

part of the inhabitants suffering from intermittent fever; a disease which in autumn assumes a formidable character. When we consider the extreme fertility of the surrounding plains, their moisture, and the mass of vegetation with which they are covered, we may easily conceive why, amidst so much decomposition of organic matter, the inhabitants do not enjoy that salubrity of air which characterizes the climate of Cumana.

The chain of calcareous mountains of the Brigantine and the Cocollar sends off a considerable branch to the north, which joins the primitive mountains of the coast. This branch bears the name of Sierra de Meapire; but towards the town of Cariaco it is called Cerro Grande de Curiaco. Its mean height did not appear to be more than 150 or 200 toises. It was composed, where I could examine it, of the calcareous breccias of the sea-coast. Marly and calcareous beds alternate with other beds containing grains of quartz. It is a very striking phenomenon for those who study the physical aspect of a country, to see a transverse ridge connect at right angles two parallel ridges, of which one, the more southern, is composed of secondary rocks, and the other, the more northern, of primitive rocks. The latter presents, nearly as far as the meridian of Carupano, only mica-slate; but to the east of this point, where it communicates by a transverse ridge (the Sierra de Meapire) with the limestone range, it contains lamellar gypsum, compact limestone, and other rocks of secondary formation. It might be supposed that the southern ridge has transferred these rocks to the northern chain.

When standing on the summit of the Cerro del Meapire, we see the mountain currents flow on one side to the gulf of Paria, and on the other to the gulf of Cariaco. East and west of the ridge there are low and marshy grounds, spreading out without interruption; and if it be admitted that both gulfs owe their origin to the sinking of the earth, and to rents caused by earthquakes, we must suppose that the Cerro de Meapire has resisted the convulsive movements of the globe, and hindered the waters of the gulf of Paria from uniting with those of the gulf of Cariaco. But for this rocky dyke, the isthmus itself in all probability would have had no existence; and from the castle of Araya as far as