

Quito. In other places (and this circumstance is very remarkable), they are disseminated in pearl-stone, as at Cinatepecuaro, in the province of Mechoacan,* and at the Cabo de Gates, in Spain. At the peak of Teneriffe the obsidian is not found towards the base of the volcano, which is covered with modern lava: it is frequent only towards the summit, especially from the plain of Retama, where very fine specimens may be collected. This peculiar position, and the circumstance that the obsidian of the Peak has been ejected by a crater which for ages past has thrown out no flames, favour the opinion, that volcanic vitrifications, wherever they are found, are to be considered as of very ancient formation.

Obsidian, jade, and Lydian-stone,† are three minerals, which nations ignorant of the use of copper or iron, have in all ages employed for making keen-edged weapons. We see that wandering hordes have dragged with them, in their distant journeys, stones, the natural position of which the mineralogist has not yet been able to determine. Hatchets of jade, covered with Aztec hieroglyphics, which I brought from Mexico, resemble both in their form and nature those made use of by the Gauls, and those we find among the South Sea islanders. The Mexicans dug obsidian from mines, which were of vast extent; and they employed it for making knives, sword-blades, and razors. In like manner the Guanches, (in whose language obsidian was called *tabona*,) fixed splinters of that mineral to the ends of their lances. They carried on a considerable trade in it with the neighbouring islands; and from the consumption thus occasioned, and the quantity of obsidian which must have been broken in the course of manufacture, we may presume that this mineral has become scarce from the lapse of ages. We are surprised to see an Atlantic nation substituting, like the natives of America, vitrified lava for iron. In both countries this variety of lava was employed as an object of ornament: and the inhabitants of Quito made beautiful looking-glasses with an obsidian divided into parallel laminæ.

There are three varieties of obsidian at the Peak. Some form enormous blocks, several toises long, and often of a spheroidal shape. We might suppose that they had been

* To the west of the city of Mexico.

† Lydischerstein.