

the theatre of which has been placed in the Atlantic.¹ The myth of Plato was in all probability suggested by the reports concerning the external sea which reached the early Greeks through the Phœnicians, who represented the Atlantic as shallow, muddy, and encumbered with sea-weed.² During the fifteenth century of our era, it was even supposed that in the celebrated myth of Atlantis, Plato described America; but there is nothing in Plato's myth to suggest a reference to the New World. Those who believe in the transformation of true oceanic areas into continental areas, and *vice versa*, in recent geological times, have supported their views by a reference to the Atlantis myth.³ While this transformation has undoubtedly taken place in coast regions and shallow seas, there is little, if any, evidence of such changes in continental and oceanic areas properly so called.

The voyage of Scylax of Caryanda,⁴ down the Indus and to the Persian Gulf, must be referred to the early part of the fifth century, but the Periplus of the Mediterranean which bears his name belongs probably to the first half of the fourth century B.C.⁵ This Periplus of Scylax shows that the Greeks, at that time, had little knowledge of the sea which bathes the west of Europe. The remarks are limited to saying:—"Beyond the Pillars of Hercules there are many Carthaginian commercial stations, much muddy water, high tides, and open seas."⁶ The writer was the first to give us a detailed account of the coasts of the Adriatic; we are also indebted to him for descriptions of the Pontus Euxinus. At the end of the Periplus there is an enumeration of the principal islands known in the Mediterranean, where twenty of them are arranged in the order of their size. In this list the Balearic Islands are not mentioned; a fact which shows how incomplete was the knowledge possessed by the Greeks of this period, regarding even the Mediterranean—the sea best known to them.⁷

Although the Greeks must be regarded as the founders of scientific geography, they are not known before the fourth century to have undertaken oceanic voyages of discovery, which are, in a way, the prelude of oceanographical researches. According to Herodotus,⁸ the Phocæans were the first Greeks to trade in the Adriatic, to become acquainted with the Tyrrhenian Sea, and to venture on the waters of the Atlantic. The Phocæan colonists of Massilia (Marseilles) were the first to undertake naval enterprises on an extensive scale. In the fourth century before our era they sent an expedition to the North Sea, under the direction of the illustrious astronomer and mathematician, Pytheas,⁹

¹ Quatre lettres sur le Mexique, par l'Abbé Brasseur; Donnelly, Atlantis, London, 1886; Daniel Wilson, The Lost Atlantis, Edinburgh, 1892.

² See *ante*, p. 6.

³ The idea of Atlantis was developed in ancient times by Theopompus, contemporary and pupil of Ephorus; his geographical knowledge was very imperfect (see Bunbury, *op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 384.)

⁴ Flourished at the end of the sixth century B.C.

⁵ Niebuhr fixes the date at 360–348 B.C.

⁶ Scylax, Periplus, 1.

⁷ See Bunbury, *op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 394, and note B, p. 406.

⁸ Herodotus, i. 163 (see p. 10, *ante*).

⁹ His date is uncertain; he probably lived in the time of Alexander the Great, in the second half of the fourth century