

wells been dug in the muriatiferous clay, with the view of finding strata richer in muriate of soda. The *salineros*, or salt-workers generally complain of want of rain; and in the new salt-works, it appears to me difficult to determine what quantity of salt is derived solely from the waters of the sea. The natives estimate it at a sixth of the total produce. The evaporation is extremely strong, and favoured by the constant motion of the air; so that the salt is collected in eighteen or twenty days after the pits are filled.

Though the muriate of soda is manufactured with less care in the peninsula of Araya than at the salt-works of Europe, it is nevertheless purer, and contains less of earthy muriates and sulphates. We know not whether this purity may be attributed to that portion of the salt which is furnished by the sea; for though it is extremely probable, that the quantity of salt dissolved in the waters of the ocean is nearly the same under every zone, it is not less uncertain whether the proportion between the muriate of soda, the muriate and sulphate of magnesia, and the sulphate and carbonate of lime, be equally invariable.

Having examined the salt-works, and terminated our geodesical operations, we departed at the decline of day to sleep at an Indian hut, some miles distant, near the ruins of the castle of Araya. Directing our course southward, we traversed first the plain covered with muriatiferous clay, and stripped of vegetation; then two chains of hills of sandstone, between which the lagoon is situated. Night overtook us while we were in a narrow path, bordered on one side by the sea, and on the other by a range of perpendicular rocks. The tide was rising rapidly, and narrowed the road at every step. We at length arrived at the foot of the old castle of Araya, where we enjoyed a prospect that had in it something lugubrious and romantic. The ruins stand on a bare and arid mountain, crowned with agave, columnar cactus, and thorny mimosas: they bear less resemblance to the works of man, than to those masses of rock which were ruptured at the early revolutions of the globe.

We were desirous of stopping to admire this majestic spectacle, and to observe the setting of Venus, whose disk appeared at intervals between the yawning crannies of the