

The military defence of the coasts of Terra Firma rests on six points: the castle of San Antonio at Cumana; the Morro of Nueva Barcelona; the fortifications of La Guayra, (mounting one hundred and thirty-four guns); Porto Cabello; fort San Carlos, (at the mouth of the lake of Maracaybo); and Carthagena. Porto Cabello is, next to Carthagena, the most important fortified place. The town of Porto Cabello is quite modern, and the port is one of the finest in the world. Art has had scarcely anything to add to the advantages which the nature of the spot presents. A neck of land stretches first towards the north, and then towards the west. Its western extremity is opposite to a range of islands connected by bridges, and so close together that they might be taken for another neck of land. These islands are all composed of a calcareous breccia of extremely recent formation, and analagous to that on the coast of Cumana, and near the castle of Araya. It is a conglomerate, containing fragments of madrepores and other corals cemented by a limestone basis and grains of sand. We had already seen this conglomerate near the Rio Guayguaza. By a singular disposition of the ground the port resembles a basin or a little inland lake, the southern extremity of which is filled with little islands covered with mangroves. The opening of the port towards the west contributes much to the smoothness of the water.* One vessel only can enter at a time; but the largest ships of the line can anchor very near land to take in water. There is no other danger in entering the harbour than the reefs of Punta Brava, opposite which a battery of eight guns has been erected. Towards the west and south-west we see the fort, which is a regular pentagon with five bastions, the battery of the reef, and the fortifications that surround the ancient town, founded on an island of a trapezoidal form. A bridge and the fortified gate of the Staccado join the old to the new town; the latter is already larger than the

* It is disputed at Porto Cabello whether the port takes its name from the tranquillity of its waters, "which would not move a hair (cabello)," or (which is more probable) derived from Antonio Cabello, one of the fishermen with whom the smugglers of Curaçoa had formed a connexion at the period when the first hamlet was constructed on this half-desert coast