

CHAPTER V.

THE PHŒNICIANS.

1. The history of a people, the most distinguished in the most ancient times for industry, commerce, and navigation, may well be interesting to Englishmen, ^{Antiquity and character.} who have been called in reproach "a nation of shopkeepers," but may fairly and proudly claim also to be foremost as mariners and as merchants in all this modern world. The Phœnicians were of pure Semitic race, closely connected with the Hebrews in blood and language, and became a separate nation so early that they are found to have settled on the south-eastern coasts of the Mediterranean before the arrival of the Israelites in Canaan, in the fifteenth century B.C. The distinctive character of the Phœnicians among the nations of the most ancient world is, that they were colonizers, not conquerors; peaceful merchants, not fighting meddlers; intrepid and enterprising seamen, not bold and ambitious soldiers; industrious and ingenious workmen and creators, not ruthless and wanton destroyers of the labours of their fellow-men.

2. They hold a high place in the history of ancient civilization, for their diffusion of commodities and of culture ^{Their civilization.} partly produced at home, in part received from abroad. This important and interesting people present us with a new principle of development in civilization, that of a nation relying solely on the activity of industry, combined with the careful bravery which dares the deep, and devises means of safety thereon. We have man's courage, energy, and intelligence brought into play mainly for the benefit, not the bane, of mankind. The foremost things in Phœnicia are human will and work, not Nature's bounty, as in the fertile valleys of the Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates. In Babylonia and Egypt, human subsistence depended largely upon Nature and the sun; in maritime Phœnicia, on the sailor's skill and courage. Valour gives way to intelligence, and warlike ferocity to ingenuity, in this seafaring and manufacturing life, and thus the nations were freed from a bondage to Nature and from fear of her powers upon the ever-flowing sea.

3. *Phœnicia* was a narrow strip of country on the south-eastern coast of the great inland sea of antiquity, lying chiefly