

Though the narratives of Hanno and Scylax, in the state in which they have reached us, contain no passage which we can reasonably apply to the Canary Islands, it is very probable that the Carthaginians, and even the Phœnicians, had some knowledge of the Peak of Teneriffe. In the time of Plato and Aristotle, vague notions of it had reached the Greeks, who considered the whole of the coast of Africa, beyond the Pillars of Hercules, as thrown into disorder by the fire of volcanoes. The Abode of the Blessed, which was sought first in the north, beyond the Riphæan mountains, among the Hyperboreans, and next to the south of Cyrenaica, was supposed to be situated in regions that were considered to be westward, being the direction in which the world known to the ancients terminated. The name of Fortunate Islands was long in as vague signification, as that of El Dorado among the conquerors of America. Happiness was thought to reside at the end of the earth, as we seek for the most exquisite enjoyments of the mind in an ideal world beyond the limits of reality.

We must not be surprised that, previous to the time of Aristotle, we find no accurate notion respecting the Canary Islands and the volcanoes they contain, among the Greek geographers. The only nation whose navigations extended toward the west and the north, the Carthaginians, were interested in throwing a veil of mystery over those distant regions. While the senate of Carthage was averse to any partial emigration, it pointed out those islands as a place of refuge in times of trouble and public misfortune; they were to the Carthaginians what the free soil of America has become to Europeans amidst their religious and civil dissensions.

The Canaries were not better known to the Romans till eighty-four years before the reign of Augustus. A private individual was desirous of executing the project, which wise foresight had dictated to the senate of Carthage. Sertorius, conquered by Sylla, and weary of the din of war, looked out for a safe and peaceable retreat. He chose the Fortunate Islands, of which a delightful picture had been

* The idea of the happiness, the great civilization, and the riches of the inhabitants of the north, was common to the Greeks, to the people of India, and to the Mexicans.