

widely separated ridges, having a general meridional trend, and rising above a vast plateau, which is itself 4000 or 5000 feet in elevation. It is not these intermittent ridges which really form the great mass of the land in that region, but the widely extended lofty plateau, or rather succession of plateaus, which supports them. In Europe, also, the Alps form but a subordinate part of the total bulk of the land. If their materials could be spread out over the continent, it has been calculated that they would not increase its height more than about twenty-one feet.²¹

Attempts have been made to estimate the probable average height which would be attained if the various inequalities of the land could be levelled down. Humboldt estimated the mean height of Europe to be about 671, of Asia 1132, of North America 748, and of South America 1151 feet.²² Herschel supposed the mean height of Africa to be 1800 feet.²³ These figures, though based on the best data available at the time, are no doubt much under the truth. In particular, the average height assigned to North America is evidently far less than it should be; for the great plains west of the Mississippi Valley reach an altitude of about 5000 feet, and serve as the platform from which the mountain ranges rise. The height of Asia also is obviously

²¹ M. De Lapparent ("Traité de Géologie," 3d edit. p. 57) gives the following estimate of relative heights and areas, the area below sea-level being taken as 0.6 of the whole.

Zone I.	(from sea-level to 200 metres)	covers 34.7 % of the terrestrial surface
" II.	" 200 " 500 "	21.6 "
" III.	" 500 " 1000 "	21.4 "
" IV.	" 1000 " 2000 "	14.2 "
" V.	" 2000 " 3000 "	3.7 "
" VI.	" 3000 " 4000 "	2.1 "
" VII.	above 4000 "	1.7 "
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		99.4 "

²² "Aise Centrale," tom. i. p. 168.

²³ "Physical Geography," p. 119.