

Plato how to invent 'a noble lie'; and he, unhesitatingly, pronounces the whole narrative a fabrication. "The world, like a child, has readily, and for the most part, unhesitatingly accepted the tale of the Island of Atlantis." To the critical editor, this reception furnishes only an illustration of popular credulity, showing how the chance word of a poet or philosopher may give rise to endless historical or religious speculation. In the *Critias*, the legendary tale is unquestionably expanded into details of no possible historical significance or genuine antiquity. But it is not without reason, that men like Humboldt have recognised in the original legend the possible vestige of a widely-spread tradition of earliest times. In this respect, at any rate, I purpose here to review it.

It is to be noted that even in the time of Socrates, and indeed of the elder Critias, this Atlantis was referred to as the vague and inconsistent tradition of a remote past; though not more inconsistent than much else which the cultured Greeks were accustomed to receive. Mr. Hyde Clarke, in an "Examination of the Legend," printed in the *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, arrives at the conclusion that Atlantis was the name of the king rather than of the dominion. But king and kingdom have ever been liable to be referred to under a common designation. According to the account in the *Timæus*, Atlantis was a continent lying over against the Pillars of Hercules, greater in extent than Libya and Asia combined; the highway to other islands and to a great ocean, of which the Mediterranean Sea was a mere harbour. But in the vagueness of all geographical knowledge in the days of Socrates and of Plato, this Atlantic domain is confused with some Iberian or western African power, which is stated to have been arrayed against Egypt, Hellas, and all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. The knowledge even of the western Mediterranean was then very imperfect; and, to the ancient Greek, the West was a region of vague mystery which sufficed for the localisation of all his fondest imaginings. There, on the far horizon, Homer pictured the Elysian plain, where, under a serene sky, the favourites of Zeus enjoyed eternal felicity; Hesiod assigned the abode of departed heroes to the Happy Isles beyond the western waters that engirdled Europe; and Seneca foretold that that mysterious ocean would