

deadly blows at the idea of the philosophers and poets, that the earth was surrounded on all sides by the ocean; he himself went too far in the opposite direction, by affirming that the ocean did not extend to the north of Europe and Asia. He says:—"I cannot refrain from laughing a little at all those who undertake to describe the contours of the land without any facts to guide them, for example, who represent the ocean as embracing the entire world in its course, who make it round as if drawn with a pair of compasses."¹ He rejects the notion that the earth has the form of a disc, and that the ocean is a river; he combats this theory everywhere. No person, he argues, was able to say whether Europe was bounded by the sea to the north and east, but it was well known that it was bathed by the Atlantic to the west as Asia was by the Erythræan Sea to the south. Departing from this prudent reserve, he states that there is no manner of doubt that Africa is a peninsula attached to the continent by the isthmus of Suez, and surrounded at the south by the ocean. He evidently accepts this view as the true one, because he believed what had been affirmed with reference to the *periplus* of Necho around the continent of Africa.² With Herodotus, then, the external sea and the Erythræan Sea were one ocean, which must be regarded as one of the most important advances in a knowledge of the ocean basins. This is not the only addition this Greek writer has made to our notions of physical geography. He points out the regular tide in the Persian Gulf, a phenomenon which did not fail to strike the Greeks, unaccustomed as they were to any flux or reflux of the sea on their own coasts. He also discusses the formation of alluvium at the entrance of the Nile, and the size and configuration of the three continents.

In one single passage³ Herodotus employs the word Atlantic to designate the sea to the west, but it appears evident from the incidental manner in which the word is used, that this name, here met with for the first time, must have been well known at the period. On the other hand, we do not find in his writings a special name for the Mediterranean.⁴

The ideas of Socrates⁵ and Plato⁶ concerning the habitable world do not touch directly on our subject, except with reference to the myth of Atlantis, concerning which it is necessary to say a few words, as this conception has not been without influence on studies intimately connected with oceanography. In this mythical story, Plato⁷ supposes a great extent of land situated in the external sea to have disappeared in one day and one night beneath the waters of the ocean. Since that time, he adds, the Atlantic Sea has ceased to be navigable, its waters having become muddy and charged with clay derived from the engulfed land. Everything appears to show that, according to the idea of Plato, this narration was a pure fiction; yet in succeeding centuries many attempts have been made to interpret this story by reference to geological phenomena,

¹ Herodotus, iv. 36.

³ Herodotus, i. 202.

⁵ Born about 469 B.C.

⁶ Born 429 B.C.

² Herodotus, iv. 42 (see page 4 *ante*).

⁴ See Bunbury, *op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 221, note.

⁷ Plato, *Timæus*, c. 5. 6; *Critias*, c. 3. 8.

SOCRATES AND
PLATO.

MYTH OF
ATLANTIS.