

THE LOST ATLANTIS

I

EARLY IDEAS

THE legend of Atlantis, an island-continent lying in the Atlantic Ocean over against the Pillars of Hercules, which, after being long the seat of a powerful empire, was engulfed in the sea, has been made the basis of many extravagant speculations; and anew awakens keenest interest with the revolving centuries. The 12th of October 1892 has been proclaimed a World's holiday, to celebrate its accomplished cycle of four centuries since Columbus set foot on the shores of the West. The voyage has been characterised as the most memorable in the annals of our race; and the century thus completed is richer than all before it in the transformations that the birth of time has disclosed since the wedding of the New World to the Old. The story of the Lost Atlantis is recorded in the *Timæus* and, with many fanciful amplifications, in the *Critias* of Plato. According to the dialogues, as reproduced there, Critias repeats to Socrates a story told him by his grandfather, then an old man of ninety, when he himself was not more than ten years of age. According to this narrative, Solon visited the city of Sais, at the head of the Egyptian delta, and there learned from the priests of the ancient empire of Atlantis, and of its overthrow by a convulsion of nature. "No one," says Professor Jowett, in his critical edition of *The Dialogues of Plato*, "knew better than