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William Desborough Cooley

Excerpt

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THE HISTORY
OF
MARITIME AND INLAND
DISCOVERY.

BOOK I.

GEOGRAPHY OF THE ANCIENTS.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION. — WANDERING PROPENSITY OF PRIMITIVE MAN.
— SLOW GROWTH OF GEOGRAPHY. — THE HEBREWS. — THE
MOSAIC GENESIS. — SIMPLE COSMOLOGY. — THE PHENICIANS.
— ANTIQUITY OF THEIR NAVIGATIONS. — THEIR OBSCURITY.

THE history of the progress of geographical knowledge is calculated more than that of any other branch of learning to illustrate the progressive civilisation of mankind. It has for its object, in some measure, the diffusion of the species, but is more immediately connected with the advancement of navigation and commercial enterprise. Instead of confining the attention to the fortunes of a particular community, it carries the eye of the enquirer continually abroad, to survey all the nations of the earth, to mark the knowledge they obtained of one another, and the extent of their mutual acquaintance.

The principal charm of savage life arises from the unlimited range which it allows over the face of nature.

VOL. I.

B

Those who have once tasted the pleasure of roving at large through woods and mountains, can never afterwards feel happy under the restraints of society. Curiosity and the love of action, no less than their wants, must have continually urged the earliest inhabitants of the globe to explore all the varieties of its surface. Pastoral tribes feel an interest in learning the nature of the country in the vicinity of their encampments, the extent of its pastures, and the rivers which flow through and refresh it. But the observations of a rude age are seldom accumulated beyond the wants of the present moment. The movements by which those nomades acquire the knowledge along with the possession of new regions, generally lead to a total forgetfulness of their old habitations; little correspondence is maintained by those who migrate with those who remain behind: so that in a short time the geographical knowledge of migratory nations is reduced to obscure and fading traditions.

When men in the progress of their migrations reach the sea coast, the love of gain as well as of adventure soon impels them to launch upon the waves, and direct their course to distant countries. But the complicated art of navigation requires many ages to bring it to perfection. Science alone can give certainty to the observations of the mariner; and the discoveries of the early navigators were as perishable as they were vaguely described. Besides, in proportion as the spirit of adventure prevailed among the motives of the earliest expeditions, a corresponding desire to indulge in exaggeration and romantic fiction disfigured all the relations which remain of them. Wonder and credulity, however, are the natural characteristics of an early age, and we must not regard as wholly fabulous those accounts of antiquity, in which we find a few threads of consistent fact, interwoven with much that is absolutely incredible.

Geography of the Hebrews.

The earliest geographical records which remain to us are those of the sacred scriptures. The Hebrews them-

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selves, an inland and pastoral nation, had probably but little direct acquaintance with distant countries. For their knowledge of commerce, and of the nations with which it opened a correspondence, they were perhaps chiefly indebted to the Egyptians and Phœnicians: but the account which Moses gives of the first progenitors of mankind, and of the nations which sprung from them, is unquestionably derived from peculiar sources.

All the nations of the old world distinctly known to the sacred historian, are reduced by him to the families of Shem, Ham, and Japhet. The children of these patriarchs are also enumerated by him, and each of them appears as the founder of a nation; but in those early ages it is impossible to affix with certainty to any region a name which properly belongs to a wandering horde. The Mosaic account (Genesis x.), however, is a precious record of the manner in which the knowledge of the earth was enlarged by the dispersion of the human species.

The family of Shem comprised the pastoral nations which were spread over the plains between the Euphrates and the shores of the Mediterranean, from Ararat to Arabia. The Hebrews themselves were of this stock, and the resemblance of their language with the Aramean or ancient Syriac, and with Arabic, sufficiently proves the identity in race of what are called the Semitic nations. There is no difficulty in assigning to each of the sons of Shem his proper situation. Elam founded the kingdom of Elymeis, Assur that of Assyria, and Aram the kingdom of Syria or Aramæa, a name still clearly preserved in that of Armenia. From Arphacsad were descended the Hebrews themselves, and the various tribes of Arabia; and this close affinity of origin was always manifest in the language and in the intimate correspondence of these two nations. Some of the names given by Moses to the children of Shem are still used in Arabia as local designations: thus there is still a district in that country called *Havilah*; and *Uzal*, the

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name given to Sana by the sacred historian, is not yet quite obsolete.

The descendants of Ham constituted the most civilized and industrious nations of the Mosaic age. The sons of that patriarch were Cush, Mizraim, Phut, and Canaan. The name of Ham is identical with that of *Cham* or *Chamia*, by which Egypt has in all ages been called by its native inhabitants, and *Mizr* or *Mizraim* is the name by which the same country, or more properly the Delta, is known to Turks and Arabians. The land of *Phut* appears to signify Libya in general; and the name *Cush*, though sometimes used vaguely, is obviously applied to the southern and eastern parts of Arabia. The names of *Saba*, *Sabtah*, *Raamah*, and *Sheba*, children of Cush, long survived in the geography of Arabia.

The posterity of Canaan rivalled the children of Mizraim in the early splendour of arts and cultivation. Though the Canaanites, properly speaking, and the Phœnicians were separated from each other by Mount Carmel, yet as the same spirit of industry animated both, they may here, in a general sense, be considered as one people. The Phœnicians possessed the knowledge of the Egyptians, free from the superstitious reluctance of the latter to venture upon the sea. Their local position naturally engaged them in commercial enterprise: — “and the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou goest to Gerar unto Gaza.” Their chief cities, Tyre and Sidon, had reached the highest degree of commercial opulence when the first dawn of social polity was only commencing in Greece. Damascus, one of the oldest cities in the world, remains as a monument of the first inhabitants. The great superiority of the people on that coast above the Hebrews in the time of Moses, is clearly shown in the language of holy writ. When Joshua and the other chiefs, who were sent by the prophet to observe and report on the land of Canaan, returned, they said, “We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and

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honey. Nevertheless, the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great." In fine, they conclude, "We be not able to go up against this people, for they are very great." While the Canaanites inhabited walled and populous cities, the Hebrews dwelt in tents like the brethren of Joseph, who declared to Pharaoh, "Thy servants are shepherds, both we and also our fathers."

The warlike children of Japhet, the Japetus of the Greeks, have far surpassed the other posterity of Noah in the extent of their possessions. All the Indo-teutonic nations, stretching without interruption from the extremity of western Europe through the peninsula of India to the island of Ceylon, may be considered as derived from this common ancestor. The Turkish nation also, occupying the elevated countries of central Asia, boast the same descent. Their own traditions accord in this respect with the Mosaic history; and indeed the affinities of language, which are still evident among all the nations of the Japetic family, fully confirm the relation of the sacred writer. The meaning of Japhet's name in the Sanscrit language, *Yapáti*, or lord of the earth, bears a sense which is well adapted to the numbers and the eminence of his descendants.

The eldest of Japhet's sons was Gomer, who, Josephus tells us, was the father of the Celts. Magog, we must be contented to suppose, was the founder of some Scythian nation. In Madai we may recognize the ancestor of the Medes. The posterity of Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras may be traced from Ararat, always called *Masis* by its inhabitants, through Phrygia into Europe. Tubal and Meshech left their names to the Tibareni and Moschi, Armenian tribes, whose early migrations appear to have extended into Mœsia. In like manner the Thracians may have owed their origin to Tiras.

Ashkenaz, the son of Gomer, is thought to be that Ascanius whose name so frequently occurs in the ancient topography of Phrygia, and from whom, probably, the

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Euxine, at first the *Axine* sea, derived its appellation. In Togarmah we see the proper ancestor of the Armenian nations, and it is even asserted of the Turks.

Javan was the Ion of the Greeks, the father of the Ionians. In the names of his sons we find fresh proofs of the consistency of the Mosaic history. In Elishah we see the origin of Elis or Hellas. The name of Tarshish is supposed, with little foundation, to refer to Tarsus in Cilicia. Kittim means Cyprus, and Dodanim or Rodanim is understood to apply to the island Rhodes. — “By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands.” It is impossible to read this ethnographical sketch of the sacred historian, who ascends to the first origin of mankind, without admiring its comprehensiveness and consistency.

It is impossible to fix with precision the eastern limit of Moses's geographical knowledge. “The dwellings of the sons of Joctan,” he says, “were from *Mesha*, as thou goest unto *Sephar*, a mount of the East.” This *Sephar* may possibly be the first range of the snowy mountains of *Paropamisus*, called also *Sepyrrus* by the ancients. But that the accurate knowledge of Moses did not extend to the confines of India is evident from the gloss which he adds, “a mountain of the *East*,” which is, in fact, the signification of the word. *Sephar* is applied in general to the East, while *Ophir*, on the other hand, means the West, or Africa.

The institutions of the Hebrews were calculated to discourage an intercourse with strangers. The brilliant commercial enterprises in which Solomon engaged were discontinued by his successors, and even the fleets of that prince were navigated by the servants of the king of Tyre. This restricted communication with foreign nations rendered it, of course, impossible to acquire any enlarged or correct knowledge of the earth; and we do not find in the prophetic writings any trace of geographical information much exceeding that which was possessed by Moses. Some, indeed, have imagined the *Ophir* of scripture to mean Peru; and the *Tarshish* from

which the fleets of Solomon returned every three years, "bringing gold, and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks," has given rise to innumerable learned disquisitions. Tarsus in Cilicia (which, by the way, was not a sea-port), as well as Tartessus in Spain, are out of the question; for the ships of Solomon were launched from Eziongeber in the Red Sea, and ivory, apes, and peacocks are obviously Indian produce. Many eminent scholars have supposed the word *Tarshish* to be a Phœnician epithet of the sea in general; but though this interpretation serves very well to explain the expression "ships of Tarshish," it only increases the difficulty of a *three years' voyage to Tarshish*. Others have imagined two places of the same name, one in the East and the other in the West. But the most ingenious of the conjectures offered to clear up these difficulties is that which explains the name *Tarshish* as an epithet derived from the Sanscrit language, in which *Tar-désa* signifies the silver country. The languages of India, owing to the great trade and civilization of the people who spoke them, are known to have contributed many terms to the Arabic and Hebrew tongues; and as the Indian legends make frequent mention of a *silver country* beyond the sea, it is not very improbable that the Arabians adopted from them this vague and wandering appellation. *Tarshish*, then, to the Phœnicians (who received the language as well as merchandize of the East through the Arabians) was an expression of extreme latitude, and applicable with equal justice to opposite quarters of the globe.

Towards the north the geographical knowledge of the Hebrews never extended beyond the Caucasus; and in the north-east it was confined within equally narrow limits. The Chaldæans, who appear to have descended from the further shores of the Caspian Sea, are described by the prophet Jeremiah as coming from the ends of the north and the sides of the earth. With Egypt and Arabia the early Hebrews were well acquainted; but towards the West their knowledge hardly reached as far as the shores of Greece.

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The cosmological ideas scattered through the scriptures are few in number, and of extreme simplicity. In the prophetic writings many traces may be found of an opinion that heaven, or the "mount of the Lord," was in the North.* The earth was evidently considered to be a plain, surrounded, perhaps, by the ocean, which was again enclosed by the clouds of heaven. Such are the opinions expressed by Job, the sublimest of all poets. "He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until (in the places where) the day and night come to an end:" and again he says, "Whereupon are the foundations of the earth fastened? or, who laid the corner-stone thereof? or, who shut up the sea with doors (boundaries); when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb; when I made the cloud the garment thereof?"† The general allusions which occur in scripture to the earth and its creation, are not more remarkable for the sublime language in which they are conveyed, than for their perfect freedom from fanciful and subtle speculations.

The Phœnicians, the greatest maritime people of antiquity, have, unfortunately, not transmitted to us any writings whatever. We know of their enterprises only from scripture, and from the scattered notices of Greek and Latin authors. We have seen that they were the pilots of Solomon's fleet; and, as often as Egyptian ships are mentioned by ancient authors, we are sure to find them manned and guided by Phœnicians. This people were, in fact, the merchants of the Egyptians, whose laws and religion were at all times unfavourable to maritime adventure: they were, in fact, the foreign merchants of Egypt in the flourishing days of the hundred-gated Thebes; and the astonishing monuments which remain to prove the ancient wealth and grandeur of that kingdom may render us less incredulous with respect to the naval proficiency of a kindred people. The survey of Egypt made by Joseph, the storing of corn in the several districts, to meet the exigencies of impending

* Isaiah, xiv.

† Job, xxvi. xxxviii.

famine, and the general use of money in that country, all bespeak a degree of social order and economy, and a familiarity with the routine of commercial dealing, which is truly astonishing at so early an age. Seven hundred years later, at the siege of Troy, the Greeks were unacquainted with the use of money.

The Phœnicians participated in the civilization of the Egyptians: they profited by supplying that luxurious and wealthy nation with foreign commodities; and, uniting to the knowledge which flourished in Thebes and Memphis a disposition to naval enterprise, we may easily conceive that they soon attained a considerable proficiency in all the arts of navigation. The numerous colonies which they planted on the shores of the Euxine, the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic, beyond the Straits of Gibraltar, attest the extent of their early voyages.

This enterprising nation may in like manner have occasionally reached India from the Red Sea. Phœnicians piloted the ships of Solomon in their three years' voyages to Tarshish. The great length of time required for these voyages betrays the timid progress of early navigation, and may, perhaps, have prevented their frequent repetition; but the regular communication with India was certainly maintained through the Arabs, who, when they saw strange nations circumnavigating their peninsula, were not slow to learn the advantages of their intermediate position.

The Phœnician colonies, Utica, Carthage, and Gades; or Cadiz, were founded between the twelfth and eighth centuries before the Christian era; but the seas of the West were probably explored for ages before settlements were formed at such a distance from the parent state.

Thus we find that the Phœnicians had, at least a thousand years before the birth of Christ, explored the western ocean, and at the same time navigated the Euxine Sea and the Arabian Gulf. Their geographical knowledge must, therefore, have been extensive; yet the illiberal jealousy which induced them to conceal their discoveries has thrown a deep shade upon their fame. The arts,

10 GEOGRAPHY OF THE ANCIENTS. BOOK I.

refinement, and commercial wealth of the Phœnicians in remote ages can be now but imperfectly estimated by the records which remain of them. The pyramids and colossal ruins of Egypt visibly demonstrate the greatness of that kingdom to remote posterity: the commercial enterprise and maritime skill of the Phœnicians have left behind no such adequate or durable memorials. Vicissitudes in the arts and in the enlightenment of mankind often occurred in the ancient world, from the difficulty and expense of multiplying books; and it is interesting to observe in the present instance that the geographical knowledge of the Phœnicians in the fabulous times of Greece may probably have embraced as large a portion of the earth as that of the Romans in the flourishing age of Augustus.

 CHAP. II.

THE GREEKS. — HOMERIC AGE.

THE FIRST NAVIGATORS PIRATES. — SLAVE TRADE IN ANTIQUITY. — HOMER'S KNOWLEDGE OF GREECE. — OF THE SCYTHIANS. — OF EGYPT AND THE ÆTHIOPIANS. — THE SHIPS OF THE HOMERIC AGE. — THE MYTHIC REGIONS OF THE WEST. — VOYAGE OF ULYSSES. — THE CYCLOPS. — ISLES OF CIRCE AND OF ÆOLUS. — ENDS OF THE OCEAN AND LAND OF DARKNESS. — THE WANDERING ISLES. — SCYLLA, CHARYBDIS, AND THE SIRENS. — SICULI AND SICANI. — TRINACRIA. — HOMER ACTUALLY IGNORANT OF THE WEST. — HESIOD. — KING LATINUS. — THE ERIDANUS. — ARGONAUTIC EXPEDITION. — ITS AUTHENTICITY. — THE EUXINE KNOWN EARLY TO THE PELASGIANS. — THE GOLDEN FLEECE. — RETURN OF JASON VARIOUSLY RELATED. — THE ORPHIC ACCOUNT. — IERNIS MENTIONED. — THE CIMMERIANS OF THE WEST. — EXPLANATION OF THE MYTHOLOGY. — ELYSIUM AND HAPPY ISLANDS OF THE WEST. — SUMMARY.

THE trade of the Phœnicians necessarily brought them soon into correspondence with the Greeks who were scattered over the islands and the shores of the Ægean.