

existed between the Black Sea and the Caspian, but there is no certainty in either case.

Herodotus, about B. C. 458, visited Olbia on the Black Sea at the mouth of the Dnieper River. He there obtained from the merchants such accurate information that he was able to state definitely that the Caspian Sea was completely isolated and had no outlet. He makes the north and south axis six times as long as that from east to west, although now it is only between three and four times as long. Of course we have no certainty that Herodotus had anything more than the unreliable accounts of traveling merchants. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see how well his information agrees with the conclusion to which we are led by other evidence. The width of the Caspian Sea between the Caucasus mountains and the Ust-Urt plateau, the part with which the Olbians would be most familiar, is about two hundred miles, and would not be greatly increased even though the level of the water rose several hundred feet. If the length of the sea were six times two hundred miles, water would extend from about its present limit at the foot of the Elburz mountains on the south, to north of Samara in the plains of Russia; and this is just what would happen if the Caspian rose to the level at which there is reason to believe that it stood in ancient times. Herodotus says also that the Jaxartes, or Syr River, after throwing off many small arms to feed a lagoon, which Rawlinson surmises to be the Sea of Aral, entered the Caspian in a single stream. Possibly the Jaxartes may have followed an old channel which, as the map shows, joins the Oxus near that river's mouth; and the united streams may have flowed by another old