

From the Puerta de la Silla the steepness of the ascent increases, and we were obliged to incline our bodies considerably forwards as we advanced. The slope is often from  $30^{\circ}$  to  $32^{\circ}$ .\* We felt the want of cramp-irons, or sticks shod with iron. Short grass covered the rocks of gneiss, and it was equally impossible to hold by the grass, or to form steps as we might have done in softer ground. This ascent, which was attended with more fatigue than danger, discouraged those who accompanied us from the town, and who were unaccustomed to climb mountains. We lost a great deal of time in waiting for them, and we did not resolve to proceed alone till we saw them descending the mountain instead of climbing up it. The weather was becoming cloudy; the mist already issued in the form of smoke, and in slender and perpendicular streaks, from a small humid wood which bordered the region of alpine savannahs above us. It seemed as if a fire had burst forth at once on several points of the forest. These streaks of vapour gradually accumulated together, and rising above the ground, were carried along by the morning breeze, and glided like a light cloud over the rounded summit of the mountain.

M. Bonpland and I foresaw from these infallible signs, that we should soon be covered by a thick fog; and lest our guides should take advantage of this circumstance and leave us, we obliged those who carried the most necessary instruments to precede us. We continued climbing the slopes which lead towards the ravine of Chacaito. The familiar loquacity of the Creole blacks formed a striking contrast with the taciturn gravity of the Indians, who had constantly accompanied us in the missions of Caripe. The negroes amused themselves by laughing at the persons who had been in such haste to abandon an expedition so long in preparation; above all, they did not spare a young Capuchin monk, a professor of mathematics, who never ceased to boast of the superior physical strength and courage pos-

\* Since my experiments on slopes, mentioned at p. 94, I have discovered in the Figure de la Terre of Bouguer, a passage, which shows that this astronomer, whose opinions are of such weight, considered also  $36^{\circ}$  as the inclination of a slope quite inaccessible, if the nature of the ground did not admit of forming steps with the foot.