

west. The Academy of Sciences recommended the men of science who accompanied the unfortunate La Pérouse, to employ small air-balloons for the purpose of ascertaining at sea the extent of the trade-winds within the tropics. Such experiments are very difficult. Small balloons do not in general reach the height of the Silla; and the light clouds which are sometimes perceived at an elevation of three or four thousand toises, for instance, the fleecy clouds, called by the French *moutons*, remain almost fixed, or have such a slow motion, that it is impossible to judge of the direction of the wind.

During the short space of time that the sky was serene at the zenith, I found the blue of the atmosphere sensibly deeper than on the coasts. It is probable that, in the months of July and August, the difference between the colour of the sky on the coasts and on the summit of the Silla is still more considerable, but the meteorological phenomenon with which M. Bonpland and myself were most struck during the hour we passed on the mountain, was the apparent dryness of the air, which seemed to increase as the fog augmented.

This fog soon became so dense that it would have been imprudent to remain longer on the edge of a precipice of seven or eight thousand feet deep.* We descended the eastern dome of the Silla, and gathered in our descent a gramen, which not only forms a new and very remarkable genus, but which, to our great astonishment, we found again some time after on the summit of the volcano of Pichincha, at the distance of four hundred leagues from the Silla, in the southern hemisphere.† The Lichen floridus, so common in the north of Europe, covered the branches of the befaria and the Gualtheria odorata, descending even to the roots of these shrubs. Examining the mosses which cover the rocks of gneiss in the valley between the two peaks, I was surprised at finding real pebbles,—rounded fragments of

* In the direction of north-west the slopes appear more accessible; and I have been told of a path frequented by smugglers, which leads to Caravalleda, between the two peaks of the Silla. From the eastern peak I took the bearings of the western peak, $64^{\circ} 40'$ S.W.; and of the houses, which I was told belonged to Caravalleda, $55^{\circ} 20'$ N.W.

† *Aegopogon cenchroides*.