36 Strabo's Geological Speculations

perpetually moist, while lower grounds, especially where the rocks are porous, are the first to be dried up. In course of time one area becomes more or less desiccated, until a fresh return of a great period of inundation."¹

As geographical proof of the probability of these suggestions, he refers again to the early condition of Egypt. Herodotus had long before announced his belief that the Nile had filled up with its sediments the tract between Thebes and Memphis, once an inlet of the sea, and had continued to push out its silt so as to form the delta. Aristotle, enlarging on the statements of the historian, declares that Egypt was evidently at one time covered by a continuous sea, and that the Nile, with its annual burden of sediment, has shallowed this expanse of water, turning it first into marshes which by degrees became entirely dried up. He concludes with these remarkable words: " It is clear that, as time never stops and the universe is eternal, the Tanais and the Nile, like all other rivers, have not always flowed; the ground which they now water was once dry. But if rivers are born and perish, and if the same parts of the land are not always covered with water, the sea must undergo similar changes, abandoning some places and returning to others, so that the same regions do not remain always sea or always land, but all change their condition in the course of time."²

Though Strabo was more intent on recording geographical facts than indulging in geological speculations, he could not refrain from sometimes intercalating a

¹ Meteor. 1. xiv. 1 et seq. 20. ² Op. cit. 1. xiv. 31.