

images, or more precise ideas, by comparing our landscapes with those of the equinoctial regions. It cannot be too often repeated that nature, in every zone, whether wild or cultivated, smiling or majestic, has an individual character. The impressions which she excites are infinitely varied, like the emotions produced by works of genius, according to the age in which they were conceived, and the diversity of language from which they in part derive their charm. We must limit our comparisons merely to dimensions and external form. We may institute a parallel between the colossal summit of Mont Blanc and the Himalaya Mountains; the cascades of the Pyrenees and those of the Cordilleras: but these comparisons, useful with respect to science, fail to convey an idea of the characteristics of nature in the temperate and torrid zones. On the banks of a lake, in a vast forest, at the foot of summits covered with eternal snow, it is not the mere magnitude of the objects which excites our admiration. That which speaks to the soul, which causes such profound and varied emotions, escapes our measurements as it does the forms of language. Those who feel powerfully the charms of nature cannot venture on comparing one with another, scenes totally different in character.

But it is not alone the picturesque beauties of the lake of Valencia that have given celebrity to its banks. This basin presents several other phenomena, and suggests questions, the solution of which is interesting alike to physical science and to the well-being of the inhabitants. What are the causes of the diminution of the waters of the lake? Is this diminution more rapid now than in former ages? Can we presume that an equilibrium between the waters flowing in and the waters lost will be shortly re-established, or may we apprehend that the lake will entirely disappear?

According to astronomical observations made at La Victoria, Hacienda de Cura, Nueva Valencia, and Guigue, the length of the lake in its present state from Cagua to Guayos, is ten leagues, or twenty-eight thousand eight hundred toises. Its breadth is very unequal. If we judge from the latitudes of the mouth of the Rio Cura and the village of Guigue, it nowhere surpasses 2·3 leagues, or six thousand five hundred toises; most commonly it is but four