

for the ecclesiastical hierarchy, or sought to limit its power. In 1768 Don Manuel Centurion carried off twenty thousand head of cattle from the missionaries, in order to distribute them among the indigent inhabitants. This liberality, exerted in a manner not very legal, produced very serious consequences. The governor was disgraced on the complaint of the Catalonian monks, though he had considerably extended the territory of the missions toward the south, and founded the Villa de Barceloneta, above the confluence of the Carony with the Rio Paragua, and the Ciudad de Guirior, near the union of the Rio Paragua and the Paraguamusi. From that period the civil administration has carefully avoided all intervention in the affairs of the Capuchins, whose opulence has been exaggerated like that of the Jesuits of Paraguay.

The missions of the Carony, by the configuration of their soil\* and the mixture of savannahs and arable lands, unite the advantages of the Llanos of Calabozo and the valleys of Aragua. The real wealth of this country is founded on the care of the herds and the cultivation of colonial produce. It were to be wished that here, as in the fine and fertile province of Venezuela, the inhabitants, faithful to the labours of the fields, would not addict themselves too hastily to the research of mines. The example of Germany and Mexico proves, no doubt, that the working of metals is not at all incompatible with a flourishing state of agriculture; but, according to popular traditions, the banks of the Carony lead to the lake Dorado and the palace of "the gilded man:"† and this lake, and this palace, being a local fable, it might be dangerous to awaken remembrances which begin gradually to be effaced. I was assured that, in 1760, the independent Caribs went to Cerro de Pajarcima, a mountain to the south of Vieja Guayana, to submit the decomposed rock to the action of washing. The gold-dust collected by this labour was put into calabashes of the *Crescentia cujete* and sold to the Dutch at Essequibo. Still more recently, some Mexican miners, who abused the credulity of Don

\* It appears, that the little table-lands between the mountains of Upata, Cumanu, and Tupuquen, are more than one hundred and fifty toises above the level of the sea.

† *El Dorado*, that is, *el rey ó hombre dorado*. See vol. ii, p. 400.