

These natural desiccations, so important to agriculture, have been considerable during the last ten years, in which America has suffered from great droughts. Instead of marking the sinuosities of the present banks of the lake, I have advised the rich landholders in these countries to fix columns of granite in the basin itself, in order to observe from year to year the mean height of the waters. The Marquis del Toro has undertaken to put this design into execution, employing the fine granite of the Sierra de Mariara, and establishing *limnometers*, on a bottom of gneiss rock, so common in the lake of Valencia.

It is impossible to anticipate the limits, more or less narrow, to which this basin of water will one day be confined, when an equilibrium between the streams flowing in and the produce of evaporation and filtration, shall be completely established. The idea very generally spread, that the lake will soon entirely disappear, seems to me chimerical. If in consequence of great earthquakes, or other causes equally mysterious, ten very humid years should succeed to long droughts; if the mountains should again become clothed with forests, and great trees overshadow the shore and the plains of Aragua, we should more probably see the volume of the waters augment, and menace that beautiful cultivation which now trenches on the basin of the lake.

While some of the cultivators of the valleys of Aragua fear the total disappearance of the lake, and others its return to the banks it has deserted, we hear the question gravely discussed at Caracas, whether it would not be advisable, in order to give greater extent to agriculture, to conduct the waters of the lake into the Llanos, by digging a canal towards the Rio Pao. The possibility* of this enter-

* The dividing ridge, namely, that which divides the waters between the valleys of Aragua and the Llanos, lowers so much towards the west of Guigue, as we have already observed, that there are ravines which conduct the waters of the Caño de Cambury, the Rio Valencia, and the Guataparo, in the time of floods, to the Rio Pao; but it would be easier to open a navigable canal from the lake of Valencia to the Orinoco, by the Pao, the Portuguesa, and the Apure, than to dig a draining canal level with the bottom of the lake. This bottom, according to the sounding, and my barometric measurements, is 40 toises less than 222, or 182 above the surface of the ocean. On the road from Guigue to the Llanos, by the table-land of La Villa de Cura, I found, to the south of the dividing