

Strabo, A. D. 20, furnishes evidence more exact than that of Pomponius and Pliny. He gives data as to the distance from the mouth of the Phasis River in the Black Sea to that of the Cyrus in the Caspian, as to the sandy plain on the west coast of the Caspian, and as to other features. His figures agree in indicating that at that time the sea stood higher than now. From them Khanikof has estimated that in the first century of our era the level of the Caspian Sea was eighty-five feet higher than now. If this is true, the Scythian gulf must have extended far toward the Sea of Aral, with which, at an earlier, higher stage, it may almost have coalesced.

The last ancient author who makes any important contribution to our knowledge of the Caspian Sea is Ptolemy, A. D. 160, one of the most accurate among Greek geographers. He abandoned the Alexandrine idea of a northern outlet, and asserted that the sea was completely enclosed. His map makes it over twice as long from east to west as from north to south. Apparently, when he became convinced that the sea was not connected with the northern ocean, he supposed the so-called Caspian gulf to be also a mistake, and accordingly made the sea consist of only the Hyrcanian and Scythian gulfs.

Most of the information of the preceding paragraphs has been gleaned from Humboldt's great book, "Asie Centrale." In dealing with records of ancient authors, two mental attitudes are possible. One, exemplified by Murchison in his paper on the Caspian, assumes that the ancients were essentially wrong, and that their geographical accounts are worth studying only as literature. The other, exemplified by Hum-