for each of these ridges and chains of hills had to be crossed over by a succession of low saddles. Between the first two ridges runs a latitudinal valley towards the S. 78° E., but without any visible watercourse; while at the end of it we could distinguish a pure white expanse, a salt lake for the most part dried up. Although our course led us near the lake, nevertheless we did not go right up to its shore. It must however be in a very advanced stage of desiccation, for the reaches of open water were few and far between, while the rest of the lake-bottom consisted of a perfectly level area of bare crystallized salt. This lake occupies one of the lowest depressions of the latitudinal valley. In its vicinity are several pools, some with, others without, water, but all incredibly salt. The lake is oblong, and about midway along its southern shore it is joined by a stream, which in the lower part of its course winds in sweeping curves through the hills. Its current was approximately at a standstill, to the eye almost stationary. Although at the first glance the river thus appeared to be large, yet its volume was really minimal, a very small fraction of a cubic meter. Its banks, and even the river-bed, are composed of extremely fine red sediment, some of it so soft and treacherous that a man might very easily have been drowned in it, though in other places it was hard and compact, and bore easily. On the left side, above the ford, was an extremely shallow marginal lake, which needed but a slight subsidence to disappear altogether. Immediately below the ford the river divides for a short distance into two arms, which embrace a low mud-island between them. Still farther down it forms a sort