

have made in the last two or three thousand years. It is only in bays like that of Menzaleh, that any great amount of new land has been gained, the general advance of the delta being checked by a strong current of the Mediterranean, which, running from the west, sweeps eastward the sediment brought down by the great river, and prevents the land from encroaching farther on the sea. The slow subsidence also of the land may be another cause checking the advance of the delta, and the desiccation of the inland country.

Aristotle remarks, that as Homer does not mention Memphis, the city either had no existence in the time of the poet, or was less considerable than Thebes.

This observation is no doubt just, so far as regards the comparative splendour of the two cities, the one the metropolis of Upper and the other of Lower Egypt in former times. But it has no bearing whatever on the question of the existence of Memphis, for Thebes is only alluded to incidentally as the grandest city known to Homer. Achilles is made to exclaim, 'Not though you were to offer me the wealth of Egyptian Thebes, with its hundred gates,' &c. &c., 'would I stir;' \* and the allusion to Thebes in the *Odyssey* is equally a passing one. † If a work like Strabo's 'Geography,' compiled in the days of Homer, had come down to us, and Thebes had been fully described without any mention being made of Memphis, we might then have inferred the non-existence of the latter city at that period.

Great cities, says Sir G. C. Lewis, and temples, and pyramids may be erected during a small number of centuries, when despotic monarchs can command the services of large armies in peace, and some Oriental monarchs are known in historical times to have been possessed with a mania for constructing huge edifices to please their own fancies. But making every allowance for such occasional displays of

\* *Iliad*, ix. 381.

† *Odyssey*, iv. 127.