WILEY

Review: The Ophir Question

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Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Mar., 1904), pp. 378-379

Published by: geographicalj

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1775009>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 02:42 UTC

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native Mr. Taunton is especially interesting. A statement as to the making-up or "faking" of the great Southern Cross pearl is claimed to be the first showing the facts of the case. Mr. Taunton has a theory of his own as to the production of pearls—that they are simply the result of nature, "having erred in her original estimates," and coming "to be embarrassed by surplus material;" he takes as parallel cases excrescences and abnormal growths in trees and the bones of animals, or hard lumps occurring in rare stones. These, he submits, "are all pearls."

His story would make excellent reading for a boy's holiday task on Australia. For any general reader it was worth the telling.

O. J. R. H.

MATHEMATICAL AND PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY.

La Terre: ses aspects, sa structure, son évolution. Par Aug. Robin. 4° pp. iv., 330. Three coloured maps, 760 reproductions of views of scenery, 53 plates of characteristic fossils, 158 figures. Paris: Librairie Larousse. Price 13s.

The sub-title of this book, "Géologie pittoresque," concisely describes it, and the list of illustrations noted above shows that there is no lack of graphic treatment of the subject. Even the index has its pictures. Two-fifths of the book deals with contemporary phenomena, two-fifths with the formations of the past, and one-fifth with the Parisian region, man, minerals, and the past and future of the Earth. All parts are admirably illustrated. The views are judiciously selected and well reproduced, and many of them, *e.g.* the Alpine ones photographed by Sella and by Tairraz, could hardly be bettered. The book is the best picture-book of physical geography and geology which we have seen.

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY.

THE OPHIR QUESTION.

'Tarshish and Ophir.' By Gustav Oppert. Berlin. 1903.

In this learned but somewhat belated essay, which appeared originally in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, vol. 37, Prof. Oppert offers "a final solution" of the secular Tarshish-Ophir question. But no fresh light is brought to bear on the subject, which, in fact, is left as it stood over three decades ago, that is, before it assumed a new aspect in consequence of the re-discovery and exploration of the old gold-workings and associated monuments in Southern Rhodesia. The author is still lost in the tangle of time-worn etymologies, from which no sure inferences could ever be drawn, and seems unmindful of the fact that the problem has long since passed from the hands of the philologists to those of the archaeologists. More than full recognition is certainly given to the services of Karl Mauch, who is unduly credited with the re-discovery of the Zimbabwe ruins. Long quotations are also made from the early Portuguese writers, de Barros and dos Santos, but none at all from Bent, Hall, Neal, or any of the other recent observers, who are only once referred to by name at the very end of the paper. Fresh light is thus excluded from almost the only source whence it might have been drawn, so that this essay will scarcely be accepted as "a final solution of the old controversy."

Under these circumstances little importance can be claimed for the author's personal views, which are concerned mainly with the identification of the Tarshish

and the Ophir of the Biblical texts. The two places, so intimately associated in these texts, are here divorced, and Tharshish is again relegated with some of the old commentators to the Iberian Tartessus beyond the Pillars of Hercules. To my contention that there must have been a Tharshish in the Indian ocean also, the reply is that the Tharshish of Kings and Chronicles is not a seaport, but either means "the sea" (the origin possibly of the Greek word *θάλαττα* itself!), or else has been foisted into the texts by the authors of those Books instead of *Ophir*. Hence where *Tharshish* occurs (as in 1 Kings x. 22) as the objective of Solomon's gold expeditions we are to read *Ophir*. The original Ophir is allowed to have been where I place it on the south coast of Arabia. But then, the name was extended to some other place (say Sofala) on the east coast of Africa, while all the triennial gold expeditions where no objective is named were to India, "since India is not Ophir, and the Solomonic Ophir not India, but East Africa." Such, briefly, is the new theory, which is supported by no new evidence, and ignores the vast body of archaeological evidence drawn in recent years from the prehistoric remains in Southern Rhodesia.

A. H. KEANE.

MARCO POLO.

'The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East.' Translated and edited by Sir Henry Yule. Third Edition, revised throughout in the light of recent discoveries by Henri Cordier, of Paris. With a memoir of Yule by his daughter, Amy Frances Yule. 2 vols. London: John Murray. 1903. Pp. cii, 144, 462; xxii., 662.

It is now more than twenty-eight years since Yule published the last edition of his 'Marco Polo' (1875), and in that time a vast amount of work has been done. The regions of Asia through which the Polos travelled have been diligently investigated from many points of view, and a flood of light has been thrown on some obscure points in the journeys of the Venetian *Millione* and his relatives. It is the object of this new edition to present the results of recent study and travel affecting the Polo narrative. Almost all Yule's original notes have been preserved, even those which have rather a theological than a scientific interest; very few have been altered, even where a certain re-casting was desirable; but a great number of fresh annotations have been inserted. A memoir of Yule, and a bibliography, extending from p. xxvi. to p. lxxxii., have been added. Yule's original introduction has been slightly augmented (from 139 to 144 pages). In the text itself, the first volume of the new edition reaches 462 pages (against 444); the second volume, 605 (against 552), not counting the index. But as a much smaller type has been employed for the notes, the additions are more considerable than appears from a mere enumeration of the page-numbers.

As representative of the treatment of the whole work, we may notice that M. Cordier makes fifteen additions of importance to Yule's Introduction, six additions of the same character to the old notes on Polo's *Prologue*, and thirty-six to the old notes on the first twenty-five chapters of Book I.; in other words, there are few subjects of importance discussed in Yule's commentary which do not find here an illustrative appendix, longer or shorter. The word *Khan*, the route of Marco Polo in Persia, the exact position of the Polos' Venetian home, the Kbanate of Kipchak, the town and state of Bolghar on the Volga, the script used by the Mongols, the nature of *buckram* and *baldachin*, so often mentioned by thirteenth-century travellers, the Baku oil-fields, the pass of Derbent, the various names for the Caspian in the Polos' time, the Jacobite sect, the position of Tabriz in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century trade, the chief types of mediæval ship, the Dry Tree, the

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