

of Caracas, and the adjacent quarter of Trinidad. Beneath this misty sky, I could scarcely imagine myself to be in one of the temperate valleys of the torrid zone; but rather in the north of Germany, among the pines and the larches that cover the mountains of the Hartz.

But this gloomy aspect, this contrast between the clearness of morning and the cloudy sky of evening, is not observable in the midst of summer. The nights of June and July are clear and delicious. The atmosphere then preserves, almost without interruption, the purity and transparency peculiar to the table-lands and elevated valleys of these regions in calm weather, as long as the winds do not mingle together strata of air of unequal temperature. That is the season for enjoying the beauty of the landscape, which, however, I saw clearly illumined only during a few days at the end of January. The two rounded summits of the Silla are seen at Caracas, almost under the same angles of elevation* as the peak of Teneriffe at the port of Orotava. The first half of the mountain is covered with short grass; then succeeds the zone of evergreen trees, reflecting a purple light at the season when the befaria, the alpine rose-tree† of equinoctial America, is in blossom. The rocky masses rise above this wooded zone in the form of domes. Being destitute of vegetation, they increase by the nakedness of their surface the apparent height of a mountain which, in the temperate parts of Europe, would scarcely rise to the limit of perpetual snow. The cultivated region of the valley, and the gay plains of Chacao, Petare, and La Vega, form an agreeable contrast to the imposing aspect of the Silla, and the great irregularities of the ground on the north of the town.

The climate of Caracas has often been called a perpetual spring. The same sort of climate exists everywhere, half-way up the Cordilleras of equinoctial America, between four hundred and nine hundred toises of elevation, except in places where the great breadth of the valleys, combined with an arid soil, causes an extraordinary intensity‡ of radiant

* I found, at the square of Trinidad, the apparent height of the Silla to be $11^{\circ} 12' 49''$. It was about four thousand five hundred toises distant.

† *Rhododendron ferrugineum* of the Alps.

‡ As at Carthago and Ibague in New Grenada.