

ANCIENT VOYAGERS.

Monumental record of a visit of Phœnicians to Brazil five and a half Centuries before the Christian Era.

[Rio Janeiro Letter to the New York Herald.]

There are good grounds for the belief that a remarkable historical discovery has just been achieved in Brazil, no less than an engraved stone bearing a Phœnician inscription commemorating a visit to Brazil some five centuries before the birth of Christ. Visconde de Sapereahy, a member of the Emperor's Council of State, received three months ago a letter from Parahyba, inclosing a drawing of the inscription upon a stone which the writer's slaves had come upon during their agricultural labors on his farm, and which drawing had been made by the writer's son, a young man who could draw a little. This copy was turned over to the Historical Society of Rio, and by it to Senor Ladislao Netto, Director of the Rio Museum, for an examination. On examining it, he was surprised to find that the characters were pure Phœnician.

I will quote from the letter of this gentleman :

"After immense labor I have been able to interpret this inscription with such good fortune that only two or three words have proved beyond my powers.

"The inscription is of a commemorate stone—a rough monument erected by some Phœnicians of Sidonia, apparently exiles or refugees from their native land, between the ninth and tenth years of the reign of a King named Hiram. These rash or unfortunate Canaanites—the patronymic which they have used to denominate themselves—left the port of Aziongabar (now Akaba), a port upon the Red Sea, and sailed for twelve (?) novilunes (lunar months) along the land of Egypt—that is, Africa. The numbers of the males and females composing the adventurous expedition are all set forth, these particulars being placed intermediately between the invocation—one at the beginning and the other at the end of the inscription of the Alonim Valonuth—i. e., gods and goddesses, *superos superasque*, as in the Latin translation by Gesenius of those well known Phœnician words. The inscription is in eight lines of most beautiful Phœnician characters, but without separation of the words, without the vowel points, and without quiescent letters—three great obstacles to the interpretation, for whose overcoming a mere knowledge of Biblical Hebrew is insufficient.

"A certain ararism, not slightly manifest in the emphatic termination in *aleph* and in the feminine one in *thau*, and more than this the forms of the letters *mem* and *shin*, induce me to believe that the reign of the second of the two Hiram was the epoch of the adventure. And that the voyage was, therefore, made in the years 541 and 542 B. C. ; that is twenty-six years after the siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar and four years before Cyrus reigned.

"The inscription does not declare which of the two Phœnician monarchs is referred as the Hiram of the epoch. The first Hiram of the two historical ones was the Hiram the ally of Solomon, and he reigned in 980 to 947 B. C. The second was an obscure prince, who reigned in 558 to 552 B. C., under the pressure of Babylon and Egypt. But whichever the one, this inscription is one of the oldest and evidently the most notable record yet discovered in relation to the