

through a snow-drift, wherein they sank to the waist. As they advanced, the snow deepened, until it lay nearly five feet thick; they could not get any further, and were compelled to abandon the attempt on that side of the mountain.

They rested on the isolated trachytic eminence which rose out of this ocean of snow. It was half-past one P.M.; the temperature 3° C. below zero; the barometer showing an elevation of 16,700 feet. Having filled a bottle with snow, to be subjected to a chemical analysis, Boussingault and Hall retraced their steps. They reached the farm at six in the evening.

The weather had been magnificent, which made them the more deeply regret the non-success of their enterprise. However, they resolved to renew the attempt on the morrow, but on the side of the Arénal. This was almost the same direction which Humboldt had followed thirty years before. They would gladly have obtained from the inhabitants some exact information as to the route taken by that illustrious *savant*, but all those who had accompanied him were dead.

At seven A.M., on the 15th December, they set out on their journey; at nine they breakfasted, on an enormous block of trachyte, 14,150 feet in altitude, which Boussingault christened with the name of *Pedron del Almuerzo* (i.e., "The Breakfast Stone"). Nineteen hundred feet higher, the mules refusing to proceed on account of the rarefaction of the air, the travellers quitted their steeds, and began to climb on foot a talus or slope of rocks resting upon ice; a mass which seemed the result of some recent landslip, a kind of stony avalanche let loose from the mountain summit.

Towards noon they traversed a sheet of ice of such extreme slipperiness that they were obliged to excavate holes with a hatchet in which to plant their feet.

Already the air was so rarefied that they stopped at every six or eight paces to draw breath.

In this position they made their way to *terra firma*—that is, to some blocks of trachyte not covered with snow. The "forlorn hope" marched in single file—Boussingault at the head, Colonel Hall and his negro servant placing their feet in Boussingault's footprints. While on the march they preserved an absolute silence; and during their halts exchanged but a few words in a low voice—a very essential precaution in an enterprise of this kind, where nothing is so fatiguing as a sustained conversation, and where the agitation of the air resulting from shouts or other noises will often induce the most terrible avalanches.

It was not long before they gained, in this fashion, a ridge which ascended directly to the summit of Chimborazo. There was little snow on it, but it was dangerous to climb on account of its exceeding steepness. After incredible gymnastic efforts, they found themselves at the foot of a wall of trachyte, nearly perpendicular, and some hundreds of feet in height, which seemed to oppose a *ne plus ultra* to their further passage. Resting themselves in front of this "Red Rock," they quenched their thirst by sucking small lumps of ice. It was then three-quarters past noon. Everybody was frozen with the cold, for the thermometer had sunk to zero.

An extraordinary humidity pervaded the air, and the rocks were completely