

Above the region of arborescent heaths, called Monte Verde, is the region of ferns. Nowhere, in the temperate zone, have I seen such an abundance of the pteris, blechnum, and asplenium; yet none of these plants have the stateliness of the arborescent ferns which, at the height of five or six hundred toises, form the principal ornament of equinoctial America. The root of the *Pteris aquilina* serves the inhabitants of Palma and Gomera for food; they grind it to powder, and mix with it a quantity of barley-meal. This composition, when boiled, is called *gofio*; the use of so homely an aliment is a proof of the extreme poverty of the lower order of people in the Canary Islands.

Monte Verde is intersected by several small and very arid ravines (cañadas), and the region of ferns is succeeded by a wood of juniper trees and firs, which has suffered greatly from the violence of hurricanes. In this place, mentioned by some travellers under the name of Caravela,\* Mr. Eden states that in the year 1705 he saw little flames, which, according to the doctrine of the naturalists of his time, he attributes to sulphurous exhalations igniting spontaneously. We continued to ascend, till we came to the rock of La Gayta and to Portillo: traversing this narrow pass between two basaltic hills, we entered the great plain of Spartium. At the time of the voyage of Lapérouse, M. Manneron had taken the levels of the peak, from the port of Orotava to this elevated plain, near 1400 toises above the level of the sea; but the want of water, and the misconduct of the guides, prevented him from taking the levels to the top of the volcano. The results of the operation, (which was two-thirds completed,) unfortunately were not sent to Europe, and the work is still to be recommenced from the sea-coast.

We spent two hours and a half in crossing the Llano del Retama, which appears like an immense sea of sand. Notwithstanding the elevation of this site, the centigrade thermometer rose in the shade toward sunset, to 13·8°, or 3·7° higher than toward noon at Monte Verde. This augmentation of heat could be attributed only to the reverberation

\* "Phil. Trans.," vol. xxix, p. 317. Carabela is the name of a vessel with lateen sails. The pines of the peak formerly were used as masts of vessels.