The Independent Republican.

"FREEDOM AND RIGHT AGAINST SLAVERY AND WRONG."

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"Poet's Corner."

For the Republican.

LINES.

Respectfully inscribed to the Rev. Henry H. Jessup.

The blue sea is around thee:
The billows' unrest
Is tossing thee wildly
From valley to crest.

The storm oft assails thee,
But Jesus is near;
And gently assures thee,
"It is I, do not fear."

"It is I who have called thee
To rest in my love;
I will keep thee, on earth,
And will bear thee above."

"It is I who'll conduct thee
Across the dark sea,
For restrained by my power
Its waves ever be."

Yes, tis *He* who has called thee
Away from the home,
To preach the glad tidings,
"The Savior has come"

Then speed thee! aye-speed thee
Away and afar,
For the star that bears o'er thee
Is Bethlehem's star.

FROST PICTURES.

BY EDITH MAY.

When like a sullen exile driven forth,
Southward December drags his icy chain,
He graves fair pictures of his native North
On the crisp window pane.

So some pale captive hums, with lips unshorn,
The latticed-glass, and shapes rude outlines there
With listless finger, and a look forlorn
Chasing his dull despair.

The fairy fragments of some Arctic scene,
I see to-night, blank wastes of Polar snow,
Ice laden boughs, and feathery pines that lean
Over ravines below.

Black, frozen lakes, and icy peaks blown bare,
Break the white surface of the crusted pane,
And spear-like leaves, long ferns and blossoms fair,
Linked in a silvery chain.

Now me, I pray thee, by this silver thread,
Fancy, thou sorceress, bending vision-wrought,
O'er that dear world, perpetually led
By the clear starings of thought!

No, onward I turn, and tread those dreary strands,
Lakes where the wild fowl breed, the swan abides,
Shores where the white fox, burrowing in the sands,
Barks to the droning tides,

And seas where, drifting on a raft of ice
The she bear rears her young; and cliffs so high,
The dark-winged birds that emulate their rise
Melt through the pale blue sky.

There, all night long, with far diverging rays
And sickling shades, the red Auroras glow
From the keen heaven, neck suns with pallid blaze,
Light up the Artic snow.

Call to me I pray, many those waves remote,
Tract deep unexplored from its primal rest;
Some ocean sail, the fisher's lone, light boat,
Bear me wall-like o'er its breast.

Lead me, I pray, where never shallop's keel
Brake the dull ripples throbbing to their caves:
Where the marbled glacier with his armed heel
Spurs the resisting waves!

Paint me, I pray, the phantom host that hold
Celestial tourneys when the midnight calls,
On airy steeds, with faces bright and bold,
Storming her ancient halls!

Yet while I look, the magic picture fades,
Melts the bright tracery from the frosted pane;
Trees, vales and cliffs, in sparkling snows arrayed,
Dissolve in silvery rain.

Without, the day's pale glories sink and swell
Over the black rise of yon wooded height:
The moon's thin crescent, like a stranded shell,
Left on the shores of night.

Hark how the north wind, with a hasty hand
Rattling my casement, frames his mystic rhyme:
Mouse thee, rude minstrel, chanting through the land
Runes of the olden time!

Tales and Sketches.

From Putnam's Monthly.

LOW LIFE—IN THE PAMPAS.

How rich and varied are the enjoyments of the traveler in the mountainous regions! In constant changes, he sees hill and dale, lofty forests and grey, granite rocks—now a sweet-smiling meadow, and now a beetling, awe-inspiring precipice; below him, blooming orchards and rich pastures, with peaceful cattle; above him, the silent solitude of ice-covered crags and domes. New objects incessantly strike the eye; new sensations fill him with delight. And when, at last, the prospect opens, and from the lofty height he looks down, as from a monarch's throne, upon a wide, luxuriant plain, he is pleased with the change, and interested in the monuments of human industry which suddenly greet him. But as he wanders through the plain, he is soon wearied by its endless monotony; he feels like the strong, active man, when suddenly condemned to unbroken idleness, or the soldier who must change the din and turmoil of war for the lonely prison. Still, the plains are not alike all over the earth. On the vast table lands of Northern China, men are crowded upon men so thickly that laws are required to govern the simplest of daily labors, lest they interfere with each other.—In the Great Sahara, the traveler sees day after day pass in unbroken silence, and blesses the first human face he sees in the oasis. The fertile plains of Lombardy are literally covered with cities and villages, whilst the equally productive llanos of South America feed millions of wild, roving horses, and vast distances separate dwelling from dwelling.—Nor are the children of the steppes less different in their characteristics: for climate, and soil, and a thousand unobserved influences, change them from zone to zone. Even nations that live close to each other, are found thus to differ. The Mongol is proud, open-hearted, and bold; careless as old Liege, and brooking no control. His immediate neighbor, the Chinese, is as cowardly as he is humble; and, consequently, false and treacherous. He worships whatever is allowed by law; void of faith, he observes the canons of his creed, and the laws of his legislature, with unwearied obedience. Thus, the two nations, living in the same zone, and mingling in daily intercourse, are found as far apart as the races of Europe and Asia.—For the plains of the Mongols are high above the sea, and their soil is covered with sterile sand and with shingle, while the land of the Flowery Empire is fertile to a degree known to but few parts of the earth. It is also but little raised above the surface of the ocean.

Steppes, covered with heath, with grass, or other low plants, are found of unmeasured extent, in all parts of the world; but they are commonly looked upon as especially belonging to the temperate zone, because they are here most frequent, and much surpass the sandy barrens in the vastness of their extent. The prairies, covered with sweet, even verdure, awaken, most of all steppes, the image of the great sea, by the similar color, the waving motion of the surface, and even, now and then, by a Fata Morgana. But the impression produced upon the mind of the traveler is far different. Even in extent, thanks to their constant undulations, but little of the vast, grand character of the old Okenos, that holds the world, his spouse, in sweet embrace.' Nor do they lead us, as the sea does, to distant lands, and enchanted isles. The few plants that surround us, without break or change, day after day, lack the animating, cheering power that dwells in water, and do not present, like the latter, the ever-changing, graceful forms of restless waves.

At first, it is true, the sight of a steppe causes surprise, by its unlimited extent of space; and when, in the north-west, we step forth from dark, dense forests, and suddenly see before us a smiling, open plain, basking in bright sunshine, and glowing and glittering with a thousand colors, the impression is both pleasing and striking. Soon, however, its unbroken uniformity wearies the wanderer; indistinct, half-unconscious longings fill his heart; the desire of more varied impressions seizes him, and his joy changes to melancholy.

Where, on the other hand, neither tree, nor grass, nor even traces of men appear, and scanty, frugal herbs alone cover the sterile soil, there the steppe becomes more and more like the desert, and even sadder and more desolate, in proportion as animal life, also, is wanting. Thus each steppe has its marked characteristic, little as they have been observed. What a difference, for instance, between the broad plains of Hungary and the table-lands of Upper Asia; the grass forests of the llanos and the carroos of Southern Africa! All have one feature in common: the expression of wide extent—of being grand, almost infinite in space. But whilst the desert is full of terrors, the steppe is more cheerful; here the wanderer is at least not pursued at every step by signs and symptoms of death; he may faint from fatigue, and his mind may be wearied with painful monotony, but he still meets with rare signs of life, and does not feel, as in the Sahara, the breath of the destroyer in every current of air.

His sufferings are, therefore, of the mind, rather than of the body. The constant uniformity begins to weigh heavily upon his unoccupied thoughts, and the unusual, complete independence of external influences causes him discomfort; his loneliness becomes a burden, and his freedom loathsome. His fancy wanders far and near, to enliven his weary mind by pictures of the past, or by fictions in unknown realms, in order thus to afford, from within, the accustomed variety of ideas which the outer world no longer suggests. Thus it is that the imagination of the dweller in the steppe becomes as roving and restless, as subject to vague, indistinct longing, as his actual life; but it is not, as in the dreaded Sahara, filled with grim, gaunt images of all that is terrible, with tales of bitter deception, and of sudden death that lies ever in waiting. Around him nature lacks variety as well as individuality; she presents no difficulties to overcome, as in African regions, or on the high sea, where the heart grows strong, and the knee humble before God, in unceasing struggle; she refuses him a country that belongs to his nation only, and, above all, the greatest of boons, a home of his own. Hence arises that want of powerful motive for exertion, and even amusement, which is supplied by the more varied soil of happier countries. The steppe has not, we must confess, that stimulating, developing, refining influence on the mind and the heart which is felt in the shadow of lofty mountains, or in sight of the blue ocean. It retards the progress of races, and hence it is the proper and peculiar home of nomadic tribes. There man rarely says: 'It is good for us to be here; let us build tabernacles;' and he thus remains a shepherd age after age; never passing onward to become a tiller of the soil; to form a commonwealth with all its blessings; and to the worship of the Muses and the Graces. The children of the unbounded plains of Middle Asia, where we find the most perfect steppes, have, through all ages, remained wandering shepherds, while, hard by, the more favored plains of Eastern Europe have, from olden times, had settled homes, and well-secured boundaries. So powerful, indeed, is the influence of the steppe on the life of man, that even in well-cultivated Hungary, the character of the Magyars still retains some nomadic features; and in other races, as in the Arab, the truly great and glorious epochs, and noble, enthusiastic efforts of a whole nation, have not been able to remove the sons of the steppes from their original condition.

So, too, we find the true steppes of our continent, the pampas of South America, also have their own striking features, and their strongly marked children. Here nature alone reigns supreme: no oasis reminds you of former dwellers on the soil; no hewn stone speaks of labor, and its blessings; no neglected fruit tree recalls the industry and enjoyments of past generations. The changeless plain stretches far and wide to the changeless horizon; a wide, wild theater, on which plants and animals lead their mysterious, unknown life. Even the most impressive sight of the pampas, surpassing in grandeur and majesty, all other wonders of our globe, has this lonely, saddening character. It is in the lower part of these boundless plains, where the gigantic La Plata is seen to roll its vast unmeasured masses through the peaceful steppe, amidst solemn silence, and in sublime solitude. Few are the traces of life; fewer still, the rare objects that attract our attention. In the hidden crevices, the cactus hides its round balls, horrid with threatening thorns; and, now and then, at distances, a solitary umbel, the only tree of the country, rises like a great landmark, in unspeakable loneliness and sadness. Occasionally there appears on the vast plain, where it rests in the deepest solitude, the huge skeleton of an animal, that lived at times when the Andes were still sleeping at the bottom of the great ocean, and dreamt not of raising their snow-covered heads to heaven. The whole expanse of pampas is said to be one great sepulchre of these extinct gigantic beasts; and, like ghosts of a race far older than man, they rise from their graves, to bear witness of Him who made both them and us. Of late years, huge mounds may be seen to rise on the plain, covering the bones of whole generations, that now slumber in sublime isolation in this vast solitude. Formerly, all the Indian tribes carried their dead to the coast, and there buried them by the side of their fathers; now, they find a resting-place only in the midst of the wild, inhospitable desert! High above it, a black point is seen in the air: it is a condor, slowly tracing his wide gyrations in the blue ether; or far away, on the faint horizon, the quaint form of an ostrich passes and vanishes, like a dream of our fancy. Still, there is an indescribable charm in this very solitude; its wild, unfettered freedom gives, even the traveler from the far north, an idea of the fervor with which the Indians love it here, hoping to see still vaster pampas in the world to come.

These immense plains, as yet but little known, stretch from the straits of Magellan to the Colorado river, covering an area four times as large as the empire of France, and extending in length to more than eight hundred miles. At the south, snow and ice cover the ground for months; at the north, palm-trees are seen to lift their graceful plumes on high, and the breezes are loaded with richest fragrance. They are, strictly speaking, plains of the temperate zone; but, in fact, they extend through all geographical and climatic zones, and exhibit the richest varieties of natural life, known in our globe. It is here that we see the productive power of nature, and the marvelous goodness of our Lord, manifested in the most striking and majestic forms. They present to us, in their vast extent, a great variety of surface, of climate, and of products, than the wild forests of the Amazon, or the sandy Sahara.

Far down, at the southern extremity of this continent, there opens a plain, barren in the extreme, and covered with countless pebbles of porphyry: for shingle is the characteristic feature of the Patagonian Pampas.—In the south, we meet with thick layers of lava, the eruptions of volcanoes in the Andes, which still rear their craters in a majestic line against the horizon, and threaten ever and anon, to speak, after a silence of ages, once more, in voices of thunder, to mankind. These parts are utterly sterile, and apparently forsaken by God and man. But, from thence, the plains begin gradually to rise, from the coast of the Atlantic to the foot of the Andes; now gently ascending, and now mounting upwards in magnificent, gigantic terraces, one above the other, until they, at last, reach to the summit of the snow-capped mountains. Towards the northern part, the pebbles become smaller, rich tracts of land break in upon the barren shingle, and finally make way for luxurious pasturage, where are found large and numerous herds of Patagonian cattle. These would be fertile regions, indeed, and happy, were it not for a want of water, of which, in our more favored regions, we have no adequate conception. The quantity of rain that ordinarily falls is very small, but there are long, dry seasons of absolute drought. That charming traveler Darwin, tells us that, from 1827 to 1830, not a drop fell, and all vegetation, even the hardy thistle, failed utterly. All brooks dried up in this great drought—as it is still called—and the whole country appeared like a huge, dusty high-road. An incredible number of birds, wild animals, cattle and horses died for want of food and water. Deer came, fearlessly, into court-yards, to wells dug by the Spaniards; partridges could not fly when pursued; and of cattle, a million heads perished, alone in the province of Buenos Ayres. Nay, the ground being so long perfectly dry, and enormous quantities being daily blown about for years, the landmarks became obliterated, and men could not tell, any longer, the limits of their estates! In summer, the heat is intense, and the soil glows, as if blighted by fortune-heat; in winter, violent winds sweep unimpeded over the plain, and, at night, bitter frosts form ice on the surface.

Here live the Patigonians, the fabled giants of old; but much as their size has been exaggerated, it surpasses, according to the latest explorers, in height and robust strength, that of all other nations. Among two or three hundred men, Capt. Fitzroy found only eight who measured under six feet, and even the women were tall in proportion.—Huge cloaks made of skins, and hanging not ungracefully, in ample folds, from the shoulders to the ground, still add to the gigantic, massive impression of their whole appearance. Their rough, but straight hair, is oddly gathered in nets, made of the sinews of slain animals, and yet seems in keeping with the fantastic painting in red, black and white, that adorns their faces, marking broad bars across the brow, and large white circles around the eyes. This contrasts strangely with the peculiar color of their skin—a hue between pure copper and old mahogany, but easily distinguished from that of all other natives of this continent.

Their huts resemble much the dwellings of gipsies: for posts, the stalks of gigantic thistles are rammed into the ground; other stalks of the same size and lightness are fastened on above, and the whole is covered with undressed skins, inclosing it above, and on three sides, but leaving one towards the east, wide open. Within, nothing is seen but the skins on which these children of the wilderness sleep, and their weapons. Among the latter, the bolas are both the most formidable, and the most familiar to general readers. They consist of two or three round pebbles, hard clay balls or actual lead and iron, sewed up in skins and fastened to stout leather thongs of equal length, which are tied together. The Indian takes one ball in his hand, swings the other several times around his head, and then lets the whole fly at the object he wishes to seize. His intention is not, as with the lasso, to throw down his prey or his adversary, but with almost incredible skill he manages it so that it strikes a hard prominent part and rebounds; the other balls begin to swing round in all directions and the thongs become so interlaced that every effort to unravel them and to free himself makes the poor prisoner only more and more helpless. Another powerful weapon, of like character, is a small ball fastened to a thin thong, of the length of the arm: the ball weighing about a pound, is whirled rapidly around the head, and then, terribly increased velocity, it strikes the enemy with a force little inferior to that of a rifle ball; and in a hand-to-hand conflict, the Indian uses it as the old Swiss did their famous 'Morning Star.'

The food of these Indians is in keeping with their habits otherwise; they eat, generally, whatever they can reach, without regard to Savarin or Kitchener; but their main staple consists of fillies and young mares, which they stew and roast in various ways, of which even the good burghers of Copenhagan, who sell horse-flesh, regularly, in their market, are probably still unaware. Common deer and guanacos are not despised; horn-cased armadilloes and all-digesting ostriches, appear only on great occasions. Their taste, however, is strongly in favor of animal food; for of vegetables they only know two humble roots, and, oddly enough, the cocoa-plum's great delight, the delicate bud of the artichoke.

The Patigonians present to us, perhaps, the most striking instance of a barbarous nation combining the chase as a national pursuit with the raising of cattle. No tribe has, therefore, an exclusive claim to any part of the immense territory; and all roam, free and unimpeded, over their vast plains. Thanks to their active life and the good speed of their horses, they travel with amazing rapidity.—Tribes that were seen in September, near the straits of Magellan, were in February, next met on the banks of the Rio Negro—a distance of at least 2,200 miles! They have poor and rich men among them; the latter own forty or fifty horses, and several dozen dogs: the former, at least one dog and a couple of horses.

But the incredible number of the latter, literally counting millions, and the profusion of food, ever ready for consumption, are naturally destructive of all industry. The people know no toil, nor its sweet fruits and rich blessings. Specialists in a novel manner, the hungry wait until their rich neighbors have satisfied their meal; and then, without asking leave, glide up to their stores and help themselves, at discretion. Like our fellow citizens in Utah, they love expansively, and know the great art of enjoying both the company of many wives, and the blessings of domestic peace. Their faith hardly deserves that name, though it is superior to that of other savages. They have good gods, and bad gods; the former live in caves under the ground, to which the souls of the departed return after death, to dwell in happy communion. The bad deities are worshipped only to appease their anger. The dwellers upon the earth were made in the subterranean caves, and their manner of accounting for the difference between themselves and the superior Spaniard is not without originality, because almost the only instance of an humble acknowledgment of such superiority.—They admit that the gods made the Patigonians, and endowed them with spears, arrows, and bolas; but then seat them up to the surface to shift for themselves. The Spaniards, on the contrary, were gifted with guns and swords in addition. In the manner they account for the fact that they had no cattle before the arrival of these formidable strangers. Animal after animal, they say, came forth from the lower regions; the smallest and prettiest first; the latter less diminutive and less handsome. They began to fear for their safety, and when the first horned head appeared, they were seized with fright, and rolled huge stones before the opening of the caves, so as to prevent still larger and more dreadful beasts from appearing. The Spaniards, they add, were bolder, and allowed cattle and horses to issue forth from their strange birth place.

The peculiar climate of these plains has its influence on vegetation, as well as upon man. Oppressively hot in summer, few winter nights pass with hoar-frost, and the transition is commonly as sudden as it is striking. Hence, a coarse, tufted, brown grass, is the almost universal vesture of a plain, as level as the sea, and without a stone, stretching far and wide between the Atlantic and the Andes. Along the coast, mighty masses of porphyry are strewn over the solitude; further inland, a few low beeches, armed with spines, break the weary monotony, and here and there shelter sensitive cactuses, whose stamens contract at the gentlest touch. Still higher up, turf-moors and bogs at times show their dismal, dark outlines on the sterile soil; or mimic the tropical forests with their gigantic reeds and rushes. But in the plains themselves, treeless, pathless, waterless, the strangest change takes place, during the four seasons, of which we have any record. In winter, the interminable solitude is covered with the large, creeping leaves of thistles, and with clover in the richest abundance. In spring, the latter disappears, leaving no trace behind it, and in less than a month, a dense, blooming forest of gigantic thistles rises to a height of ten or twelve feet. Their stems are so close together that the eye cannot penetrate the mass, and the plants are suddenly covered with spines that the misfortune forest becomes impenetrable. A few paths only are made, as impenetrable as the labarynth of the ancients, and known only to robbers and cut-throats; so that Darwin was assured of his safety in traversing these strange regions in early spring by the remark: 'There are no robbers yet; the thistles are not up!' Ere summer has fairly passed away, these luxuriant weeds have lost their sap, and with it their fresh, luxuriant green; the bulky heads hang heavily down; the leaves are shrunk and shriveled; the dry, dark stems rattle in the slightest breeze, like the dry bones in the valley, and the first fierce wind of autumn snaps them, and scatters them over the plain. In a few weeks, they, also, have vanished, and are seen no more; the humble clover reappears, and, sooner or later, the richest verdure as far the eye can reach.

True to that beautiful sympathy, which finds even the great kingdoms of nature in sweet dependence, one on another, we find here, also, that a scanty flora supports but a scanty fauna. Most of the native animals, however, are cannibals, and live not on herbs, but upon each other. The tiger and the jaguar are the tyrants of these plains; and the fierce, blood-thirsty puma preys upon all, ever followed by the vulture on high, falling with lightning speed upon the remnant left by his nobler companion. Peculiar to these steppes is also the guanaco, a reddish-brown stag, with hairy ears, and soft, smooth fur, that feeds on the coarse, wiry grass of the most sterile regions. Fleet as the gazelle, and as timid and wild, they are seen in large herds chasing the clouds on the steppe, or rushing, with the swiftness of the wind, down from the mountain heights to their favorite salt moors. The swiftest, and keenest of scent are foremost; they examine all around, and with a peculiar penetrating sound—a shrill, piercing neighing—they warn the herd if threatened by any danger. But thus they only betray themselves the more readily to the wary hunter; and yet, more fatal still, to them is their invincible curiosity. The Indians lie down, and then, with arms and legs in the air attract the attention of their game. The poor guanacos stand still and stare, then prance and leap about in a most ridiculous manner, and again stand and stare. Some gaze at the hunter's antics, others marvel at the red rag he has fastened to his lance, and waves high overhead. They approach nearer and nearer, followed by their unwary companions, until, all of a sudden, the terrible bolas are heard ominously to whizz through the air, and the dogs open with eager barking. Nor is this the only curious habit that marks them among the strange dwellers in the desert. Day by day, they are seen to return, with unfailing precision, to the same spot, until the enormous heaps of accumulated deposits furnish the Indian with ample stores of fuel—invaluable in a land where bushes even are rare, and trees almost unknown. And when, at last, they end their short, precarious life, they crawl, with the last of their strength, to the kindly shelter of bush or rock, near the river, and there expire, strewing the ground with their bones, and, here and there, actually raising large cities of the dead.

Further to the north, the pampas of Buenos Ayres stretch, in more varied forms, from the great Atlantic up to the snow-covered Andes. A large portion of this vast extent is covered with swamp and morass, broken at times, by massive belts of reeds and rushes, and again by still, silent pools. All the low lands are filled, for a time, by the abundant showers of the rainy season; soon, however, dry weather comes again, and when the water is evaporated, luxuriant grasses furnish excellent pasture, whilst the upper regions are burnt and withered. Here, also, the colossal thistles of the pampas raise their gorgeous flowers at a height of six or eight feet, and become useful, even, in the absence of other fuel. A few peach-trees, even, are scattered here and there by chance, or planted near the rare homesteads. But when most luxuriant, these steppes suffer under the disadvantage, that all the water is brackish and salt, especially in summer; and then, moreover, it is very scanty. This is the more remarkable, as there is no salt in the soil, and a few feet below the surface, or in wells dug for the purpose, sweet water may be found in abundance. North of the river Salado, and nearer to the Andes, a region is met with, like no other land on earth, the very image of the terrible curse, "the breeding of nettles, of salt-pits—and a perpetual desolation." It is an almost part of plain, where—

"Nor bird would sing, nor lamb would bleat,
Nor any cloud would cross the vault,
But day succeeded from heat to heat,
Or stony drought from steaming salt."

There the amazed wanderer meets enormous salt-swamps, and seas, with increased marvel, the salt itself bloom out "in oddest crystals." Not a spring refreshes the sultry air, producing the cheerful green of healthy plants; even the boldest of rivers, swollen in time of violent rains, and rushing in headlong fury from the Andes upon the desolate plain, meet with an ignominious end, are slowly swallowed up by the thirsty sands! Not a tree rises to break the intolerable level, and to relieve the weary eye; at best, where the salt disappears, the ground in covered with pale, grayish globes of spring cactus, and their long, low rows, broken here and there by the serious and solemn old man's plant, covered with long gray hair, that gives it an indescribably sad and mournful expression. But these opentias are the very blessings of the pampas; they are not in vain called the "Springs of the Desert." Growing in the poorest and driest of soils, ever exposed to the pitiless rays of a burning sun, they still hide, under a thorny outside, rich stores of refreshing, well-flavored juice. And here again, as in the Sahara, we learn how the kindness of our great mother, nature, instils like kindness even into the hearts of the wild children of the desert; for charity makes it a rule in the pampas that each traveler, as he leaves his place of rest, shall draw his knife and cut from it the thorns and branches, to allow the perishing beasts of the wilderness free access to the well guarded store-house.

Many are the strange sights, and wondrous are the changes that strike the traveler on these steppes, from the boundless fields of snow-white salt to the "phantom of the wilderness"—the visionary rainbow that flees before his hope-sick eyes across the interminable solitude. But of all, the most dreadful is the pampero, a hurricane of the pampas—like the simoom of the Sahara. There are seasons in summer, when—

"There is no motion in the dumb, dead air,
Nor any song of bird or sound of rill;
Gross darkness of the inner sepulchre
Is not so deadly still."

Of a sudden, heavy white clouds are seen rising in the south-west, changing now into quaint, queer shapes, and now into dismal hangings of deepest black. Dust rises and gathers from south and north, into huge, aerial draperies, hanging in mighty volumes between heaven and earth; the cloudy pall sinks slowly lower and lower, fitful eddies lift, at times, the pendulous skirts of these most mournful curtains, and rend them into strange arches, portals, and windows, through which lurid lights glow and glimmer in ever-changing, fearful flushes. Hot, hissing puffs of wind are felt, and then, in a moment, the storm comes raging down from the snowy caps of the Andes, sweeps with indescribable fury across the pampas, and swells into a resistless, fatal hurricane. Huge, dense clouds of dust and sand hide the sun, and, even at noon, deep darkness covers the earth; lightning and thunder, loud and fearful, such as are known only to the tropics, add to the terror, and whatever has life and breath is at the mercy of the God that "is in the whirlwind and the storm." The cattle flee in despair, and thousands perish on the open steppe;—others crowd into river and swamp, and are drowned, unable to find, in the profound darkness, the way back to the shore; while men lie prostrate on their faces, and wait for the passing of the tempest.

When the Spaniards first saw these wide plains, they were covered with countless herds of guanacos and lamas; now, as the original plants have been driven out by the invaders, the thistle and lucern, so the first lords of the soil in the animal kingdom have also had to give way to the horses and cattle of Europe. The emu alone, the South American ostrich, retains a part of his ancient dominions, and still is hunted by the Gaucho for the sake of his magnificent feathers. Half-hid in the ground, the rabbit-like bizacho also survives the general destruction, and undermining the pampas all over with endless passages and holes, he avenges himself on the proud invaders by many a dangerous fall. Even the true masters of the land, the Indians—could not resist the merciless tide that swept them westward; and when the Spaniards obtained full possession of the noble lands along the La Plata, the poor native tribes, who had no settled homes, and were restless wanderers on the steppes, vanished, like the ghosts of olden times, into the night of adjoining forests, beyond the grey, grim rocks that are scattered in wild confusion at the foot of the colossal mountains. Spaniards spread over the plain, and the old Arab blood seems to have coursed once more through their veins, and to have risen and rejoiced when they roved over the wide prairies in unfettered freedom, like their brethren, the Bedouins of the Great Desert. These are the Gauchos of our days—a race more nearly resembling the Centaurs of old than any other people on earth. Sons of the bold conquerors of these happy lands, and mindful of the noble services rendered their fathers by their faithful horses, they carry the new-born child on horse-back to the distant priest who is to baptise it; and when his race is run, his corpse is again, in the same way, borne to his last resting-place! The Gaucho stirs not from home without mounting his horse, which is ever ready saddled at the door of his hut, to carry him to feast or foray. Covered with his poncho, that leaves his arms perfectly free, and yet protects him against wind and weather, and armed with bolas or lasso, and an enormous knife by his side, he looks from his proud, prancing horse, with keen eye, far over the plain! and as far as sight can carry his thought, he is master of all he surveys.—He is not bound to the soil; he does not obey a superior, and is contented because he has but few wants, and these most easily satisfied. With head erect, and a carriage full of conscious strength and natural grace, guiding his well trained horse with surprising ease and skill, he looks a true independent man, and reminds the traveler more of the bold Taurie of the Sahara than of his father, the Spaniard of Castile. Thus we see how even man's God-like nature is, in nations, as in individuals, affected and changed by soil and climate.

His hut is small and square; a few upright posts, with wicketwork between them, and clay cast upon it, occasionally covered with skins, while the roof, made mostly of reeds or of straw, leaves in the centre free egress to smoke. A few stones or skulls of horses are his seats; a small table serves, not for his meals, but for his gambling; and a crucifix and a saint's image complete his whole simple furniture. He counts it as a luxury if he has a few sheep-skins for wife and children, and even a fire is not one of his daily wants. Meat is his only food; it is roasted, in gigantic pieces, on a huge spit, and each guest cuts his piece as he likes; peaches and pumpkins are the only vegetables he knows, and bread many never see during a whole—long life. At home they spend their time in sleeping and gambling; but, as in all southern races, here, also, long periods of utter indolence give way to sudden and furious outbursts of intense activity. Close by his hut is his corral, an inclosure of strong posts, on which vultures and hawks sit gravely, waiting in patience for the never-failing feasts, of which the immense heaps of horns and bones, that are scattered around, give abundant evidence. Abroad, the Gaucho is ever chasing and coursing through the unbounded steppe; and a most noble sight it is to watch those thousands of graceful, active horses, in all the beauty of freedom, sport merrily over the plain. It is a mournful sight, on the other hand, few others on earth are so sad, to see them race up and down the vast parched prairie, maddened by fierce, implacable thirst and treading under foot, in their wild, uncontrollable fury, their own companions and offspring. And when, at last, they have scented a pool, with what terrible eagerness they fly to the coveted waters; until, in their mad haste, the foremost are borne down and crushed by those that follow—corpses are heaped upon corpses, and a huge, high pile of dead bodies alone marks the place where they sought in vain to recover sweet life!—Some of the smaller streams in the pampas are literally paved with the bones of these noble creatures, which have there found a miserable death in times of such terrible suffering.

The smallest, but, probably, the most remarkable, of these pampas, are the northern-most plains, reaching up to the very foot of the Andes. Here the soil is loose and sandy, covered with salt, and utterly unfit for the growth of any plant, however frugal and humble; nay, in some parts, it presents a picture of utter desolation, the effect of which is heightened by its contrast with the luxuriant vegetation that surrounds it on all sides. The eastern portion has, fortunately, large rivers, and can be made very fertile by irrigation. These rivers are, however, themselves one of the most remarkable curiosities of the continent; for they form a system of their own, not connected with either ocean—the Atlantic or the Pacific—and not even with a large stream falling into the ocean! Such a secluded and separate system occurs only once besides, on a large scale, on the whole globe, in the centre of Asia. The rivers of the pampas, rising in the Andes, flow eastward, and unite their waters, after having passed over a large portion of the steppe, in three great groups of lakes, which lie one above the other, so that the rivers fall from the highest lakes into the lower, and thence into the lowest.—All these lakes are, moreover, of salt water; and, in winter, and spring, their shores are covered with crusts of white, shining salt!—A few pools of brackish, sometimes even of sweet water are, however, found at no great distance, and to them the adjoining regions owe their fertility and abundant crops. This is mainly due to a small group of low mountains, that swell gently upward in the southern part of these pampas; they are, for some two months in the year, covered with snow, which feeds, in melting, the streams at their base, and thus produces a vegetation, without which neither man or cattle could live in these inhospitable regions.

Still further north, we are told by the only traveler who ever ventured so high up in the salinas, the saddest object of the globe.—The air is dark and dismal; dense fogs rest, layer above layer, on the sterile soils; never breathes here; no wind ever dispels the sad, solemn silence. The ground is covered with salt, as with newly fallen snow; here and there crouching, crippled salt-plants, without leaves or flowers, mark their stunted growth by their blackened branches, on the glaring, white salt. Not a tree, not a bush can be seen; not a spire of grass grows on this vast field of desolation. Often there falls no rain for eighteen months; and the few rivers that flow from the mountains above, upon the accursed land, are lost in the ground as soon as they reach the salinas. When, at last, rain falls again, the salt that bloomed out in bright crystals all over the unbounded steppe is dissolved, and then the plain changes into a broad expanse of black, cracked mud, covered with scattered tufts of succulent plants. But soon the sun returns; perhaps he succeeds for a few days, in dispelling the thick mists, and in an incredibly short time the water evaporates, and the whole country, as far as the eye can reach, presents an even mirror as ice, on which the rays of light break with such force as to blind the traveler and his faithful horse. Here and there the salt-snow is heaped up by the wind into little drifts of fanciful shape.

The wind from these salinas, blowing most fiercely in December, is the fatal foe of all that lives and breathes. Men, even in their houses, cover face and hands with wet cloths; any unprotected part, touched by the terrible blast, rises instantly in painful blisters. The leaves fall from the trees, as if singed and scorched, and the bark cracks and peels, as if burnt by the intolerable heat. At night, even the locks, latches, and keys, inside of the houses, are so hot that they cannot be touched with the naked hand; men feel as if they were suffocating, and words cannot describe the intense, intolerable suffering.

Not less terrible, though better known, is the renowned Despoblado, the "uninhabited lands"—a plain on a high table-land of the Andes, perhaps 13,000 feet above the surface of the sea. It still belongs to the system of the steppes or pampas, that marks so strikingly the southern part of the continent, although it lies high above the line that defines the last growth of shrubs and more perfect plants. For eight hundred long miles, this strange and mysterious plain stretches along between two parallel chains of the Andes—some of whose snowy peaks rise in unsurpassed grandeur, more than eight thousand feet above this elevated table-land. But what has attracted most curiosity, and is still the marvel of all travelers, is the fact that this immense plateau is divided into two parts by a deep valley, through which runs the only road between Bolivia and Buenos Ayres. It is more than thirty miles long, and often not a hundred yards wide; steep, towering rocks bound it on both sides.—Nearly half way, lies the town of Ingui, and to the north of it the land rises to its full height, until colossal mountains approach on both sides, and closing the unique valley, raise once more above into a level pampa.—Here, also, we find winter visiting a land in the tropics with all the severity of the Artic regions; hail-storms and snow-storms, of unheard of fury and fierceness, rage all through the month of July. In the midst of this melancholy region the amazed traveler meets some miserable huts, in which dwell the unhappy children of the ancient Peruvians.—They know neither agriculture nor the raising of cattle; proud only of the memory of their fathers, and boasting of many a priceless secret handed down from father to son, they prefer misery in their mournful home to abundance under foreign masters. Their whole wealth consists in a few lamas, their main occupation is the chase of alpacas, guanacos—and chinchillas, of which uncounted numbers are annually sent to the great marts of Europe. A few wash gold, after heavy rains; others gather snow, and carry it down to the lower country. Here, also, extensive plains of salt occur, which the inhabitants break into large pieces, and loading their patient lamas with the pure, sparkling burden, sell it in the nearest cities. Travelers are apt to become "salt-blind," from the insufferable glare of the sun on these mirror-like plains, as those on the high glaciers and ice-fields of the Alps become "snow-blind."

Such are the pampas of our continent—where, in the day, the sun moves from the right to the left, and at noon stands in the north; where, at night, the glorious sign of the southern cross shines with unwonted brilliancy—the comfort of the blind heathen, the sweet symbol of the Christian; where, by night and by day, in all seasons and all ages, we may hear the words: "Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will talk with thee!" and behold, as the prophet did, "the glory of the Lord standing there."

BENEFITS OF NEWSPAPERS IN A FAMILY.—Henery Ward Beecher says: 'In no other way can so much, so varied, so useful information be imparted, and under circumstances so favorable for educating the child's mind as through a judicious, well-conducted newspaper.

'To live in a village was once to be shut up and contracted. But now a man may be a hermit and yet a cosmopolite. He may live in the forest, walking miles to a post office, having a mail but once a week, and yet he shall be found as familiar with the living world as the busiest actor in it; for a newspaper is a spy-glass by which he brings near the most distant things; a microscope by which he leisurely examines the most minute; an ear-trumpet, by which he collects and brings within his hearing all that is said and done all over the earth; a museum full of curiosities; a picture-gallery of living pictures from real life, drawn not on canvass but with printer's ink on paper.

'The newspaper is a great traveler, a great lecturer. It is the common people's encyclopedia, the lyceum, the college.

'The influence of a good newspaper upon the minds of a family of children can hardly be estimated: certainly not compared with the cost of the paper itself. It is a universal fact asserted by teachers, and others who have made observations on this subject, that children who have access to useful newspapers at home, are better spellers, better readers, and understand what they read better; they obtain a practical knowledge of geography and history more readily, make better grammarians, and write better compositions, and, in short, are more intelligent and learn faster than children brought up in a family without the enjoyment of such reading.

'Children are interested in newspapers, because they read about many things with which they are familiar.'