

Alps or that mass of pebbly stones which we find at the lower extremity of the glaciers. At the peak the lava, broken into sharp pieces, leaves hollows, in which we risked falling up to our waists. Unfortunately the listlessness of our guides contributed to increase the difficulty of this ascent. Unlike the guides of the valley of Chamouni, or the nimble-footed Guanches, who could, it is asserted, seize the rabbit or wild goat in its course, our Canarian guides were models of the phlegmatic. They had wished to persuade us on the preceding evening not to go beyond the station of the rocks. Every ten minutes they sat down to rest themselves, and when unobserved they threw away the specimens of obsidian and pumice-stone, which we had carefully collected. We discovered at length that none of them had ever visited the summit of the volcano.

After three hours' walking, we reached, at the extremity of the Malpays, a small plain, called La Rambleta, from the centre of which the Piton, or Sugar-loaf, takes its rise. On the side toward Orotava the mountain resembles those pyramids with steps that are seen at Fayoum and in Mexico; for the elevated plains of Retama and Rambleta form two tiers, the first of which is four times higher than the second. If we suppose the total height of the Peak to be 1904 toises, the Rambleta is 1820 toises above the level of the sea. Here are found those spiracles, which are called by the natives the Nostrils of the Peak (*Narices del Pico*). Watery and heated vapours issue at intervals from several crevices in the ground, and the thermometer rose to 43.2° ; M. Labillardière had found the temperature of these vapours, eight years before us, 53.7° ; a difference which does not perhaps prove so much a diminution of activity in the volcano, as a local change in the heating of its internal surface. The vapours have no smell, and seem to be pure water. A short time before the great eruption of Mount Vesuvius, in 1805, M. Gay-Lussac and myself had observed that water, under the form of vapour, in the interior of the crater, did not redden paper which had been dipped in syrup of violets. I cannot, however, admit the bold hypothesis, according to which the Nostrils of the Peak are to be considered as the vents of an immense apparatus of distillation, the lower part of which is situated below the level of the sea. Since