

midst of brushwood, on small flats (four, six, and even eight toises height above the surface of the lake,) fine sand mixed with helicités, anciently deposited by the waters. In each of these islands may be perceived the most certain traces of the gradual sinking of the waters. But still farther (and this accident is regarded by the inhabitants as a marvellous phenomenon) in 1796 three new islands appeared to the east of the island Caiguira, in the same direction as the islands Burro, Otama, and Zorro. These new islands, called by the people *Los nuevos Peñones*, or *Los Aparecidos*,\* form a kind of banks with surfaces quite flat. They rose, in 1800, more than a foot above the mean level of the water.

It has already been observed that the lake of Valencia, like the lakes of the valley of Mexico, forms the centre of a little system of rivers, none of which have any communication with the ocean. These rivers, most of which deserve only the name of torrents, or brooks,† are twelve or fourteen in number. The inhabitants, little acquainted with the effects of evaporation, have long imagined that the lake has a subterranean outlet, by which a quantity of water runs out equal to that which flows in by the rivers. Some suppose that this outlet communicates with grottos, supposed to be at great depth; others believe that the water flows through an oblique channel into the basin of the ocean. These bold hypotheses on the communication between two neighbouring basins have presented themselves in every zone to the imagination of the ignorant, as well as to that of the learned; for the latter, without confessing it, sometimes repeat popular opinions in scientific language. We hear of subterranean gulfs and outlets in the New World, as on the shores of the Caspian sea, though the lake of Tacarigua is two hundred and twenty-two toises higher, and the Caspian sea fifty-four toises lower, than the sea; and though it is well known, that fluids find the same level, when they communicate by a lateral channel.

\* *Los Nuevos Peñones* (the New Rocks). *Los Aparecidos* (the Unexpectedly-appeared).

† The following are their names: Rios de Aragua, Turmero, Maracay, Tapatapa, Aguas Calientes, Mariara, Cura, Guacara, Guataparo, Valencia, Caño Grande de Cambury, &c.