

of the Greeks," he says, "who wish to be considered great philosophers (*Ἑλλήνων τινες ἐπισήμοι βουλόμενοι γενέσθαι σοφίην*), have propounded three ways of accounting for these floods. Two of them," he adds, "I do not think worthy of record, except just so far as to mention them." But as these are some of the earliest Greek essays in physical philosophy, it will be worth while, even at this day, to preserve the brief notice he has given of them, and his own reasonings upon the same subject.

"One of these opinions holds that the Etesian winds [which blew from the north] are the cause of these floods, by preventing the Nile from flowing into the sea." Against this the historian reasons very simply and sensibly. "Very often when the Etesian winds do not blow, the Nile is flooded nevertheless. And moreover, if the Etesian winds were the cause, all other rivers, which have their course opposite to these winds, ought to undergo the same changes as the Nile; which the rivers of Syria and Libya so circumstanced do not."

"The next opinion is still more unscientific (*ἀνεπιστημονεστέρη*), and is, in truth, marvellous for its folly. This holds that the ocean flows all round the earth, and that the Nile comes out of the ocean, and by that means produces its effects." "Now," says the historian, "the man who talks about this ocean-river, goes into the region of fable, where it is not easy to demonstrate that he is wrong. I know of no such river. But I suppose that Homer and some of the earlier poets invented this fiction and introduced it into their poetry."

He then proceeds to a third account, which to a modern reasoner would appear not at all unphilosophical in itself, but which he, nevertheless, rejects in a manner no less decided than the others. "The third opinion, though much the most plausible, is still more wrong than the others; for it asserts an impossibility, namely, that the Nile proceeds from the melting of the snow. Now the Nile flows out of Libya, and through Ethiopia, which are very hot countries, and thus comes into Egypt, which is a colder region. How then can it proceed from snow?" He then offers several other reasons "to show," as he says, "to any one capable of reasoning on such subjects (*ἀνδρί γε λογιζέσθαι τοιούτων περί οἷόν τε ἔοντι*), that the assertion cannot be true. The winds which blow from the southern regions are hot; the inhabitants are black; the swallows and kites (*ἰκτῖνοι*) stay in the country the whole year; the cranes fly the colds of Scythia, and seek their warm winter-quarters there; which would not be if it snowed ever so little." He adds another reason, founded apparently upon