

tention of the Conquistadores. These mountains join the Cordilleras of New Grenada (those of Santa Fé, Pamplona, la Grita, and Merida) to the littoral chain of Caracas. It is a land the more interesting in a geognostical point of view, as no map has yet made known the mountainous ramifications which the paramos of Niquitao and Las Rosas send out towards the north-east. Between Tocuyo, Araure, and Barquisimeto, rises the group of the Altar Mountains, connected on the south-east with the paramo of Las Rosas. A branch of the Altar stretches north-east by San Felipe el Fuerte, joining the granitic mountains of the coast near Porto Cabello. The other branch takes an eastward direction towards Nirgua and Tinaco, and joins the chain of the interior, that of Yusma, Villa de Cura, and Sabana de Ocumare.

The region we have been here describing separates the waters which flow to the Orinoco from those which run into the immense lake of Maracaybo and the Caribbean Sea. It includes climates which may be termed temperate rather than hot; and it is looked upon in the country, notwithstanding the distance of more than a hundred leagues, as a prolongation of the metalliferous soil of Pamplona. It was in the group of the western mountains of Venezuela, that the Spaniards, in the year 1551, worked the gold mine of Buria,\* which was the origin of the foundation of the town of Barquisimeto.† But these works, like many other mines successively opened, were soon abandoned. Here, as in all the mountains of Venezuela, the produce of the ore has been found to be very variable. The lodes are very often divided, or they altogether cease; and the metals appear only in kidney-ores, and present the most delusive appearances. It is, however, only in this group of mountains of San Felipe and Barquisimeto, that the working of mines has been continued till the present time. Those of Aroa, near San Felipe el Fuerte, situated in the centre of a very insalubrious country, are the only mines which are wrought in the whole capitania-general of Caracas. They yield a small quantity of copper.

\* Real de Minas de San Felipe de Buria.

† Nueva Segovia.