

SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS.¹

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THE visitor to the West Coast of Ireland who has an interest in sanctuaries as well as a taste for great scenery (in both of which the island is rich, whether on land or as viewed from the sea) will find on the utmost bound of the encircling ocean certain rocky islets, which lie off the coast of Kerry and are known as the *Skelligs*. These rocks were once the home (if such a word can be used of those who had abjured it) of anchorites who built themselves rude shelters, to which one may climb by equally rude stairs, making a pilgrimage of what was once a penance. If the tourist is interested in the meaning of the name which the islands bear, he will ask himself the question whether it was given by the Celtic would-be saints who migrated thither or whether it was the hardy Norseman who bestowed it, whose fishing vessels still frequent the coast.

In order to answer this question let us sail away from the *Skelligs*, either to the South or to the North. In the former case we shall have a chance to be wrecked on the Scilly Isles, which lie in the Atlantic to the west of the Land's End; and we shall naturally ask whether *Scilly* is not the same word as *Skellig* and with a similar meaning. If, however, we sail to the North, we may run on the *Skerryvore* or *Great Skerry*, and the philological instinct will at once enquire whether *Skerry* is not the same word as *Skellig*, or, possibly, *Scilly*. (We may compare the variation of the termination in *selig* and *silly*.) If we move further north, we shall come across more groups of rocky islets, bearing the name of *Skerries*, dangerous to mariners, so that sometimes the nautical Providence of a sea-going people has perched a lighthouse on the lofty rock, often at great cost

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both of labour and of capital. The *Skerryvore*, for instance, which lies in the Atlantic, off the coast of Argyllshire has a revolving light 150 feet above high water, erected at a cost of £86,977, and is visible for 18 miles. The *Skerries*, off the coast of Anglesey, have a light which is 117 feet above high water, visible for 16 miles. When we ask for the meaning of the name, it becomes clear that it is not Celtic, but Scandinavian. Suppose, for instance, that we turn to Vigfusson's Icelandic Dictionary, we shall find as follows :

Sker : n. gen. pl. *skerja*. dat. *skerjum* (Dan. *skjar* : swed. *skar*. Engl. *skerry*) . . . a skerry, an isolated rock in the sea. . . .

It is natural to enquire further which of the two forms *skerry* and *skellig* is etymologically the elder. Whatever may be the conclusion, the form which occurs in the *Scilly* islands would appear to be intermediate between the other two.

At this point, however, we must go warily : for in the case of the Scilly islands the evidence is at first sight against the belief that the name is ancient ; for we have not only an early series of maps in which the islands are marked, but we have also a long succession of charters in which monastic and other possessions are registered, which do not show the form *Scilly*.

Let us take the maps first. Setting aside those early geographers who supposed they had found in these islands the *Cassiterides* or *Tin-islands* of the Ancients, we have a long line of maps many of which will be found described and facsimiled in Nordenskjöld's great work entitled *Periplus*. For example, among the

Islands on the Coast of England, (p. 48)

we have

Anon (14th Cent.)	Atlas Catalan, 1375 A.D.
<i>Sorlinga</i>	<i>Sorlinga</i>
Giroldis, 1426 A.D.	Voltius, 1593 A.D.
<i>Sorllinga</i>	<i>Sorlinge</i>

to which may be added a map of Petrus Vesconti of 1318 A.D., *Solinga* : a map of Andrea Bianco of 1436 A.D., *Sorlinge* : a map of Domingo Olivis of 1568 A.D., *Surlingas*. No doubt these cartographers copy one another freely : still we can hardly avoid the conclusion that in the middle ages the *Scilly Isles* were called the

Surlingas, whatever that name may mean. When we turn to the charters, our perplexity is increased. We examine Dugdale's *Monasticon* or Tanner's *Notitia Monastica* or the excerpts from these and other sources in Borlase's *Ancient and Present State of the Islands of Scilly*, and we find that the name is not *Scilly* but almost always *Sully* or *Sylly*.

For example, there is a series of charters, which grant or confirm to the Abbey of Tavistock ecclesiastical rights over the Scilly islands. Borlase, following Dugdale, states the case as follows :

"Whether Scilly was included in the foundations of the Abbey of Tavistock, in the year 961 is, I think, uncertain ; but Bishop *Tanner* (note, p. 69) says that it belonged to that Abby before the Conquest. And yet *Henry* the First grants (does not confirm, which was the usual expression when Houses or Revenues had before been granted) to Osbert, Abbot of *Tavistock*, all the Churches of *Sully*, with their appurtenances, and the Land as the Monks or Hermits held it in the time of *Edward* the Confessor and *Burgald*, Bishop of Cornwall."

It would be easy to recite similar grants and confirmations made by Reginald, Duke of Cornwall, a natural son of Henry I., by Pope Celestian, King John, Henry III., etc., all of them being characterised by similar titles for the Islands. No wonder that Borlase was perplexed. "How came," says he, "all these islands to have their general name from so small and inconsiderable spot as the Isle of *Scilly*, whose cliffs hardly anything but birds can mount, and whose barrenness would never suffer anything but sea-birds to inhabit there ?"

Here Borlase has struck a fresh difficulty : the modern name of *Scilly* does not apply to the individual islands, but only to the most westerly islet, a lofty and inaccessible rock. Is *Sully* then the same as *Scilly*, or is the latter only the name of that particular rock to which the term *Skellig* might appropriately be given ?

Borlase got over the difficulty by assuming that there had been a subsidence ; "when all these Islands above-mentioned made but one, that one went by the name of *Sylle* or some word of like sound and derivation, and having some little islands scattered round it, it imparted its name to its inferiors."

At all events, whether Dugdale and the rest are right that the group is called *Sully*, and whether Borlase is right about a subsidence of the land so as to leave the rock now called *Scilly* in a

detached position, the names are not so remote as to make an identification impossible, and the position of the now called *Scilly* rock is just such as to invite the Norsemen to call it a *Skellig* or *Sea-Rock*. This will not explain the name *Surlenga*, nor some other mediæval forms.

As there is still so much obscurity with regard to the inter-relation of these place-names, we shall not put any further stress upon the possible equation between *Skellig* and *Scilly*. It suggested itself to us, when we were on the Kerry coast in the island of Valentia, a short sail from the islands in the Atlantic. Perhaps the imagination has played us false.

We have now to proceed from the previous observation that *Skellig* = *Skerry* = *Sea-Rock*, and go on to discuss a similar phenomenon in the Mediterranean.

All persons who pass through the Straits of Messina look out, on either side the ship, to see if they can identify either the *Rock of Scylla* or the *Whirlpool of Charybdis*, where Ulysses was so beset with misfortune that he scarce escaped with his life. Scylla the sea-monster with her six demon heads, and her triple rows of teeth, and her barking dogs was in wait for the passing navigator, and actually seized six of his men at one six-fold bite, and tore them from the ship: while on the opposite side of the strait was 'fell Charybdis,' alternately gorging and disgorging three times a day whatever passed across her treacherous waves. The story is one of the great Homeric 'moving pictures,' and wherever Homer thought the scene to lie geographically, the scholars of antiquity have identified the strait through which Ulysses had the ill-luck to pass, with Messina. When we look more closely at the Homeric description we see that stress is laid on the rockiness of Scylla:

"It reaches with its sharp peak to the broad heaven, and a dark cloud surrounds it. This never melts away, nor does clear sky ever surround that peak in summer or in harvest time. No mortal man could scale it or set foot upon the top, not though he had twenty hands and feet; for the rock is smooth, as if it were polished, and in the midst of the cliff is a dim cave, turned to the west, toward Erebus, even where you shall steer your hollow ship, glorious Odysseus. . . . Therein dwells Scylla."

Odyssey, xii., 73 ff.: (A. T. Murray's trans.).

In these terms Circe describes to Odysseus the impending danger, and she does so in fearsome language which may be abbreviated into the formula : 'there is a rock, named *Scylla* on one side of the strait through which you must pass.' The natural suggestion is that *Scylla* means *Sea-Rock* and is a variant of *Skellig* or *Skerry*.

Two confirmations come to us from the side of Greek geography.

The first is that there is another island rock in the Ægean, which bears the name of *Skyros*. Homer calls it 'lofty *Skyros*' (*Iliad*, i., 664); and the mythologists have many tales to tell of how Thetis hid Achilles in the island, and how Theseus sought to make it a sanctuary, when exiled from Athens. The suggestion arises as to a linguistic relation between *Scylla* and *Skyro* similar to that between *Skelligs* and *Skerries*.

In the next place geographers tell us that a promontory at the entrance to the Saronic gulf, just opposite to 'Sunium's marbled steep,' bore the name of *Skylleum*, and here again the mythologists have been at work to tell how *Scylla*, the daughter of Nisos was drowned at this point, and washed up on the promontory. Evidently *Scylla*, or some closely related form, is the name of the promontory itself, and the lady, whether a malevolent or an unfortunate being, is a later addition. Herodotus (viii., 8) has much to say of a Greek diver, who was employed by the Persians in salving treasures from their wrecked ships after the hurricane, in which their fleet had suffered severely. His name was Σκυλλίης. Is this a nickname, given on account of his association with wreckage?

Now let us return to the Italian coast and to Homer. The Odyssean traditions gather thickly round the southern shores of Italy, where the ancients thought to find *Calypso's Island*, which Homer calls *Ogygia*. All of this search for Homeric and Odyssean sites is imaginary work. What is not imaginary is that if one were to sail from the island Ogygia where Calypso was supposed to hide, in order to pass round the South of Italy and to reach the Straits of Messina, one would have to cross a bay which in our day is known by the name of *Squillace*; it takes its name from an ancient town named *Skylacium*. The bay itself was considered to be dangerous for navigators, and Virgil expressly calls it :

Navifragum Scylaeum (*Æn.*, ii., 553).

Here, then, is *Scylla* again, round the corner, if we may say so, from Messina. And the notable thing is that the bay which Vergil calls *Scylaeus* was known to the ancients by the name :

Sinus Scylacæus,

which is the equivalent of the modern *Squillace*. Thus there are two forms of the name, which we may represent by *Scylla* and *Scyllace*. We have arrived by geographical considerations at a bifurcation of name which reminds us of *Skerry* and *Skellig*. The final consonant in *Skellig* has turned up in the Mediterranean. But this is not all. The form *Skylake* was implied in the Homeric account. We remember the picture which Homer paints of the monster surrounded by yelping hounds and herself whining like a new-born puppy. Milton in his lovely lines in the *Comus*, describing the effect of the music of Circe upon the harsh and hideous forms of the Straits, says that :

“Scylla wept :
And chid her barking waves into attention ;
And fell (ὄλοντο) Charybdis murmured soft applause.”

Here Milton was playing the rationalist ; he wanted to get rid of those dogs and implied that they were the waves. It is a similar explanation to that which has been offered, that *Scylla* herself was an Octopus !

Milton may be excused, for Vergil had done it before him ;
Scyllam et caeruleis canibus resonantia saxa ;
Æn., iii., 432.

No ! not waves : but dogs. We can tell their origin. They are a philological explanation of *Skylake*, made by a popular reference to the Greek word

σκύλαξ = whelp or hound.

It is a case of what Waser, in his tract on *Scylla and Charybdis* calls ‘Etymologische Spielerei.’ Homer knows the explanation, and that *Skylla* is an abbreviated form for *Skylake* ; he says that the monster whines like a newly-born hound (σκύλακος νεογιλῆς). This is just as much ‘etymology at play,’ as the other accretion to the legend. The dogs and the doglike monster have now disappeared. They

were the invention of Greek etymologists. Homer says so as plainly as possible,

ἐνθα δ' ἐνὶ Σκύλλῃ ναίει δεινὸν λελακυῖα·
τῆς ἥτοι φωνὴ μὲν ὅση σκύλακος νεογιλῆς
γίγνεται.

Od. 12, 85 ff.

“Therein dwells Scylla, yelping terribly.

Her voice is indeed but as the voice of a new-born whelp.”

Here are two attempts at philology, one by picking off the syllable -λακ- from the end of Σκυλάκη, the other an identification of the whole name with the word for ‘whelp.’ We shall presently see something of the same kind in the Homeric treatment of Charybdis.

In the same way the part of the Homeric tale which represents the monster as thrusting forth her hideous necks from the cave in which she dwells, and seizing a mariner for every mouth, is only a further bit of Greek word-play: she is called Scylla, because she *tears in pieces* (σκύλλει), but more likely because she *plunders* (σκυλᾶ) the passing ship. These explanations are not new; they have been suggested in various forms and at various times. What is new is the implication that they are afterthoughts, belonging to a time when the real meaning of *Skylia* had been lost.

We shall see that Homer is quite capable of making such etymologies for himself, if we turn to the parallel case of Charybdis, described as follows:

“But the other cliff, thou wilt note, Odysseus, is lower—they are close to each other; thou couldst even shoot an arrow across—and on it is a great fig-tree (ἐρινέος) with rich foliage, but beneath this divine Charybdis sucks down the black water.” Here we notice that the poet is playing with the last two syllables of Charybdis: and he is so pleased with the assonance between the words, that he repeats it twice over.

“Thrice a day she belches it forth, and thrice she sucks it down terribly! (ἀναροιβδέει δεινόν). Mayest thou not be there when she sucks it down (ὅτε ροιβδήσειεν).”

Circe, then, used the word-play in her speech to Odysseus: when the hero comes to the Straits we are again informed that the ‘divine Charybdis terribly sucked down (δεινὸν ἀνερροιβδησε) the salt water of the sea’: (*ibid.*, 235 f.). The word-play was made easier by the

almost complete vocalic equivalence of $-pu\beta-$ and $-pou\beta-$. The assonance which we have detected cannot be accidental; and it is natural to credit it to Homer himself. If that is the case we may, with a good measure of confidence, treat the *whining* of *Skylia* and the barking of her *dogs* as due to a similar attempt at etymological explanations.

Returning, then, to *Odysseus* and his dangers, we ask what is the real meaning of *Charybdis*, assuming that we have rightly identified *Skylia* with *Sea-Rock*. There does not appear to have been any solution of this problem, and we might very well abandon the enquiry where it is certain that so many have failed. However, there can be no harm in looking a little further afield.

We start with the Homeric description of a periodic whirlpool in a strait. Some persons have suggested that it is merely a tide-race, such as would naturally impress the primitive navigator when he ventured outside the almost tideless Mediterranean, and passed the Pillars of Hercules. They would lay stress on the recurrence of the phenomenon three times in the day. With a very slight allowance for fancy, this would be the recurring high and low tide, and *Charybdis* would be 'boiling up' at high-tide, and 'boiling down' at low tide.

If, however, we are to go into tidal waters, we will not hastily abandon the idea that *Charybdis* is a whirlpool, with suctional and effusive powers, for there is more chance of finding such a whirlpool in the Atlantic than in the straits of Messina. Suppose, then, that we return to Scotland. Here also we have a famous whirlpool, well-known to geographers as well as to the literary world under the name of *Corrievrekan*. There is much said about this dread whirlpool in the records of the early Irish saints and navigators. We will turn in the first instance to Cormac's *Glossary* as translated by O'Donovan and edited by Whitley Stokes. "COIRE BRECCAIN. 'Breccan's caldron,' i.e. a great whirlpool which is between Ireland and Scotland to the north, in the meeting of the various seas, viz. the sea which encompasses Ireland at the north-west, and the sea which encompasses Scotland at the north-east, and the sea to the south between Ireland and Scotland. They whirl round like moulding compasses, each of them taking the place of the other, like the paddles . . . of a millwheel, until they are *sucked into the depths*, so that the *caldron* remains with its mouth wide open; and it would suck even the whole of

Ireland into its yawning gullet. It vomits iterum that draught up, so that its thunderous eructation and its bursting and its roaring are heard among the clouds, like the steam-boiling of a caldron on the fire."

The description which Cormac gives of the whirlpool is quite Homeric, and should be quoted by the commentators on Homer to illustrate the poetic terms ; but some one will say, it is too Homeric, and that Cormac, or his sources, has come under the influence either of Homer himself, or indirectly under the influence of Homer through Vergil. We must move very cautiously when we identify whirlpools. Perhaps we shall presently find the Irish writers calling Corrievrekan by the name of *Charybdis* ! We must take Corrievrekan to pieces, as we tried, with scant success, to do with Charybdis.

Suppose we turn to the *Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* (published in 1828) ; we find as follows :

COIRE ; pl.—EACHAN. s.m. 1. A cauldron or kettle, cacabus, ahenum. *Voc.* 89, (i.e. Alexander MacDonell's Gaelic Vocabulary). 2. A circular hollow, embosomed in hills, or a part of one hill so formed : convallis, cavum ingens in monte, vel montibus circumclusum. *Macintyr.* 22 : (i.e. Duncan MacIntyre's Gaelic Songs). *Scot. Corrie. Jam.* (i.e. Jameson's Scottish Dictionary). 3. A whirlpool : gurgus, vortex, charybdis. *Oss.*, iii., 422 : (i.e. Ossian's poems). Coire bhreacain. A whirlpool near the Island of Jura : "in undosis charybdis Breacani aestibus. *Adamn. Vit. S. Columb.*, lib. i., c. 5.

This is a very instructive entry : it tells us that *Coire* (the Scottish *corrie*) is a word that means *caldron* or *kettle* ; it can be applied to natural hollows in the hills or shores, just as, for instance, we have near the town of Moffat in Scotland what they call a *Devil's Punch-bowl*, or as the little town on the east of the Island of Arran is called *Corrie* from its enclosing hills. The Irish Dictionaries will tell us the same tale : e.g. Dinneen, *Irish English Dictionary*, says that *Coire* is a caldron ; a large pot or boiler ; a gulf ; a whirlpool ; a maelstrom ; and is applied metaphorically to hell.

But Cormac tells us also that Adamnan in his *Life of St. Columba* speaks of *Corrie-vrekan* under the terms of *Charybdis Breacani* ; so we are under the influence of Homer at some distance, and it looks as if Adamnan had equated *Charybdis* with *caldron*.

We remember Homer's description : he calls the whirlpool a λέβης or caldron :

ἔνθεν μὲν Σκύλλῃ, ἐτέρωθι δὲ δῖα Χάρυβδις
 δεινὸν ἀναρροίβδησε θαλάσσης ἄλμυρὸν ὕδωρ.
 ἦ τοι ὄτ' ἐξέμέσειε, λέβης ὥς ἐν πυρὶ πολλῷ
 πᾶσ' ἀναμορμόρεσκε κυκωμένη.

Od., xii., 235 ff.

Clearly we must look closer at Adamnan if he ventures to translate *coire* by *Charybdis*: meanwhile, however much the language of Cormac may suggest Homer or Homeric and Vergilian parallels, it is clear that *coire* is good Keltic and means a *Kettle*.

The passage in Adamnan is as follows :

"On another day, also, while St. Columba was engaged in his mother-church, he suddenly cried out, with a smile, 'Columbanus, the son of Beogna, has just set out on a voyage to us, and is in a great danger in the rolling tides of Brecan's whirlpool ; (*nunc in undosis Charybdis* (codd : carubdis, caribdis) *Brecani aestibus valde periclitatur*) : he is raising his hands to heaven ; he is also blessing that angry and dreadful sea ; yet in this the Lord only frightens him, for the ship in which he is shall not be wrecked in the storm, etc."

It seems clear that Adamnan has really equated *coire* with *charybdis*. Who then, was Brecan who has given his name to the caldron ?

The Irish chroniclers have much to say, of a legendary character, about this Brecan. As Adamnan and Columba believe him to be a person, we may as well enquire what is to be said on his behalf. There is a summary of a mass of traditions in O'Curry's *Lectures on the Materials of Ancient Irish History* (p. 257 ff.).

"Breacan was the son of *Maine*, son of Niall of the Nine Hostages, monarch of Erin, whose reign closed A.D. 405. This *Breacan* was a great merchant and the owner of fifty *Curachs*, trading between Ireland and Scotland : on one of his voyages he was, we are told, with his fifty *Curachs*, swallowed up in the great whirlpool formed by the confluence of the north-western and north-eastern seas with the channel between Ireland and Scotland. His fate, however, was not exactly known until *Lughaidh*, the blind poet, in many years after, paid a visit to *Bennchur* (Bangor—on the coast of the county of Down). The poet's people having strayed from the town down

to the beach, found the bleached skull of a small dog on the shore. This they took up, carried to the poet, and asked him what skull it was. 'Lay the end of the poet's wand on the skull,' said *Lughaidh*; and then, pronouncing some mystical sentences in the ancient *Teinim Laegh* style, he told them that the skull was that of *Breacan's* little dog, and that *Breacan* himself, with all his curachs and people, had been drowned in the *Coire Breacain*, (or *Breacan's* cauldron),—an appropriate name, from the constant boiling up and surging of the whirlpool, and the name by which it continued ever after to be known in ancient Gaelic writings. This story is preserved in *Cormac's Glossary*, compiled in the ninth century, and in the *Dinnsenchas*, a much older compilation generally."

The author last-named says that Columba actually saw the bones of Breacan at the bottom of the whirlpool and mused on them oracularly : as follows :

"A long time after, Columcille was passing through it, when the sea rose up in front and discovered to him the bones of Breacan, the son of Maine, son of Niall. Upon which Columba said, 'That is friendly of thee, O aged Breacan, etc.'"

The same story is told in O'Donnell's narrative of the saint's return from Druim-ceatt : . . . As there are some interesting points in the narration, we quote from the account :

"Rebus itaque omnibus, propter quas advenerat, in Hibernia foeliciter peractis, sanctissimus Pater navigationem versus Britanniam resumit. Et cum spirantibus ventis ostia Euripi, *Loch-feabhail* vulgo dicti, esset praetergressis; navis incidit in vorticisam quendam charybdim, nautis et navigantibus formidabilem, quae vulgo *Cor-Breacain*, id est, charybdis Breacani, appellatur: quia ibi ante annos multos Brecanus ex Manio filio Nielli Magni, Hiberniae Regis nepos, submersus interiit: cujus ossa super tumentes fluctus vir sanctus conspicit elevari. Eaque Deo revelante agnoscens, ad socios ait; Illa sunt ossa Breacani cognati nostri, quae voluit Christus ita nobis ostendi, ut pro defuncti refrigerio, ac pro nostra a praesenti periculo liberatione simul apud Dominum intercedamus. Ac mox post brevem et ferventem precum instantiam obtinuit vir beatus non solum se ac suos ab imminente vitae discrimine, sed et Breacani animam a purgatorii poenis liberari, quem et ad celestia gaudia vidit volentem."

A vivid parallel, indeed, between the Maelstrom and the place of

torment ! but, as Brecan is an imaginary character, so are the operations of the particular prayer that sent him flying heavenward, except so far as they record and accomplish the escape of Columba himself. What is really important for us is the classical knowledge of the recording angel of the tale ; he passes one tide race and calls it *Euripus* ; he comes to Corryvrekan and calls it *Charybdis*. Again we see how careful we have to be to remove the Homeric and Vergilian traits from the story of the Whirlpool.

If we are told that its roaring can be heard from far, we have the same report in Vergil (*Æn.*, iii., 555) :

“et gemitum ingentem pelagi pulsataque saxa,
audimus longe fractasque ad litora voces,
exultantque vada atque aestu miscentur harenae ;
et pater Anchises, ‘nimirum haec illa Charybdis.’”

The powers of suction and evacuation of the whirlpool are also, as we have seen, described in Homeric terms, to which we have the Vergilian parallel :

imo barathri ter gurgite vastos
sorbet in abruptum fluctus rursusque sub auras
eriget alternos et sidera verberat unda.

Æn., iii., 420 ff.

The writer who knows about Euripus and Charybdis in describing a voyage of S. Columba is capable of a good deal in the shape of borrowed figures and Græco-Latin legends. He did not, however, invent the meaning of *Coire*, which we have shown to be good Keltic for *Kettle*.

Brecan is also Keltic ; for it is the same word as the *Wrekin* in Shropshire on the border of Wales (the Latin *Uriconium*),¹ and as the name of the town and county and high hill of *Brecon* over the Welsh border. I doubt if a satisfactory etymology has yet been given to these three forms : it seems likely that it has something to do with a high rock or crag. Those who are interested in Corrievrekan for its own sake will find that there was an attempt made to transfer the whirlpool from the coast of the island of Jura to the tide-race between

¹ I owe the suggestion to my colleague Mr. Vine. Walter Scott's spelling, *Corrievrekin* in *The Lord of the Isles* is probably correct.

the Irish coast and the island of Rathlin (see Reeves, *Columba*) : for my part I do not assist at the removal of maelstroms.

So our investigation leaves us with the following suggestion, since Corryvreckan means some kind of a kettle or caldron, and since Homer calls Charybdis a kettle (λέβης), that there is some archaic form behind Charybdis which has this very meaning.

As we have said, our enquiry was disturbed by the possibility of cross-currents and interactions between the traditions ; but this need not prevent us from recognising that in the Homeric folk-tale we have preserved to us one of the oldest of the stories that sailors transmit from one to the other. One can see, for instance, in the Homeric account of *Scylla and Charybdis*, how the narration has interwoven with it the story of the *Wandering Rocks* ; these are commonly explained as being the *Symplegades* at the entrance of the Black Sea, which the Argonauts successfully pass, by the stratagem of sending a dove in advance, which flies through and loses its tail, when the rocks come together. In Homer the dove tries to get through the *Planctae* or *Clashers* and is killed, but Jason gets through, by supernatural aid. Neither at the entrance to the Euxine nor in the neighbourhood of Messina are there any such terrors, in the shape of rocks that might threaten to crush the navigator. They belong to the romance of long-past history and early human thought posing as history. Corryvreckan may be no more than an illustration, which we have ourselves superimposed upon an old-world tradition. And this old-world story may have come from anywhere, wherever original man may have wandered ; and any speech that we may know may be invoked to explain the names that are given to the features of the Homeric landscape and sea-scape. We need no explanation of the meaning of the *Planctae*, and we think we have an explanation of *Skylia* which meets the phenomena, in which case the rock is really rock, linguistically. The final perplexity is over *Charybdis*, which we think has something to do with a *kettle* or *caldron*.

We have now reached a point in our enquiry into the myth of *Scylla* and *Charybdis*, where it will be advantageous to stop and consider whether we are on the right track, and if so, how far we have advanced in the direction of a lawful interpretation. That we are dealing with folk-lore from a very early period of human history is becoming clear ; for the story that Homer tells of the perils faced by

Odysseus is certainly not elementary mythology. When Homer discourses of the *Clashing Rocks* through which Ulysses, in imitation of Jason, has to pass, it is a different experience from that which occurs in the popular saga. The Argo is not going to the Euxine; she is under the protection of Hera and the Sea-Ladies, not of Athene, and in place of a single dove sent on to test the passage through the *Clashers* and lose its tail in the attempt, we have a flight of doves of which one loses its life, while the rest get through. So the Argo-myth is in two different stages in the *Odyssey* and in the *Argonautica*. Mythologists are disposed to believe the Clashing Rocks to be themselves only a variant on certain Clashing Doors, which need not refer to physical life at all. It is sufficient to point out that it is an old myth with variant forms in Homer's day.

Something similar must be said with regard to *Scylla and Charybdis*. As regards *Scylla*, at all events, either Homer or some rhapsodist before him has been making philological word-play of the first forms that described the dangerous sea-rock, and has evolved the sea-dogs and the sea-rapine of the monster out of the various spellings of her name. Nor are there wanting indications that some one has been taking the name of fell *Charybdis* to pieces in like manner. We have seen the mythology growing before our very eyes. But behind these word-plays there is the seaman's story of a sailor's dangers, and this story is told in old-world language which finds a close parallel in the *Corrievrekan* of the Hebrides.

Corrievrekan would be the very best parallel to illustrate *Scylla and Charybdis*, if it had not been that some of those early navigators of the western seas whose descriptions have come down to us were scholars as well as sailors, and while they had their own local folk-lore of the great tide-race, they had also Vergil up their sleeves, for purposes of illustration, and embellished their accounts of 'sinking ships and praying hands,' with details taken from Æneas and Anchises. It is precisely on this account that where the two folk-lore lines have crossed and duplicated one another, that it becomes difficult to use *Corrievrekan* to illustrate *Charybdis*. For *Charybdis* has already been used to describe *Corrievrekan*. Here is, however, one point where we have a secure parallel. We have shown that Corrie is good Gaelic for a cauldron, though we did not succeed in finally elucidating the other half of the name. This is the people's name, and not the

scholars ! Neither Columba nor Adamnan christened the tide-race. Yet we remember that Homer also called Charybdis a kettle (κέβης ὤς), and the parallel expressions go back to a common primitive.

The question, then, arises whether there are any accounts of the whirlpool which come from the lips of the people without scholarly manipulation. Perhaps we may find such in Martin's *Description of the Western Isles*, published in 1703, which certainly gives the most vivid picture of *Corrieurekan*, and apparently from personal observation of the phenomenon and actual converse with the Western Highlanders. We will transcribe this account, on the hypothesis of its independence of Adamnan or Vergil, and see to what results the investigation may lead us. Martin, then, tells us as follows :¹

"Between the north end of *Jura*, and the Isle *Scarba*, lies the Famous and Dangerous Gulph, call'd *Cory Vrekan*, about a mile in breadth, it yields an impetuous Current, not to be matched anywhere about the Isle of *Britain*. The Sea begins to boil and ferment with the Tide of Flood, and resembles the boiling of a Pot" (here we recall the language of the *Odyssey* (xii., 237), 'Verily whenever she belched it forth, like a cauldron on a great fire she would seethe and bubble in utter turmoil,') "and then increases gradually until it appear in many Whirlpools, which form themselves in sort of Pyramids, and immediately after spout up as high as the Mast of a little Vessel, and at the same time make a loud report." (Here we recall the Vergilian lines,

Et gemitum ingentem pelagi pulsataque saxa
Audimus longe fractasque ad litora voces.)

Æn., iii., 555, 6.

"These white Waves run two Leagues with the Wind before they break : the Sea continues to repeat these various Motions from the beginning of the Tide of Flood, until it is more than half Flood, and then it decreaseth gradually until it hath ebb'd about half an hour, and continues to boil 'till it is within an hour of low water. This boiling of the Sea is *not above a Pistol shot distant* from the coast of *Scarba Isle*, where the white Waves meet and spout up ;" (here we make the parallel with *Odyssey* (xii., 101), 'But the other cliff thou wilt note, Odysseus, lower—they are close to each other ; *thou couldst*

¹ *l.c.*, p. 236.

even shoot an arrow across'); they call it the *Kaillach*, i.e. an old Hag: and they say that when she puts on her Kerchief, i.e. the whitest Waves, it is then reckon'd fatal to approach her": (the parallel with Scylla is evident). "Notwithstanding of this great Ferment of the Sea, which brings up the least shell from the ground, the smallest Fisher-Boat may venture to cross the Gulph at the last hour of the tide of Flood, and at the last hour of the Tide of Ebb": (Here again we have the Vergilian parallel:

'Exultantque vada atque aestu miscentur harenae'

—*Æn.*, iii., 557,

and we also remember how Columba saw the bones of Brechan and his company whirled to the top, and proceeded to pray him out of Purgatory). "This Gulph has its name from *Brekain*, said to be son to the king of *Denmark*, who was drowned here, cast a shoar in the north to *Jura*, and buried in a cave, as appears from the stone Tomb and Altar there." (This is certainly not the Columban tradition, which makes Brechain an Irish merchant-prince and not a Scandinavian and gives him no burial; we have a Norse legend competing with an Irish one.)

Now when we review Martin's account, we are struck with the popular features of the description: it may have classical parallels, but they are clearly not borrowed from the classics. Who would have thought, for instance, of imitating the statement in the *Odyssey* that it was only a bow-shot across from *Charybdis* to *Scylla*, by saying that it was a Pistol-shot from the whirlpool to the rock. Would any narrator have taken Vergil's account of the sand that was brought up from the bottom of the whirlpool, or Adamnan's account of the surging up of the bones of Brechain, and made it into the phenomenon of the uplift from the seafloor of the smallest of sea-shells? Clearly we are looking at the scene with Martin's own eyes and the eyes of his fisher-friends. One might argue away the coincident terms in which the sea is said to boil like a pot, for that is Biblical enough, and even Leviathan in Job does a pot-boiling of his own and makes white waves, but we cannot explain away the unexpected appearance of an old hag in the form of a rock with her white kerchief on. That is genuine folk-lore. *Scylla* has rejoined *Charybdis*. Not only is she betrayed by the fishermen's lingo, but philology attests her, and gives her a Norse

origin. The rocky islet where the whirling waves break is called *Scarba*;¹ now we have met the root *Skar* already in the *Skerries* and the *Skelligs*, and it is gone into Scottish and north English as *Skaur*, as in *Scarborough* or the adjacent *Scalby*. The old lady then is Scandinavian, even if we may not agree with the fisher folk that *Brechain* was a Dane.²

Supposing, then, that we are correct in saying that *Skylla* and *Charybdis* are in folk-lore parallelism with *Scarba* and *Corrievrekan*, it will follow that we have reached the foundation of the whole series of legends in Corrievrekan itself; for Corrievrekan is not a myth; it is still in evidence, and constitutes a real danger, such as it is almost impossible to believe can ever have existed in the trifling currents of the Straits of Messina.³ Moreover the students who detected in Homer's surging and resurging of *Charybdis* three times a day an allusion to the tides are justified in their suspicion, so far as tidal motion is involved; only it is the abnormal tide-race of Corrievrekan and not the normal 'wap and wan' (to use Mallory's language) of waves upon the seashore. How did the story of the great whirlpool reach the Mediterranean? Was it the Phœnician sailors who ventured to the furthest Hebrides, or the hardy Norsemen who entered the Pillars of Hercules, or did the story travel overland from the Baltic, like Apollo and the Apple and the Amber and other northern contributions to Southern history and religion? At all events no one will doubt that Corrievrekan would furnish good material for myth-making to anyone who should pass into the Western Seas.

We have not, however, exhausted the information which Martin has collected for us from his Gaelic fishermen. He continues as follows:—

"The Natives told me that about three years ago (i.e. before 1700), an English vessel happened inadvertently to pass through this Gulph at the time when the Sea began to boil: the whiteness of the

¹ We have such an island in the *Heimskringla*, iv., 321, "Markus, and some people with him, sprang upon an island called *Skarpa*," said to be near Bergen.

² Against this derivation, note that H. Cameron Gillies in *The Place-Names of Argyll* says that *Scarba* is Norse; *Skarf* - *r* + *ey* = cormorant isle.

³ But see what is said *infra* on this point.

Waves and their spouting up, was like the breaking of a Sea upon a Rock ; they found themselves attracted irresistibly to the White Rock as they supposed it to be ; this quickly obliged them to consult their safety, and so they betook themselves to the small Boat with all speed, and thought it no small happiness to land safe in *Jura*, committing the vessel under all her Sails to the uncertain Conduct of the Tide and Wind ; she was driven to the opposite continent of *Knapdale*, where she no sooner arrived, than the Tide and Wind became contrary to one another, and so the vessel was cast into a Creek, where she was safe ; and then the Master and Crew were by the Natives of this Isle conducted to her, where they found her as safe as they left her, tho' all her Sails were still hoisted."

Here we have either an alternative name for the island of Scarba, which we have identified with *Skylla*, the name *White Rock* being given to the Old Lady on account of her white kerchief of waves, or it belongs to the submerged rock, between Scarba and Jura, which, rising out of a great depth to within fifteen feet of the surface, makes the rallying point for the tumult of the tide. But *White Rock* is not only in the strait between Scarba and Jura, it has a place, also, in Homeric myth and narration. In the last book of the *Odyssey* the souls of the suitors whom Odysseus has slain are conducted "Westward" by *Hermes*.

"Past the streams of Oceanus they went, past the *rock Leukas*, past the gates of the Sun and the land of dreams, and quickly came to the mead of *Asphodel*, where the spirits dwell, phantoms of men who have done with toils." Here is *White Rock* in the Western Sea, one of the stages to be passed by migrant souls.

Nor is this all that may be said on *White Rock*. A glance at the map will show that for a voyager coming to the Straits of Messina from the South, there lies on his right hand shortly before he reaches *Rhegium*, the promontory of *Leukopetra*. So *White Rock* is geographically in the same area as *Scylla* and *Charybdis*, and the other Ulyssean identifications.¹ This can hardly be accidental ; it suggests

¹ Cf. Victor Bérard : *Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssee*, p. 350 : "Σκύλλην πετραίην : cette épithète πετραίη ne se trouve nulle part ailleurs dans les poèmes homériques. Cette pierre marque l'entrée du détroit sicilien, comme une autre pierre en marque la sortie : au Sud, en effet, sur la même côte italienne, le détroit sicilien finit à la Pierre blanche, *Leukopetra*."

that the White Rock of the 24th book of the *Odyssey* has been found by a different method of enquiry from that of the 12th book, but in either case it is probable that Scylla is adjacent to it. One folk-lorist locates *White Rock* in the next world, another, more interested in Terrestrial geography, finds a place for it on the map of Southern Italy. We, with Mr. Martin's assistance, claim to have shewn that almost all the features of the Corrievrekan whirlpool and its adjacent shores can be traced in the Homeric and Vergilian accounts of Scylla and Charybdis. For that reason we make these equations,

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{Corrievrekan} & = & \text{Charybdis (the Kettle).} \\ \text{Scarba} & = & \text{Scylla (the Rock).} \end{array}$$

Before passing away from the geographical identifications, we may mention that these dangerous promontories and straits have often piacular sacrifices connected with them, a fact which again reminds us of *Scylla* and the *White Rock*. For example, at the S. end of the Island of Leucadia, which lies to the north of Cephalaria and Ithaca, there is a steep promontory, much dreaded by mariners, called *Leucatas* or *White Mountain*. Here, once, stood a temple of *Apollo Leucadios*, to whom every year a human sacrifice was thrown from the top of the cliff. In the farther sea, where a promontory juts out opposite Sunium, at the entrance to the Saronic gulf, we have the rock *Scyllæum*, where it is said that Scylla herself was thrown into the sea, no doubt as a piacular victim.

We note the parallelism between the two cases, and suggest a possible connection with the *Scylla-and-Charybdis* Cycle we have been studying. For us, the result of our investigation is a conviction that *Scylla* is a sea-rock and *Charybdis* a sea-cauldron, and that both of them had their origin in the Hebrides.

In the foregoing pages we have ventured the suggestion that a mariner's tale of the peril of the northern seas was the original of the Homeric story of Scylla and Charybdis and associated dangers which beset the wandering Odysseus. This mariner's tale, suitably adorned by a mariner's imagination has its origin in the whirlpool of Corrievrekan in the Hebrides. It is around such an experience of seafaring men as is associated with the passing of Corrievrekan that the folk-tales of the *Odyssey* have accumulated.

Before we can remove this suggestion from the region of hypothesis

into that of reasonable demonstration, it is clear that we must be prepared with a number of supplementary enquiries. We must ask, in the first instance, why we have regarded the Greek identification of Scylla and Charybdis with the Straits of Messina as untenable. We must then examine whether the supposed folk-lore evidence for the wanderings of Odysseus is not itself to be traced directly to the Homeric story. Last of all we may be required to show that Corrievrekan is a better starting-point for the legends than, let us say, the Great Maelstrom.

When we proceed to look into these points, we are obliged to admit, in the first place, that we are too much in the habit of under-estimating the dangers of the passage through the Straits of Messina. This is partly due to the fact that we travel in bigger ships which are less subject to disturbance by currents, on account of their own speed and their own force of propulsion. Most Mediterranean travellers will feel like ourselves that, after a number of passages through the straits, we could detect no annoyance from the gulping mouth of the divine Charybdis, as Homer calls her. Yet even an ocean-liner may give us some information on the dangers of this particular bit of navigation. For example, in a recent issue of the *Manchester Guardian* (April 3, 1924) a writer gives a vivid description by a passenger on a big steamship, which, as he says, provoked the wrath of Charybdis.

"She still dwells in the depths of the Straits and the fishermen give her a wide berth. All-daring we violated her preserve, and she clasped us in her wrathful grasp.

"On the bridge was considerable agitation. The ship was swinging, despite helm, and rushing towards the shore at twice her normal speed. There was a pounding of feet on the teak deck, a frenzied clanging of gongs in the bowels of her, and the rattling of the steam-engine as the wheel was spun round. But the ship trembled in the grasp of Charybdis. She alone knew her agony. She listed to port. She shuddered and kicked viciously, but still she was urged onward towards the cliffs. Then suddenly, unable to hold the struggling craft, the Evil Being swung her back once more until her bows pointed to the open sea. Again the gongs clanged and the living mass of mechanism kicked harder, seemed to sweat with her exertion—and broke free from the foul clutch."

And the writer concludes by observing that "if Charybdis can play

with a 10,000-ton, geared-turbined oil-burning twin-screw liner, A 1 at Lloyds, perfectly sea-worthy, and the crack ship of her house, she must have inspired real terror in Odysseus, venturing within reach in his frail bark."

This bit of recent experience, even if somewhat overcoloured, must be held to negative the assumption that we are obliged to go elsewhere than to the Straits of Messina in search of the violent, whirling and engulfing waves that we find described in the pages of the *Odyssey*. Similar testimony is given from Admiral Smyth in Butler's *Authoress of the Odyssey*. The Greek identification must not be discarded, except on the proof that a better one can be found elsewhere, more minutely answering to the Odyssean details of the voyage. For example, it has been commonly, and we think rightly, held that the boiling up of Charybdis a certain number of times in the day is a reference to a tidal phenomenon, and not merely to a local current of the Mediterranean. That suggests the Western and Northern Seas.

Our next difficulty lies in the accurate detection of original folk-lore elements in the Odyssean story. The clashing Rocks, for example, turn up in the track of Odysseus, as they would naturally do in the path of any voyager into unknown seas; but they are neither history nor geography: they are known to be folk-lore of a widely-diffused and very early type. If, however, we remove the incident of the *Planctae*, as Homer calls them, from the story of Odysseus, why should not Charybdis go the way of Circe, and be a mere abyss of the imagination? We need to be on our guard also against the mistake of regarding as pre-Homeric folk-lore what is really post-Homeric and derived from the *Odyssey* itself. As the problem is really an important one, we will give an illustration in some detail of what we mean.

In a recently published book, whose title is *The Three Dervishes and other Persian Tales*, Mr. Reuben Levi has given us a collection of translations from Persian sources, which are of no small interest to the folk-lorist. For example in the *Story of Salim the Jeweller of Iwasit* we have an ogre who is clearly a close relative of Polyphemus. The incident of his destruction must be added to the rapidly increasing group of Polyphemus stories, which can now be traced as far as Corea, and the folk-lorist must tell us whether Homer is the author of the whole cycle of stories or only one member of the authorship (with a possible subordinate series of imitators). In the same collection we

have the *Story of the Sailor and the Pearl Merchant* which has naturally relations to the Sinbad series. But what are we to say of the following incident ?

"They perceived that their ship, without their rowing, and without any greater force of wind, began to move at great speed over the water. In great amazement the sailors ran to Abu'l Fawaris and asked him what had come to the ship that it moved so fast. He raised his eyes, and groaned deeply as in the distance he saw a mountain that rose out of the sea. In terror he clapped his hand to his eyes and shouted out : "We shall all perish ! My father continually warned me that if ever I lost my way upon the sea I must steer to the East ; for if I went to the West I should certainly fall into the Lion's Mouth. When I asked him what the Lion's Mouth was, he told me that the Almighty had created a great hole in the midst of the ocean at the foot of a mountain. . . . In great terror the sailors saw their ship being carried like the wind against the mountain. Soon it was caught in the whirlpool where the wrecks of ten thousand ancient ships were being carried around in the swirling current."

This is clearly Scylla and Charybdis, the steep crag and the opposite whirlpool. The Sailor escapes like Odysseus ; "the current cast him out upon the shore and he made the rope of his ship fast to a stout tree." No doubt this is a reminiscence of the wild fig-tree of the Odyssey to which the hero attaches, not the ship, but himself. If folk-lore has produced the Odyssey, the Odyssey, also, is capable of producing or reproducing folk-lore. If we see this to be illustrated from the Persian literature, it was equally to be noticed in the accounts of Corrievrekan, where the Homeric and Vergilian notes abounded. If Corrievrekan made Homer it was also true that Homer made Corrievrekan. It is the hypothetical statement that is the difficult one. Did Homer derive from the Hebrides ?

We come now to our last enquiry. We assume the existence, somewhere, of a real whirlpool or tide-race to which these various legends go back, Odyssean or otherwise. If you like, let us say with Mr. Victor Bérard in his brilliant volumes that the Odyssey is built up out of Phœnician *Handbooks for Mariners*. To what area of danger do these instructions point ? Will the Mediterranean suffice ? We do not think that it sufficed for the roving Phœnician traders and explorers. At the same time it must be admitted that the hypothesis

of a *Periplus* in which roadsteads, distances and dangers were recorded is quite a natural prologue to the *Odyssey* itself. When for instance we read the advice which Kirkē gives to Odysseus to avoid the cave of Skylla, she tells him that the cave faces westward towards the dark (πρὸς ζόφον) and Erebus-ward (εἰς Ἐρεβος τετραμμένον); it is difficult to avoid the inference that Erebus is here the transliteration of the Semitic *Ereb* (= sunset) of which *West* is the translation. So M. Bérard may be justified in his introduction of Phœnician influences. Homer joins Erebus and ζόφος, where there is no nautical term involved: e.g. *Od.*, 20, 356, Ἐρεβόσδε ὑπὸ ζόφον, the sunset and the dark. If, however, we make Homer depend on the Phœnicians for his map of the wanderings of Odysseus, the visit of the hero to the country of the Laistrygonēs 'where the outgoings of night and day are close together,' suggests the high northern latitudes for the Phœnician voyagers whom he is copying. They must have heard of the midnight sun and the Arctic night. So that the *Periplus* is not merely the coasting voyage of the Mediterranean such as the Greeks imagined. If, however, we are to search for Scylla and Charybdis in northern latitudes, why should the whirlpool not be the Great Maelstrom itself? The knowledge of the supreme danger of the northern sea might as easily be carried to the southern lands as the length of the day in the Arctic Circle in summer. Homer might as readily pick up the one as the other. It might even have been carried overland. The problem of the Homeric sources of information has received much attention in recent years at the hands of J. B. Bury, Ridgeway, and others. On the one hand it is certain that Homer places the Kimmerians in the far North-West near the sunless abodes of the dead, the ghost-land of antiquity: on the other hand the Kimmerians are known to the Greek world as invaders of the Ægean, from the Black Sea and the Caucasus. They were no mythical people who burnt Sardis in historical times. From what part of the North did they come? Are they the same as the Cimbri? Let us see what the modern historians say about it. We will begin by consulting Prof. Bury (J. B. Bury, *Klio.*, vi., 86).

"The knowledge of these northern Kimmerians and the ghostland on the Ocean must have reached the Ægean in one of two ways. It must have come by the West by sea or through Gaul, or by the East overland. On the first assumption, the name of the oceanic

Kimmerians would have reached the Greeks through Phœnician explorers of the coast of Gaul. . . . In that case we should have to suppose that at that time (say about 1000 B.C.) the home of the Kimmerians or Cimbrians was not in Denmark but far to the West. This is not in itself unlikely. . . .

"If the Phœnician traders, who had sailed as far as the north coast of Gaul, learned the Cimbrian name, and heard of the superstition of ghostland, the genesis of the Homeric episode would be explained."

P. 88. "The main point of this paper is to show that the Homeric Cimmerians and their setting have a double relation, on one hand to the *Κιμμέριοι* of the East, on the other to the Cimbri of the North-West. This is independent of the question whether Cimbri and *Κιμμέριοι* are one; though, perhaps, it may help to establish their identity!" A similar conclusion is reached by Ridgeway, *Early Age of Greece*, i. 390, as follows:

"We have already adverted to the people termed Cimmerians in the *Odyssey*, and we tried to show that by placing them on the Ocean Stream, and in a region of perpetual night, in juxtaposition to the Laestrygonæ (the land of the midnight sun), the poet meant the northern parts of Europe. As he makes Odysseus sail to the West, he certainly did not mean the East, and he therefore cannot have referred to the Cimmerians of the Black Sea. It is then not too rash to suppose that these latter Cimmerians were but an early swarm from the motherland of the Cimbrians beside the North Sea. The ancients identified the Cimmerians with the Cimbri, and some modern scholars hold these statements to be trustworthy. . . . Posidonius, the Stoic, who travelled in central and western Europe about 90 B.C. and who had thus full opportunity of knowing much about its ethnology, tells us that the 'Hellenes had called the Cimbri Cimmerians.' This statement is repeated by Plutarch in reference to that great horde, which threatened Italy towards the close of the second century B.C. (Plutarch, *Marius* 2. . . .). The evidence both historical and philological makes it as certain as the nature of the case will allow that the Cimmerii and the Cimbri are identical."

The foregoing quotations will show the direction in which modern ethnological research has been moving; we are entitled to take Homer and his Odysseus out of the Mediterranean or the Black Sea, and to allow them excursions into Northern latitudes. If the Laestrygonæ

and the Cimmerians are beyond Gaul to the North, we are entitled to look for Scylla and Charybdis either in the Hebrides or the Arctic Ocean. The Greek geographers who made so many Homeric identifications for us in the Mediterranean were hunting too near home.

A difficulty, however, arises at this point. We have to explain how, on the supposition that knowledge as to sub-Arctic conditions reached the Ægean, it was so long before the Maelstrom itself was discovered by Northern peoples. In England, for instance, the existence of the whirlpool was not known of till the sixteenth or seventeenth century. If knowledge invaded near regions in so leisurely a manner, how did it become common property in the Mediterranean hundreds of years B.C.?

These are not idle questions, for we find on looking into the records of Norse geographers and Arctic voyagers, that, when the description of the Maelstrom passed into printed form from the tales of seamen, it was very soon identified by scholars with the Charybdis of Homer and Virgil.

In *Purchas, His Pilgrimage* (1625 A.D.) we find the following entry : (vol. iii., p. 222) :

"The first voyage made by Master Anthonie Jenkuison, from the Citie of London, toward the land of Russia, begunne the twelfth of May, in the year 1557."

"Note that there is between the said *Rost* Islands and *Lofoot* (i.e. Lofoden), a Whirle-poole called *Malestrand*, which from halfe-ebbe until halfe-floud, maketh such a terrible noyse, that it shaketh the Rings in the doors of the Inhabitants Houses of the said Islands ten miles off. Also if there cometh any Whale within the current of the same, they make a pittiful cry. Moreover if great Trees be carryed into it by force of Streames, and after with the ebbe be cast out againe, the ends and boughes of them have been so beaten, that they are like the stalkes of Hempe that is bruized."

This is the account which John Milton used in his posthumous book, *A Description of Moscovia* (1682), p. 84 :

"In the year Osep Napea returned into his country with Anthony Jenkinson, who had the command of four tall ships. He reports etc." Athanasius Kircher, the Jesuit, has much to say in his *Mundus Subterraneus* about the Maelstrom, which he supposed to be connected by an under-earth tunnel with the head of the Gulf of Bothnia,

of which he gives diagrams and descriptions (Kircher, *Mundus Subterr.* c. x. (lib. iii., p. 17)). Amongst the Norwegian Chorographers we may refer to Pontoppidan (A.D. 1755) who gives a vivid description of the flux and reflux of the Whirlpool, and treats Kircher's theory of submarine vortices and tunnels as a conjecture without foundation. He quotes much native evidence for the violence and danger of the current, and in particular gives an account of it from the *Nordisch Chorographia* of Mr. Jonas Ramus. We transcribe some passages :

"The mountain of Helseggen, in Lofoden, lies a league from the island Ver, and betwixt these two, runs that large and dreadful stream called Moskoestrom, from the island Moskoe, which is in the middle of it, together with several circumjacent isles, as Ambaaren, half a quarter of a league northward, Ifesen, Hoeyholm, Kieldholm, Suarven, and Buckholm. Moskoe lies about a half a quarter of a mile south of the island of Ver, and betwixt them these small islands, Otterholm, Flimen, Sandflesen, *Skarholm*. Betwixt Lofoden and Moskoe, the depth of the water is between thirty-six and forty fathoms, but on the other side, towards Ver, the depth decreases so as not to afford a convenient passage for a vessel, without the risk of splitting on the rocks, which happens even in the calmest weather : when it is flood, the stream runs up the country betwixt Lofoden and Moskoe, with a boisterous rapidity, but the roar of its impetuous ebb to the sea is scarce equalled by the loudest and most dreadful cataracts ; the noise being heard several leagues off, and the vortices or pits are of such an extent and depth, that if a ship comes within its attraction, it is inevitably absorbed and carried down to the bottom, and there beat to pieces against the rocks ; and when the water relaxes, the fragments thereof are thrown up again. But these intervals of tranquility are only at the turn of the ebb and flood, in calm weather, and last but a quarter of an hour, its violence gradually returning. When the stream is most boisterous, and its fury heightened by a storm, it is dangerous to come within a Norway mile of it, boats, ships, and yachts having been carried away, by not guarding against it, before they were within its reach. It likewise happens frequently, that whales come too near the stream, and are overpowered by its violence ; and then it is impossible to describe their howlings and bellowings in their fruitless struggles to disengage themselves. A bear once attempted to cross from Lofoden to Moskoe, with a design of preying upon the

sheep at pasture in the island, afforded the like spectacle to the people ; the stream caught him, and bore him down, whilst he roared terribly, so as to be heard on shore. Large stocks of firs and pine-trees, after being absorbed by the current, rise again, broken and torn to such a degree, as if bristles grew on them. This plainly shows the bottom to consist of craggy rocks, among which they are whirled to and fro. This stream is regulated by the flux and reflux of the sea : it being constantly high and low water every six hours. In the year 1645, early in the morning of Sexagesima-Sunday, it raged with such noise and impetuosity, that on the island of Moskoe, the very stones of the houses fell to the ground." "So far Mr. Ramus, whose account perfectly agrees with those given by others, especially Mr. I. Althand of Ethne, who in his younger years was chaplain there, and consequently had many opportunities in observing variety of circumstances. Mr. Peder Dass, who lives on the very spot, will admit of no other cause of this natural prodigy ; and of contradiction to the opinion of the Danish poet Arreboe, in his stanzas on subterraneous watery abysses, he affirms this vortex to arise only from the violence and rapidity of the daily ebb and flood, occasioned by the contraction of its course betwixt the rocks, whereby, in calm weather, but much more when the sea is roused by the wind, this Moskoestrom is rendered so dangerous and dreadful, both on account of its sound, and the furious agitation of its mountainous waves."

Then follows an account of similar vortices in the Faroe islands, taken from *Ferroe Reserata*, cap 1, p. 45. On p. 83, reference is made to Kircher (*Mundus Subterr.*, lib. iii.). And it is stated that Kircher's belief in a subterranean water-passage between the Maelstrom and the Gulf of Bothnia was endorsed by M. Herbin in a dissertation delivered by him at Copenhagen in 1670. On p. 84, reference is made to Mr. Peter Claussøn in his description of Norway who states that the gyration of the water is attended with such roaring as to be heard many miles off. Also that "the stream absorbs whole trees, and after submerging them, they come up again with their roots and branches stript and torn, etc." P. 84. "I must not omit here, that Mr. Jonas Ramus, in the above-mentioned place, page 200 etc., labours to show it probable, that Scylla and Charybdis, which have always been accounted to lie upon the coast of Sicily, were no other than this Moskoestrom, whither Ulysses was actually driven in the course

of his wanderings ; the inundations of the water (in the Danish language, *Vanders Skyllen*) and the island *Skarsholm*,—having given occasion to the names of *Scylla* and *Charybdis*. Though I can by no means agree to the opinion of this ingenious Gentleman, concerning *Ulysses'* voyage, yet, in proving the probability of it in another learned piece, it must be confessed that he has given proofs of an uncommon erudition and genius, and as to the *Moskoestrom*, I shall exhibit his opinion in his own words, that then the reader may adopt as much or as little of it as he pleases."

"*Halagoland* appears to be one of the first inhabited provinces in Norway ; for soon after the Trojan war, *Ulysses*, whose name was *Outin*, sailing to the extreme limits of the great ocean, arrived in a dark country, of which he gives the following description ; it was full of high mountains, reaching to the very clouds, and perpetually covered with mists and thick darkness, so that they never enjoyed the benefit of the sun, neither at its rising nor its setting, and there he met with two horrible sea-vortices, *Scylla* and *Charybdis*, the noise of which struck him with terror, before he came near them ; and then he saw a violent ebullition of the sea, like a boiling-kettle, throwing up froth and smoke, which were rapidly carried up in the air. All this has by many been falsely interpreted of the strait near Sicily, though that island has none of those high mountains, covered with dark clouds, nor that gloominess impenetrable to the rays of the sun, nor a perilous roaring stream, so as to be impassable without extreme danger. But all this perfectly coincides with *Moskoestrom*, near *Helleland*, where there are, on the side of *Lofode*, those high mountains called *Helseggen*, the summits of which, according to *Homer's* description, were inaccessible to any man, though he had twenty hands and feet, and in winter involved in continual mists and darkness ; for from the 27th of November to the 25th of December, old style, the sun is never seen there. There, likewise, are those terrible ebullitions and horrible sounds, which so terrified *Ulysses* at *Scylla* and *Charybdis* ; circumstances quite similar to the roaring fall betwixt *Helseggen* and *Moskoe*, where the stream overflows the intermediate rocks and islands, and thus came to be called *Scilla*, from *Skillers* ; and, on the other side of *Moskoe*, are also islands and rocks, against which the stream breaks ; among these particularly, is the island *Skarholm*, which may be taken for *Charybdis*.

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"Ulysses afterwards reports, that the days after sailing by Charybdis, he came to the island Ogygia, which he describes, as divided by four rivers, each having its particular outlet. This remarkably corresponds with the island Hinde, which is so intersected with deep creeks. . . . One of these creeks is called Oegursfiord, or Agisfiord, an appellation which has some affinity with that of Ogygia ; and that Ulysses, whose name was Outin, lived seven years in this island, married and had children there, agrees with the account of our chronicles concerning Outin, where his genealogy is called Haleigatal, because his descendants lived in Halogaland."

We have given abundant space to Mr. Jonas Ramus, whose books are rare and whose theory is curious. Polyphemus is robbed of the one joke which Odysseus made him perpetrate, as to No-man having put out his eye ; and by taking the Greek OUTIS in the accusative as the real name of Odysseus, we have a mythical *Outin* who can be traced in Norse records. It is *Odin* that he is trying to find in the sublime wanderer. We must not, however, condemn Ramus or the Maelstrom because the theory is buttressed by bad philology. He may be right in looking in the Northern Seas for traces of Odysseus. The main objection is that the Maelstrom is too far north, and that it lacks the folk-lore features which we have established for Corrievrekan. We have shown that there is still an old lady in occupation of a dangerous rock, and that there is a whirlpool in the form of a cauldron (Corrie) boiling round a White Rock (Leucopetra), which White Rock is one of the stages to the Ghost-land in the West, to say nothing of minor features for identification such as the bow-shot (= pistol-shot) distance between Scylla and Charybdis. So we conclude that Skylla and Charybdis belong to the Hebrides.

Jonas Ramus, with whom we have been contending in the foregoing section, for the right to discover and annex Charybdis, has incidentally done us the good service of reminding us that at Rome in Tacitus' day, the literati were suggesting that Homer's Odysseus had been travelling over Northern lands and seas. The passage in Tacitus' *Germania* which he quotes in support of his theses, both in the book called *Nori Regnum* and in that entitled *Ulysses et Outinus unus et idem* is as follows :

"Ulixem quidam opinantur longo illo et fabuloso errore hunc oceanum delatum adiisse Germaniae terras, Asciburgiumque quod in

ripa Rheni situm hodieque incolitur, ab illo constitutum nominatumque. Aram quin etiam Ulyssi consecratum adjecto Laertae patris nomine eodem loco repertam."—Tacitus, *Germania*, c. 3.

One would like to know more about the grounds on which Tacitus makes his suggestions, and of the location of the city and the inscribed altar.

If the foregoing hypothesis be correct, one of the best confirmations will be found in the way in which it will shed light on related Homeric problems. If, for example, we are justified in taking Odysseus to Hades by the North-West Passage, what are we to say of the perils which are adjacent to the selected route? What shall we say of the cannibal *Laistrygones*, who live where night and day blend into one, and where a man who could dispense with sleep could earn double wages? Much has been written about these monsters, who appear to be closely connected with the *Cyclopes*, and only different from them in that the *Cyclopes* are of pastoral habit and do not 'deem dooms in the city,' while the *Laistrygones* have the advantage of binocular vision, and of urban life.

First of all we observe that the termination of the name *Laistrygones* is exactly similar to what the ancient geographers give us for Baltic and Scandinavian peoples: for example they do not call the *Goths* by such a short name, but apparently under the influence of a Teutonic plural, they call them *Guttones* or *Gottones*. The *Teutons* are another similar case; they appear on the ancient map precisely as *Teutones* and not as *Deutsch*. In the same way we have from Pliny, and the early geographers whom he transcribes, such names as *Ingaevones*, *Saxones*, *Senones*, etc.

In the next place we notice that there is a termination still extant in Scandinavian lands, which may throw light upon the perplexing *Laistrygones*. The southern province of Sweden is known by the name of *Gotarike* in which we easily recognise the *Goths* and their kingdom (*rik*, *rig*, or *reich*). The central province of Sweden is formed in a similar manner, and is known as *Svearike* (*Sverige*) or the kingdom of the Swedes; following this analogy, it is natural to conjecture that the *Laistrygones* are the people of the Last Rik, the *ultimum regnum* of the ancient geographers. All the attempts to find a Greek etymology for them may be set on one side, and have, indeed, already been discarded as insufficient: the *Laistrygones* are Teutonic or Scandinavian, and their proper place on the map is

not in the neighbourhood of Mt. Etna, but in Norway. Thus the identification of Scylla and Charybdis in northern waters leads to the approximate location of the savage people, who destroyed Odysseus' companions and threw rocks at his ships.

Ultimate Kingdom naturally calls up to one's mind the *Ultima Thulé* of the ancient geographers. It is well known that Thulé, at all events, is in the far north, and that it was supposed to be an island ; but no explanation has ever been forthcoming of the perplexing Thulé. The Oxford Dictionary tells us that :

"Thila, Tyle, Tile, Thyle, Tule, Thule, Gr. Θούλη" is "a proper name of unknown origin," and that it is the ancient Greek and Latin name (first found in Polybius' account of the voyage of Pytheas) for a land six days' sail north of Britain, which he supposed to be the most northerly region in the world. Thulé has been variously conjectured to be the Shetland Isles . . . Iceland, the northern point of Denmark, or some point on the coast of Norway."

There is no doubt that Pytheas, from whom all the earlier Greek and Latin geographers derive, was a really scientific explorer, and is to be reckoned amongst the first of those who have increased our knowledge of the world we live in. He travelled, perhaps on foot, or partly on foot and partly by ship, through the whole length of the British Isles, and some have suggested that he was sent on his discovery of Great Britain and the adjacent seas by some public organisation (*Societas Geographica Massiliensis*) connected with Marseilles, which was his native place. The reports which he brought back about the Midnight Sun and the Frozen Seas of the north were ridiculed as old-wives' fables, and Polybius goes so far as to say that it was impossible for Pytheas to have gone so far and seen so much, in view of the fact that he was a private person and without pecuniary resources. This depreciation of Pytheas has gone on nearly to our own day, but it is now generally recognised that Pytheas was an astronomer as well as a traveller, and that his observations are often incorporated in the geography and maps of Ptolemy. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (ed. II. xxii. 703) says of him that :

"Pytheas certainly had one merit which distinguished him from almost all his contemporaries—he was a good astronomer, and was one of the first who made observations for the determination of latitude, among others that of his native place of Massilia, which he fixed with remarkable accuracy ; his result, which was within a few miles of the

truth, was adopted by Ptolemy, and became the basis of the Ptolemaic map of the western Mediterranean." We agree to recognise that the great geographer was also a good astronomer.

The next point to which we draw attention is that *Thulē*, whether it be the name of an island, or whatever it may be, almost always is known in geographical circles as *Ultima Thulē*. Let us look at Pliny's account, which is no doubt based on Pytheas. After describing the *Glessariæ* or *Glass-islands*, from which amber is collected, he goes on to say, "Ultima omnium (sc. insularum) quae memorantur, Thulē, in qua solstitio nullas esse noctes indicavimus . . . a Thulē unius diei navigatione mare concretum, a nonnullis Cronium appellatur." Here we see the adjective *ultima* lurking before *Thule*.

The same thing is to be noted in Orosius, who puts Thulē to the N.W. of Ireland ;

Bi westannord an Ibernica is paet *ytemeste* land paet man haet *Thila*. Here *Thila* is *utmost Thila*.

What then is the meaning of *Thulē* or of *Ultima Thulē* ?

The Arabic word for *longitude* is *ṭul*, and the involved root is good Hebrew and Phœnician for *extension* generally. Consequently the Thulē of Pytheas is the last point to which longitude (or is it latitude ?) could be assigned on his maps. It is quite possible that as an astronomical term it was earlier than the days of Pytheas, who may have obtained it from Phœnician navigators. If the word carried in Pytheas the connotation of island, as well as of the farthest map-limit, it is quite possible that Norway was intended, which the ancient geographers believed to be an island. Pytheas does not say that he had himself been so far north ; he tells what he saw and distinguishes it from what he had heard. He had observed the lengthening day up to 19 hours ; it does not appear that he had ever seen the midnight sun. Our suggestion, then, is that *Ultima Thulē* means the furthest attainable longitude (or latitude). After that, we come to the non-navigable Arctic Ocean.

But where did Homer get his knowledge of the Midnight Sun or of Baltic geography ? If he has access to the Hebrides or even to the North Sea in the sense of actual knowledge it is probable that he has been drawing on Phœnician sources, as M. Bérard suggested, but in a much wider sense than M. Bérard imagined. How unfortunate that Phœnician literature has perished, and that no Carthaginian library has come to light !