

as ourselves.' Some centuries afterwards, as I passed by the same place, I could not perceive the slightest vestige of the city. I demanded of a peasant, who was gathering herbs upon its former site, how long it had been destroyed? 'In sooth, a strange question,' replied he, 'the ground here has never been different from what you now behold it.' 'Was there not,' said I, 'of old a splendid city here?' 'Never,' answered he, 'so far as we know, and never did our fathers speak to us of any such.'

"On my return there again, after the lapse of other centuries, I found the sea in the same place, and on its shores were a party of fishermen, of whom I inquired how long the land had been covered by the waters? 'Is this a question,' said they, 'for a man like you? This spot has always been what it is now.'

"I again returned ages afterwards, and the sea had disappeared. I inquired of a man who stood alone upon the ground, how long ago the change had taken place, and he gave me the same answer that I had received before.

"Lastly, on coming back again after an equal lapse of time, I found there a flourishing city, more populous and more rich in buildings than the city I had seen the first time; and when I would have fain informed myself regarding its origin, the inhabitants answered me, 'Its rise is lost in remote antiquity—we are ignorant how long it has existed,