hours' toil, we reached a small plain, which, on account of its elevated position, bears the name of Alta Vista. This is the station of the *neveros*, those natives, whose occupation it is to collect ice and snow, which they sell in the neighbouring towns. Their mules, better practised in climbing mountains than those hired by travellers, reach Alta Vista, and the *neveros* are obliged to transport the snow to that place on their backs. Above this point commences the Malpays, a term by which is designated here, as well as in Mexico, Peru, and every other country subject to volcanoes, a ground destitute of vegetable mould, and covered with fragments of lava.

We turned to the right to examine the cavern of ice, which is at the elevation of 1728 toises, consequently below the limit of the perpetual snows in this zone. Probably the cold which prevails in this cavern, is owing to the same causes which perpetuate the ice in the crevices of Mount Jura and the Apennines, and on which the opinions of naturalists are still much divided. This natural ice-house of the peak has, nevertheless, none of those perpendicular openings, which give emission to the warm air, while the cold air remains undisturbed at the bottom. It would seem that the ice is preserved in it on account of its mass, and because its melting is retarded by the cold, which is the consequence of quick evaporation. This small subterraneous glacier is situated in a region, the mean temperature of which is probably not under three degrees; and it is not, like the true glaciers of the Alps, fed by the snow waters that flow from the summits of the mountains. During winter the cavern is filled with ice and snow; and as the rays of the sun do not penetrate beyond the mouth, the heats of summer are not sufficient to empty the reservoir. The existence of a natural ice-house depends, consequently, rather on the quantity of snow which enters it in winter, and the small influence of the warm winds in summer, than on the absolute elevation of the cavity, and the mean temperature of the layer of air in which it is situated. The air contained in the interior of a mountain is not easily displaced, as is exemplified by Monte Testaccio at Rome, the temperature of which is so different from that of the surrounding atmosphere. On Chimborazo enormous heaps of ice are found