

nesus, not far from the Promontory of Malea. Further westward is the Ionian Sea, the Syrtic basin, in which lies Malta. The western extremity of Sicily here approaches within forty-eight geographical miles of the coast of Africa. The sudden appearance and short continuance of the upheaved volcanic island of Ferdinandea in 1831, to the southwest of the calcareous rocks of Sciacca, seem to indicate an effort of nature to reclose the Syrtic basin between Cape Grantola, Adventure Bank, examined by Captain Smyth, Pantellaria, and the African Cape Bon, and thus to divide it from the third western basin, the Tyrrhenian. This last sea receives the ocean which enters the Pillars of Hercules from the west, and surrounds Sardinia, the Balearic Islands, and the small volcanic group of the Spanish Columbratæ.

This triple constriction of the Mediterranean has exercised a great influence on the earliest limitations, and the subsequent extension of Phœnician and Greek voyages of discovery. The latter were long limited to the Ægean and Syrtic Seas. In the Homeric times the continent of Italy was still an "unknown land." The Phocæans opened the Tyrrhenian basin west of Sicily, and Tartessian mariners reached the Pillars of Hercules. It must not be forgotten that Carthage was founded at the boundary of the Tyrrhenian and Syrtic basins. The physical configuration of the coast-line influenced the course of events, the direction of nautical undertakings, and the changes in the dominion of the sea; and the latter reacted again on the enlargement of the sphere of ideas.

The northern shore of the Mediterranean possesses the advantage of being more richly and variously articulated than the southern or Libyan shore, and this was, according to Strabo, noticed already by Eratosthenes.* Here we find three peninsulas, the Iberian, the Italian, and the Hellenic, which, owing to their various and deeply-indented contour, form, together with the neighboring islands and the opposite

* Humboldt, *Asie Centrale*, t. i., p. 67. The two remarkable passages of Strabo are as follows: "Eratosthenes enumerates three, and Polybius five points of land in which Europe terminates. The first-mentioned of these writers names the projecting point which extends to the Pillars of Hercules, on which Iberia is situated; next, that which terminates at the Sicilian Straits, to which Italy belongs; and, thirdly, that which extends to Malea, and comprises all the nations between the Adriatic, the Euxine, and the Tanais" (lib. ii., p. 109). "We begin with Europe because it is of irregular form, and is the quarter most favorable to the mental and social ennoblement of men. It is habitable in all parts except some districts near the Tanais, which are not peopled on account of the cold" (lib. ii., p. 126).