

contestably auriferous. There Acunha and Father Fritz placed their Laguna del Oro; and various accounts, which I obtained at San Carlos from Portuguese Americans, explain perfectly what La Condamine has related of the plates of beaten gold found in the hands of the natives. If we pass from the Iquiare to the left bank of the Rio Negro, we enter a country entirely unknown, between the Rio Branco, the sources of the Essequibo, and the mountains of Portuguese Guiana. Acunha speaks of the gold washed down by the northern tributary streams of the Lower Marañon, such as the Rio Trombetas (Oriximina), the Curupatuba, and the Ginipape (Rio de Paru). It appears to me a circumstance worthy of attention, that all these rivers descend from the same table-land, the northern slope of which contains the lake Amucu, the Dorado of Raleigh and the Dutch, and the isthmus between the Rupunuri (Rupunuwini) and the Rio Mahu. There is no reason for denying the existence of auriferous alluvial lands far from the Cordilleras of the Andes, on the north of the Amazon; as there are on the south, in the mountains of Brazil. The Caribs of the Carony, the Cuyuni, and the Essequibo, have practised on a small scale the washing of alluvial earth from the remotest times.* When we examine the structure of mountains, and embrace in one point of view an extensive surface

* "On the north of the confluence of the Curupatuba and the Amazon," says Acunha, "is the mountain of Paraguaxo, which, when illuminated by the sun, glows with the most beautiful colours; and thence from time to time issues a horrible noise (revienta con grandes estruenos)." Is there a volcanic phenomenon in this eastern part of the New Continent? or is it the love of the marvellous, which has given rise to the tradition of the bellowings (bramidos) of Paraguaxo? The lustre emitted from the sides of the mountain recalls to mind what we have mentioned above of the miraculous rocks of Calitami, and the island Ipomucena, in the imaginary Lake Dorado. In one of the Spanish letters intercepted at sea by Captain George Popham, in 1594, it is said, "Having inquired of the natives whence they obtained the spangles and powder of gold, which we found in their huts, and which they stick on their skin by means of some greasy substances, they told us, that in a certain plain, they tore up the grass, and gathered the earth in baskets, to subject it to the process of washing." (*Raleigh*, p. 109.) Can this passage be explained by supposing that the Indians sought thus laboriously, not for gold, but for spangles of mica, which the natives of Rio Caura still employ as ornaments, when they paint their bodies?