

lands, those which remind the traveller of the most beautiful districts of France and the south of Germany, extend from Silao towards the Villa of Leon: they are in the neighbourhood of the mines of Guanaxuato, which alone furnish a sixth part of all the silver of the New World.

CHAPTER XIV.

Earthquakes at Caracas.—Connection of those Phenomena with the Volcanic Eruptions of the West India Islands.

ON the evening of the 7th of February we took our departure from Caracas. Since the period of our visit to that place, tremendous earthquakes have changed the surface of the soil. The city, which I have described, has disappeared; and on the same spot, on the ground fissured in various directions, another city is now slowly rising. The heaps of ruins, which were the grave of a numerous population, are becoming anew the habitation of men. In retracing changes of so general an interest, I shall be led to notice events which took place long after my return to Europe. I shall pass over in silence the popular commotions which have taken place, and the modifications which society has undergone. Modern nations, careful of their own remembrances, snatch from oblivion the history of human revolutions, which is, in fact, the history of ardent passions and inveterate hatred. It is not the same with respect to the revolutions of the physical world. These are described with least accuracy when they happen to be contemporary with civil dissensions. Earthquakes and eruptions of volcanos strike the imagination by the evils which are their necessary consequence. Tradition seizes on whatever is vague and marvellous; and amid great public calamities, as in private misfortunes, man seems to shun that light which leads us to discover the real causes of events, and to understand the circumstances by which they are attended.

I have recorded in this work all I have been able to