

of mines, so early as the end of the sixteenth century. In following the valley of Caracas eastward beyond Caurimare, on the road to Caucagua, we reach a mountainous and woody country, where a great quantity of charcoal is now made, and which anciently bore the name of the Province of Los Mariches. In these eastern mountains of Venezuela, the gneiss passes into the state of talc. It contains, as at Salzburg, lodes of auriferous quartz. The works anciently begun in those mines have often been abandoned and resumed.

The mines of Caracas were forgotten during more than a hundred years. But at a period comparatively recent, about the end of the last century, an Intendant of Venezuela, Don Jose Avalo, again fell into the illusions which had flattered the cupidity of the Conquistadores. He fancied that all the mountains near the capital contained great metallic riches. Some Mexican miners were engaged, and their operations were directed to the ravine of Tipe, and the ancient mines of Baruta to the south of Caracas, where the Indians gather even now some little gold-washings. But the zeal which had prompted the enterprise soon diminished, and after much useless expense, the working of the mines of Caracas was totally abandoned. A small quantity of auriferous pyrites, sulphuretted silver, and a little native gold, were found; but these were only feeble indications; and in a country where labour is extremely dear, there was no inducement to pursue works so little productive.

We visited the ravine of Tipe, situated in that part of the valley which opens in the direction of Cabo Blanco. Proceeding from Caracas, we traverse, in the direction of the great barracks of San Carlos, a barren and rocky soil. Only a very few plants of *Argemone mexicana* are to be found. The gneiss appears everywhere above ground. We might have fancied ourselves on the table-land of Freiberg. We crossed first the little rivulet of Agua Salud, a limpid stream, which has no mineral taste, and then the Rio Garaguata. The road is commanded on the right by the Cerro de Avila and the Cumbre; and on the left, by the mountains of Aguas Negras. This defile is very interesting in a geological point of view. At this spot the valley of Caracas commu-