

Daniel Wilson



*The Lost Atlantis
and Other
Ethnographic
Studies*

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PREFACE

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"THE Preface is the most troublesome part of a book," I have often heard my dear Father say; and now it falls to my unaccustomed pen to write a preface for him.

I cannot undertake to define the aim of this book; I can only tell how the last work on it was done. In my Father's note-book I find it described as "A few carefully studied monographs, linked together by a slender thread of ethnographic relationship."

Returning in June last from a brief visit to Montreal, with the first signs of illness beginning to show, he found a bundle of proofs waiting for him, and with the characteristic promptness which never let any duty wait, he set to work at once to correct them. "It is my last book," he said, conscious that his busy brain had nearly fulfilled all its tasks; and so through days of rapidly increasing weakness and pain he lay on the sofa correcting proofs till the pen dropped from the hand no longer able to hold it. His mind turned to the book in his *wandering* thoughts from illness, and on one of these occasions he murmured: "Sybil will write the Preface"; and so I try to fulfil his wish. "Ask Mr. Douglas to correct the proofs himself, and to be sure to make an index," was one of his last requests, thus providing for the finishing of the work which he could not himself finish. He has passed now from this world whose prehistoric story he so lovingly tried to decipher, and where he was ever finding traces of the hand of God, into that other world, "where toil shall cease and rest begin"; but where I doubt not he still goes on

learning more and more, no longer seeing through a glass darkly but in perfect light.

The silent lips seem to speak once more in this volume—his last words to the public; and I commit it very tenderly to those who are interested in his favourite study of Ethnology.

SYBIL WILSON.

BENCOSIE, TORONTO,

August 1892.

THE LOST ATLANTIS

I

EARLY IDEAS

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THE legend of Atlantis, an island-continent lying in the Atlantic Ocean over against the Pillars of Hercules, which, after being long the seat of a powerful empire, was engulfed in the sea, has been made the basis of many extravagant speculations; and anew awakens keenest interest with the revolving centuries. The 12th of October 1892 has been proclaimed a World's holiday, to celebrate its accomplished cycle of four centuries since Columbus set foot on the shores of the West. The voyage has been characterised as the most memorable in the annals of our race; and the century thus completed is richer than all before it in the transformations that the birth of time has disclosed since the wedding of the New World to the Old. The story of the Lost Atlantis is recorded in the *Timæus* and, with many fanciful amplifications, in the *Critias* of Plato. According to the dialogues, as reproduced there, Critias repeats to Socrates a story told him by his grandfather, then an old man of ninety, when he himself was not more than ten years of age. According to this narrative, Solon visited the city of Sais, at the head of the Egyptian delta, and there learned from the priests of the ancient empire of Atlantis, and of its overthrow by a convulsion of nature. "No one," says Professor Jowett, in his critical edition of *The Dialogues*

of *Plato*, “knew better than Plato how to invent ‘a noble lie’”; and he, unhesitatingly, pronounces the whole narrative a fabrication. “The world, like a child, has readily, and for the most part, unhesitatingly accepted the tale of the Island of Atlantis.” To the critical editor, this reception furnishes only an illustration of popular credulity, showing how the chance word of a poet or philosopher may give rise to endless historical or religious speculation. In the *Critias*, the legendary tale is unquestionably expanded into details of no possible historical significance or genuine antiquity. But it is not without reason, that men like Humboldt have recognised in the original legend the possible vestige of a widely-spread tradition of earliest times. In this respect, at any rate, I purpose here to review it.

It is to be noted that even in the time of Socrates, and indeed of the elder Critias, this Atlantis was referred to as the vague and inconsistent tradition of a remote past; though not more inconsistent than much else which the cultured Greeks were accustomed to receive. Mr. Hyde Clarke, in an “Examination of the Legend,” printed in the *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, arrives at the conclusion that Atlantis was the name of the king rather than of the dominion. But king and kingdom have ever been liable to be referred to under a common designation. According to the account in the *Timæus*, Atlantis was a continent lying over against the Pillars of Hercules, greater in extent than Libya and Asia combined; the highway to other islands and to a great ocean, of which the Mediterranean Sea was a mere harbour. But in the vagueness of all geographical knowledge in the days of

Socrates and of Plato, this Atlantic domain is confused with some Iberian or western African power, which is stated to have been arrayed against Egypt, Hellas, and all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. The knowledge even of the western Mediterranean was then very imperfect; and, to the ancient Greek, the West was a region of vague mystery which sufficed for the localisation of all his fondest imaginings. There, on the far horizon, Homer pictured the Elysian plain, where, under a serene sky, the favourites of Zeus enjoyed eternal felicity; Hesiod assigned the abode of departed heroes to the Happy Isles beyond the western waters that engirdled Europe; and Seneca foretold that that mysterious ocean would yet disclose an unknown world which it then kept concealed. To the ancients, Elysium ever lay beyond the setting sun; and the Hesperia of the Greeks, as their geographical knowledge increased, continued to recede before them into the unexplored west.

In the youth of all nations, the poet and historian are one; and, according to the tale of the elder Critias, the legend of Atlantis was derived from a poetic chronicle of Solon, whom he pronounced to have been one of the best of poets, as well as the wisest of men. The elements of oral tradition are aptly set forth in the dialogue which Plato puts into the mouth of Timæus of Locris, a Pythagorean philosopher. Solon is affirmed to have told the tale to his personal friend, Dropidas, the great-grandfather of Critias, who repeated it to his son; and he, eighty years thereafter, in extreme old age, told it to his grandson, a boy of ten, whose narrative, reproduced in mature years, we are supposed to read in the

dialogue of the *Timæus*. Even those are but the later links in the traditionary catena. Solon himself visited Sais, a city of the Egyptian delta, under the protection of the goddess, Neith or Athene. There, when in converse with the Egyptian priests, he learned, for the first time, rightly to appreciate how ignorant of antiquity he and his countrymen were. "O Solon, Solon," said an aged priest to him, "you Hellenes are ever young, and there is no old man who is a Hellene; there is no opinion or tradition of knowledge among you which is white with age." Solon had told them the mythical tales of Phoroneus and Niobe, and of Deucalion and Pyrrha, and had attempted to reckon the interval by generations since the great deluge. But the priest of Sais replied to this that such Hellenic annals were children's stories. Their memory went back but a little way, and recalled only the latest of the great convulsions of nature, by which revolutions in past ages had been wrought: "The memory of them is lost, because there was no written voice among you." And so the venerable priest undertook to tell him of the social life and condition of the primitive Athenians 9000 years before. It is among the events of this older era that the overthrow of Atlantis is told: a story already "white with age" in the time of Socrates, 3400 years ago. The warriors of Athens, in that elder time, were a distinct caste; and when the vast power of Atlantis was marshalled against the Mediterranean nations, Athens bravely repelled the invader, and gave liberty to the nations whose safety had been imperilled; but in the convulsion that followed, in which the island-continent was engulfed in the ocean, the warrior race of Athens also perished.

The story, as it thus reaches us, is one of the vaguest of popular legends, and has been transmitted to modern times in the most obscure of all the writings of Plato. Nevertheless, there is nothing improbable in the idea that it rests on some historic basis, in which the tradition of the fall of an Iberian, or other aggressive power in the western Mediterranean, is mingled with other and equally vague traditions of intercourse with a vast continent lying beyond the Pillars of Hercules. Mr. Hyde Clarke, in his *Khita and Khita-Peruvian Epoch*, draws attention to the ancient system of geography, alluded to by various early writers, and notably mentioned by Crates of Pergamos, B.C. 160, which treated of the Four Worlds. This he connects with the statement by Mr. George Smith, derived from the cuneiform interpretations, that Agu, an ancient king of Babylonia, called himself "King of the Four Races." He also assigns to it a relation with others, including its Inca equivalent of *Tavintinsuzu*, the Empire of the Four Quarters of the World. But the extravagance of regal titles has been the same in widely diverse ages; so that much caution is necessary before they can be made a safe basis for comprehensive generalisations. Four kings made war against five in the vale of Siddim; and when Lot was despoiled and taken captive by Chederlaomer, King of Elam, Tidal, King of Nations, and other regal allies, Abraham, with no further aid than that of his trained servants, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen in all, smote their combined hosts, and recovered the captives and the spoil. Here, at least, it is obvious that "the King of Nations" was somewhat on a par with one of the six vassal kings who rowed King Edgar on the River Dee.

Certainly, within any early period of authentic history, the conceptions of the known world were reduced within narrow bounds; and it would be a very comprehensive deduction from such slight premises as the legend supplies, to refer it to an age of accurate geographical knowledge in which the western hemisphere was known as one of four worlds, or continents. When the Scottish poet, Dunbar, wrote of America, twenty years after the voyage of Columbus, he only knew of it as "the new-found isle."

The opinion, universally favoured in the infancy of physical science, of the recurrence of convulsions of nature, whereby nations were revolutionised, and vast empires destroyed by fire, or engulfed in the ocean, revived with the theories of cataclysmic phenomena in the earlier speculations of modern geology; and has even now its advocates among writers who have given little heed to the concurrent opinion of later scientific authorities. Among the most zealous advocates of the idea of a submerged Atlantic continent, the seat of a civilisation older than that of Europe, or of the old East, was the late Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg. As an indefatigable and enthusiastic investigator, he occupies a place in the history of American archæology somewhat akin to that of his fellow-countryman, M. Boucher de Perthes, in relation to the palæontological disclosures of Europe. He had the undoubted merit of first drawing the attention of the learned world to the native transcripts of Maya records, the full value of which is only now being adequately recognised. His *Histoire des Nations Civilisées* aims at demonstrating from their religious myths and historical traditions the existence of a self-originated

civilisation. In his subsequent *Quatre Lettres sur le Mexique*, the Abbé adopted, in the most literal form, the venerable legend of Atlantis, giving free rein to his imagination in some very fanciful speculations. He calls into being, "from the vasty deep," a submerged continent, or, rather, extension of the present America, stretching eastward, and including, as he deems probable, the Canary Islands, and other insular survivals of the imaginary Atlantis. Such speculations of unregulated zeal are unworthy of serious consideration. But it is not to be wondered at that the vague legend, so temptingly set forth in the *Timæus*, should have kindled the imaginations of a class of theorists, who, like the enthusiastic Abbé, are restrained by no doubts suggested by scientific indications. So far from geology lending the slightest confirmation to the idea of an engulfed Atlantis, Professor Wyville Thomson has shown, in his *Depths of the Sea*, that while oscillations of the land have considerably modified the boundaries of the Atlantic Ocean, the geological age of its basin dates as far back, at least, as the later Secondary period. The study of its animal life, as revealed in dredging, strongly confirms this, disclosing an unbroken continuity of life on the Atlantic sea-bed from the Cretaceous period to the present time; and, as Sir Charles Lyell has pointed out, in his *Principles of Geology*, the entire evidence is adverse to the idea that the Canaries, the Madeiras, and the Azores, are surviving fragments of a vast submerged island, or continuous area of the adjacent continent. There are, indeed, undoubted indications of volcanic action; but they furnish evidence of local upheaval, not of the submergence of extensive continental areas.

But it is an easy, as well as a pleasant pastime, to evolve either a camel or a continent out of the depths of one's own inner consciousness. To such fanciful speculators, the lost Atlantis will ever offer a tempting basis on which to found their unsubstantial creations. Mr. H. H. Bancroft, when alluding to the subject in his *Native Races of the Pacific States*, refers to forty-two different works for notices and speculations concerning Atlantis. The latest advocacy of the idea of an actual island-continent of the mid-Atlantic, literally engulfed in the ocean, within a period authentically embraced by historical tradition, is to be found in its most popular form in Mr. Ignatius Donnelly's *Atlantis, the Antediluvian World*. By him, as by Abbé Brasseur, the concurrent opinions of the highest authorities in science, that the main features of the Atlantic basin have undergone no change within any recent geological period, are wholly ignored. To those, therefore, who attach any value to scientific evidence, such speculations present no serious claims on their study. There is, indeed, an idea favoured by certain students of science, who carry the spirit of nationality into regions ordinarily regarded as lying outside of any sectional pride, that, geologically speaking, America is the older continent. It may at least be accepted as beyond dispute, that that continent and the great Atlantic basin intervening between it and Europe are alike of a geological antiquity which places the age of either entirely apart from all speculations affecting human history. But such fancies are wholly superfluous. The idea of intercourse between the Old and the New World prior to the fifteenth century, passed from the region of speculation to the

domain of historical fact, when the publication of the *Antiquitates Americanæ* and the *Grönland's Historiske Mindesmærker*, by the antiquaries of Copenhagen, adduced contemporary authorities, and indisputably genuine runic inscriptions, in proof of the visits of the Northmen to Greenland and the mainland of North America, before the close of the tenth century.

The idea of pre-Columbian intercourse between Europe and America, is thus no novelty. What we have anew to consider is: whether, in its wider aspect, it is more consistent with probability than the revived notion of a continent engulfed in the Atlantic Ocean? The earliest students of American antiquities turned to Phœnicia, Egypt, or other old-world centres of early civilisation, for the source of Mexican, Peruvian, and Central American art or letters; and, indeed, so long as the unity of the human race remained unquestioned, some theory of a common source for the races of the Old and the New World was inevitable. The idea, therefore, that the new world which Columbus revealed, was none other than the long-lost Atlantis, is one that has probably suggested itself independently to many minds. References to America have, in like manner, been sought for in obscure allusions of Herodotus, Seneca, Pliny, and other classical writers, to islands or continents in the ocean which extended beyond the western verge of the world as known to them. That such allusions should be vague, was inevitable. If they had any foundation in a knowledge by elder generations of this western hemisphere, the tradition had come down to them by the oral transmissions of centuries; while their knowledge of their

own eastern hemisphere was limited and very imperfect. "The Cassiterides, from which tin is brought"—assumed to be the British Isles,—were known to Herodotus only as uncertainly located islands of the Atlantic of which he had no direct information. When Assuryuchurabal, the founder of the palace at Nimrud, conquered the people who lived on the banks of the Orontes from the confines of Hamath to the sea, the spoils obtained from them included one hundred talents of *anna*, or tin; and the same prized metal is repeatedly named in cuneiform inscriptions. The people trading in tin, supposed to be identical with the Shirutana, were the merchants of the world before Tyre assumed her place as chief among the merchant princes of the sea. Yet already, in the time of Joshua, she was known as "the strong city, Tyre." "Great Zidon" also is so named, along with her, when Joshua defines the bounds of the tribe of Asher, extending to the sea coast; and is celebrated by Homer for its works of art. The Seleucia, or Cilicia, of the Greeks was an attempted restoration of the ancient seaport of the Shirutana, which may have been an emporium of Khita merchandise; as it was, undoubtedly, an important place of shipment for the Phœnicians in their overland trade from the valley of the Euphrates. One favoured etymology of Britain, as the name of the islands whence tin was brought, is *barat-anna*, assumed to have been applied to them by that ancient race of merchant princes: the Cassiterides being the later Aryan equivalent, Gr. κασσίτερος, Sansk. *kastira*.

In primitive centuries, when ancient maritime races thus held supremacy in the Mediterranean Sea, voyages were

undoubtedly made far into the Atlantic Ocean. The Phœnicians, who of all the nations settled on its shores lay among the remotest from the outlying ocean, habitually traded with settlements on the Atlantic. They colonised the western shores of the Mediterranean at a remote period; occupied numerous favourable trading-posts on the bays and headlands of the Euxine, as well as of Sicily and others of the larger islands; and passing beyond the straits, effected settlements along the coasts of Europe and Africa. According to Strabo (i. 48), they had factories beyond the Pillars of Hercules in the period immediately succeeding the Trojan war: an era which yearly becomes for us less mythical, and to which may be assigned the great development of the commercial prosperity of Tyre. The Phœnicians were then expanding their trading enterprise, and extending explorations so as to command the remotest available sources of wealth. The trade of Tarshish was for Phœnicia what that of the East has been to England in modern centuries. The Tartessus, on which the Arabs of Spain subsequently conferred the name of the Guadalquivir, afforded ready access to a rich mining district; and also formed the centre of valuable fisheries of tunny and muræna. By means of its navigable waters, along with those of the Guadina, Phœnician traders were able to penetrate far inland; and the colonies established at their mouths furnished fresh starting points for adventurous exploration along the Atlantic seaboard. They derived much at least of the tin, which was an important object of traffic, from the mines of north-west Spain, and from Cornwall; though, doubtless, both the tin of the Cassiterides and amber from

the Baltic were also transported by overland routes to the Adriatic and the mouth of the Rhone. It was a Phœnician expedition which, in the reign of Pharaoh Necho, B.C. 611-605, after the decline of that great maritime power, accomplished the feat of circumnavigating Africa by way of the Red Sea. Hanno, a Carthaginian, not only guided the Punic fleet round the parts of Libya which border on the Atlantic, but has been credited with reaching the Indian Ocean by the same route as that which Vasco de Gama successfully followed in 1497. The object of Hanno's expedition, as stated in the *Periplus*, was to found Liby-Phœnician cities beyond the Pillars of Hercules. How far south his voyage actually extended along the African coast is matter of conjecture, or of disputed interpretation; for the original work is lost. It is sufficient for our purpose to know that he did pursue the same route which led in a later century to the discovery of Brazil. Aristotle applies the name of "Antilla" to a Carthaginian discovery; and Diodorus Siculus assigns to the Carthaginians the knowledge of an island in the ocean, the secret of which they reserved to themselves, as a refuge to which they could withdraw, should fate ever compel them to desert their African homes. It is far from improbable that we may identify this obscure island with one of the Azores, which lie 800 miles from the coast of Portugal. Neither Greek nor Roman writers make other reference to them; but the discovery of numerous Carthaginian coins at Corvo, the extreme north-westerly island of the group, leaves little room to doubt that they were visited by Punic voyagers. There is therefore nothing extravagant in the assumption that we have here the

“Antilla” mentioned by Aristotle. While the Carthaginian oligarchy ruled, naval adventure was still encouraged; but the maritime era of the Mediterranean belongs to more ancient centuries. The Greeks were inferior in enterprise to the Phœnicians; while the Romans were essentially unmaritime; and the revival of the old adventurous spirit with the rise of the Venetian and Genoese republics was due to the infusion of fresh blood from the great northern home of the sea-kings of the Baltic.

The history of the ancient world is, for us, to a large extent, the history of civilisation among the nations around the Mediterranean Sea. Its name perpetuates the recognition of it from remote times as the great inland sea which kept apart and yet united, in intercourse and exchange of experience and culture, the diverse branches of the human family settled on its shores. Of the history of those nations, we only know some later chapters. Disclosures of recent years have startled us with recovered glimpses of the Khita, or Hittites, as a great power centred between the Euphrates and the Orontes, but extending into Asia Minor, and about B.C. 1200 reaching westward to the Ægean Sea. All but their name seemed to have perished; and they were known only as one among diverse Canaanitish tribes, believed to have been displaced by the Hebrew inheritors of Palestine. Yet now, as Professor Curtius has pointed out, we begin to recognise that “one of the paths by which the art and civilisation of Babylonia and Assyria made their way to Greece, was along the great high-road which runs across Asia Minor”; and which the projected railway route through the valley of the Euphrates seeks to

revive. For, as compared with Egypt, and the earliest nations of Eastern Asia, the Greeks were, indeed, children. It was to the Phœnicians that the ancients assigned the origin of navigation. Their skill as seamen was the subject of admiration even by the later Greeks, who owned themselves to be their pupils in seamanship, and called the pole-star, the Phœnician star. Their naval commerce is set forth in glowing rhetoric by the prophet Ezekiel. "O Tyrus, thou that art situate at the entry of the sea, a merchant of the people of many isles. Thy borders are in the midst of the seas. The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners. Thy wise men, O Tyrus, were thy pilots. All the ships of the sea, with their mariners, were in thee to occupy thy merchandise." But this was spoken at the close of Phœnician history, in the last days of Tyre's supremacy.

Looking back then into the dim dawn of actual history, with whatever fresh light recent discoveries have thrown upon it: this, at least, seems to claim recognition from us, that in that remote era the eastern Mediterranean was a centre of maritime enterprise, such as had no equal among the nations of antiquity. Even in the decadence of Phœnicia, her maritime skill remained unmatched. Egypt and Palestine, under their greatest rulers, recognised her as mistress of the sea; and, as has been already noted, the circumnavigation of Africa—which, when it was repeated in the fifteenth century, was considered an achievement fully equalling that of Columbus,—had long before been accomplished by Phœnician mariners. Carthage inherited the enterprise of the mother country, but never equalled her achievements. With the fall of Carthage, the Mediterranean

became a mere Roman lake, over which the galleys of Rome sailed reluctantly with her armed hosts; or coasting along shore, they “committed themselves to the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the winds”; or again, “strake sail, and so were driven,” after the blundering fashion described in the voyage of St. Paul. To such a people, the memories of Punic exploration or Phœnician enterprise, or the vague legends of an Atlantis beyond the engirdling ocean, were equally unavailing. The narrow sea between Gaul and Britain was barrier enough to daunt the boldest of them from willingly encountering the dangers of an expedition to what seemed to them literally another world.

Seeing then that the first steps in navigation were taken in an age lying beyond all memory, and that the oldest traditions assign its origin to the remarkable people who figure alike in early sacred and profane history—in Joshua and Ezekiel, in Dios and Menander of Ephesus, in the Homeric poems and in later Greek writings,—as unequalled in their enterprise on the sea: what impediments existed in B.C. 1400 or any earlier century that did not still exist in A.D. 1400, to render intercourse between the eastern and the western hemisphere impossible? America was no further off from Tarshish in the golden age of Tyre than in that of Henry the Navigator. With the aid of literary memorials of the race of sea-rovers who carved out for themselves the Duchy of Normandy from the domain of Charlemagne’s heir, and spoiled the Angles and Saxons in their island home, we glean sufficient evidence to place the fact beyond all doubt that, after discovering and colonising Iceland and

Greenland, they made their way southward to Labrador, and so, some way along the American coast. How far south their explorations actually extended, after being long assigned to the locality of Rhode Island, has anew excited interest, and is still a matter of controversy. The question is reviewed on a subsequent page; but its final settlement does not, in any degree, affect the present question. Certain it is that, about A.D. 1000, when St. Olaf was introducing Christianity by a sufficiently high-handed process into the Norse fatherland, Leif, the son of Eric, the founder of the first Greenland colony, sailed from Ericsfiord, or other Greenland port, in quest of southern lands already reported to have been seen, and did land on more than one point of the North American coast. We know what the ships of those Norse rovers were: mere galleys, not larger than a good fishing smack, and far inferior to it in deck and rigging. For compass they had only the same old "Phœnician star," which, from the birth of navigation, had guided the mariners of the ancient world over the pathless deep. The track pursued by the Northmen, from Norway to Iceland, and so to Greenland and the Labrador coast, was, doubtless, then as now, beset by fogs, so that "neither sun nor stars in many days appeared"; and they stood much more in need of compass than the sailors of the "Santa Maria," the "Pinta," and the "Nina," the little fleet with which Columbus sailed from the Andalusian port of Palos, to his first discovered land of "Guanahani," variously identified among the islands of the American Archipelago. Yet, notwithstanding all the advantages of a southern latitude, with its clearer skies, we have to remember that the "Santa Maria," the only decked vessel of

the expedition, was stranded; and the “Pinta” and “Nina,” on which Columbus and his party had to depend for their homeward voyage, were mere coasting craft, the one with a crew of thirty, and the other with twenty-four men, with only *latine* sails. As to the compass, we perceive how little that availed, on recalling the fact that the Portuguese admiral, Pedro Alvares de Cabral, only eight years later, when following on the route of Vasco de Gama, was carried by the equatorial current so far out of his intended course that he found himself in sight of a strange land, in 10° S. lat., and so accidentally discovered Brazil and the new world of the west, not by means of the mariner’s compass, but in spite of its guidance. It is thus obvious that the discovery of America would have followed as a result of the voyage of Vasco de Gama round the Cape, wholly independent of that of Columbus. What befell the Portuguese admiral of King Manoel, in A.D. 1500, was an experience that might just as readily have fallen to the lot of the Phœnician admiral of Pharaoh Necho in B.C. 600, to the Punic Hanno, or other early navigators; and may have repeatedly occurred to Mediterranean adventurers on the Atlantic in older centuries. On the news of de Cabral’s discovery reaching Portugal, the King despatched the Florentine, Amerigo Vespucci, who explored the coast of South America, prepared a map of the new-found world, and thereby wrested from Columbus the honour of giving his name to the continent which he discovered.

When we turn from the myths and traditions of the Old World to those of the New, we find there traces that seem not unfairly interpretable into the American counterpart of

the legend of Atlantis. The chief seat of the highest native American civilisation, is neither Mexico nor Peru, but Central America. The nations of the Maya stock, who inhabit Yucatan, Guatemala, and the neighbouring region, were peculiarly favourably situated; and they appear to have achieved the greatest progress among the communities of Central America. They may not unfitly compare with the ancient dwellers in the valley of the Euphrates, from the grave mounds of whose buried cities we are now recovering the history of ages that had passed into oblivion before the Father of History assumed the pen. Tested indeed by intervening centuries their monuments are not so venerable; but, for America's chroniclings, they are more prehistoric than the disclosures of Assyrian mounds. The cities of Central America were large and populous, and adorned with edifices, even now magnificent in their ruins. Still more, the Mayas were a lettered people, who, like the Egyptians, recorded in elaborate sculptured hieroglyphics the formulæ of history and creed. Like them, too, they wrote and ciphered; and appear, indeed, to have employed a comprehensive system of computing time and recording dates, which, it cannot be doubted, will be sufficiently mastered to admit of the decipherment of their ancient records. The Mayas appear, soon after the Spanish Conquest, to have adopted the Roman alphabet, and employed it in recording their own historical traditions and religious myths, as well as in rendering into such written characters some of the ancient national documents. Those versions of native myth and history survive, and attention is now being directed to them. The most recent contribution

from this source is *The Annals of the Cakchiquels*, by Dr. D. G. Brinton, a carefully edited and annotated translation of a native legal document or *titulo*, in which, soon after the Conquest, the heir of an ancient Maya family set forth the evidence of his claim to the inheritance. Along with this may be noted another work of the same class: *Titre Généalogique des Seigneurs de Totonicapan. Traduit de l'Espagnol par M. de Charencey*. These two works independently illustrate the same great national event. In one, a prince of the Cakchiquel nation, tells of the overthrow of the Quiché power by his people; and in the other a Quiché seignior, one of the "Lords of Totonicapan," describes it from his own point of view. Both were of the same Maya stock, in what is now the State of Guatemala. Each nation had a capital adorned with temples and palaces, the splendour of which excited the wonder of the Spaniards; and both preserved traditions of the migration of their ancestors from Tula, a mythical land from which they came across the water.

Such traditions of migration meet us on many sides. Captain Cook found among the mythological traditions of Tahiti, a vague legend of a ship that came out of the ocean, and seemed to be the dim record of ancestral intercourse with the outer world. So also, the Aztecs had the tradition of the golden age of Anahuac; and of Quetzalcoatl, their instructor in agriculture, metallurgy and the arts of government. He was of fair complexion, with long dark hair, and flowing beard: all, characteristics foreign to their race. When his mission was completed, he set sail for the mysterious shores of Tlapallan; and on the appearance of

the ships of Cortes, the Spaniards were believed to have returned with the divine instructor of their forefathers, from the source of the rising sun.

What tradition hints at, physiology confirms. The races of America differ less in physical character from those of Asia, than do the races either of Africa or Europe. The American Indian is a Mongol; and though marked diversities are traceable throughout the American continent, the range of variation is much less than in the eastern hemisphere. The western continent appears to have been peopled by repeated migrations and by diverse routes; but when we attempt to estimate any probable date for its primeval settlement, evidence wholly fails. Language proves elsewhere a safe guide. It has established beyond question some long-forgotten relationship between the Aryans of India and Persia and those of Europe; it connects the Finn and Lapp with their Asiatic forefathers; it marks the independent origin of the Basques and their priority to the oldest Aryan intruders; it links together widely diverse branches of the great Semitic family. Can language tell us of any such American affinities, or of traces of Old World congeners, in relation to either civilised Mayas and Peruvians, or to the forest and prairie races of the northern continent?

With the millions of America's coloured population, of African blood and yet speaking Aryan languages, the American comparative philologist can scarcely miss the significance of the warning that linguistic and ethnical classifications by no means necessarily imply the same thing. Nevertheless, without overlooking this distinction, the

ethnical significance of the evidence which comparative philology supplies cannot be slighted in any question relative to prehistoric relations between the Old World and the New. What then can philology tell us? There is one answer, at the least, which the languages of America give, that fully accords with the legend, "white with age," that told of an island-continent in the Atlantic Ocean with which the nations around the Mediterranean once held intercourse. None of them indicates any trace of immigration within the period of earliest authentic history. Those who attach significance to the references in the *Timæus* to political relations common to Atlantis and parts of Libya and Europe; or who, on other grounds, look with favour on the idea of early intercourse between the Mediterranean and the western continent, have naturally turned to the Eskuara of the Basques. It is invariably recognised as the surviving representative of languages spoken by the Allophyliaë of Europe before the intrusion of Aryans. The forms of its grammar differ widely from those of any Semitic, or Indo-European tongue, placing it in the same class with Mongol, East African, and American languages. Here, therefore, is a tempting glimpse of possible affinities; and Professor Whitney, accordingly, remarks in his *Life and Growth of Languages*, that the Basque "forms a suitable stepping-stone from which to enter the peculiar linguistic domain of the New World, since there is no other dialect of the Old World which so much resembles in structure the American languages." But this glimpse of possible relationship has proved, thus far, illusory. In their morphological character, certain American and Asiatic

languages have a common agglutinative structure, which in the former is developed into their characteristic polysynthetic attribute. With this, the Eskuarian system of affixes corresponds. But beyond the general structure, there is no such evidence of affinity, either in the vocabularies or grammar, as direct affiliation might be expected to show. Elements common to the Anglo-American of the nineteenth century and the Sanskrit-speaking race beyond the Indus, in the era of Alexander of Macedon, are suggested at once by the grammatical structure of their languages; whereas there is nothing in the resemblance between the Basque and any of the North American languages that is not compatible with a “stepping-stone” from Asia to America by the islands of the Pacific. The most important of all the native American languages in their bearing on this interesting inquiry—those of Central America,—are only now receiving adequate attention. Startling evidence may yet reward the diligence of students; but, so far as language furnishes any clue to affinity of race, no American language thus far discloses such a relationship, as, for example, enabled Dr. Pritchard to suggest that the western people of Europe, to whom the Greeks gave the collective name of Κέλται, and whose languages had been assumed by all previous ethnologists as furnishing evidence that they were precursors of the Aryan immigrants, in reality justified their classification in the same stock.

But while thus far, the evidence of language is, at best, vague and indefinite in its response to the inquiry for proofs of relationship of the races of America to those of the Old World; physiological comparisons lend no confirmation to

the idea of an indigenous native race, with special affinities and adaptation to its peculiar environment, and with languages all of one class, the ramifications from a single native stem. So far as physical affinities can be relied upon, the man of America, in all his most characteristic racial diversities, is of Asiatic origin. His near approximation to the Asiatic Mongol is so manifest as to have led observers of widely different opinions in all other respects, to concur in classing both under the same great division: the Mongolian of Pickering, the American Mongolidæ of Latham, the Mongoloid of Huxley. Professor Flower, in an able discussion of the varieties of the human species, addressed to the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain in 1885, unhesitatingly classes the Eskimo as the typical North Asiatic Mongol. In other American races he notes as distinctive features the characteristic form of the nasal bones, the well-developed superciliary ridge, and retreating forehead; but the resemblance is so obvious in many other respects, that he finally includes them all among the members of the Mongolian type. If, then, the American Mongol came originally from Asia, or sprung from the common stock of which the Asiatic Mongol is the typical representative, within any such period as even earliest Phœnician history would embrace, much more definite traces of affinity are to be looked for in his language than mere correspondence in the agglutination characteristic of a very widely diffused class of speech. But we, thus far, look in vain for traces of a common genealogy such as those which, on the one hand, correlate the Semitic and Aryan families of Asia and Europe with parent stocks of times

anterior to history, and on the other, with ramifications of modern centuries. We have, moreover, to deal mainly with the languages of uncivilised races. To the continent north of the Gulf of Mexico, the grand civilising art of the metallurgist remained to the last unknown; and in Mexico, it appears as a gift of recent origin, derived from Central America. The Asiatic origin of the art of Tubal-cain has, indeed, been pretty generally assumed, both for Central and Southern America; but by mere inference. In doing so, we are carried back to some mythic Quetzalcoatl: for neither the metallurgist nor his art was introduced in recent centuries. Assuming, for the sake of argument, the dispersion of a common population of Asia and America, already familiar with the working of metals, and with architecture, sculpture and other kindred arts, at a date coeval with the founding of Tyre, "the daughter of Sidon," what help does language give us in favour of such a postulate? We have great language groups, such as the Huron-Iroquois, extending of old from the St. Lawrence to North Carolina; the Algonkin, from Hudson Bay to South Carolina; the Dakotan, from the Mississippi to the Rocky Mountains; the Athabaskan, from the Eskimo frontier, within the Arctic circle, to New Mexico; and the Tinné family of languages west of the Rocky Mountains, from the Youkon and Mackenzie rivers, far south on the Pacific slope. With those, as with the more cultured languages, or rather languages of the more cultured races, of Central and Southern America, elaborate comparisons have been made with vocabularies of Asiatic languages; but the results are, at best, vague. Curious points of agreement have, indeed,

been demonstrated, inviting to further research; but as yet the evidence of relationship mainly rests on correspondence in structure. The agglutinative suffixes are common to the Eskimo and many American Indian tongues. Dr. H. Rink describes the polysynthetic process in the Eskimo language as founded on radical words, to which additional or imperfect words, or affixes, are attached; and on the inflexion, which, for transitive verbs, indicates subject as well as object, likewise by addition. But, while Professor Flower unhesitatingly characterises the Eskimo as belonging to the typical North Asiatic Mongols; he, at the same time, speaks of them as almost as perfectly isolated in their Arctic home "as an island population." Nevertheless, the same structure is common to their language and to those of the great North American families already named. All alike present, in an exaggerated form, the characteristic structure of the Ural-Altaic or Turanian group of Asiatic languages.

Race-type corresponds in the Old and New World. A comparison of languages by means of the vocabularies of the two continents, yields no such correspondence. All the more, therefore, is the American student of comparative philology stimulated to investigate the significance of the polysynthetic characteristic found to pertain to so many—though by no means to all—of the languages of this continent. The relationship which it suggests to the agglutinative languages of Asia, furnishes a subject of investigation not less interesting to American students, alike of the science of language, and of the whole comprehensive questions which anthropology embraces, than the relations of the Romance languages of Europe to the parent Latin; or