

above the level of the Pacific ; the *hacienda*, or grazing-farm, at the foot of the volcano of Antisana, 13,500. In Central America and Mexico we find civilization flourishing at remarkable altitudes. Mexico, familiar to our boyhood as the seat of the Montezumas and the theatre of the great deeds of valour done by Cortez and his men, is 7500 feet above the sea-level ; and a great number of towns on the Mexican plateau are from 6750 to 7000 feet.

Thus we find a large portion of the human race accustomed to breathe a singularly rarefied air. An atmosphere which for the European fresh from his valleys and plains is light and rarefied, is but the atmosphere at its ordinary density for the inhabitant of the tablelands of Mexico or the Andes.

[It is not the province of this volume to enlarge upon the botany and fauna of the Andes. Generally speaking, they do not exhibit that prodigal fertility of vegetation which is so characteristic of the Himalayas. Nor are they so rich in animal life. The puma wanders among their solitudes ; the lammergeier and the vulture brood upon their loftier summits ; their green sides and deep valleys afford shelter and nutriment to the llama, the guanaco, and the vicuña. These, however, are the principal types. The great feature of their landscapes is sublimity, but owing to the extraordinary elevation of the plateaus, and the breadth of the mountain-masses, no single peak gives so grand an idea of height or is so imposing in the eye of the spectator as Mont Blanc. Their finest aspect is when viewed by the voyager from the broad bosom of the Pacific.]