

sometimes leaps into the water, to attack the Indians in their canoes.

Opposite the farm of Bermudez, two spacious caverns open into the crevice of Cuchivano, whence at times there issue flames, which may be seen at a great distance in the night; and, judging by the elevation of the rocks, above which these fiery exhalations ascend, we should be led to think that they rise several hundred feet. This phenomenon was accompanied by a subterranean, dull, and long continued noise, at the time of the last great earthquake of Cumana. It is observed chiefly during the rainy season; and the owners of the farms opposite the mountain of Cuchivano allege that the flames have become more frequent since December 1797.

In a herborizing excursion we made at Rinconada we attempted to penetrate into the crevice, wishing to examine the rocks which seemed to contain in their bosom the cause of these extraordinary conflagrations; but the strength of the vegetation, the interweaving of the lianas, and thorny plants, hindered our progress. Happily the inhabitants of the valley themselves felt a warm interest in our researches, less from the fear of a volcanic explosion, than because their minds were impressed with the idea that the Risco del Cuchivano contained a gold mine; and although we expressed our doubts of the existence of gold in a secondary limestone, they insisted on knowing "what the German miner thought of the richness of the vein." Ever since the time of Charles V. and the government of the Welsers, the Alfingers, and the Sailors, at Coro and Caracas, the people of Terra Firma have entertained a great confidence in the Germans with respect to all that relates to the working of mines. Wherever I went in South America, when the place of my birth was known, I was shown samples of ore. In these colonies every Frenchman is supposed to be a physician, and every German a miner.

The farmers, with the aid of their slaves, opened a path across the woods to the first fall of the Rio Juagua; and on the 10th of September we made our excursion to the Cuchivano. On entering the crevice we recognised the proximity of tigers by a porcupine recently embowelled. For greater security the Indians returned to the farm, and brought back