

Atlantis: The Antediluvian World

Part II. The Deluge.

Chapter VI.

Some Consideration Of The Deluge Legends.

The Fountains of the Great Deep.--As Atlantis perished in a volcanic convulsion, it must have possessed volcanoes. This is rendered the more probable when we remember that the ridge of land of which it was a part, stretching from north to south, from Iceland to St. Helena, contains even now great volcanoes--as in Iceland, the Azores, the Canaries, etc.--and that the very sea-bed along the line of its original axis is, to this day, as we have shown, the scene of great volcanic disturbances.

If, then, the mountains of Atlantis contained volcanoes, of which the peaks of the Azores are the surviving representatives, it is not improbable that the convulsion which drowned it in the sea was accompanied by great discharges of water. We have seen that such discharges occurred in the island of Java, when four thousand people perished. "Immense columns of hot water and boiling mud were thrown out" of the volcano of Galung Gung; the water was projected from the mountain "like a water-spout." When a volcanic island was created near Sicily in 1831, it was accompanied by "a waterspout sixty feet high."

In the island of Dominica, one of the islands constituting the Leeward group of the West Indies, and nearest to the site of Atlantis, on the 4th of January, 1880, occurred a series of convulsions which reminds us forcibly of the destruction of Plato's island; and the similarity extends to another particular: Dominica contains, like Atlantis, we are told, numerous hot and sulphur springs. I abridge the account given by the *New York Herald* of January 28th, 1880:

"A little after 11 o'clock A.M., soon after high-mass in the Roman Catholic cathedral, and while divine service was still going on in the Anglican and Wesleyan chapels, all the indications of an approaching thunder-storm suddenly showed themselves; the atmosphere, which just previously had been cool and pleasant--slight showers falling since early morning--became at once nearly stifling hot; the rumbling of distant thunder was heard, and the light-blue and fleecy white of the sky turned into a heavy and lowering black. Soon

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the thunder-peals came near and loud, the lightning flashes, of a blue and red color, more frequent and vivid; and the rain, first with a few heavy drops, commenced to pour as if the floodgates of heaven were open. In a moment it darkened, as if night had come; a strong, nearly overpowering smell of sulphur announced itself; and people who happened to be out in the streets felt the rain-drops falling on their heads, backs, and shoulders like showers of hailstones. The cause of this was to be noted by looking at the spouts, from which the water was rushing like so many cataracts of molten lead, while the gutters below ran swollen streams of thick gray mud, looking like nothing ever seen in them before. In the mean time the Roseau River had worked itself into a state of mad fury, overflowing its banks, carrying down rocks and large trees, and threatening destruction to the bridges over it and the houses in its neighborhood. When the storm ceased--it lasted till twelve, mid-day--the roofs and walls of the buildings in town, the street pavement, the door-steps and back-yards were found covered with a deposit of volcanic débris, holding together like clay, dark-gray in color, and in some places more than an inch thick, with small, shining metallic particles on the surface, which could be easily identified as iron pyrites. Scraping up some of the stuff, it required only a slight examination to determine its main constituents--sandstone and magnesia, the pyrites being slightly mixed, and silver showing itself in even smaller quantity. This is, in fact, the composition of the volcanic mud thrown up by the *soufrières* at Watton Waven and in the Boiling Lake country, and it is found in solution as well in the lake water. The Devil's Billiard-table, within half a mile of the Boiling Lake, is composed wholly of this substance, which there assumes the character of stone in formation. Inquiries instituted on Monday morning revealed the fact that, except on the south-east, the mud shower had not extended beyond the limits of the town. On the north-west, in the direction of Fond Colo and Morne Daniel, nothing but pure rain-water had fallen, and neither Loubière nor Pointe Michel had seen any signs of volcanic disturbance. . . .

"But what happened at Pointe Mulâtre enables us to spot the locale of the eruption. Pointe Mulâtre lies at the foot of the range of mountains on the top of which the Boiling Lake frets and seethes. The only outlet of the lake is a cascade which falls into one of the branches of the Pointe Mulâtre River, the color and temperature of which, at one time and another, shows the existence or otherwise of volcanic activity in the lake-country. We may observe, *en passant*, that the fall of the water from the lake is similar in appearance to the falls on the sides of Roairama, in the interior of British Guiana; there, is no continuous stream, but the water overleaps its basin like a kettle boiling over,

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and comes down in detached cascades from the top. May there not be a boiling lake on the unapproachable summit of Roairama? The phenomena noted at Pointe Mulâtre on Sunday were similar to what we witnessed in Roseau, but with every feature more strongly marked. The fall of mud was heavier, covering all the fields; the atmospheric disturbance was greater, and the change in the appearance of the running water about the place more surprising. The Pointe Mulâtre River suddenly began to run volcanic mud and water; then the mud predominated, and almost buried the stream under its weight, and the odor of sulphur in the air became positively oppressive. Soon the fish in the water--brochet, camoo, meye, crocro, mullet, down to the eel, the crawfish, the loche, the tétar, and the dormer--died, and were thrown on the banks. The mud carried down by the river has formed a bank at the month which nearly dams up the stream, and threatens to throw it back over the low-lying lands of the Pointe Mulâtre estate. The reports from the Laudat section of the Boiling Lake district are curious. The Bachelor and Admiral rivers, and the numerous mineral springs which arise in that part of the island, are all running a thick white flood, like cream milk. The face of the entire country, from the Admiral River to the Solfatera Plain, has undergone some portentous change, which the frightened peasants who bring the news to Roseau seem unable clearly and connectedly to describe, and the volcanic activity still continues."

From this account it appears that the rain of water and mud came from a boiling lake on the mountains; it must have risen to a great height, "like a water-spout," and then fallen in showers over the face of the country. We are reminded, in this Boiling Lake of Dominica, of the Welsh legend of the eruption of the Llyn-llion, "the Lake of Waves," which "inundated the whole country." On the top of a mountain in the county of Kerry, Ireland, called Mangerton, there is a deep lake known as Poulle-i-feron, which signifies Hell-hole; it frequently overflows, and rolls down the mountain in frightful torrents. On Slieve-donart, in the territory of Mourne, in the county of Down, Ireland, a lake occupies the mountain-top, and its overflowings help to form rivers.

If we suppose the destruction of Atlantis to have been, in like manner, accompanied by a tremendous outpour of water from one or more of its volcanoes, thrown to a great height, and deluging the land, we can understand the description in the Chaldean legend of "*the terrible water-spout*," which even "the gods grew afraid of," and which "rose to the sky," and which seems to have been one of the chief causes, together with the earthquake, of the destruction of the country. And in this view we are confirmed by the

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Aramæan legend of the Deluge, probably derived at an earlier age from the Chaldean tradition. In it we are told, "All on a sudden *enormous volumes of water issued from the earth*, and rains of extraordinary abundance began to fall; the rivers left their beds, and the ocean overflowed its banks." The disturbance in Dominica duplicates this description exactly: "In a moment" the water and mud burst from the mountains, "the floodgates of heaven were opened," and "the river overflowed its banks."

And here, again, we are reminded of the expression in Genesis, "the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up" (chap. vii., 11). That this does not refer to the rain is clear from the manner in which it is stated: "The same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth," etc. And when the work of destruction is finished, we are told "the fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped." This is a reminiscence by an inland people, living where such tremendous volcanic disturbances were nearly unknown, of "the terrible water-spout which "rose to the sky," of the Chaldean legend, and of "the enormous volumes of water issuing from the earth" of the Aramæan tradition. The Hindoo legend of the Flood speaks of "the marine god Hayagriva, who dwelt in the abyss," who produced the cataclysm. This is doubtless "the archangel of the abyss" spoken of in the Chaldean tradition.

The Mountains of the North.--We have in Plato the following reference to the mountains of Atlantis:

"The whole country was described as being very lofty and precipitous on the side of the sea. . . . The whole region of the island lies toward the south, and is sheltered from the north. . . . The surrounding mountains exceeded all that are to be seen now anywhere."

These mountains were the present Azores. One has but to contemplate their present elevation, and remember the depth to which they descend in the ocean, to realize their tremendous altitude and the correctness of the description given by Plato.

In the Hindoo legend we find the fish-god, who represents Poseidon, father of Atlantis, helping Mann over "the Mountain of the North." In the Chaldean legend Khasisatra's vessel is stopped by "the Mountain of Nizir" until the sea goes down.

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The Mud which Stopped Navigation.--We are told by Plato, "Atlantis disappeared beneath the sea, and then that sea became inaccessible, so that navigation on it ceased, on account of the quantity of mud which the ingulfed island left in its place." This is one of the points of Plato's story which provoked the incredulity and ridicule of the ancient, and even of the modern, world. We find in the Chaldean legend something of the same kind: Khasisatra says, "I looked at the sea attentively, observing, and the whole of humanity had returned to mud." In the "Popol Vuh" we are told that a "resinous thickness descended from heaven," even as in Dominica the rain was full of "thick gray mud," accompanied by an "overpowering smell of sulphur."

The explorations of the ship *Challenger* show that the whole of the submerged ridge of which Atlantis *is a part is to this day thickly covered with volcanic debris.*

We have but to remember the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, which were covered with such a mass of volcanic ashes from the eruption of A.D. 79 that for seventeen centuries they remained buried at a depth of from fifteen to thirty feet; a new population lived and labored above them; an aqueduct was constructed over their heads; and it was only when a farmer, in digging for a well, penetrated the roof of a house, that they were once more brought to the light of day and the knowledge of mankind.

We have seen that, in 1783, the volcanic eruption in Iceland covered the sea with pumice for a distance of one hundred and fifty miles, "and *ships were considerably impeded in their course.*"

The eruption in the island of Sumbawa, in April, 1815, threw out such masses of ashes as to darken the air. "The floating cinders to the west of Sumatra formed, on the 12th of April, a mass *two feet thick* and several miles in extent, *through which ships with difficulty forced their way.*"

It thus appears that the very statement of Plato which has provoked the ridicule of scholars is in itself one of the corroborating features of his story. It is probable that the ships of the Atlanteans, when they returned after the tempest to look for their country, found the sea impassable from the masses of volcanic ashes and pumice. They returned terrified to the shores of Europe; and the shock inflicted by the destruction of Atlantis upon the civilization of the world probably led to one of those retrograde periods in the history of our race in which they lost all intercourse with the Western continent.

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The Preservation of a Record.--There is a singular coincidence in the stories of the Deluge in another particular.

The legends of the Phœnicians, preserved by Sanchoniathon, tell us that Tautos, or Taut, was the inventor of the alphabet and of the art of writing.

Now, we find in the Egyptian legends a passage of Manetho, in which Thoth (or Hermes Trismegistus), before the Deluge, inscribed on stelæ, or tablets, in hieroglyphics, or sacred characters, the principles of all knowledge. After the Deluge the second Thoth translated the contents of these stelæ into the vulgar tongue.

Josephus tells us that "The patriarch Seth, in order that wisdom and astronomical knowledge should not perish, erected, in prevision of the double destruction by fire and water predicted by Adam, two columns, one of brick, the other of stone, on which this knowledge was engraved, and which existed in the Siriadic country."

In the Chaldean legends the god Ea ordered Khasisatra to inscribe the divine learning, and the principles of all sciences, on tables of terra-cotta, and bury them, before the Deluge, "in the City of the Sun at Sippara."

Berosus, in his version of the Chaldean flood, says:

"The deity, Chronos, appeared to him (Xisuthros) in a vision, and warned him that, upon the 15th day of the month Dœsius, there would be a flood by which mankind would be destroyed. He therefore enjoined him to write a history of the beginning, procedure, and conclusion of all things, and to bury it in the City of the Sun at Sippara, and to build a vessel," etc.

The Hindoo Bhâgavata-Purâna tells us that the fish-god, who warned Satyravata of the coming of the Flood, directed him to place the sacred Scriptures in a safe place, "in order to preserve them from Hayagriva, a marine horse dwelling in the abyss."

Are we to find the original of these legends in the following passage from Plato's history of Atlantis?

"Now, the relations of their governments to one another were regulated by the injunctions of Poseidon, as the law had handed them down. These were inscribed by the first then on a column of orichalcum, which was situated in

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the middle of the island, at the Temple of Poseidon, whither the people were gathered together. . . . They received and gave judgments, and at daybreak they wrote down their sentences on a golden tablet, and deposited them as memorials with their robes. There were many special laws which the several kings had inscribed about the temples." (Critias, p. 120.)

A Succession of Disasters.--The Central American books, translated by De Bourbourg, state that originally a part of the American continent extended far into the Atlantic Ocean. This tradition is strikingly confirmed by the explorations of the ship *Challenger*, which show that the "Dolphin's Ridge" was connected with the shore of South America north of the mouth of the Amazon. The Central American books tell us that this region of the continent was destroyed by a succession of frightful convulsions, probably at long intervals apart; three of these catastrophes are constantly mentioned, and sometimes there is reference to one or two more.

"The land," in these convulsions, "was shaken by frightful earthquakes, and the waves of the sea combined with volcanic fires to overwhelm and engulf it. . . . Each convulsion swept away portions of the land until the whole disappeared, leaving the line of coast as it now is. Most of the inhabitants, overtaken amid their regular employments, were destroyed; but some escaped in ships, and some fled for safety to the summits of high mountains, or to portions of the land which for a time escaped immediate destruction."
(Baldwin's "Ancient America," p. 176.)

This accords precisely with the teachings of geology. We know that the land from which America and Europe were formed once covered nearly or quite the whole space now occupied by the Atlantic between the continents; and it is reasonable to believe that it went down piecemeal, and that Atlantis was but the stump of the ancient continent, which at last perished from the same causes and in the same way.

The fact that this tradition existed among the inhabitants of America is proven by the existence of festivals, "especially one in the month *Izcalli*, which were instituted to commemorate this frightful destruction of land and people, and in which, say the sacred books, 'princes and people humbled themselves before the divinity, and besought him to withhold a return of such terrible calamities.'"

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Can we doubt the reality of events which we thus find confirmed by religious ceremonies at Athens, in Syria, and on the shores of Central America?

And we find this succession of great destructions of the Atlantic continent in the triads of Wales, where traditions are preserved of "three terrible catastrophes." We are told by the explorations of the ship *Challenger* that the higher lands reach in the direction of the British Islands; and the Celts had traditions that a part of their country once extended far out into the Atlantic, and was subsequently destroyed.

And the same succession of destructions is referred to in the Greek legends, where a deluge of Ogyges--"the most ancient of the kings of Bœotia or Attica, a quite mythical person, lost in the night of ages"--preceded that of Deucalion.

We will find hereafter the most ancient hymns of the Aryans praying God to *hold the land firm*. The people of Atlantis, having seen their country thus destroyed, section by section, and judging that their own time must inevitably come, must have lived under a great and perpetual terror, which will go far to explain the origin of primeval religion, and the hold which it took upon the minds of men; and this condition of things may furnish us a solution of the legends which have come down to us of their efforts to perpetuate their learning on pillars, and also an explanation of that other legend of the Tower of Babel, which, as I will show hereafter, was common to both continents, and in which they sought to build a tower high enough to escape the Deluge.

All the legends of the preservation of a record prove that the united voice of antiquity taught that the antediluvians had advanced so far in civilization as to possess an alphabet and a system of writing; a conclusion which, as we will see hereafter, finds confirmation in the original identity of the alphabetical signs used in the old world and the new.