

This table contains the whole system of mountains of the New Continent; namely: the Andes, the maritime Alps of California or New Albion, and the five groups of the east.

I may subjoin to the facts I have just stated, an observation equally striking; in Europe, the maxima of secondary systems, which exceed 1500 toises, are found solely on the south of the Alps and Pyrenees, that is, on the south of the principal continental ridge. They are situated on the side where that ridge approaches nearest the shore, and where the Mediterranean has not overwhelmed the land. On the north of the Alps and Pyrenees, on the contrary, the most elevated secondary systems, the Carpathian and the Scandinavian mountains* do not attain the height of 1300 toises. The depression of the line of elevation of the second order is consequently found in Europe as well as in America, where the principal ridge is farthest removed from the shore. If we did not fear to subject great phenomena to too small a scale, we might compare the difference of the height of the Alps and the mountains of eastern America, with the difference of height observable between the Alps or the Pyrenees, and the Monts Dorés, the Jura, the Vosges, or the Black Forest.

We have just seen that the causes which upheaved the oxidated crust of the globe in ridges, or in groups of mountains, have not acted very powerfully in the vast extent of country stretching from the eastern part of the Andes, towards the Old World; that depression and that continuity of plains are geologic facts, the more remarkable, as they extend nowhere else in other latitudes. The five mountain systems of eastern America, of which we have stated the limits, divide that part of the continent into an equal number of basins, of which, only that of the Caribbean Sea remains submerged. From north to south, from the polar circle to the Straits of Magellan, we see in succession:

1400 to 1600 toises. Yet on the loftiest mountains of Greece, Tomoros, Olympus in Thessaly, Polyanos in Dolope, and Mount Parnassus, M. Pouqueville saw, in the month of August, snow lying only in patches, and in cavities sheltered from the rays of the sun.

* The Lömnitzer Spitz of the Carpathians, is, according to M. Wahlenberg, 1245 toises; Sneehättan, in the chain of Dovrefjeld in Norway (the highest summit of the old continent, north of the parallel of 55°), is 1270 toises above the level of the sea.