

## “ ATLANTIS ”

BY V.W. FRATER MAURICE BEACHCROFT, VI°.

THE origin of the story of Atlantis is to be attributed to Plato (400 B.C.), by whom it was outlined in the *Timæus*, and begun on a larger scale (though not completed) in *Critias*.

He tells us that Solon heard from the priests of Sais, in the Egyptian Delta, a story of 9,000 years before, “ when the Atlantic was navigable, and there was an island situated in front of the straits which you call the Columns of Heracles ”—now the Straits of Gibraltar—“ the island was larger than Libya and Asia put together, and was the way to other islands ; and from the islands you might pass through the whole of the opposite continent which surrounded the true ocean ; for this sea which is within the straits of Heracles is only a harbour, having a narrow entrance ; but that other is a real sea and the surrounding land may be most truly called a continent.

“ Now in the island of Atlantis there was a great and wonderful empire ” . . . and he goes on to give very full details of the wealth and power of this vast military and commercial empire—and then . . . “ But afterwards there occurred violent earthquakes and floods, and in a single day and night of rain . . . the Island of Atlantis . . . disappeared, and was sunk beneath the sea . . . and that is the reason why the sea in those parts is impassable and impenetrable, because there is such a quantity of shallow mud in the way ; and this was caused by the subsidence of the Island.”

Thus Plato, and after him a countless host of commentators.

Donnelly, whom I shall refer to later, rightly disposes of the argument that “ all these matters must be held incredible,” by reminding us that for centuries Pompeii and Herculaneum were believed to be myths, while Herodotus, long considered the very “ Father of Lies,” “ is now admitted as a substantially accurate historian by such scholars as Schlegel and Buckle.”

The early references are all brief, but have a certain cumulative value.

Plutarch confirms the actual fact of Solon’s visit to Egypt and says that he conversed when there with “ Senchis the Saite, the most learned of the Egyptian priests, hearing from him of the Atlantic Island.”

Cicero, in *Somnium Scipionis*, is said to speak of "habitable continents beyond the sea," commenting upon whom Macrobius refers to "four great islands," two in the Northern and two in the Southern hemisphere."

I cannot trace the reference in *Somnium Scipionis*, which may be consulted in M.W. Frater Wynn Westcott's excellent translation, but the scheme of that composition is such as to deprive the allusion, if existing, of any great historical value.

Von Humboldt thought that Columbus knew of Macrobius' comments, and was influenced by them in his search.

Diodorus Siculus is cited by Donnelly as saying that the Phœnicians had discovered a large island in the Atlantic beyond the Pillars of Hercules. The editor of Plutarch's *Life of Solon* in the Langhorne translation cites the same author (in a footnote) as saying that the Carthaginians had discovered the Island, and forbidden anyone to land there.

The last sentence is so disconcerting, even though we remember that both these alleged discoveries would of course refer to an island other than the then long-submerged Atlantis, that I cite the actual passage from *Diodorus Siculus* (1653 trans.):

"The Phœnicians (sailing through the ocean by the coasts of Africk) were overtaken by a tempest, which, lasting for many dayes, drove them upon this Iland; where, observing the nature and goodnesse of it, they discovered it to others. Now the Tyrrhenians (who were powerfull at sea) had an intent to send a Colony into that Iland, but were prohibited by the Carthaginians, fearing that the excellency of the place might invite them all to goe thither; for this intent they concealed it, to the end that when any misfortune should befall their own City at any time, they might have that as a refuge to betake themselves into."

Proclus, in his commentary on Plato, mentions Islands beyond the Pillars of Hercules, and affirms that it was known that, in one of those islands, the inhabitants preserved from their ancestors a remembrance of Atlantis, "an extremely large island, which for a long time held dominion over all the islands of the Atlantic Ocean." He cites also the Ethiopic *History* of Marcellus to the same effect.

Æelian, in the *Varia Historia*, is also said to cite Theopompus as relating an interview between Midas, King of Phrygia, and Silenus, in which Silenus reported the existence of a great continent beyond the Atlantic, larger than Europe, Asia and Libya together: while Clement's *Epistle to the Corinthians* speaks of "the worlds that are beyond the Ocean, unpassable to man."

The Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg based his belief in the existence of Atlantis on the *Codex Chimalpopoca*—a Nahua MS. of anonymous authorship, which he believed to have an allegorical meaning relating to Atlantis (see his *Histoire des Nations Civilisés*).

There is, indeed, no inherent improbability in the broad thesis ; and, in its essential points, the story is less wonderful than Prescott's account of the conquest of Peru.

The details given relate no marvels, but a plain tale of commercial empire ; and, while it is true that Plato had a habit of solidifying myth for political purposes (a practice which has survived and flourished up to the present day), it is hard to see what purpose the story of Atlantis could have served for him, save in so far as it may be said to have reflected the ancient glories of Greece.

Moreover, there is a considerable body of circumstantial evidence in his support, much of which has been industriously collated by Ignatius Donnelly in his book *Atlantis* (1882), though his quotations and statements should not be accepted without verification or corroboration.

(a) SUBMERSION POSSIBLE :—

He would be a rash man who denied to-day the possibility of the submersion of a continent on as vast a scale as that demanded ; yet this was the side of the story that, until recently, provoked the bitterest scepticism, Proclus, in his *Commentary on Plato*, providing an honourable exception. To-day, we know that Sicily was once deep beneath the ocean, and that the Desert of Sahara lay for uncounted ages under the wide reaches of the sea. In the great earthquake of Lisbon it is said that the centre of the disturbance was in just that part of the Atlantic which we are now considering ; and we have only recently been tragically reminded, in Japan, of the vast forces that sleep beneath our feet.

The entire area of Great Britain was once submerged to a depth of at least 1,700 feet, and over the site of her Metropolis was strewn the Northern Drift ; while the lost land of Lyonesse, vanished for ever from the eyes of men, has an abiding memorial in every English heart.

There are memories of some great cataclysm everywhere. Figuier, it is true, in the *World Before the Deluge*, speaks of the Biblical " Flood " as " the Asiatic Deluge," but has shown how every race retains similar legends.

Lenormant, in the *Contemporary Review* for November, 1879, says that all races have a traditionary deluge save the black ; and he forgets that Egyptian legend also knows nothing of a flood. Significant points these, if Donnelly's thesis be true, that the black races were never known west of European boundaries, and that Egypt was an Atlantean colony founded at the zenith of her power, and before destruction overwhelmed her.

The Chaldean legend of the Flood, in particular, implies some sudden cataclysm, and says : " The sea was filled with mud "—almost in the very words of Plato.

(b) PHYSICAL CONNECTIONS :—

There is also much evidence of former physical connection between America and Europe, as we now call the lands on either side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Various expeditions, chief among them that of the U.S.A. *Dolphin* and of the British *Challenger*, have established the existence of the "Dolphin Ridge," a ridge in the bed of the Atlantic, stretching from 150° N. Lat. and 45° W. Long. in the South, to 52° N. Lat. and 30° W. Long. in the North. All is now submerged save a few islands—among them the Azores—which, lying within the zone of the ridge, are, essentially, peaks rising from a high plateau.

The whole of this ridge was once dry land.

In the course of an unusually well-informed article in the *Scientific American* for July 28th, 1877, it is said :—

"In a recent lecture in London a member of the *Challenger* staff has reviewed the evidence of soundings touching the general contour of the 'Lost Atlantis.'

"Its hills and valleys are not such as could be formed by any natural irregularity in the deposition of sediments, nor by submarine elevations ; . . . they have been carved by agencies acting above the water-level.

"Along the ridge there are four points which remain unsubmerged : the Azores, St. Paul's Rocks, Ascension and Tristan d'Acunha."

Donnelly loosely paraphrases this citation in the obliquest of *oratio obliqua*, and attributes the whole article (which is in fact editorial) to a member of the *Dolphin* staff.

Plato's description of the Atlantic as "filled with mud" is borne out by the common evidence of all ancient writers : "a muddy, dark and misty sea," "mare tenebrosum."

The *Challenger* expedition found the submerged ridge thickly covered with volcanic débris, and such a catastrophe as that described would undoubtedly affect navigation for a considerable time.

In 1783 the pumice floating in the sea near Iceland impeded ships in their courses.

In 1815, after the Sumbawa Island eruption, floating cinders were met with to the west of Sumatra, two feet deep and stretching for several miles ; while Pompeii and Herculaneum were buried 15 to 30 feet deep in ashes that covered every trace and remembrance of their existence for upwards of 17 centuries.

Plato speaks of "hot and cold springs" in his *Atlantis*, and there are still hot springs in the Azores. He describes the stones used in Atlantean buildings as being "one white, another black, and a third red." Similar conditions obtain on the Azores to-day, where black lava, and rocks, red and white in colour, are still found.

But nobody knew of the Azores in Plato's day—or of their hot springs or coloured rocks.

In Columbus' time, at least, it is certain that there was a city named "Atlan" at the entrance to the Gulf of Uraba in Darien (now called Acla).

(c) SIMILARITY OF FLORA AND FAUNA:—

There is also much evidence of similarity found in the flora and fauna on either side of the Atlantic.

The hairy mammoth, woolly-haired rhinoceros, Irish elk, musk-ox, reindeer, glutton and lemming are, or were, common to both Europe and America.

Discoveries made in the fossil beds of Nebraska prove that the horse actually originated there.

The European cave-lion is the grizzly of the Rocky Mountains, the Norway elk is identical with the American moose; and the remains of the cave-lion mentioned above as having inhabited Europe are found also in Mississippi.

Herodotus is said by Donnelly to describe cotton in India in 450 B.C.; though I have not as yet been able to verify the citation. Columbus found the West Indian natives using cotton cloth.

Raylinson (*Ancient Monarchies*, i. 578) thinks the Assyrians possessed the pineapple, which was always supposed to be of American origin, and was certainly unknown in Europe before the time of Columbus.

But Chief Witness for Atlantis is the banana, so recently brought prominently before the public in another, if more negative, sense.

The banana is a seedless fruit. It cannot stand the voyage through a temperate zone, and then resume its growth.

But, nevertheless, beyond all contradiction, it was generally cultivated in America before 1492; and it must have been so cultivated for a very long time on both sides of the Atlantic, to have become seedless.

To believe this to be coincidence would argue a degree of Faith that should make a small mouthful of Atlantis.

But, if not a coincidence, and if no continuous land—how did the banana spread?

There appears but one alternative in the Behring Straits—and that only on the postulate that the climate so far North in those days was a tropical climate—suitable (in other words) to bananas—so that we merely exchange one marvel for another.

And indeed, if the Behring Straits was the bridge of floral and faunal intercourse, how is it that so many trees and plants, which are common to Europe and to the Atlantic States, are not found West of the Rocky Mountains.

Among these are the Magnolia, the Plane, the Tulips, Persimmon, Elm, Mulberry, Catalpa, Beech, Chestnut and Hickory.

(d) SIMILARITY OF LANGUAGE AND CUSTOMS :—

And, finally, are worth noting the similarity of language, beliefs and customs found on either side :—

(i) The similarities of language are too numerous to quote without overloading my paper.

I have prepared a short *Appendix* of the most striking instances. This may be seen in the High Council Library, and, even so it should be remembered that this witness may be fully believed and yet not prove the case . . . since Man and his Language (unlike mammoths and bananas) may cross the sea in boats.

(ii) Of the similarity of customs and beliefs there is ample evidence :—

Dorman (*Origin of Primitive Superstitions*) shows that the Aztecs embalmed their dead in the same way as did the Egyptians, while Le Plongeon (cited by Short in *North Americans of Antiquity*) points out that the sandals on the feet of the statue of Chaacmol, discovered at Chichen Itza, are exact representations of those found on the feet of the Guanches, the early inhabitants of the Canary Islands, whose mummies are yet occasionally met with in the caves of Teneriffe and the other islands of the group.

Both old and new worlds were acquainted with : Bronze, Tin, Iron, Gold, Copper, Silver, Tin, Bricks, Cement, the Arch, Suspension-Bridges, the Plough, and the Art of Writing.

The monuments of Yucatan show a veil falling on the shoulders like an Egyptian Nemis.

Pyramids are common in Mexico and Peru.

Each side of the Atlantic possessed weapons common to both : Bow-and-arrows, Spears, Darts, Short swords, Battle-axes, Slings and Shields. Neither side knew of the Blowpipe or the Boomerang, indigenous to Australia.

And there are countless other similarities :—

The Mexican year began on February 26th, the first day of the Egyptian year.

The White Bull of Egypt is the Sacred White Buffalo of Dakota ; while the Peruvians, like the ancient Romans and the Greeks, foretold the future by an examination of the entrails of animals.

One eccentric custom, which though not entirely without merits of its own, must yet be considered a peculiar one, in virtue of which it is the husband who retires to bed and receives the sympathy and congratulations of his neighbours when the wife has given birth to a child, is found in China, in Corsica, on the shores of the Black Sea . . . and also in N. and S. America, in Brazil, among the Caribs of the West Indies and among the Esquimaux.

And, finally, the historian Taine (*History of English Literature*, p. 23) says that “ the unity of the Indo-European races presents the great marks of an original model ” ; while Donnelly cites Retzius as affirming (in the Smithsonian Report of 1859) that “ we find one

and the same form of skull in the Canary Islands, on the African Coast and among the Carib Islands."

These are only selections from a very considerable mass of testimony. We find also representations of negroes on the monuments of Central America, where there are no negroes, and representations of Red men (indigenous only to America) on the monuments of ancient Egypt.

And on the oldest American reliefs are unmistakable carvings of elephants.

I have no space to tell of Quetzalcoatl, the bearded white man from the East, who is said in legend to have brought civilisation and the arts to Mexico, and sailed away into the sunrise. The story may be found in Short's *North Americans of Antiquity*, while other authorities who must be mentioned are:—

H. J. Mackinder (*Britain and the British Seas*), assuming the existence of a submerged Atlantis, but placing it in the neighbourhood of Greenland; Lewis Spence, who, in his recently published book, *Atlantis*, has produced a great mass of evidence, much of which is marred by inaccuracy, but which cannot be entirely disregarded; and Dr. Robert Scharff, whose *Paper*, written in 1902, and dealing concisely with each argument advanced against the hypothesis by Alfred Russel Wallace, threw a fresh light upon the whole subject.

He points out that Wallace founds his entire negation upon observation of one family of apterous beetles, supposing that these beetles migrated to the Islands over the sea when winged; but that, in the course of ages, those which attempted flight were continually blown out to sea and lost, while the more sluggish survived and finally became apterous.

Dr. Scharff fails to agree with this somewhat ultra-Darwinian hypothesis; and, on his own part, specially instances *Phitonia Atlantica*, a sluglike creature living altogether underground in the Azores, the fresh-water crayfish which is confined to South America and West Africa, and the blind wood-louse (*Platyarthrus*), inhabiting ants' nests in Western Europe and Venezuela, as creatures whose habitats preclude the possibility of occasional dispersal such as is demanded by the hypothesis of Wallace.

His short paper is the clearest and most able of all those yet written upon this subject.

#### THE CASE "CONTRA."

On the other hand, it is said by those who do not believe in the existence of Atlantis that the story of mysterious islands in the Atlantic is an old one, and that, in practically every case, these islands were proven fictions.

"Antillia," the "Isle of Seven Cities," the "Island of Brasil," "St. Brandom," all are mist; and the pleasant markings on the

Zeno Chart of 1558—"Frislanda," "Icarie," "Drage," "Podanda," "Neome"—are . . . pleasant markings, and no more.

The "Island of Buss," supposed to have been discovered by the gallant Frobisher in 1578 and shown on the Molyneux Globe of 1592, is such stuff as dreams are made of, notwithstanding an account given of its actual exploration in Seller's *English Pilot* of 1673 (circ.).

The Bibliography of these matters is immense, but special reference may be made to:—

Miller Christy, *On Busse Island*; The same author, *On an Early Chart*, and to Westropp, *Brasil and Legendary Islands* (the latter having also an interesting chapter on Atlantis). (R.I. Ac. Proc. vol. 30 (1912)).

Of Atlantis itself the chief criticism of modern days comes from Clarke, *Examination of the Legend of Atlantis*, who says that the geological theory was long ago exploded by Darwin, "in his Chapter on *Oceanic Islands*" and by A. R. Wallace in *Island Life*, and he concludes:—

"There is no evidence that such a continent ever did exist, nor is it even possible that it could."

Darwin, however, wrote no "Chapter on *Oceanic Islands*," and, if the reference is to his *Coral Reefs and Volcanic Islands*, Clarke has misread him. But Wallace, in *Island Life*, does undoubtedly speak of Atlantis and Lemuria as "hypothetical lands."

J. A. Stewart, in *The Myths of Plato*, 1905, says that Egyptologists know nothing of a lost Atlantis, and quotes *F. Sander* on *Atlantis* in support. The latter work is not to be found in the British Museum Library, and I cannot verify the reference; but the fact is, of course, and with certain reservations, admitted by all.

He cites also Jowett's *Introduction to the Critias* and Bunbury's *History of Ancient Geography*, as deciding that Atlantis is a creature of Plato's imagination; though he gives no reasons of his own.

He states, in conclusion, that the story as to the shallow and muddy character of the ocean is taken from Scylax' *Periplus* ("much mud and high tides and open seas outside the Pillars of Hercules"), and from Aristotelia *Meteorologica* ("the sea outside the Pillars is shallow, muddy and windless"—so presenting the Atlantean apologists with two additional witnesses; while T. H. Martin (*Etudes sur le Timée: Dissertation sur l'Atlantide*) is another uncompromising unbeliever.

In general, the opposition forfeits possible sympathy by a facetious intolerance that is extremely irritating.

Wise men know that an unescapable Romance is the condition of all human progress.

Reference should also be made to an able Article in the *Times* for February 19, 1909, which was inspired by the contemporary discoveries of Dr. Arthur Evans on the site of ancient Knossos—



and which attempts to identify Plato's *Atlantis* with the Crete of antiquity.

There is much to be said for the view put forward so skilfully, though the leading article in the same issue should be disregarded, being largely derived from Jowett's *Introduction to the Critias*, and so adding nothing new to the discussion.

Knoetel's *Atlantis und das Volk* would, I think, repay investigation, but requires a fuller knowledge of German than I possess; while no reference at all has been made to the very considerable body of "testimony" based on spiritualistic communication and the like:—

Scott Elliot's *The Story of Atlantis* (1909), W. J. Colville's *Inspirational Lecture on the Lost Continent* (1884) and Leslie's *Submerged Atlantis Restored* (1911) supply, indeed, full details—exact plans, names, dates, and every particular . . . and are believed all. The spirit is very willing.

Rudolph Steiner, in *The Submerged Continents of Atlantis* derives from the Akashic Records—not, I suspect, without considerable editing of that somewhat sketchy material; . . . and, in short, I have left all such too generous exposition on one side.

But "palmarum qui meruit ferat," and I end by quoting the article in the 11th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. 2, p. 857-8, which, having stated that Montaigne, Buffon and Voltaire believed the legend true, and having mentioned no one else save T. H. Martin and the writer of the *Times* article already cited, concludes:—

"It is impossible to decide how far this legend is due to Plato's invention, and how far it is based on facts of which no record remains."

Nothing could be more true or more obvious, and we must all respectfully agree.

The evidence for a common origin of mankind is, of course, overwhelming. It always was.

Plato's story itself appears to us more credible to-day than it did to his contemporaries when he propounded it, even if his personal authority be rather less.

We have been learning all these centuries, as it were succeeding generations of Horatios, that all our philosophies have not plumbed the deeps of Heaven and Earth.

Possibly it is true, if we postdate it to some remote epoch, but it is most certainly beyond proof as yet.

Let us then conclude, as true optimists, with Seneca:—

" Venient annis  
Saecula seris, quibus Oceanus  
Vincula rerum laxet; et ingens  
Pateat Tellus. . . .  
Nec sit terris Ultima Thule."

Someday, in other words, we shall know, "when the sea gives up her dead."

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### APPENDIX ON SIMILARITY OF LANGUAGES.

#### A. MANDAN RACE OF N. AMERICAN INDIANS—SIMILARITIES WITH WELSH LANGUAGE:—

<i>English</i>	<i>Mandan</i>	<i>Welsh</i>	<i>Welsh</i> (as pronounced).
It	Ount	Hwynt	Hooynt
They	Eonah	Hona	Hona
No	Megosh	Nagoes	Nagosh
Head	Pan	Pen	Pan
{ Great	{ Maho	{ Mawr	{ Mosoor
{ Spirit	{ Peneta	{ Penaether	{ Panaether

B. COMPARISON OF DAKOTA WITH OTHER LANGUAGES :—

<i>English</i>	<i>Saxon</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Sioux</i>
See	Seon	Sehen	Sin
Went	Wendan		Winta
Town	Tun	Zaun	Tonwe
Weapon	Wepn	Wapen	Wipe
Eight	Achta	Acht	Shaktogan
Pock	Poc	Pocke	Poka
With	With	Wider	Wita
Tight	Tian	Dicht	Titan
{ Touch or			
{ Take	Taecan	Ticken	Htaka
Child	Cild	Kind	Cin
Work	Wercan	Wirken	Woccan
Shackle	Seoacul		Shka
Shabby		Schabbig	Shabya

C. NAMES OF ARMENIAN AND CENTRAL AMERICAN CITIES :—

<i>Armenian Cities</i>	<i>Central American Cities.</i>
Chol	Chol-ula
Colua	Colua-can
Zuivana	Zuivan
Cholima	Colima
Zalissa	Xalisco