

which is remarkable for its extreme solidity. The walls of freestone, five feet thick, have been blown up by mines; but we still found masses of seven or eight hundred feet square, which have scarcely a crack in them. Our guide showed us a cistern (aljibe) thirty feet deep, which, though much damaged, furnishes water to the inhabitants of the peninsula of Araya. This cistern was finished in 1681, by the governor Don Juan de Padilla Guardiola, the same who built at Cumana the small fort of Santa Maria. As the basin is covered with an arched vault, the water, which is of excellent quality, keeps very cool: the confervæ, while they decompose the carburetted hydrogen, also shelter worms which hinder the propagation of small insects. It had been believed for ages, that the peninsula of Araya was entirely destitute of springs of fresh water; but in 1797, after many useless researches, the inhabitants of Maniquarez succeeded in discovering some.

In crossing the arid hills of Cape Cirial, we perceived a strong smell of petroleum. The wind blew from the direction in which the springs of this substance are found, and which were mentioned by the first historians of these countries.* Near the village of Maniquarez, the mica-slate† comes out from below the secondary rock, forming a chain of mountains from one hundred and fifty to one hundred and eighty toises in height. The direction of the primitive rock near Cape Sotto is from north-east to south-west; its strata incline fifty degrees to the north-west. The mica-slate is silvery white, of lamellar and undulated texture, and contains garnets. Strata of quartz, the thickness of which varies from three to four toises, traverse the mica-slate, as we may observe in several ravines hollowed out by the waters. We detached with difficulty a fragment of cyanite from a block of splintered and milky quartz, which was isolated on the shore. This was the only time we found this substance in South America.‡

This latter denomination was formerly synonymous with Cumana.—Herrera, p. 14.

* Oviedo, terms it “A resinous, aromatic, and medicinal liquor.”

† The Piedra pelada of the Creoles.

‡ In New Spain, the cyanite has been discovered only in the province of Guatimala, at Estancia Grande,—Del Rio, *Tablas Min.*, 1804, p. 27.