

the varied form of our small continent as a special advantage. Africa\* and South America, which manifest so great a resemblance in their configuration, are also the two continents that exhibit the simplest littoral outlines. It is only the eastern shores of Asia, which, broken as it were by the force of the currents of the ocean† (*fractas ex æquore terras*), exhibit a richly-variegated configuration, peninsulas and contiguous islands alternating from the equator to 60° north latitude.

Our Atlantic Ocean presents all the indications of a valley. It is as if a flow of eddying waters had been directed first toward the northeast, then toward the northwest, and back again to the northeast. The parallelism of the coasts north of 10° south latitude, the projecting and receding angles, the convexity of Brazil opposite to the Gulf of Guinea, that of Africa under the same parallel, with the Gulf of the Antilles, all favor this apparently speculative view.‡ In this Atlantic valley, as is almost every where the case in the configuration of large continental masses, coasts deeply indented, and rich in islands, are situated opposite to those possessing a different character. I long since drew attention to the geognostic importance of entering into a comparison of the western coast of Africa and of South America within the tropics. The deeply-curved indentation of the African continent at Fernando Po, 4° 30' north latitude, is repeated on the coast of the Pacific at 18° 15' south latitude, between the Valley of Arica and the Morro de Juan Diaz, where the Peruvian coast suddenly changes the direction from south to north which it had previously followed, and inclines to the northwest. This change

\* Of Africa, Pliny says (v. 1), "Nec alia pars terrarum pauciores recipit sinus." The small Indian peninsula on this side the Ganges presents, in its triangular outline, a third analogous form. In ancient Greece there prevailed an opinion of the regular configuration of the dry land. There were four gulfs or bays, among which the Persian Gulf was placed in opposition to the Hyrcanian or Caspian Sea (Arrian, vii., 16; Plut., *in vita Alexandri*, cap. 44; Dionys. Perieg., v. 48 and 630, p. 11, 38, Bernh.). These four bays and the isthmuses were, according to the optical fancies of Agesianax, supposed to be reflected in the moon (Plut., *de Facie in Orbem Lunæ*, p. 921, 19). Respecting the *terra quadrifida*, or four divisions of the dry land, of which two lay north and two south of the equator, see Macrobius, *Comm. in Somnium Scipionis*, ii., 9. I have submitted this portion of the geography of the ancients, regarding which great confusion prevails, to a new and careful examination, in my *Examen Crit. de l'Hist. de la Géogr.*, t. i., p. 119, 145, 180-185, as also in *Asie Centr.*, t. ii., p. 172-178.

† Fleurieu, in *Voyage de Marchand autour du Monde*, t. iv., p. 38-42.

‡ Humboldt, in the *Journal de Physique*, liii., 1799, p. 33; and *Rel. Hist.*, t. ii., p. 19; t. iii., p. 189, 198.