

disengagement of hydrogen.\* When travellers, who are not acquainted with natural inflammable gases, are shown the *Cueva del Serrito de Monai*, the people of the country love to frighten them by setting fire to the gaseous combination which is constantly accumulated in the upper part of the cavern. May we attribute the insalubrity of the atmosphere to the same causes as those which operate in the plains between Tivoli and Rome, viz., disengagements of sulphuretted hydrogen?† Possibly, also, the mountainous lands, near the llanos of Monai, may have a baneful influence on the surrounding plains. The south-easterly winds may convey to them the putrid exhalations that rise from the ravine of Villegas, and from La Sienega de Cabra, between Carora and Carache. I am desirous of collecting every circumstance having a relation to the salubrity of the air; for, in a matter so obscure, it is only by the comparison of a great number of phenomena, that we can hope to discover the truth.

The barren yet feverish savannahs, extending from Barquesimeto to the eastern shore of the lake of Maracaybo, are partly covered with cactus; but the good silvester-cochineal, known by the vague name of *grana de Carora*, comes from a more temperate region, between Carora and Truxillo, and

\* What is that luminous phenomenon known under the name of the Lantern (*farol*) of Maracaybo, which is perceived every night toward the seaside as well as in the inland parts, at Merida for example, where M. Palacios observed it during two years? The distance, greater than 40 leagues, at which the light is observed, has led to the supposition that it might be owing to the effects of a thunderstorm, or of electrical explosions which might daily take place in a pass in the mountains. It is asserted that, on approaching the *farol*, the rolling of thunder is heard. Others vaguely allege that it is an air-volcano, and that asphaltic soils, like those of Mena, cause these inflammable exhalations which are so constant in their appearance. The phenomenon is observed on a mountainous and uninhabited spot, on the borders of the Rio Catatumbo, near its junction with the Rio Sulia. The situation of the *farol* is such that, being nearly in the meridian of the opening (*boca*) of the lake of Maracaybo, navigators are guided by it as by a lighthouse.

† Don Carlos del Pozo has discovered in this district, at the bottom of the Quebrada de Moroturo, a stratum of clayey earth, black, strongly soiling the fingers, emitting a powerful smell of sulphur, and inflaming spontaneously when slightly moistened and exposed for a long time to the rays of the tropical sun. The detonation of this muddy substance is very violent.