

CARTHAGE.



HISTORY had recorded the rise and fall of many powerful nations that had shone in their ephemeral brightness, and dark clouds had long dimmed their brilliant lustre ere a new star of dazzling splendour appeared in the political firmament, ere Carthage had taken a foremost place among the giant rivals that vied for the proud title of mistress of the world. The exact date of the foundation of Carthage lies hidden beneath a veil of obscurity, for it has been her doom to be fully known only when she had passed the period of her meridian glory. From out the tangled skein of various mythological accounts, we can disengage a few scattered threads that will enable us to reconstruct to a tolerable degree of certainty her early career.

Though the site of Carthage has been known for centuries, yet only in recent years has its exact location ceased to be one of the most vexed questions of classic lore. Amid the many contradictory recitals of its foundation, the most probable is that it was established about one hundred and thirty-three years after the fall of Troy, by Dido, who fled from Tyre, owing to the cruel exactions of her brother Pygmalion and landed on the coast of Africa. The natives fearing a rival power, would grant her only as much ground as could be covered with a bull's hide, but the crafty Dido, displaying that deceit which the more enlightened have too often manifested in their dealings with the less cultured, had recourse to an ingenious artifice: she cut the hide into small strips and thereby enclosed a considerable portion of territory. For this reason it was called Byrsa and upon it was made the first settlement. As the inhabitants rapidly multiplied, Carthage arose and Byrsa became the citadel of the city.

The fabled visit of Aeneas to the shores of Africa when Dido was engaged in building the town has afforded the Mantuan bard the opportunity of giving us, beneath the embellishments of poetic diction, a faithful description of the appearance of Carthage. Aeneas, worn out with

long suffering and unceasing calamities, was at length driven to the Libyan shores, into a deep recess formed by the promontory of Hermæum on the east and that of Apollo on the west, and sheltered from the stormy sea by an island at its mouth, generally supposed to be the peninsula of Carthage itself. We might follow Aeneas, guided by his goddess-mother, to the spacious, gorgeous halls of Dido, and there see her seated on her lofty throne dispensing justice to her subjects. The grandeur and splendour of Carthage is fully established and needs no further proof than that addressed by him who had been the valiant defender of far renowned Troy, and who was to be the founder of proud, imperial Rome, when he gazed in astonishment upon the vast extent, the massive walls, the lofty towers, and frowning citadels of the city

*"Miratur molem Aeneas, magalia quondam :
Miratur portas strepitumque et strata viarum "*

Nor must we wonder at the amazement of Aeneas, for there lay beneath his view a city whose magnitude rivalled that of ancient Babylon, whose triple line of walls enclosed the whole peninsula and rendered the town almost impregnable.

If we had the power of transporting ourselves back a few centuries in the annals of the world, we could see the unfortunate, heroic Dido, after having had to fly the persecutions of an unnatural brother to bear all the cares and anxiety consequent upon the founding of a colony, forced, in order to avoid the importunities of Iasbas, king of Mauritania, who demanded her in marriage, to ascend the funeral pile and there put an end to her existence, thus escaping what she held to be unholy nuptials. After her untimely death, Carthage ceased to be a monarchy and became what might well be called an oligarchical republic.

But before continuing the history of Carthage, it would be well to cast a cursory glance upon her religion and mode of government, for these to a very great extent affect the development of character, and consequently exercise a powerful influence upon the destinies of a nation. The Punic religion was