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## INTRODUCTION.

Ancient ignorance of the Polar Regions—The Phœnicians the first navigators of the Northern Atlantic—Æstrymnades or Cassiterides—Tin—Tarshish—Ireland—America.

IN attempting to trace the rise and progress of our present knowledge of the Polar Regions, we naturally turn first to the ancient historians, but we can glean very little exact information from them, their writings containing only obscure notices of countries lying towards the arctic circle, and no account whatever of a corresponding antarctic climate, though some of the old philosophers did express a suspicion of its existence. The Phœnicians alone of the ancients, and their Carthaginian descendants, have a fair claim to the discovery by sea of the western coasts of Europe, and this they achieved in the pursuit of commerce. Tin was the staple commodity sought by their northern voyages, and from Cornwall, then, and still the chief source of that metal, they supplied the world. It is indeed generally supposed, that all the tin in use at the dawn of history came from Cornwall, and if that opinion be correct, the intercourse between the Mediterranean and Britain must have begun at a very early date. In the Book of Numbers tin is specially mentioned among the spoil taken from the Midianites 1452 years before the Christian era. “Only the gold, and the silver, the brass, the iron, the *tin* and the lead, everything that

may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean.”\*

The bright white *Kassiteros*† or *Kattiteros*, is named often in the Iliad as a valuable ornament of chariots and armour, of which we have examples in the following passages taken from Cowper’s translation:—

Impenetrable brass, *tin*, silver, gold,  
 He cast into the forge.  
*Il.*, xviii. v. 590.

There, also laden with its fruit, he form’d  
 A vineyard all of gold; purple he made  
 The clusters, and the vines supported stood  
 By poles of silver, set with even rows.  
 The trench he colour’d sable and around  
 Fenced it with *tin*.  
*Il.*, xviii. v. 701.

With five folds  
 Vulcan had fortified it: two were brass,  
 The two interior *tin*: the midmost gold.  
*Il.*, xx. v. 336.

\* Chap. xxxi. v. 22. See also Isaiah i. 25; Ezekiel xxii. 18; xxvii. 12. Mr. Rawlinson supposes that the Phœnicians did not emigrate to the Mediterranean coasts until the thirteenth century before Christ, and if he is correct in giving that date, the Midianites could not have obtained their tin from Cornwall through the Sidonians or Tyrian Phœnicians.—*Translation of Herodotus*, iv. p. 249. Pliny however says, “*India neque æs neque plumbum habet, gemisque suis ac margaritas hæc permutat.*”

† Pliny says that the *cassiteron* of the Greeks is the metal which he calls *plumbum album*. According to Sir Gardner Wilkinson, tin is termed *Kasdeer* in Arabic, and *Kastira* in Sanscrit. *Stannum* is supposed to have been an alloy of lead, tin, and other metals, combined with silver in the ore, and separated by melting. The word had perhaps a barbaric origin, for the Irish *stán* is as likely to have been the root as the derivative of the Latin epithet. The Icelandic *dín*, the Swedish *tenn*, the English and Dutch *tin*, the German *zinn*, and the French *étain* may have come from either the Irish or the Latin. The Welsh *alean* looks as if it had received an Arabic prefix. In the Truro Museum there is a pig of tin, which, from its peculiar shape, is supposed to be Phœnician, as it differs from the Roman and Norman pigs found also in Cornwall. A figure of this pig is given in Rawlinson’s *Herodotus*, book iii. chap. 116, which see for further details.

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I will present to him my corselet bright,  
 Won from Asteropæus, edg'd around  
 With glittering *tin*; a precious gift and rare.  
*Il.*, xxiii. v. 694.

Radiant with *tin* and gold the chariot ran.  
*Il.*, xxiii. v. 629.

Amber was also an article of Phœnician commerce obtained in the north, and wrought into ornaments by Tyrian workmen.

A splendid collar, gold with *amber* strung.  
*Od.*, xv. v. 556.

A necklace of wrought gold, with *amber* rich  
 Bestudded, ev'ry bead bright as a sun.  
*Od.*, xviii. v. 358.

As the principal source of amber in the present day, as well as in former times, is the south shore of the Baltic, especially the Gulf of Dantzic; it has been conjectured that the Phœnician ships had penetrated into the Baltic, but so light an article as amber was more likely to have been brought overland from the Baltic, as the furs of the Ural Mountains came further over the continent in the time of Herodotus. Amber is the product also of other coasts in the north of Europe. Pliny tells us that an island lying near the peninsula of *Cartris* (Jutland), which is terminated by the Cimbric cape, was named *Glessaria* by the Roman soldiers because it produced amber (the *Glessum* of the Germans, and *Glaer* of the Anglo-Saxons). Considerable pieces of amber are still found occasionally on the Lincolnshire coast by a few men who gain a livelihood by digging up trees from the submarine forest there, to which they get access in the spring-tides.\*

\* "The throwing up of this fossil (amber) during two thousand years on the coast between Memel and Dantzic, leads us to assume that there subsists

Without, however, claiming for the Phœnicians as certain, the honour of having first sailed down the Cattegat, there is little reason for doubting the navigation of the Northern Atlantic by that people, and their pre-eminent skill in nautical affairs, which was indeed readily conceded to them by rival nations.\* Pliny, in his list of mythical inventors, says that Hippus, a Tyrian, constructed the *first* “merchant ship” and that “cock-boats” (*cymbæ*) owed their origin to the Phœnicians, who were, moreover, the first people who directed their course on the ocean by the fixed stars. The Carthaginians, he adds, first built “a ship of four banks of oars,” and they were also the first who instituted a trade in merchandise, though from father Jupiter came the instinct of buying and selling.

When we consider that the Carthaginians had formed settlements on the western islands of the Mediterranean and on the coasts of Spain,† before the Romans possessed a fleet, and were the discoverers and first colonizers of Madeira, we are not of the number of those who believe that they never ventured out to sea but servilely hugged the shore in long coasting voyages. It is scarcely possible that a people, who, during the many centuries that intervened between their first occupation of Sidon and Tyre, and the destruction of Carthage by the Romans, had enjoyed a monopoly of traffic on the Erythræan, Mediterranean, and Atlantic oceans, should have at that place a peculiar brown coal formation.”—*Erman*, *Travels in Siberia*, translated by W. D. Cooley, Lond., i. p. 11. Minute grains of amber, or of a substance very similar to it, exist in some of the strata of a (miocene) tertiary formation on the Mackenzie.

\* Rawlinson's Herodotus, ii. 414; iv. 46.

† Gades (*Gaddir*) and Utica, according to the Phœnician annals, as quoted by Aristotle, were founded at the same date, about 270 years prior to the building of Carthage, or 1130 B. C.—*Heeren*.

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remained stationary in the art of navigation.\* It has been alleged that their ships were too small for anything but coasters, though the tonnage of a Carthaginian vessel must have greatly exceeded that of some ketches and fly-boats that braved the Greenland seas in the days of Queen Elizabeth. A pinnace which formed one of Frobisher's first fleet was only of ten tons burthen, and his other two ships were little more than twice as big. Contrast this with the armament of Hanno, composed of sixty ships, capable of carrying thirty thousand colonists of all ages to the western coast of Africa, and averaging five hundred passengers to each ship.†

There is no reason to suppose that the fleet of Himilco, which sailed at the same time to colonize Western Europe, was less efficiently organized, though it may have numbered fewer ships. Himilco's narrative has unfortunately perished, but Festus Avienus, who consulted a record of it deposited in one of the temples of Carthage, states that the Carthaginian admiral navigated the Atlantic four months, planting colonies doubtless on his way. If Strabo be correct when he assigns a Phœnician origin to two-hundred towns in the south of Spain, we cannot but believe that many of the maritime towns of Portugal were also founded by that people. Himilco at length reached the promontory and bay of Æstrymon and the

\* See Dr. Redshob, on *Tartessus*, in Notes and Queries, Jan. 1, 1859, 2d. series, vii. p. 3. Strabo says that before the time of Homer the Phœnicians had possession of the best parts of Africa and Spain, iii. p. 104.

† According to Strabo, the Getuli and Libyans destroyed three hundred cities founded by Tyre in western Africa. Professor Owen identifies the "hairy men" which Hanno's sailors slew and skinned, with the gigantic *Gorilla* or *Satyr* of the country lying under the equator on the west coast of Africa.

As to the size of the ships, Strabo tells us that the merchants of Gades employed very large vessels in their sea voyages, though the poor fishermen of the city had only small boats, which they named "horses," because their prows bore figure-heads of that animal.

islands of the Æstryrnides, which were described as being rich in *tin* and *lead*, and inhabited by a very numerous, spirited, and industrious people, devoted to commerce, and navigating the sea in boats of hide; in which one may recognise the Welsh coracle.\* Distant two days' sail from these islands lay the green-turfed holy island† of the Irish race, and near at hand, the Island of Albion. Himilco was contemporary with Aristotle, who applies the epithet of *Keltikon* to *Kassiteros*.

The Æstryrnides have been identified with the Cassiterides or "Tin islands" of the Greeks, and by some moderns with St. Michael's Mount, the Lizard, and the adjacent promontories of Cornwall; by others they are thought rather to be the Scilly Islands. Herodotus (B. C. 450) mentions the Cassiterides, as does also Aristotle (B. C. 340). Polybius (B. C. 160) makes a distinct reference to the British Isles.‡ This knowledge, imperfect as it was, could have been acquired only from the Phœnicians, or from the Phocæan Greeks, who began to frequent Spain in the time of Cyrus (B. C. 566).

Avienus says, moreover, that long before Himilco's time, trading voyages were made from Tartessus to the Æstryrnides, and that *Gaddir* was the Punic appellation of the seaport anciently called *Tartessus*, or, as its Tyrian founders named it, *Tarshish*.|| When the Phocæans first visited this port, in the sixth century before the Christian era, it had a monarch

\* There is no proof that the coracle was the only sea-boat of the ancient Britons, though the peculiarity of its construction brought it strongly into notice.

† *Inis-fail* (Hibernice), *Insula fatalis vel sacra*.

‡ Moore supposes that all the British Isles, including Albion, Jerne, Scilly, and the Isle of Man, were called Cassiterides.—*Hist. of Ireland*.

|| "Ships of Tarshish" came in time to signify vessels built for long voyages, and the ships of Solomon and Hiram (1 Kings x. 22; Chr. ix. 21), destined to bring gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks, were constructed to navigate the

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named *Aganthonius*, who is said to have lived to an extreme old age. It was still in existence, but poor and destitute when Festus Avienus saw it about A. D. 370, being, he says, little more than a heap of ruins, though even then an annual feast was held there in honour of the Tyrian Hercules.\*

The Romans knew little of the northern and western coasts of Europe until the time of Cæsar, when in the progress of their conquest of Gaul they reached the English Channel by land. The Phœnicians kept the secret of their voyages to the Cassiterides so closely, that one of their mariners is reported to have run his ship on a shoal, that a Roman vessel which followed might not perceive the course he was pursuing, gaining by his patriotism a reward from his own nation. With the same commercial jealousy the Punic seamen magnified the dangers of the Atlantic Ocean, and told marvellous stories of the stagnant and sluggish waters, and of the dense fields of sea-weed which stopped the way of their ships.

The Phœnicians were not only carriers of the metals which were the important articles of their commerce, but they also worked such mines as lay near their maritime depots.—(*Rawl. Herod.* iii. 445.) Avienus says expressly, that not only the common people of Carthage went to the Cassiterides, but also her agriculturists; and we may safely infer that the western Celtic nations learnt the art of reducing metallic ores from

Erythræan Sea, as were also Jehoshaphat's, built at Ezion-geber. But when Ezekiel says of Tyre (588 B. C.), "Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kinds of riches; with *silver, iron, tin* and *lead*, they traded in thy fairs" (xxvii. 12). The Spanish port is clearly indicated, Tarshish being the entrepot for the north-western commerce. In the Hamitic tongue, "*Tarshish*" means, according to Sir Henry Rawlinson, "younger brother"—a suitable appellation of a colony.—*Rawl. Herod.* i. p. 298.

\* Called in a Phœnician inscription at Malta, *Adonin Melkarth Baal Tzura*, "Our Lord Melkarth, Baal of Tyre."—*Rawl. Herod.* ii. p. 50.

Phœnician metallurgists. Relics of Carthaginian trade with the British Isles are supposed to exist in the peculiar and very ancient glass beads dug up in Cornwall and Ireland, similar in all respects to those still found in Western Africa.\* Cambden says that mining shafts in Cornwall, deserted ages ago, are named in the Cornish language *attal sarazin*, from the belief that they are the work of people that came from Spain or Africa; and the translator of Heeren's *Ideen* adduces as traces of the Carthaginians in Ireland, the existing traditions of a colony of Phenian miners in the county of Wicklow, remarking also on the resemblance which the ancient shafts there bear to the remains of Punic mineral works in Spain. He adds that the brazen instruments occasionally dug up in the Irish bogs, are allied in the same proportions with Carthaginian relics discovered in Italy and Sicily.† The Irish also attribute to the Phenians the introduction of letters into their island.

However shadowy the Irish traditions of the Phenians may

\* Rawlinson's Herodotus.

† Moore in his "History of Ireland" mentions the same fact, and states that Phœnician brass implements discovered in an Irish cairn in the year 1848, consisted of 85 or 90 parts of copper alloyed with 15 or 10 of tin. He likewise informs us, that the antique swords found in Ireland are exactly similar to the swords obtained on the field of Cannæ by Sir William Hamilton, and preserved in the British Museum. There were giants on the earth in those days; and the Irish for giant being "Phinn," is a coincidence worth noticing, when speaking of the sons of Phœnix. Phinn M'Coul the Celtic hero had all the attributes of a giant or of a superior caste.

———"Far to the west in th' ocean wide  
 Beyond the realm of Gaul, a land there lies,  
 Sea-girt it lies, where gyants dwelt of old."—MILTON.

Dr. Villanueva in his learned "*Ibernia Phœnicea*" supposes that *Feine* may not signify Phœnician generally, but some principal man, which would be in accordance with the Ossianic fragments. *Fen vel feineh*, he says, denotes the "corner of a building" in Phœnician, and is extended to a leader of the people.—*Ibernia Phœnicia*, Dublin, 1831.



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appear to a rigid critic, they may have a real foundation, and it does not require much exercise of the imagination to find a near resemblance between a group of handsome young Milesian girls, gracefully bearing their brown water-pitchers from a cistern in Cork, and a knot of females, of the same ages, carrying jars of exactly the same form, from an Andalusian fountain. Nothing in lineaments, form, or attitudes, militate against both being descendants of one people, probably the *Bastuli* or Phœnician half-breeds.

After the Phœcæans had founded Massilia (Marseilles), tin was carried thither across Gaul, and this route would probably be the principal one during the punic wars, when the Carthaginian fleet found full employment in the Mediterranean. Pytheas, a native of Massilia, sailed, as he himself reported, out of the Straits of Gibraltar northwards, and then eastwards, into the Baltic. Strabo, while denying the truthfulness of Pytheas, states many facts on his authority. Among others, he describes *Thule* as being the northernmost of the British Isles, situated on the arctic circle, and having neither sea nor atmosphere, but merely a concretion of the two, like lungs.

Pliny terms this icy region the Cronian Sea, and says that it begins a day's sail beyond Thule, which he speaks of as the last of the islands lying off the Germanic coast, beyond the *Glessariæ* or *Electridas*. Thule, he adds, has no night at the summer solstice and no daylight in the winter. He also mentions by name *Scandinavia*, as an island of the *Sinus Codanus* or Baltic, and calls other islands in the Sound or Cattegat, *Scandia*, *Bergos* and *Nerigon*, the latter word being usually translated Norway. The voyage to Thule is generally made, he tells us, from Nerigon.

In another passage this author, on the authority of

Timæus, names *Raunonia* as an island in the northern ocean on which amber is thrown by the waves, the ocean being that which Hecataeus calls *Amalchium*, and the Cimbri, *Morimarusa*. Its southern shore is the Scythic coast, and in it there is an island of immense size, called *Baltia* by Xenophon of Lampsacus, and *Basilia* by Pytheas. Westward, it extends to the promontory of *Rubeas*, beyond which is the Cronian Sea.\* In these passages we have evidence that the Romans, even as late as Pliny's time, had no correct knowledge of the North Sea and Baltic, but that they had obtained the names of many places from the Carthaginians or Massilians.

A mere overland journey from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Baltic, would not have enabled the Massilian or Carthaginian traders to have collected the facts regarding the northern regions which are preserved by Strabo, Pliny, and other writers, and we may infer that the Phœnicians had rounded the Cimbric promontory by sea, though no direct evidence can be adduced in support of such an opinion; they certainly had the skill and daring required for such voyages, and there is no reason whatever to doubt the existence of a flourishing maritime trade between the western coasts of Europe and the British Isles, long before the Roman rule embraced that remote part of the world.

There are not wanting facts which have led many thoughtful men to believe that Phœnician ships may have been driven across the Atlantic, and thus have preceded the Gothic race in the discovery of a western continent, and that though no trustworthy record of such an accident has been found, yet the classic authors of Greece and Rome make

\* *Plinii, Hist. Nat. iv. cc. 27 et 30.*