

we should wonder at the changes of volume in rivers than we do at the regular succession of the seasons. After an excellent account of a flood on the Danube, of which we may believe him to have been an eye-witness, he enters upon a discussion of the rise of the Nile which he describes as it appears at Philae. In rejecting the popular opinion expressed by the tragedians that the cause of this annual phenomenon is to be sought in the melting of snow on the mountains of Ethiopia, he repeats the arguments of Herodotus (whom however he does not cite) but with the interesting addition, which he may have derived from the explorers sent by Nero to the south of Egypt, that in Ethiopia no hibernating animal had ever been found, and that the serpent may be seen there in winter even on the open high grounds.¹

The effects of floods in destroying woods, houses and flocks are described, and the philosopher, in his characteristic way, turns from a contemplation of these events to moralise over the destiny of mankind. He asks in what manner, when the fatal day of the deluge shall arrive, will a large part of the earth's surface be destroyed by water, whether the great ocean will overwhelm us, or ceaseless torrents of rain, or prolonged winter, pouring deluges from the clouds, or rivers swollen into floods, and torrents rushing from newly opened sources, or whether it will be by no single agency, but when all will conjoin together; when rains will descend, rivers will overflow, the sea will issue from its depths and all will sweep in one fell array against the human race.²

¹ Book iv. ii. 7-30.

² III. xxvii.