

Many, and not without tolerably good reasons, believe that an island or continent existed in the Atlantic ocean about this period, but which disappeared afterwards.

Diodorus Siculus says that some "Phœnicians were cast upon a most fertile island opposite to Africa." Of this, he says, they kept the most studied secrecy, which was doubtless occasioned by their jealousy of the advantage the discovery might be to the neighboring nations, and which they wished to secure wholly to themselves. Diodorus Siculus lived about 100 years before Christ. Islands lying west of Europe and Africa are certainly mentioned by Homer and Horace. They were called Atlantides, and were supposed to be about 10,000 furlongs from Africa. Here existed the poets' fabled Elysian fields. But to be more particular with Diodorus, we will let him speak for himself. "After having passed the islands which lie beyond the Herculean straits, we will speak of those which lie much farther into the ocean. Towards Africa, and to the west of it, is an immense island in the broad sea, many days' sail from Lybia. Its soil is very fertile, and its surface variegated with mountains and valleys. Its coasts are indented with many navigable rivers, and its fields are well cultivated; delicious gardens, and various kinds of plants and trees." He finally sets it down as the finest country known, where the inhabitants have spacious dwellings, and every thing in the greatest plenty. To say the least of this account of Diodorus, it corresponds very well with that given of the Mexicans when first known to the Spaniards, but perhaps it will compare as well with the Canaries.

Plato's account has more weight, perhaps, than any of the ancients. He lived about 400 years before the Christian era. A part of his account is as follows:—"In those first times [time of its being first known], the Atlantic was a most broad island, and there were extant most powerful kings in it, who, with joint forces, were appointed to occupy Asia and Europe: and so a most grievous war was carried on, in which the Athenians, with the common consent of the Greeks, opposed themselves, and they became the conquerors. But that Atlantic island, by a flood and earthquake, was indeed suddenly destroyed, and so that warlike people were swallowed up." He adds, in another place, "An island in the mouth of the sea, in the passage to those straits, called the Pillars of Hercules, did exist; and that island was greater and larger than Lybia and Asia; from which there was an easy passage over to other islands, and from those islands to that continent, which is situated out of that region." "Neptune settled in this island, from whose son, Atlas, its name was derived, and divided it among his ten sons. To the youngest fell the extremity of the island, called Gadir, which, in the language of the country, signifies fertile, or abounding in sheep. The descendants of Neptune reigned here, from father to son, for a great number of generations in the order of primogeniture, during the space of 9,000 years. They also possessed several other islands; and, passing into Europe and Africa, subdued all Lybia as far as Egypt, and all Europe to Asia Minor. At length the island sunk under water; and for a long time after-