

In the early days of the race, man was only acquainted with that limited portion of the earth which supported him and his flocks and herds. His science did not extend beyond the dense forest which surrounded him, the mountain which had invited his first wandering steps, the banks of the river and the green pastures where his hours of youth had glided by : the valley wherein he was born, and wherein his dust would sleep—that, for him, was the Earth. But as the number of families augmented—as contiguous tribes began to share among themselves the soil, and to determine the boundaries of their respective territories—the idea of *fatherland* was introduced, and, gradually, that of geographical divisions. Agricultural industry came in due time to consolidate the existence of these territorial demarcations, whose importance was increased by the creation of the first kings or simple chiefs of tribes.

Sprung from the necessity of exchange and barter, Commerce gradually grew bold, and carried its products to various unknown nations. On returning from his adventures, the navigator charmed and dazzled his friends with stirring tales of the wonders he had seen and the perils braved in his remote peregrinations. Thus arose the mixture of fable and truth, a legend or a tradition, which represents the *limbo* of Geography.

But where shall we place the cradle of that science? Of all the nations of antiquity, which was the first to conceive a precise idea of the extent of the countries bordering on its own?

According to an old writer, there existed a geographical chart laid down in the time of the Egyptian Sesostris (Rameses III. ?), and dating, therefore, some fifteen centuries before Christ. But what grounds are there for believing that the Egyptians, who were no navigators,* could have ever so far extended their geographical investigations as to draw up any other maps than those of their own country? It is, then, probable that this first chart was confined to Egypt. And within such narrow local boundaries, for some centuries, were restricted the knowledge of the ancient Asiatic peoples, and even of some of the modern. The Hindus in their world-maps only delineate Hindustan, Persia, and the island of Ceylon; and the Chinese know nothing more than their own Flowery Land.

“Genesis” is the first book of antiquity which affords any geographical indications. MOSES places in the west of Asia the second cradle of the human race, when it was renewed after the Noachian deluge. The sacred writer speaks of Mount Ararat—he names some great rivers, as the Nile and the Euphrates—but he furnishes no information relative to the extent of our globe.

After Moses, HOMER, the inspired poet of ancient Hellas, is the most ancient author who has transmitted to us in a summary form the geographical ideas of his contemporaries. The long description which occurs in the eighteenth book of the

* [Yet it is certain that Egyptian ships ploughed the Mediterranean as early as the reign of Thothmes III.; while at a later date, the Phœnicians obeyed the commands of Necho in circumnavigating the African peninsula.]