

CHAPTER VI.

LAKES AND INLAND SEAS.



IT remains for us, before we enter upon a survey of the ocean-world, to speak of those basins of fresh or brackish water which we call *lakes* or *inland seas*.

A reservoir of water which is continuously fed by some unknown spring, is denominated a *lake*. If the water spreads over a considerable surface of ground, which it covers with difficulty, and if its borders are ill-defined, it is designated a *marsh*, *morass*, or *swamp*. When the water has been partially absorbed by the soil, we distinguish the locality as a *bog*. Lakes and morasses are met with, in greater or lesser number, at all elevations, in the lowest plains as among the loftiest mountains.

Veritable lakes—*lakes* properly so called—are very frequently mere expansions of the basin of the river which traverses them. It is thus that in Europe the Lake of Geneva is formed by the development of the Rhone, the Lake of Constance by the Rhine, the Lago Maggiore and the Lakes of Como and di Garda by the affluents of the Po. The romantic river Orbe traverses at first the Lake of Joux (in the Upper Jura), situated 1950 feet above the level of the Lake of Geneva; then it is engulfed in vast funnel-shaped cavities hollowed out in the limestone; after a subterranean course of upwards of 4000 yards, it emerges into daylight in a lower valley, 750 feet below its original point of disappearance, and traverses the Lakes of Neufchatel and Bienne. Lake Baikal, in Eastern Siberia, receives and again gives up the Angara; Lake Tzana, in Ethiopia, the Abbaye, or Blue River.

Occasionally we may observe successive contractions of the valley, and the lake will then be divided into several basins, like that of