

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Importance of the History of Geography—Subdivisions of Geography: (1) Mathematical, (2) Physical, (3) Descriptive and Political, (4) Historical—The Mediterranean Sea the Starting-point in the Enquiry—Its Advantages—Commerce and Settlements of the Phoenicians in the Aegean Sea, in Africa and Sicily, and at Gades—Their selfish Policy detrimental to Knowledge—The Greeks; their Qualifications for the Study of Geography—Greece a suggestive Country for this Subject, in its General Features, and its Peculiar Phenomena—Disappearance of Rivers—Currents of the Euripus—Volcanic Phenomena and Earthquakes—The Study of Geography almost confined to the Greeks—Greek Explorers—Greek Scientific Geographers—Hardly any Roman Geographers—Geographical Eras and Centres—Greek Colonies—Miletus and the Ionian School—Herodotus—Early Expeditions—Alexander's Campaigns—Foundation of Alexandria—Roman Conquests—Augustan Age—Ptolemy—Stimulating Influence of Geographical Discoveries—Curious Information thus obtained—Means of testing the Reports of Early Travellers—Marvellous Narratives not necessarily Incredible.

THE History of Geography forms an integral part of the history of the development of the human race. It chronicles the gradual advances which men made in their intercourse with their fellow men, and the results of those advances in enlarged views of life and increased civilisation. It notes their progress in speculation on such subjects as the shape and magnitude of the earth, the position of the continents on its surface, the tides and other recurring phenomena, and on the changes which they either saw taking place before their eyes, or inferred as having happened in the past from the appearance of existing objects. Finally, as its most rightful function, it traces the increase of the knowledge which they possessed of various countries—of their outline and surface, their mountains and rivers, their products and commodities. And as geography is the most central in its position of all the sciences,

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standing as it does half-way between history, sociology and the other studies which relate to man on the one side, and those which deal with the composition of the earth which is his dwelling-place, such as geology, on the other; so the history of geography, especially that of its earlier stages, when these cognate subjects were still in their infancy, is fruitful in information relating to them.

It will be seen from this that geography is a comprehensive subject, and requires to be studied from several different points of view; and for this reason it may be well at starting that we should consider the subdivisions under which it may be most advantageously treated. These are Mathematical, Physical, Descriptive or Political, and

Historical Geography. Mathematical Geography deals with those questions which depend on the sciences of astronomy and geometry—the relation of the earth to the other heavenly bodies, the measurement of its circumference, the division of its surface into zones, the alternations of the seasons, and the like; and also all such points as are connected with map-making—the relative position of places and countries on the face of the globe, the altitude of mountains, the determination of parallels and meridians, and eventually the construction of a scheme of latitude and longitude, and the delineation of these on a round or plane surface.

(1) **Mathematical,** Physical Geography treats of the surface of the earth, together with its component elements and the influences that affect it. Under this head fall the distribution of land and water, the composition of the rocks and the metals which they contain, the changes in the ground together with the causes which have produced them, and varieties of soil, climate and vegetation.

(2) **Physical,** Descriptive and Political Geography sets forth in detail the characteristics of the several portions of this area, regarding it especially as the habitation of man, and subdividing it according to the political aggregation of its occupants. To this head also belongs all information respecting the works which have been produced upon its surface by the hand of man—the dwelling-places which he has constructed, the changes which he has effected by means of

I.] THE MEDITERRANEAN THE STARTING-POINT. 3

harbours, embankments and drainage, and the development of the products of the soil. Historical Geography regards the earth from the point of view of its effect on human society and the progressive development of the race. With this object it considers the modifying influence on national character which has been produced by the aspect of a country, by the facilities or impediments which it presents in respect of communication with other peoples, and by the occupations which it naturally fosters. And it also points out the effect which geographical features have produced, both in determining campaigns and battles, which have been the turning-points of the world's history, and in fixing beforehand the routes which must be followed by trade and commerce; and, on a larger scale, in affecting the power which particular countries have exercised at certain periods. It is easy to perceive from this review how many points of contact with other studies geography presents; and none of these can be ignored in a history of geography, if it is to afford an adequate survey of the subject.

The natural starting-point for such a history must be the shores of the Mediterranean, because the peoples that dwelt in the neighbourhood of that sea first cultivated the science of geography on an extended scale, and it was from that quarter that the information was originally derived which furnished the material for such a study. The reason of this is to be found fully as much in the geographical features of that portion of the globe, as in the character of the nations that inhabited it. Thus Strabo in the Introduction to his Geography¹ draws attention to the superiority of the coasts of the inland seas—such as the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean—over those of the ocean, from which they are inlets, in respect of the variety of their outline; and he adds that from that point of view the Mediterranean has the advantage over all the others. By means of this multiplicity of form, communication was promoted between distant races through the islands which served as stepping-stones from one country to another, and the numerous creeks and harbours which

(4) Historical.

The Mediterranean Sea the Starting-point in the Enquiry.

Its Advantages.

¹ 2. 5. 26.

provided a place of refuge in bad weather. The conformation of its northern shore is especially noticeable in this respect ; and, in addition to this, the relative position of the peninsulas of Greece, Italy and Spain, which project into it on this side from the continent of Europe, tended still more to facilitate the intercourse between them. Thus the same causes which promoted the civilisation of the inhabitants of this region of the globe by enlarging their minds and enabling them to communicate to one another the arts of life, laid at the same time the foundations of a progressive and comprehensive study of geography. The case was widely different with countries like India and China, which from their remote situation and strongly marked boundaries were cut off from any but the most limited contact with others ; and the same thing is almost equally true of Egypt, which land, though it communicated with the Mediterranean, was developed on lines of its own owing to its dependence on the Nile, and was traditionally exclusive in its ideas and policy. Whatever knowledge of geography was possessed by the nations which occupied these countries, was too much restricted in its horizon to be of service for general study.

The people who were the first depositaries of geographical knowledge in the Mediterranean were the Phoenicians. Long before the dawn of Greek history that wonderful race had established their trading stations at various points on the shore of that sea, and even on the confines of the ocean. The names of their two principal cities—Tyre, originally Sur, “the rock,” with reference to its site on a barren island, and Sidon, “the fishers’ town”—sufficiently indicate their early aptitude for maritime pursuits ; and the narrow strip of coast which formed their country, cut off as it was from the rest of Syria by the rocky wall of Libanus, denied them any other outlet for their boundless vigour than that offered by the sea. We can trace their advance along the three basins into which the Mediterranean is naturally divided—from the Syrian coast to the Cyrenaica, which here advances towards the southernmost parts of Greece ; from thence to the still more strongly marked limit which is formed by Sicily and the Carthaginian territory ; and at last to the Pillars of Hercules at

Commerce
and Settle-
ments of the
Phoenicians

its western end. In the first of these seas we note their progress by way of Cyprus and Rhodes to Crete, which island, from its position at the southern limit of the Aegean, and between the extremities of the continents of Greece and Asia Minor, was suited to be a starting-point for future advances.

In the Aegean itself we find numerous evidences in the Aegean Sea, of their presence. Thus the name Samos, which, whether it occurs in the island of that name or in Samothrace, was recognised by the Greeks as meaning 'a height'¹, is derived from the Semitic *shamah* 'to be high.' Lampsacus, as the city at the entrance of the Hellespont from the Propontis was called, signified in that language the town "at the ford." Atabyrium, the highest summit in Rhodes, is the same as Tabor; in fact the Greeks thus designated the well-known mountain in Palestine. Iardanos also, the stream in Crete, has the same name as the Jordan, *yarden* being the Phoenician word for 'river'; and Adramyttium in Mysia corresponds to Hadrumentum in Africa. Elsewhere we find traces of the Phoenician religion. In Thasos there was a temple of the Tyrian Heracles², *i.e.* Melcarth; and in several places where the local name Macaria is found associated with traditions of Heracles, it would seem to be a corruption of the title of the same god. The cult of Aphrodite Urania which existed in Cythera, a Phoenician station, was in reality that of Astarte, and in several places called Astyra we find the traces of her name. Again, the 'Great Gods' that were worshipped in Samothrace, though in all probability they were not originally Semitic divinities, yet seem at one time to have passed under the influence of the Phoenicians from their name Cabeiri, which is derived from *kabir* 'great,' a title applied by that people to their leading deities. In connexion with the purple fisheries, by which they obtained the Tyrian dye, we find the Phoenicians in the Laconian gulf and at Hermione in the Argolic Acte, both of which places were famed for their purple; and in the same connexion we discover their traces at Corinth, on the coins of which city the purple-mussel appears, and where Sisyphus is said to have been father of Porphyryon, that is the purple-trade, and

¹ Strabo, 8. 3. 19, *σάμους ἐκάλουν τὰ ὕψη*.

² Herod. 2. 44.

to have founded the worship of Melicertes or Melcarth. Nor were they behindhand in the pursuit of the precious metals in these parts, for Herodotus¹ tells us that they worked the gold mines in Thasos; and in other places there are evidences of their mining operations.

At an early period also we meet with the Phoenicians at the western extremity of the central basin of the Mediterranean. Here on the African coast they founded their colony of Utica, the date of which, if we may trust the authorities, was about eleven hundred years before Christ; and the same neighbourhood three centuries later saw the establishment of the more famous city of Carthage. The causes of the prosperity of that place, which was destined to be the rival of its parent state, were its central position in the Mediterranean, owing to which it commanded the spaces of sea both to the east and west of it, its nearness to Sicily and Italy, which brought it into communication with Europe, and the access which it enjoyed to the interior of Africa; these advantages rendered it an almost ideal trading station. On the opposite coast of Sicily, also, the most favourable points were occupied either by Phoenician or Carthaginian settlements. At the westernmost point stood Lilybaeum—the town ‘opposite Libya,’ as its Semitic name signifies; to the northward of this rose the conspicuous mountain on which Eryx stands, with its famous temple of Venus Erycina, in which the worship of Astarte was perpetuated; and not far off they had a station at Panormus, where they commanded one of the finest harbours in the island. Again, in the third bay of the Mediterranean, that which reaches from Sicily to the Straits, they established themselves in Sardinia and Corsica, along the Spanish coast, and in the neighbouring Balearic islands; and even Massilia was probably one of their stations before the arrival of the Greek settlers. Yet, wonderful to relate, all these advances had been anticipated by more adventurous voyages, for long before this time, and several centuries before the Greeks were even aware that the Mediterranean was an enclosed sea, these energetic traders had passed the Pillars of Hercules, and reached the ocean. There—a few years earlier,

¹ Herod. 6. 47.

as it would seem, than the foundation of Utica—they fortified themselves in an impregnable position at Gades or Gadeira—Agaddir, “the enclosure”—which became thenceforth their starting-point for expeditions to Britain, and for the establishment of trading stations on the western coast of Africa. The neighbouring region of southern Spain was known through them as Tarshish or Tartessus—a name which was derived from the tribe that inhabited it, the Turti or Turdetani. Of this we hear even in the genealogy in the tenth chapter of the book of Genesis¹, and in Solomon’s time (1000 B.C.) it is mentioned in connexion with the navy of Hiram, King of Tyre².

The geographical information about various countries which was thus obtained by the Phoenicians must have been very great, and this, together with the astronomical and other scientific knowledge which enabled them to undertake such extensive expeditions, would have been extremely valuable for the study of geography, if they had come down to us. Unfortunately the whole of it is lost beyond recovery. This is the result of the narrow and jealous commercial policy of that people, which caused them to keep secret their maritime discoveries, so as to prevent other nations from entering on the same field. In Herodotus we meet with various stories relating to the difficulties incurred in obtaining the products of distant lands, which were circulated by the Phoenicians with the object of discouraging competition and concealing the origin of those articles. The trees from which they obtained the frankincense in Arabia were reported to be guarded by winged serpents³; the lake where cassia was gathered was infested with large bats, as a defence against which those who collected it had to wrap themselves in the hides of oxen⁴; and cinnamon was acquired by artifice from the nests of birds, which were built on inaccessible rocks. The historian’s report of the last of these fables, which recalls some of the stories in the Arabian Nights, runs as follows:—“Great birds, they [the Arabians] say, carry the sticks which we Greeks, taking the word from the Phoenicians, call cinnamon to their nests, which are formed of clay and attached

Their selfish
Policy detri-
mental to
Knowledge.

¹ Gen. 10. 4.

² 1 Kings 10. 22.

³ Herod. 3. 107.

⁴ *Ibid.* 3. 110.

to precipitous mountains, which no foot of man can approach. So the Arabians, to get the cinnamon, use the following artifice. They cut up the limbs of the oxen and asses and other beasts of burden which die in their land into large pieces, and carry them into those regions, and when they have placed them near the nests withdraw to a distance. Thereupon the birds swoop down, and carry with them the pieces of meat up to their nests, which, being unable to sustain the weight, break and fall to the ground; after which the Arabians come and collect the cinnamon, which is then transported into other countries¹." Under these circumstances it is not surprising that, while the Phoenicians themselves were familiar with the western parts of the Mediterranean, all that the Greeks learnt from them at an early time was vague rumours of a great mountain called Atlas, which supported the heavens, or of lofty rocks, called the Pillars of Hercules, which marked the limit of the world in that direction. The tradition of this system of exclusiveness was maintained until a late period. Strabo tells us, when speaking of the Cassiterides², that a Phoenician shipmaster from Gades, when on his way to those islands, being followed by a Roman vessel which desired to discover the region from which tin was obtained, purposely ran his ship on a shoal in order to involve the other in the same destruction; and that, when he returned home, he was indemnified by the state for the loss of his cargo. We cannot wonder if posterity also has suffered from the effects of this selfish policy.

The loss to geography, however, which has arisen from this cause, has been amply compensated by that study having passed into the hands of the Greeks. That people, more than any other nation in antiquity, were fitted to deal with the subject, and to give the due proportion to its various branches. They too were a maritime race, and had learnt to regard the sea as the highway of nations, or, as Homer expresses it, the "watery ways³." The uncertain navigation of the Aegean, studded as it is by high peaks which attract the storms, taught the Greek mariner a lesson of caution and hardihood; and this, combined with the adventurous

The Greeks;
 their Qualifi-
 cations for the
 Study of Geo-
 graphy.

¹ Herod. 3. 111.

² Strabo, 3. 5. 11.

³ ὕγρὰ κέλευθα.

spirit which characterised the people, fitted them to undertake expeditions into distant lands. But it was the national intellect of the Greeks that especially qualified them for geographical investigation. Their comprehensiveness of mind was suited to a subject which, as we have seen, embraces a wide area of knowledge, and imparted to it a philosophical as well as a scientific character. Hence at an early period we find that the information gathered by their traders was recorded, and made the basis for enquiries into the origin and constitution of the world. Their acuteness of observation caused them to notice the peculiarities of the countries which they visited, and of the objects which they met with in them; and these they learnt to compare with one another, and to speculate on their resemblances. This was the commencement of physical geography, which formed a link between the study of the earth at large and the detailed investigation of physical phenomena. The versatility of their intellect prevented them from confining themselves to one side of the study, and led them to regard it from several points of view. Thus mathematical, and physical, and historical geography, each in its turn, obtained recognition, and at last systematic treatises were written, in which all these aspects of the subject were combined. To this we may add a certain expansiveness of temperament—the very reverse of the exclusiveness of the Phoenicians—which impelled them to communicate to others the knowledge which they themselves obtained.

The country also which was inhabited by the Greeks on both sides of the Aegean was peculiarly suggestive for geographical study, both in its general characteristics and in the peculiar phenomena which it exhibits. For a science like astronomy, requiring as it does above all things a clear atmosphere and an unimpeded range of view, the plains of Babylonia were a more fitting home. Geometry, which, we are told, originated in the necessity of measuring the ground in Egypt after the landmarks had been obliterated by the inundation of the Nile, would naturally look to that country as its birthplace. But for geography Greece had lessons to teach which nowhere else could be learnt to equal advantage on account of the extraordinary variety of its natural

Greece a
 suggestive
 Country for
 this Subject,

features. It was a land of mountains, many of which were of sufficient altitude to be snow-clad in winter; and these, while they were ranged in definite chains, at the same time displayed conspicuous summits. The levels that were interposed between them were either upland plains, like that of Mantinea, which lies more than 2000 feet above the sea, or maritime plains, such as those of Athens and Argos, which, though enclosed on three sides by lofty barriers, terminated on the fourth in an open line of coast. The rivers were for the most part torrents, which flowed with a rushing current in winter and were dry in summer; but there were not wanting streams of greater volume, like the Achelous and the Alpheius, which had a perennial supply of water. The promontories of Greece, which project conspicuously into the sea, while they inspired the sailor with dread on account of the dangerous currents in their neighbourhood, were recognised as landmarks for which to steer, and as geographical limits, which bounded the intervening spaces of sea. Everywhere, too, the islands met the eye in endless succession, with an infinite variety of form. Yet none of these features were as characteristic as the sea itself, which penetrated the land in innumerable bays, which it subdivided again into smaller creeks and harbours, thus producing a great irregularity of outline, and a seaboard of extraordinary length in proportion to the area of the country. By means of these the Greeks were familiarised with every phase of that element, and learnt to watch its changes, and to notice the influence which it exercised on human life and history.

But besides these general features, there were many peculiar phenomena in the lands which bordered on the Aegean which could not fail to interest an imaginative people. This was the case with the sudden disappearance of rivers—a feature which is not uncommon in limestone districts, but is unusually frequent in Greece—and their reappearance after a subterraneous course. The Alpheius was a well-known instance, for it sinks into the ground in the earlier part of its course in the district of Asea, between the territory of Megalopolis and that of Tegea; and this is thought to have been the origin

in its General
 Features,

and its
 Peculiar
 Phenomena.

Disappear-
 ance of Rivers.