

EARLY NAVIGATORS.

We have taken the birth of Christ as a point of departure in the history of navigation, merely because of the prominence of that event in the annals of the world, not on account of any connexion that it has with the chronicles of the sea. So far from that, the first five centuries of the Christian era are an absolute blank in all matters which pertain to our subject. The Roman Empire rose and fell; and its rise and fall concerned the Mediterranean only. Not even Julius Cæsar, the greatest man in Roman history, has a place in maritime records; unless, when crossing the Adriatic in a fishing-boat during a storm, his memorable words of encouragement to the fisherman, "Fear nothing! you carry Cæsar and his fortunes!" are sufficient to connect him with the sea. Neither Pompey, nor Sylla, nor Augustus, nor Nero, nor Titus, nor Constantine, nor Theodosius, nor Attila, can claim part or lot in the dominion of man over the ocean. And so we glide rapidly over five centuries.

Upon the invasion of Italy by the barbarians, A.D. 476, the Veneti, a tribe dwelling upon the north-eastern shores of the Adriatic, escaped from their ravages by fleeing to the marshes and sandy inlets formed by the deposits of the rivers which there fall into the gulf. Here they were secure; for the water around them was too deep to allow of an attack from the land, and too shallow to admit the approach of ships from the sea. Their only resource was the water and the employments it afforded. At first they caught fish; then they made salt, and finally engaged in maritime traffic. Early in the seventh century their traders were known at Constantinople, in the Levant, and at Alexandria. Their city soon covered ninety islands, connected together by bridges. They established mercantile factories at Rome, and extended their authority into Istria and Dalmatia. In the eighth century they chased the pirates, and in the ninth they fought the Saracens. At this period Genoa, too, rose into notice, and the Genoese and the Venetians at once became commercial rivals, and the monopolists of the Mediterranean.

And now Peter the Hermit, barefooted and penniless, inveighing against the atrocities of the Turks towards Christians at Jerusalem, exhorted the warriors of the Cross to take up arms against the infidels. He inspired all Europe with an enthusiasm like his own, and enlisted a million followers in the cause. The passion of the age was for war, peril, and adventure; and fighting for the Sepulchre was a more agreeable method of doing penance than wearing