

## SCATTERING THE SEEDS.

Phœnicia consisted of a narrow strip of territory, which lay between Mount Libanus and the Mediterranean Sea. It boasted of two principal cities, Sidon towards the north and Tyre in the south. They were peopled by a shrewd, money-making class of mariners and manufacturers, whose dexterity in maritime matters, and in various arts, made them masters alike of the ocean and the markets. They were restless, intrepid, adventurous, ever ready to risk life and limb on land or sea for gain. By land they would journey eastwards, and meet, upon the confines of the Bactrian Desert, the camels that brought gold dust from the unexplored wilds of the north, or silk from distant Cathay. Like many travellers of modern times, and probably with more reason, they would have strange stories to tell when they returned to their own people, weird tales, "blest with that charm, the certainty to please." They would relate, for instance, startling tales of the griffins that guarded, without using, the gold, and the swarms of ants that pursued the robbers of their metallic treasure. Taking advantage of the periodic monsoons, the merchants would visit Arabia, Guzerat, the coast of Coromandel, and the island of Ceylon. They would sell, in Syria and Egypt, spices of various kinds, ivory, their famous purple dye, glass, wood of the almug-tree, and gaudy coloured birds and little gibbering monkeys, as pets for the multitudinous inhabitants of royal harems.

What a rich freight of "yarns" those hardy mariners carried home! Marvellous stories regarding perfume burdened breezes, happy islands, prodigious monsters, strange men, and strange gods. We can imagine one of those ancient "toilers of the sea," seated on a wharf at Sidon or Tyre, relating to wondering men and women, who never "went down to the sea in ships," tales so surprising and interesting that his listeners never once grew weary, although the shadow on the dial made great strides, and the sun sent down his beams in a blaze of light and heat. Nor was the barter in which those men engaged restricted to the bales of merchandise that weighed down their white-winged galleys. Some tales of Tyre or of Sidon, some morsel of news or home-gossip, we may be sure, was exchanged while the bargain was advancing, in the noisy mart, or the more secluded bazaars, from the period of cautious speculation to that of exchange.

The enterprising Syrians, pent up in a narrow territory, look beyond their contracted borders for a suitable stage for their commercial abilities. They thread with their galleys the reticulated waters of the Archipelago. They coast those famous Isles of Greece, "where burning Sappho loved and sang." They explore the dangerous and inhospitable Black Sea, hugging the shores closely at night; for the overcast sky renders the guiding stars invisible and they must steer their arduous way by land-marks. They circumnavigate Sicily, express some surprise at its extent, pass slowly along the coast of Italy, cross the bay of Genoa, descend by the east of Spain, and finally pass through the Straits of Hercules into unknown and illimitable seas.

The rowers in the vessels of our Sidonian wanderers will be chiefly kidnapped slaves of Hellas, or the Islands, or Italy, or Sicily. From these the merchants will pick up scraps of non-Semitic dialects, and they will hear for the first time strange and poetically exaggerated stories of whirl-pools, and sirens, and spouting sea-monsters, and Tritons that blow echoing horns. They will learn much about dragons that guard orchards of golden-rinded fruit, noisome, bat-like creatures that pounce down upon prepared feasts, rocks that clash together, and happy islands far away in the western seas, that may not be approached, but from which there breathe gales of perfume, and may be heard faintly the sounds of music and sweet singing voices. Subsequently, when these stories came to be related again, each story-teller tinged them with his own idiosyncrasy, which generally tended towards exaggeration; for it is the nature of such accounts to grow like a snow-ball while being rolled about.

At Cadiz, in Spain, those fearless mariners open up a splendid trade, and barter toys and glass ornaments for the silver and lead of inexhaustible mines. But they seldom care to make permanent settlements, always preferring to turn their weather-beaten prows towards home, when their assortment of goods was exhausted. The unsettled life they led,

and incessant wandering, with the constant contact with strangers which it caused, makes it certain that they will scatter broadcast immemorial traditions of the great Semitic races. These accounts will be taken up by local bards, to be incorporated into existing myths, and names and geography will ere long become so confused as to render thereafter disentangling very difficult or impossible.

Some adventurers will push westward or southward to the Canary Islands, or along the coast of North Africa, and scatter everywhere, as opportunity offers, not only their merchandise, but odd morsels of their superior civilization as well. Those early missionaries of intelligence will leave here and there a magic and memorable token of their visit. It may be some mystic sign, hieroglyphs of a cow's head, a camel's back, or a sea wave,—signs gifted, by the prevailing superstition, with an eternal vitality and miraculous properties. Such were the means whereby speech was arrested, thought stereotyped, the once flying words of beauty and power caught and impressed with immortality, and the first step taken towards the invention of a phonetic alphabet.

Others will, at rare intervals, sail over a stormy stretch of ocean till they reach the southern coast of Cornwall, and will carry back a freight of invaluable tin and a number of more or less outlandish accounts of the inhabitants and of the country. In return for the rich wools, the tin, and the silver which they receive, they will give corn from Egyptian storehouses, or ornaments and "flash" jewellery; for the latter is not a modern invention. Occasionally, to conciliate a great chief, mayhap, they will leave behind them bright scarlet robes, swords of fine temper, and helmets, and shields, and cuirasses, curiously inlaid and embossed with emblems unintelligible to the new wearers. These precious articles of costume will pass as heirlooms from father to son, and elaborate descriptions of them will be adroitly inserted into war ballads, and chanted to lute music by the national minstrels.

When a swallow prepares for migration at the approach of cold weather, the cautious and economic little creature packs the interstices of his feathers tight and fast with tiny, close compressed bales of insects. Pigeons, in their voyages, carry in their crops precious cargoes of undigested seeds. These feathery wanderers bless unconsciously with their visits islands far distant from any mainland, and are the founders of mighty forests, and the scatterers of generations in myriads of insect life. So was it of old with the merchants or mariners who left commonwealths that possessed a comparatively advanced native civilization to visit nations lower down on the scale of culture. Wherever they went they sowed beyond their knowledge or intention, as men so often do, and without knowing it planted germs which matured in the warm sun of progress into new states, new politics, and new civilizations.

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## MONTREAL GOSSIP.

The last number of the REVIEW contains an allusion to religious "Combines"; rather a curious one is in operation on the north shore of the Island of Montreal. Driving from the railway station to the village of Sault-au-Récollet recently, I observed a characterless looking structure, painted drab, and evidently of mushroom growth.

"What building is that?" I asked the small boy who drove the *carriole* containing Her Majesty's mails.

"*Ce n'est qu'une Suisse*," was the half indifferent and wholly contemptuous answer. Not being very clear as to what a *Suisse* might be, I demanded a further explanation. "*C'est la mitaine Anglaise, et le Professeur va la bruler!*" Now the Professor in question is a most worthy and peace-loving person, who would not harm a fly, who is even afraid to subscribe to the REVIEW for fear of hurting the feelings of the editors of less favoured papers—and, bad as the "meeting" may be—I feel confident that the idea of his allowing it to tempt him to the crime of arson arose in the brain of that mail driver.

Enquiry in the city elicited the information that the little conventicle at the Back River was put up by the combined efforts and subscriptions of the various Protestants of the place—chiefly Anglicans and Presbyterians—and that a parson of each sect in turn conducts the service therein. My informant, a zealous English lady, who is going out to spend Easter at Sault-au-Récollet in order to organize a Temperance Associa-