

grasses, one vast savannah extending over the immense mountain plateaux, and reflecting a yellow, almost golden tinge, to the slopes of the Cordilleras, on which graze the lama and the cattle domesticated by the European colonist. Where the naked trachyte rock pierces the grassy turf, and penetrates into those higher strata of air which are supposed to be less charged with carbonic acid, we meet only with plants of an inferior organization, as lichens, lecideas, and the brightly-colored, dust-like lepraria, scattered around in circular patches. Islets of fresh-fallen snow, varying in form and extent, arrest the last feeble traces of vegetable development, and to these succeeds the region of perpetual snow, whose elevation undergoes but little change, and may be easily determined. It is but rarely that the elastic forces at work within the interior of our globe have succeeded in breaking through the spiral domes, which, resplendent in the brightness of eternal snow, crown the summits of the Cordilleras; and even where these subterranean forces have opened a permanent communication with the atmosphere, through circular craters or long fissures, they rarely send forth currents of lava, but merely eject ignited scorïæ, steam, sulphureted hydrogen gas, and jets of carbonic acid.

In the earliest stages of civilization, the grand and imposing spectacle presented to the minds of the inhabitants of the tropics could only awaken feelings of astonishment and awe. It might, perhaps, be supposed, as we have already said, that the periodical return of the same phenomena, and the uniform manner in which they arrange themselves in successive groups, would have enabled man more readily to attain to a knowledge of the laws of nature; but, as far as tradition and history guide us, we do not find that any application was made of the advantages presented by these favored regions. Recent researches have rendered it very doubtful whether the primitive seat of Hindoo civilization—one of the most remarkable phases in the progress of mankind—was actually within the tropics. Airyana Vaedjo, the ancient cradle of the Zend, was situated to the northwest of the upper Indus, and after the great religious schism, that is to say, after the separation of the Iranians from the Brahminical institution, the language that had previously been common to them and to the Hindoos assumed among the latter people (together with the literature, habits, and condition of society) an individual form in the Magodha or Madhya Desa,* a district that is bounded by the great chain

* See, on the Madhjadêça, properly so called, Lassen's excellent work, entitled *Indische Alterthumskunde*, bd. i., s. 92. The Chinese