

undergone a still greater change. The sands thrown up by the sea and the wind have formed between the isle of Pharos and the ancient city, a tongue of land, of two hundred fathoms in breadth, on which the modern city has been built. It has blocked up the nearest mouth of the Nile, and diminished the lake Mareotis to nearly nothing. During this period the alluvial deposits of the Nile have been left on the banks, and very much increased their extent.

The ancients were acquainted with these alterations. Herodotus says, that the priests of Egypt looked on their country as the gift of the river Nile. It is only a short time, he says, that in a manner the Delta has appeared.(1) Aristotle observes, that Homer speaks of Thebes, as if it were the only city of Egypt, and makes no mention of Memphis.(2) The Canopian and Pelusian mouths of the Nile were formerly the principal ones; and the coast extended in a direct line from one to the other; it appears so in the charts of Ptolemy: since his time, however, the water has been cast into the Bolbitian and Phatnitic mouths; and at these entrances the most extensive formations of accumulated alluvial deposits have been made, which have given a semicircular contour to the coast. The cities of Rosetta and Damietta, built on the sea shores at these mouths, less than a thousand years since, are now two leagues distant from it. According to Demaillet, it would only have required twenty-six years to form a cape half a league in length in front of Rosetta.(3)

(1) Herod. Euterpe, v. and xv.

(2) Arist. Météor. lib. i. cap. xiv.

(3) Demaillet Descr. de de l'Egypte, p. 102 and 103.