

As we look backward down the ages, everything grows more and more misty the farther our sight travels. It is difficult to tell where the solid ground of fact ends and the cloud-line begins. Beyond the eighth or ninth century B.C., everything we should like to know about the "old voyagers" is indistinct and uncertain.

The bold sea-traders of Phœnicia—the little strip of coast with "cedared Lebanon" at its back—were early afloat. At that point, where their national history touches the history of the Jews, we have interesting references to them by a Jewish writer. In the First Book of Kings we read that Solomon "had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram." If we may identify Tharshish with Carthage, which city was a Phœnician colony, this would mean that Solomon employed the ships and sailors of a sea-going nation to do his carrying trade; his own Jewish subjects being home-keeping landmen, in spite of their long sea-front. The hired Carthaginian ships formed a contingent of the fleet sent out every three years by Hiram, King of Tyre. Their chief resort was Ophir, which some say was in Africa, while others show good reason to believe it was the Malabar coast of India. "Once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory (elephants' teeth), apes, and peacocks." A previous