

In Egypt, said he, in the Delta, about the summit of which the streams of the Nile are divided, is the district (*νομός*) surnamed Saitic; the chief city of which is Sais, whence also came the king Amasis; and it had a presiding divinity, whose name is in the Egyptian tongue Neith, which they say corresponds with the Greek Athena; and the people profess to be great friends of the Athenians, and united with them in a sort of close alliance. Solon said that on his arrival thither, he was very honorably received, and especially, on his inquiring about ancient affairs of those priests who possessed superior knowledge in such matters, he perceived that neither himself nor any one of the Greeks (so to speak) had any antiquarian knowledge at all. And once on a time desirous of inducing them to narrate their ancient stories, he undertook to describe those events which had formerly happened among us in days of yore—those about the first Phoroneus and Niobe; and again after the deluge of Deucalion and Pyrrha, how they survived together with their posterity, paying due attention to the different ages in which these events are said to have occurred:—on which one of their extremely ancient priests exclaimed. “Solon, you Greeks are always children, and aged Greek there is none.” \* \* \* You are all youths in intelligence; for you hold no ancient opinions derived from remote tradition, nor any system of discipline that can boast of a hoary old age: and the cause of this, is the multitude and variety of destructions that have been and will be undergone by the human race, the greater indeed arising from fire and water, others of less importance from ten thousand other contingencies. \* \* \* The truth is, however, that in all places where there is neither intense cold nor immoderate heat, the race of man is always found to exist, sometimes in less, sometimes in greater number. And all the noble, great or otherwise distinguished achievements, performed either by ourselves, or by you, or elsewhere, of which we have heard the report—all these have been engraven in our temples in very remote times, and preserved to the present day; while on the contrary, with you and all other nations, they are only just committed to writing, and all other modes of transmission which states require—when again, at the usual period, a current from heaven rushes on them like a pestilence, and leaves the survivors among you both destitute of literary attainments and unacquainted with music;—and thus you become young again, as at first, knowing nothing of the events of ancient times, either in our country or yours. As to the things, Solon, which you have just related from your antiquities, they differ indeed but little from puerile fables—for in the first place you mention only one deluge of the earth, whereas there had been many before; and in the next place you are unacquainted with that most noble and excellent race of men who once inhabited your country, from whom you and your whole present state are descended, though only a small remnant of this admirable people is now remaining—your ignorance in this matter resulting from the fact that their posterity for many generations died without speaking to posterity by writing; for long before the chief deluge, a city of Athenians existed, regulated by the best laws, both in military and all other matters, whose, noble deeds and civil institutions are said to have been the most excellent of all that we have heard to exist under heaven.

Many and mighty deeds of your state, then, are here recorded in writing (in our sacred records), and call forth our admiration; nevertheless there