

Cape Paria, the whole mass of the mountains of the coast would have formed a narrow island, parallel to the island of Santa Margareta, and four times as long. Not only do the inspection of the ground, and considerations deduced from its *relievo*, confirm these opinions; but a mere glance of the configuration of the coasts, and a geological map of the country, would suggest the same ideas. It would appear that the island of Margareta has been heretofore attached to the coast-chain of Araya by the peninsula of Chacopata and the Caribbee islands, Lobo and Coche, in the same manner as this chain is still connected with that of the Cocollar and Caripe by the ridge of Meapire.

At present we perceive that the humid plains which stretch east and west of the ridge, and which are improperly called the valleys San Bonifacio and Cariaco, are enlarging by gaining on the sea. The waters are receding, and these changes of the shore are very remarkable, more particularly on the coast of Cumana. If the level of the soil seem to indicate that the two gulfs of Cariaco and Paria formerly occupied a much more considerable space, we cannot doubt that at present the land is progressively extending. Near Cumana, a battery, called La Boca, was built in 1791 on the very margin of the sea; in 1799 we saw it very far inland. At the mouth of the Rio Neveri, near the Morro of Nueva Barcelona, the retreat of the waters is still more rapid. This local phenomenon is probably assignable to accumulations of sand, the progress of which has not yet been sufficiently examined. Descending the Sierra de Meapire, which forms the isthmus between the plains of San Bonifacio and Cariaco, we find towards the east the great lake of Putacuao, which communicates with the river Areo, and is four or five leagues in diameter. The mountainous lands that surround this basin are known only to the natives. There are found those great boa serpents known to the Chayma Indians by the name of *guainas*, and to which they fabulously attribute a sting under the tail. Descending the Sierra de Meapire to the west, we find at first a hollow ground (*tierra hueca*) which, during the great earthquakes of 1766, threw out asphaltum enveloped in viscous petroleum. Farther on, a numberless quantity of sulphureous