

five groups are all nearly of an average height of from 500 to 700 toises; and the culminant points (maxima of the lines of elevation) from 1000 to 1300 toises. That uniformity of structure, in an extent twice as great as Europe, appears to me a very remarkable phenomenon. No summit east of the Andes of Peru, Mexico, and Upper Louisiana, rises beyond the limit of perpetual snow.* It may be added, that with the exception of the Alleghanies, no snow falls sporadically in any of the eastern systems which we have just examined. From these considerations it results, and above all, from the comparison of the New Continent with those parts of the old world which we know best, with Europe and Asia, that America, thrown into the aquatic hemisphere† of our planet, is still more remarkable for the continuity and extent of the depressions of its surface, than for the height and continuity of its longitudinal ridge. Beyond and within the isthmus of Panama, but eastward of the Cordillera of the Andes, the mountains scarcely attain, over an extent of 600,000 square leagues, the height of the Scandinavian Alps, the Carpathians, the Monts-Dorés (in Auvergne), and the Jura. One system only, that of the

* Not even the White Mountains of the state of New Hampshire, to which Mount Washington belongs. Long before the accurate measurement of Captain Partridge, I had proved (in 1804), by the laws of the decrement of heat, that no summit of the White Mountains could attain the height assigned to them by Mr. Cutler, of 1600 toises.

† The southern hemisphere, owing to the unequal distribution of seas and continents, has long been marked as eminently aquatic; but the same inequality is found when we consider the globe as divided not according to the equator but by meridians. The great masses of land are stinted between the meridian of 10° west, and 150° east of Paris, while the hemisphere eminently aquatic begins westward of the meridian of the coast of Greenland, and ends on the east of the meridian of the eastern coast of New Holland and the Kurile Isles. This unequal distribution of land and water has the greatest influence on the distribution of heat over the surface of the globe, on the inflexions of the isothermal lines, and the climatic phenomena in general. For the inhabitants of the central parts of Europe the aquatic hemisphere may be called western, and the land hemisphere eastern; because in going to the west we reach the former sooner than the latter. It is the division according to the meridians, which is intended in the text. Till the end of the 15th century, the western hemisphere was as much unknown to the nations of the eastern hemisphere, as one half of the lunar globe is to us at present, and will probably always remain.