

	LATITUDE.	HEIGHT OF SNOW-LINE IN ENGLISH FEET.
Ethiopia, ... ..	13°	14,075
The Andes of Quito, ... ..	1° S.	15,680
The Andes of Bolivia, east, ... ..	16°	15,800
"          "      west, ... ..	18°	18,400
The Andes of Chili, ... ..	33°	14,600
The Andes of Patagonia, ... ..	43°	6,300
Strait of Magellan, ... ..	54°	3,700

We must guard the reader, however, against accepting these figures as absolutely accurate ; for, in truth, the phenomenon of the perpetual snow-line is very complicated. It is influenced by the temperature, by the hygrometrical condition of the atmosphere,\* the configuration of the mountains, the direction of the prevailing winds and their contact either with the land or the sea, the total elevation of the heights and the comparative precipitousness of their declivities : finally, by the extent and absolute elevation of the table-lands on which these mountains are situated.

All these causes combined affect, in a considerable degree, the elevation of the snow-line. On the springing peaks of the Swiss Alps, the snow begins at an elevation of 9000 feet, and a few scanty lichens barely colour the rocks which here and there emerge from their icy shroud ; while on Chimborazo, in South America, M. Boussingault found saxifrages clinging to the crags at a height of 15,600 feet above the sea—that being the limit of perpetual snows on the mountain in question. On the flanks of the Eastern Cordilleras of Upper Peru, Pentland has observed that the lower limit of the snows rarely descends below 16,900 feet ; while in the Andes of Quito, which are much nearer the Equator, it sinks as low as 15,000 feet.

On visiting these immense fields and wastes of snow, we are surprised to discover among them some faint traces of organic life. Even on the loftiest summits, the rocks which pierce through their heavy and perpetual pall are overspread with broad tracts of lichens and other plants of an inferior character. Messieurs Agassiz and Dessors have found these signs of nature's activity on the summit of the Jungfrau and the Schreckhorn.

\* That is, the relative humidity or dryness of the atmosphere.