

## CHAPTER III.

THE MOUNTAIN-RANGES OF AMERICA—ASCENT OF CHIMBORAZO BY HUMBOLDT AND BOUSSINGAULT—ELEVATION OF THE AMERICAN CONTINENT.



IN Bolivia, and in the centre of South America, there exists a great table-land nearly 13,000 feet in height, which Pentland has denominated the “Thibet of the New World.” It forms an immense valley enclosed between two parallel chains, which belong to the central Cordillera of the Andes. To the north lies Lake Titicaca. Twenty-five times the size of the Lake of Geneva, it was the centre of the ancient empire of the Incas. The river Desaguadero traverses the south of this valley; its affluents springing from the eastern chain, whose opposite declivity furnishes the tributaries of the Paraguay, and which exhibits the snowy peaks, or *nevados*, of Sorata and Illimani. The western Cordillera separates the valley of Titicaca from the shores of the Pacific Ocean, and includes the summits of Sahama and Parinacota, and several active volcanoes, as those of Arequipa and Gualateiri.

In Figure 61, the artist has delineated a panoramic view of the entire chain of the Andes, between the upper lake of Titicaca and the lower lake of Parihuanacocha. Starting from this grand central mass, the Andes are prolonged northward to the Isthmus of Panama, and southward even to the wave-worn rocks of Cape Horn, their configuration being everywhere of the most diversified character, and the main body throwing off numerous spurs and branches.

The Peruvian Cordillera contains the lofty mass of Chimborazo; that of Chili the towering peak of Aconcagua, whose summit forms the culminating point of the American continent.

[In the following Table we state the altitude of the principal mountains of America :—