

Next to the works at Buria, near Barquisimeto, those of the valley of Caracas, and of the mountains near the capital, are the most ancient. Francisco Faxardo and his wife Isabella, of the nation of the Guaiquierias,\* often visited the table-land where the capital of Venezuela is now situated. They had given this table-land the name of Valle de San Francisco; and having seen some bits of gold in the hands of the natives, Faxardo succeeded, in the year 1560, in discovering the mines of Los Teques,† to the south-west of Caracas, near the group of the mountains of Cocuiza, which separate the valleys of Caracas and Aragua. It is thought that in the first of these valleys, near Baruta, south of the village of Valle, the natives had made some excavations in veins of auriferous quartz; and that, when the Spaniards first settled there, and founded the town of Caracas, they filled the shafts, which had been dry, with water. It is now impossible to ascertain this fact; but it is certain that, long before the Conquest, grains of gold were a medium of exchange, I do not say generally, but among certain nations of the New Continent. They gave gold for the purchase of pearls; and it does not appear extraordinary, that, after having for a long time picked up grains of gold in the rivulets, people who had fixed habitations, and were devoted to agriculture, should have tried to trace the auriferous veins in the superior surface of the soil. The mines of Los Teques could not be peaceably wrought, till the defeat of the Cacique Guaycaypuro, a celebrated chief of the Teques, who long contested with the Spaniards the possession of the province of Venezuela.

We have yet to mention a third point to which the attention of the Conquistadores was called by indications

Faxardo and his wife were the founders of the town of the Collado, now called Caravalleda.

† Thirteen years later, in 1573, Gabriel de Avila, one of the alcaldes of the new town of Caracoas, renewed the working of these mines, which were from that time called the "Real de Minas de Nuestra Señora." Probably this same Avila, on account of a few farms which he possessed in the mountains adjacent to La Guayra and Caracas, has occasioned the Cumbre to receive the name of Montaña de Avila. This name has subsequently been applied erroneously to the Silla, and to all the chain which extends towards cape Codera.