

inland sea, of which the Caspian and the Sea of Aral are but minute fragments, — mere detached pools, left amid the general ebb, — had once occupied that vast central basin of Asia into which the Volga and the Oxus fall. He was ever realizing to himself — and deriving much quiet enjoyment from the process — a time when a sea without visible shore occupied, league beyond league, the surrounding landscape, and picturing in fancy the green gleam of the waves, interposed, cloud-like, between him and the sun. Very similar must be the feelings of the voyager on the great Pacific. We find trace in this ocean of a sinking continent, — a continent once of greater area than all Europe, — in the act of foundering, with but merely its mast-heads above the water. Great coral reefs that whiten the green depths league after league and degree after degree, for hundreds and thousands of miles, with here and there a tall mountain-peak existing as a surf-engirdled island, are all that remain to show where a “wide continent bloomed,” that had existed as such myriads of ages after the true geologic *Atlantis* had been engulfed.

It seems more than questionable whether we shall ever arrive at a knowledge approximating to correct, regarding the distribution of ocean and continent in the earlier, or even secondary geologic formations. The Silurian and Old Red Sandstone systems give but few indications of land at all, and certainly no indications whatever of its place or extent. The Coal Measures, on the other hand, puzzle with the multiplicity of their alternations of land and water, — in some instances, of sea and land. We know little more than that an ocean-deposit forms very generally the base of the system, and that the deep bottom occupied by the sea came afterwards to be a platform, on which great forests sprang up and decayed; and that amid the broken stumps of these forests, when again sub-