

left me to proceed with a Chilian rustic guide. As a substitute a travelling barber joined us, and to my great amusement attached himself to me. It was curious to meet with an equestrian hair-cutter. He had his scissors slung to his saddle. He was a most useful man to me, for, true to his trade, he persisted in talking to me and telling me long stories, riding beside me all day, until at last I really began to understand part of what he said, and made rapid progress in Spanish. His great wish was that we should reach the new house which he was building, that I might see it. At last he led me off the road in a turn of the valley which was excessively barren-looking, like the rest of the landscape at this altitude, 7,000 or 8,000 feet. I could see no house, but he led me to a large square block of fallen rock. Here, against the rock on one side, was a sort of pen enclosed on three sides by a wall of roughly piled stones about a yard high and by the rock on the other.

There was no roof of any kind, but this was the "casa." It measured about six feet square. A hole excavated under the rock at the back was the store-room. My friend motioned me with most elaborate politeness to enter, and offered refreshment. He pressed especially coffee, so I agreed to that, whereupon his servant or assistant, a lad whom we found at the "new house," produced, after a long delay, some hot water slightly tinged brown by about half a dozen coffee beans.

The hair-cutter had turned a rill from the river over the dry and dusty soil near by, and grass was beginning to spring. He insisted on riding farther with me to an inn at the bottom of the final steep climb to the summit of the Pass, and having slept a night and waited at the inn till my return from the summit, accompanied me back to his house. He ceased not to talk to me all the time, and though I was becoming comparatively proficient in the language, I got tired of him at last, and treacherously gave him the slip whilst he rode off into a side valley to find some wonderful plant for me of which he alone knew the locality.

It pleased me very much to find amongst the Alpine vegetation, at 7,500 feet elevation, a plant of the genus *Azorella* (*A. trifoliata*), a genus with which I had become so familiar in the far-off Kerguelen's Land.\* A plant, *Chevreulia Thouarsii*, which occurs in the isolated and distant Tristan da Cunha, is common all over Chile; the species found on the continent being identical with that of the island.

Near the summit of the Pass the slopes are almost absolutely barren.

\* See p. 144.