

of Murcielago, towards the sources of the Frevato and the Ventuari.

It was across these mountains, which are inhabited by Indians of gentle character, employed in agriculture,* that, at the time of the expedition for settling boundaries, General Iturriaga took some horned cattle for the supply of the new town of San Fernando de Atabapo. The inhabitants of Encaramada then showed the Spanish soldiers the way by the Rio Manapiari,† which falls into the Ventuari. By descending these two rivers, the Orinoco and the Atabapo may be reached without passing the great cataracts, which present almost insurmountable obstacles to the conveyance of cattle. The spirit of enterprise which had so eminently distinguished the Castilians at the period of the discovery of America, was again roused for a time in the middle of the eighteenth century, when Ferdinand VI was desirous of knowing the true limits of his vast possessions; and in the forests of Guiana, that land of fiction and fabulous tradition, the wily Indians revived the chimerical idea of the wealth of El Dorado, which had so much occupied the imagination of the first conquerors.

Amidst the mountains of Encaramada, which, like most coarse-grained granite rocks, are destitute of metallic veins, we cannot help inquiring whence came those grains of gold which Juan Martinez‡ and Raleigh profess to have seen in such abundance in the hands of the Indians of the Orinoco. From what I observed in that part of America, I am led to think that gold, like tin,|| is sometimes disseminated in an

* The Mapoyes, Parecas, Javaranas, and Curacicanas, who possess fine plantations (conucos) in the savannahs by which these forests are bounded.

† Between Encaramada and the Rio Manapiare, Don Miguel Sanchez, chief of this little expedition, crossed the Rio Guainaima, which flows into the Cuchivero. Sanchez died, from the fatigue of this journey, on the borders of the Ventuari.

‡ The companion of Diego Ordaz.

|| Thus tin is found in granite of recent formation, at Geyer; in hyalomictic or *graisen*, at Zinnwald; and in syenitic porphyry, at Altenberg, in Saxony, as well as near Naila, in the Fichtelgebirge. I have also seen, in the Upper Palatinate, micaceous iron, and black earthy cobalt, far from any kind of vein, disseminated in a granite destitute of mica, as magnetic iron-sand is in volcanic rocks