

Mountains lies at a distance of 500 miles from the Pacific, but from the Sound of Juan de Fuca to the 60th parallel the range is not above 350 to 380 miles distant.

Crossing the great American plain to the eastern coast, we observe a barrier rising between the plain and the ocean in the Alleghany or Appalachian range, which rarely exceeds 4000 feet in height, or 100 miles in breadth, and consists of from three to five parallel groups. The area of the whole has been estimated at 2,000,000 square miles. The scenery is of a pastoral or sylvan character, and their western slopes rejoice in a singularly fertile and genial soil.

The mountains of the West Indian islands are mostly volcanoes, in an active or extinct condition.\*]

Up to the present time the loftiest summit ascended by man in North America is that of Chimborazo, which was scaled by the illustrious Humboldt, in 1802, to the height of 19,000 feet, and thirty years later, by Boussingault, who reached an elevation of 19,750 feet.

We shall relate the attempts of these celebrated travellers. Their scientific interest was not proportioned to their difficulties and dangers; but there is always something in such enterprises which excites the curiosity of the public. Everybody is desirous of knowing the impressions experienced on these peaks so lone and silent, reputed inaccessible, or, at all events, out of the range of ordinary adventure. Their successful ascent flatters the pride of humanity; it is a new conquest over nature.

It was in the summer of 1802 that Humboldt undertook to plant the standard of geographical discovery on the snowy crest of Chimborazo. Accompanied by his friend Bonpland, by Carlos Montufar, a Spaniard, and some native guides, he set out, on the 22nd of June, from the plain of Tapia, which forms part of an immense

\* [The reader is referred for fuller details to Humboldt's "Kosmos;" Mrs. Somerville's "Physical Geography;" Keith Johnston's "Physical Atlas;" Tschudi's "Travels in Peru;" Von Martin's "Travels in Brazil;" Squier's "Central America;" Sir Charles Lyell's "Travels in North America;" Clark and Lewis's "Expedition to the Rocky Mountains," &c.]