

at all times, and sombre vapours there obscure the light of day.¹ Himilco was not able to continue his route through this gloom, across this muddy ocean covered with sea-weed and inhabited by marine monsters. It was through such sombre colours that the ancients viewed the external sea to the west and beyond the coasts of Germany and Britain, to which they gave the names of *Mare cronium, pigrum, concretum, mortuum*. In Theophrastus² and in a compilation written about the middle of the third century before Christ,³ there are other references to Carthaginian discoveries, which seem to indicate that they were acquainted with the weed of the Sargasso Sea. The mention of sea-monsters plunging among the sea-weeds in which the vessels were becalmed shows that the sea-weeds could not have been attached to the shore or to shallows, and is in favour of the view that the Carthaginians had reached the Sargasso Sea.

CHARACTER OF
THE PHœNICIANS.

To judge from the few details that have been transmitted to us by classical writers, the knowledge of the ocean possessed by Phœnicians and Carthaginians was of an essentially practical kind. In this phase of maritime exploration, the cruises and mercantile expeditions accomplished little more than an extension of knowledge with regard to the extent and limits of the different seas, the most elementary part of the science. What we know of the Carthaginians has been transmitted through the Romans, while our information regarding the Phœnicians of the eastern basin of the Mediterranean is derived from the Greeks. The Greeks profited by the discoveries of the Phœnicians and eventually drove them from the sea, of which they had so long been the masters. The less bellicose Phœnicians, when they encountered their rivals, sought new routes for their maritime commerce, which for centuries they had carefully concealed, thus preserving to themselves the monopoly of the rare products for which they went in search to great distances across the sea, such as amber, tin, silver, gold dust, pearls, and aromatics. The precautions taken by these peoples to hide their oceanic routes tended not a little to obscure the notions concerning the sea among the ancients. The Phœnicians and Carthaginians excited the imaginations of their rivals, when they attempted to follow them, by exaggerating the dangerous adventures of their distant voyages. Thus originated harpies, griffins of the Pontus Euxinus, Scylla and Charybdis, the gelatinous sea of the north, and other fables. Had the historical records of the Phœnicians been preserved, we should certainly have found in them more than the merest outlines of the knowledge of the sea as a result of their voyages. These sagacious and experienced sailors must have accumulated many important facts relating to the morphology of the ocean. A people that initiated such great enterprises and accomplished such extensive explorations, cannot have been composed solely of clever navigators, eager merchants, and bold explorers. There must have been in their midst men of learning who speculated concerning the origin of the phenomena of the ocean. We know little or nothing of

¹ R. F. Avienus, *Ora maritima*, vv. 115-130, 406-415.

² *Hist. Plant.*, iv. 6, 7.

³ *Mirab. Auscult.*, p. 136.