

But with regard to the island which has been discovered in the ocean to the south and the marvellous tales told concerning it, we shall now endeavour to give a brief account, after we have first set forth accurately the causes which led to its discovery. There was a certain Iambulus who from his boyhood up had been devoted to the pursuit of education, and after the death of his father, who had been a merchant, he also gave himself to that calling; and while journeying inland to the spice-bearing region of Arabia he and his companions on the trip were taken captive by some robbers. Now at first he and one of his fellow-captives were appointed to be herdsmen, but later he and his companion were made captive by certain Ethiopians and led off to the coast of Ethiopia. They were kidnapped in order that, being of an alien people, they might effect the purification of the land. For among the Ethiopians who lived in that place there was a custom, which had been handed down from ancient times, and had been ratified by oracles of the gods, over a period of twenty generations or six hundred years, the generation being reckoned at thirty years; and at the time when the purification by means of the two men was to take place, a boat had been built for them sufficient in size and strong enough to withstand the storms at sea, one which could easily be manned by two men; and then loading it with food enough to maintain two men for six months and putting them on board they commanded them to set out to sea as the oracle had ordered. Furthermore, they commanded them to steer towards the south; for, they were told, they would come to a happy island and to men of honourable character, and among them they would lead a blessed existence. And in like manner, they stated, their own people, in case the men whom they sent forth should arrive safely at the island, would enjoy peace and a happy life in every respect throughout six hundred years; but if, dismayed at the extent of the sea, they should turn back on their course they would, as impious men and destroyers of the entire nation, suffer the severest penalties. Accordingly, the Ethiopians, they say, held a great festal assembly by the sea, and after offering costly sacrifices they crowned with flowers the men who were to seek out the island and effect the purification of the nation and then sent them forth. And these men, after having sailed over a vast sea and been tossed about four months by storms, were carried to the island about which they had been informed beforehand; it was round in shape and had a circumference of about five thousand stades.

But when they were now drawing near to the island, the account proceeds, some of the natives met them and drew their boat to land; and the inhabitants of the island, thronging together, were astonished at the arrival of the strangers, but they treated them honourably and shared with them the necessities of life which their country afforded. The dwellers upon this island differ greatly both in the characteristics of their bodies and in their manners from the men in our part of the inhabited world; for they are all nearly alike in the shape of their bodies and are over four cubits in height, but the bones of the body have the ability to bend to a certain extent and then straighten out again, like the sinewy parts. They are also exceedingly tender in respect to their bodies and yet more vigorous than is the case among us; for when they have seized any object in their hands no man can extract it from the grasp of their fingers. There is absolutely no hair on any part of their bodies except on the head, eyebrows and eyelids, and on the chin, but the other parts of the body are so smooth that not even the least down can be seen on them. They are also remarkably beautiful and well-proportioned in the outline of the body. The openings of their ears are much more spacious than ours and growths have developed that serve as valves, so to speak, to close them. And they have a peculiarity in regard to the tongue, partly the work of nature and congenital with them and partly intentionally brought about by artifice; among them, namely, the tongue is double for a certain distance, but they divide the inner portions still further, with the result that it becomes a double tongue as far as the base. Consequently they are very versatile as to the sounds they can utter, since they imitate not only every articulate language used by man but also the varied chatterings of the birds, and, in general, they reproduce any peculiarity of sounds. And the most remarkable thing of all is that at one and the same time they can converse perfectly with two persons who fall in with them, both answering questions and discoursing pertinently on the circumstances of the moment; for with one division of the tongue they can converse with the one person, and likewise

with the other talk with the second. Their climate is most temperate, we are told, considering that they live at the equator, and they suffer neither from heat nor from cold. Moreover, the fruits in their island ripen throughout the entire year, even as the poet writes, 'Here pear on pear grows old and apple close/On apple, yes, and clustered grapes on grapes/and fig on fig.' And with them the day is always the same length as the night, and at midday no shadow is cast of any object because the sun is in the zenith.

These islanders, they go on to say, live in groups which are based on kinship and on political organizations, no more than four hundred kinsmen being gathered together in this way; and the clansmen spend their time in the meadows, the land supplying them with many things for sustenance; for by reason of the fertility of the island and the mildness of the climate, food-stuffs are produced of themselves in greater quantity than is sufficient for their needs. For instance, a reed grows there in abundance, and bears a fruit in great plenty that is very similar to the white vetch. Now when they have gathered this they steep it in warm water until it has become the size of a pigeon's egg; then after they have crushed it and rubbed it skilfully with their hands, they mould it into loaves, which are baked and eaten, and they are of surprising sweetness. There are also in the island, they say, abundant springs of water, the warm springs serving well for bathing and the relief of fatigue, the cold excelling in sweetness and possessing the power to contribute to good health. Moreover, the inhabitants give attention to every branch of learning and especially to astrology; and they use letters which, according to the value of the sounds they represent, are twenty-eight in number, but the characters are only seven, each one of which can be formed in four different ways. Nor do they write their lines horizontally, as we do, but from the top to the bottom perpendicularly. And the inhabitants, they tell us, are extremely long-lived, living even to the age of one hundred and fifty years, and experiencing for the most part no illness. Anyone also among them who has become crippled or suffers, in general, from any physical infirmity is forced by them, in accordance with an inexorable law, to remove himself from life. And there is also a law among them that they should live only for a stipulated number of years, and that at the completion of this period they should make away with themselves of their own accord, by a strange manner of death; for there grows among them a plant of a peculiar nature, and whenever a man lies down upon it, imperceptibly and gently he falls asleep and dies.

They do not marry, we are told, but possess their children in common, and maintaining the children who are born as if they belonged to all, they love them equally; and while the children are infants those who suckle the babes often change them around in order that not even the mothers may know their own offspring. Consequently, since there is no rivalry among them, they never experience civil disorders and they never cease placing the highest value upon internal harmony. There are also animals among them, we are told, which are small in size but the object of wonder by reason of the nature of their bodies and the potency of their blood; for they are round in form and very similar to tortoises, but they are marked on the surface by two diagonal yellow stripes, at each end of which they have an eye and a mouth; consequently, though seeing with four eyes and using as many mouths, yet it gathers its food into one gullet, and down this its nourishment is swallowed and all flows together into one stomach; and in like manner its other organs and all its inner parts are single. It also has beneath it all around its body many feet, by means of which it can move in whatever direction it pleases. And the blood of this animal, they say, has a marvellous potency; for it immediately glues on to its place any living member that has been severed; even if a hand or the like should happen to have been cut off, by the use of this blood it is glued on again, provided that the cut is fresh, and the same thing is true of such other parts of the body as are not connected with the regions which are vital and sustain the person's life. Each group of the inhabitants also keeps a bird of great size and of a nature peculiar to itself, by means of which a test is made of the infant children to learn what their spiritual disposition is; for they place them upon the birds, and such of them as are able to endure the flight through the air as the birds take wing they rear, but such as become nauseated and filled with consternation they cast out, as not likely either to live many years and being, besides, of no account because of their dispositions. In each group the oldest man regularly exercises the leadership, just as if he were a kind of king, and is

obeyed by all the members; and when the first such ruler makes an end of his life in accordance with the law upon the completion of his one hundred and fiftieth year, the next oldest succeeds to the leadership. The sea about the island has strong currents and is subject to great flooding and ebbing of the tides and is sweet in taste. And as for the stars of our heavens, the Bears and many more, we are informed, are not visible at all. The number of these islands was seven, and they are very much the same in size and at about equal distances from one another, and all follow the same customs and laws.

Although all the inhabitants enjoy an abundant provision of everything from what grows of itself in these islands, yet they do not indulge in the enjoyment of this abundance without restraint, but they practise simplicity and take for their food only what suffices for their needs. Meat and whatever else is roasted or boiled in water are prepared by them, but all the other dishes ingeniously concocted by professional cooks, such as sauces and the various kinds of seasonings, they have no notion whatsoever. And they worship as gods that which encompasses all things and the sun, and, in general, all the heavenly bodies. Fishes of every kind in great numbers are caught by them by sundry devices and not a few birds. There is also found among them an abundance of fruit trees growing wild, and olive trees and vines grow there, from which they make both olive oil and wine in abundance. Snakes also, we are told, which are of immense size and yet do no harm to the inhabitants, have a meat which is edible and exceedingly sweet. And their clothing they make themselves from a certain reed which contains in the centre a downy substance that is bright to the eye and soft, which they gather and mingle with crushed sea-shells and thus make remarkable garments of a purple hue. As for the animals of the islands, their natures are peculiar and so amazing as to defy credence. All the details of their diet, we are told, follow a prescribed arrangement, since they do not all take their food at the same time nor is it always the same; but it has been ordained that on certain fixed days they shall eat at one time fish, at another time fowl, sometimes the flesh of land animals, and sometimes olives and the most simple side-dishes. They also take turns in ministering to the needs of one another, some of them fishing, others working at the crafts, others occupying themselves in other useful tasks, and still others, with the exception of those who have come to old age, performing the services of the group in a definite cycle. And at the festivals and feasts which are held among them, there are both pronounced and sung in honour of the gods hymns and spoken laudations, and especially in honour of the sun, after whom they name both the islands and themselves. They inter their dead at the time when the tide is at the ebb, burying them in the sand along the beach, the result being that at flood-tide the place has fresh sand heaped upon it. The reeds, they say, from which the fruit for their nourishment is derived, being a span in thickness increase at the times of full-moon and again decrease proportionately as it wanes. And the water of the warm springs, being sweet and health-giving, maintains its heat and never becomes cold, save when it is mixed with cold water or wine.

After remaining among this people for seven years, the account continues, Iambulus and his companion were ejected against their will, as being malefactors and as having been educated to evil habits. Consequently, after they had again fitted out their little boat they were compelled to take their leave, and when they had stored up provisions in it they continued their voyage for more than four months. Then they were shipwrecked upon a sandy and marshy region of India; and his companion lost his life in the surf, but Iambulus, having found his way to a certain village, was then brought by the natives into the presence of the king at Palibothra, a city which was distant a journey of many days from the sea. And since the king was friendly to the Greeks and devoted to learning he considered Iambulus worthy of cordial welcome; and at length, upon receiving a permission of safe-conduct, he passed over first of all into Persia and later arrived safe in Greece. Now Iambulus felt that these matters deserved to be written down, and he added to his account not a few facts about India, facts of which all other men were ignorant at that time.