

the summit of the eastern peak. They felt interested in hearing the account of our expedition, but they were not satisfied with the result of our measurement, which did not assign to the Silla even the elevation of the highest summit of the Pyrenees.* One cannot blame the national feeling which suggests exaggerated ideas of the monuments of nature, in a country in which the monuments of art are nothing; nor can we wonder that the inhabitants of Quito and Riobamba, who have prided themselves for ages on the height of Chimborazo, mistrust those measurements which elevate the mountains of Himalaya above all the colossal Cordilleras?

During our journey to the Silla, and in all our excursions in the valley of Caracas, we were very attentive to the lodes and indications of ore which we found in the strata of gneiss. No regular diggings having been made, we could only examine the fissures, the ravines, and the land-slips occasioned by torrents in the rainy season. The rock of gneiss, passing sometimes into a granite of new formation, sometimes into mica-slate,† belongs in Germany to the most metalliferous rocks; but in the New Continent, the gneiss has not hitherto been remarked as very rich in ores worth working. The most celebrated mines of Mexico and Peru are found in the primitive and transition schists, in the trap-porphyrines, the grauwakke, and the alpine limestones. In several spots of the valley of Caracas, the gneiss contains a small quantity of gold, disseminated in small veins of quartz, sulphuretted silver, azure copper-ore, and galena; but it is doubtful whether these different metalliferous substances are not too poor to encourage any attempt at working them. Such attempts were, however, made at the conquest of the province, about the middle of the sixteenth century.

From the promontory of Paria to beyond cape Vela, the early navigators had seen gold ornaments and gold dust, in the possession of the inhabitants of the coast. They penetrated into the interior of the country, to discover whence the

* It was formerly believed that the height of the Silla of Caracas scarcely differed from that of the peak of Teneriffe.

† Especially at great elevations.