

immense valleys, when some light vapors, which at first appeared only like spiders webs on the sides of the mountain, soon began to detach themselves in the form of white flakes, stretching nearer and nearer to each other, till they at last arranged themselves like a girdle along the horizon.

"All of a sudden, about eight o'clock, this curtain enlarged itself, and approached Chimborazo; then in a few minutes it mounted to us, thin at first, but becoming perceptibly more dense. We no longer could perceive the summit. We continued, however, to mount upwards, enticed by the hope of attaining our object much more easily than we had supposed on leaving our encampment.

"The fog continued to increase; we could not see twenty paces from us. At half past nine, it had become so thick that it was almost as dark as night at the distance of a few metres. Confident of finding our footsteps again to guide our descent, we travelled on with additional stubbornness; but we had every moment to examine the compass, in order to avoid a precipice which we had left on our right before reaching the terminal depression by which we resolved to gain the summit.

"It seemed to us that the declivity became less steep, we breathed more freely, and walked with less effort. Some dull detonations began at intervals to be heard in the distance. At first we ascribed them to the explosions of Cotopaxi; but soon reverberating peals, such as are heard only in the vicinity of the equator, convinced us that thunder was rolling in the lower regions. A terrible storm was in preparation.

"In the fear that the hail or snow would efface the marks of our feet, and thereby expose us to the risk of losing ourselves in the descent, we determined, with regret, to halt for a while. We hastened to kindle our chuquiragua wood, in order to melt the snow in our coffee-pot. At ten o'clock, the thermometer which, at five feet above the snow, indicated 1·7, was plunged in boiling water where the mercury stood at 77·5.

"At five minutes past ten, our observations terminated, and we began to descend with giant strides in order to regain our encampment as speedily as possible. We arrived there in the midst of the thick fog about an hour after noon. The thunder rolled almost without interruption, the flashes of lightning describing dazzling zigzags around us, never seen elsewhere so distinctly defined except in pictures.