

Saussure remarked in that of Mont Blanc. From Chimborazo's top the sky appeared of no deeper sapphire than at Quito. In truth, Boussingault very rarely saw the blue-black heaven of which Saussure speaks. He was convinced that the intensity of hue sometimes observed upon the glaciers is, to a great extent, the result of excessive weariness of the eyes; perhaps, also, is due in some measure to the contrast afforded by the gleam of the spotless snow. In such a case, the phenomenon will be essentially physiological.

Up to three o'clock the weather continued beautifully fine and clear, and the thermometer sunk no lower than $+ 8^{\circ}$ C. But after this hour dense clouds began to accumulate at the base of the mountain, and a storm rolled and roared beneath the feet of our aerial spectators. The growl of the thunder rose towards them, but much weakened, as if it came from a distance. It was time to begin the descent, before it was rendered impracticable by snow or cold, and they had no provisions for a sojourn upon the glacier. After descending some thousand feet with exceeding difficulty, they entered the region of the clouds. Lower down, a little hail fell. Afterwards, as they continued their descent, having regained and remounted their mules, an icy rain mingled with the hail-shower. Nevertheless they arrived, safe and sound, about eight o'clock p.m., at the farm, or *hacienda*, of Chimborazo.

All the observations made by the French physicist tend to confirm Humboldt's opinion that Chimborazo is an extinct volcano. Its colossal mass is an accumulation of irregularly disposed trachytic débris. The table-lands of trachyte exhibit enormous crevasses apparently diverging from the centre, like the cracks in a sheet of glass which has been struck in the middle. Chimborazo, when upheaved, rearranged (*redressé*) the rocks, which have remained piled up around the centre of eruption.

On the 23rd of December 1831, Boussingault quitted Riobamba to continue his travels. In bidding farewell to Colonel Hall, who had so long shared his perils and fatigues, he grasped his hand warmly, and not without a sad presentiment. A presentiment unhappily verified; for, a few months afterwards, that brave and enterprising officer perished miserably in the streets of Quito by the dagger of an assassin.

A few words, before concluding this chapter, on the general elevation of the American continent.

This elevation, which is considerable, will help to explain the great altitude of the mountain-chains of America, far superior to that of the European mountains.

The primitive elevations of the low lands of North and South America are respectively computed at about 670 and 480 feet, by Humboldt; but, making due allowance for the upheaving movement