The Phœnician Periplus of Africa

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CORRESPONDENCE.

The Phœnician Periplus of Africa.

As Mr. E. J. Webb groups me with those who appeal to the "Phœnician legend" of the circumnavigation of Africa in support of their view regarding the great antiquity of the Rhodesian monuments, I should like to say that I do not rely at all on the statement of Herodotus, which I none the less hold to be no "legend," but the truthful record of an historical event. In this I am supported by such weighty names as H. Wagner ("Phœnicische Schiffer umfahren . . . den ganzen Erdtheil, begünstigt durch die Meeres-Strömungen an der Küste von Afrika," 'Lehrbuch,' Book 6, p. 190), E. Reclus ("the first voyage of circumnavigation, mentioned by Herodotus" (vol. 10, p. 27 of my English edition)), Dr. J. S. Keltie ("there is no difficulty in crediting the story" ('Partition of Africa,' p. 8)), and many others, to whom Mr. Webb will scarcely venture to apply his caustic remark about "ignorance of elementary astronomy." I, no doubt, refer to the subject (*Geographical Journal*, vol. 27, p. 338), but that is only to refute Mr. MacIver's paradoxical statement that the ancients had no knowledge of the Austral regions. The story is also mentioned in my 'Gold of Ophir,' p. 94, but only in a casual way, and no argument is built upon it.

Mr. Webb asks, if Herodotus is to be believed about the Phœnician circumnavigation, "why does no one believe him when he goes on to speak of a Carthaginian one?" The reply is that this is just what Herodotus does not do. He nowhere mentions a Carthaginian "Periplus," not even that of Hanno, which may have got as far as the Bay of Bissagos. What he does mention, immediately after the Phœnician story, is that of the ill-starred Sataspes (Book 4, par. 43), which was sent, not by the Carthaginians, but by Xerxes, who impaled or crucified (ἀνεσκολόπισε) the unsuccessful prince on his return to court. Why Posidonius is introduced I fail to see. No doubt he tried to discredit Herodotus; but so he did Eratosthenes too, and, in his attempt to correct that great mathematician's calculation of the circumference of the Earth, made a lamentable blunder which retarded the progress of geographical studies for many generations.

A. H. KEANE.

Mr. Webb seems somewhat to miss the point of those who regard the statement that the sun was on the right hand during the supposed circumnavigation as tending to confirm its truth. Surely the natural conclusion to be drawn from it is not so much that the sun was north at noon, as that it was, during the greater part of the day, on the right of the general course sailed. This could only be the case if the navigators reached a part of the coast with a decided trend to the west, which, of course, would not be possible unless they at least approached the southern extremity of the continent. The statement would also seem to point (for all that Mr. Webb says to the contrary) to a position well within the southern hemisphere, for nowhere north of the equator at least would the sun's general position (*i.e.* for any considerable part of the day or year) to the right of an east-to-west course be so marked as to call for special comment. There is no need to suppose that the statement "startled the world." It merely proved unacceptable to Herodotus, who was hardly remarkable for acuteness of perception, and whose whole attitude in the matter was obviously influenced by preconceived ideas.

EDWARD HEAWOOD.