

are studded with villages and hamlets. At our feet, masses of vapour, constantly drifted by the winds, afforded us the most variable spectacle. A uniform stratum of clouds, similar to that already described, and which separated us from the lower regions of the island, had been pierced in several places by the effect of the small currents of air, which the earth, heated by the sun, began to send towards us. The port of Orotava, its vessels at anchor, the gardens and the vineyards encircling the town, shewed themselves through an opening which seemed to enlarge every instant. From the summit of these solitary regions our eyes wandered over an inhabited world; we enjoyed the striking contrast between the bare sides of the peak, its steep declivities covered with scorïæ, its elevated plains destitute of vegetation, and the smiling aspect of the cultured country beneath. We beheld the plants divided by zones, as the temperature of the atmosphere diminished with the elevation of the site. Below the Piton, lichens begin to cover the scorious and lustrous lava: a violet,* akin to the *Viola decumbens*, rises on the slope of the volcano at 1740 toises of height; it takes the lead not only of the other herbaceous plants, but even of the gramina, which, in the Alps and on the ridge of the Cordilleras, form close neighbourhood with the plants of the family of the cryptogamia. Tufts of retama, loaded with flowers, adorn the vallies hollowed out by the torrents, and encumbered with the effects of the lateral eruptions. Below the retama, lies the region of ferns, bordered by the tract of the arborescent heaths. Forests of laurel, rhamnus, and arbutus, divide the ericas from the rising grounds planted with vines and fruit trees. A rich carpet of verdure extends from the plain of spartium, and the zone of the alpine plants even to the groups of the date tree and the musa, at the feet of which the ocean appears to roll. I here pass slightly over the principal features of this botanical chart, as I shall enter hereafter into some farther details respecting the geography of the plants of the island of Teneriffe.†

The seeming proximity, in which, from the summit of the peak, we behold the hamlets, the vineyards, and the gardens on the coast, is increased by the prodigious transparency of

* *Viola cheiranthifolia*.

† See p. 114.