

The existence of the Arabian Gulf as the result of the ir-
 ruption of the Indian Ocean through the Straits of Bab-el-
 Mandeb belongs to a series of great physical phenomena,
 which could alone have been revealed to us by modern geog-
 nosy. The European continent has its main axis directed
 from northeast to southwest; but almost at right angles to
 this direction there is a system of fissures, which have given
 occasion partly to a penetration of sea-water, and partly to
 the elevation of parallel mountain chains. This inverse line
 of strike, directed from the southeast to the northwest, is dis-
 cernible from the Indian Ocean to the efflux of the Elbe in
 Northern Germany; in the Red Sea, the southern part of
 which is inclosed on both sides by volcanic rocks; in the Per-
 sian Gulf, with the deep valleys of the double streams of the
 Euphrates and the Tigris; in the Zagros chain in Luristan;
 in the mountain chains of Hellas, and in the neighboring isl-
 ands of the Archipelago; and, lastly, in the Adriatic Sea,
 and the Dalmatian calcareous Alps. The intersection* of
 these two systems of geodetic lines directed from N.E. to S.W.,
 and from S.E. to N.W. (the latter of which I consider to be
 the more recent of the two), and whose cause must undoubt-
 edly be traced to disturbances in the interior of our planet, has
 exercised the most important influence on the destiny of man-
 kind, and in facilitating intercourse among different nations.
 This relative position, and the unequal degrees of heat experi-
 enced by Eastern Africa, Arabia, and the peninsula of West-
 ern India at different periods of the year, occasion a regular
 alternation of currents of air (monsoons), favoring navigation
 to the Myrrhifera Regio of the Adramites in Southern Arabia,
 to the Persian Gulf, India, and Ceylon; for, at the season of
 the year (from April and May to October) when north winds
 are prevailing in the Red Sea, the southwest monsoon is
 blowing from Eastern Africa to the coast of Malabar, while
 the northeast monsoon (from October to April), which favors
 the return passage, corresponds with the period of the south
 winds between the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb and the Isthmus
 of Suez.

After having sketched that portion of the earth to which
 foreign elements of civilization and geographical knowledge
 might have been conveyed to the Greeks from so many different
 directions, we will first turn to the consideration of those na-
 tions inhabiting the coasts of the Mediterranean who enjoyed

* Leopold von Buch, *Ueber die Geognostischen Systeme von Deutsch-
 land*, s. xi.; Humboldt, *Asie Centrale*, t. i., p. 284-286.