

VARIOUS

NOTES AND QUERIES,
NUMBER 42, AUGUST
17, 1850

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NOTES

ALFRED'S OROSIUS

The two exceedingly valuable elucidations which the geography of King Alfred relating to Germany (intercalated in the royal author's translation of Orosius), has received from your learned contributors MR. R.T. HAMPSON (Vol. i., p. 257.) and MR. S.W. SINGER (Vol. i., p. 313.) induce me to offer some new views on the same subject. From my having passed a long series of years in the countries described, and read and examined all that continental authors, as well as Englishmen, have written or conjectured on the subject, I trust that my opinions, though differing from all hitherto received, may not be unworthy the attention of these gentlemen, and of your other numerous subscribers. I shall, however, at present, not to exceed the necessary limitation of your articles, restrict myself to a consideration of the very disputed *Cwenas* and the *Cwen-sae*,

which both the gentlemen have not alluded to.

The universal agreement amongst the commentators (with the two solitary exceptions I shall hereafter mention), by which this sea is taken for the White Sea, is diverting, and has been the primary source of many of their errors, and of that most monstrous one, by which Othere's narrative has been made the relation of a voyage round the North Cape to Archangel. It is difficult to say who may have first broached the brilliant idea. Spelmann's annotators, his alumni Oxonienses of University College, seem to have left the matter without much consideration, in which they were pretty servilely followed by Bussæus, though not so much so as to justify Professor Ingram's remark, "that his notes were chiefly extracted thence." (Pref. viii.) Professor Murray of Göttingen (1765), and Langebeck, in his *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum* (1773), make no mention of these arctic discoveries; and the latter is satisfied that the Cwenas are the Amazons of Adam of Bremen:—

"De Quenorum priscis Sedibus et Quenlandiæ situ, vide Torfæus, *Hist. Norweg.* i. 140. Adamus Bremens, pp. 58, 59. 61., per Amazones et terram Foeminarum voluit Queuones et Quenladium intelligi."

and it remains, therefore, to the next commentator, John Reinhold Forster (the companion navigator with Sir Joseph Banks), to have been the first to whom we owe the important error. He was praised by Daines Barrington, for whose edition he gave the notes afterwards reproduced in his *Northern Voyages*

of Discovery; but still with certain reservations. The honourable translator found some negative evidences which seemed to militate against the idea that the voyage could have extended into the arctic circle; for, in such a case, Othere would hardly have refrained from mentioning the perpetual day of those regions, the northern lights, which he must have experienced; to which we add, the perpetual snows, and many other very striking peculiarities, so new and seemingly inexplicable to a southern traveller or listener.

Succeeding writers seem to have had fewer scruples, and to have admitted the idea without consideration. Thorkelin, the Dane, (when in England to copy out the poem of *Beowulf* for publication at Copenhagen), gave a very flattering testimony to Forster's notes, in *Bibliotheca Topographica*, vol. ix. p. 891. *et seq.*, though I believe he subsequently much modified it. Our own writers who had to remark upon the subject, Sharon Turner, and Wheaton, in his *History of the Northmen*, may be excused from concurring in an opinion in which they had only a verbal interest. Professor Ingram, in his translation of *Othere's Voyage* (Oxford, 1807, 4to. p. 96. note), gives the following rather singular deduction for the appellation: Quenland was the land of the Amazons; the Amazons were fair and white-faced, therefore *Cwen-Sae* the White Sea, as Forster had deduced it: and so, having satisfied himself with this kind of Sorites, follows pretty closely in Forster's wake. But that continental writers, who took up the investigation avowedly as indispensable to the

earliest history of their native countries, should have given their concurrence and approval so easily, I must confess, astonishes me.

Dahlman, whilst Professor of History at Kiel, felt himself called upon by his situation to edit and explain this work to his countrymen more detailedly than previously, and at vol. ii. p. 405. of the work cited by Mr. Singer gives all Alfred's original notices. I shall at present only mention his interpretation of *Quen Sae*, which he translates *Weltmeer*; making it equivalent to the previous *Garseeg* or *Oceanus*. He mentions the reasonings of Rask and Porthan, of Abo, the two exceptions to the general opinion (which I shall subsequently notice), without following, on this point, what they had previously so much more clearly explained. The best account of what had previously been done on the subject is contained in Beckmann's *Litteratur der alten Reisen* (s. 450.); and incidental notices of such passages as fall within the scope of their works, are found in Schlözer's *Allgemeine nordische Geschichte*, Thummann's *Untersuchungen*, Walch's *Allgemeine Bibliothek*, Schöning's *Gamle nordishe Geographie*, Nyerup's *Historisk-statistik Skildering i aeldre og nyere Tider*, in Sprengel's *Geschichte*, and by Wörbs, in Kruse's *Deutsche Alterthümer*. Professor Ludw. Giesebrecht published in 1843, at Berlin, a most excellent *Wendische Geschichte*, in 3 vols. 8vo., but his inquiries concerning this Periplus (vol. iii. p 290) are the weakest part of his work, having mostly followed blindly the opinions to which the great fame and political importance

of Dahlman had given full credence and authority. He was not aware of the importance of Alfred's notices for the countries he describes, and particularly for the elucidation of the vexed question of Adam of Bremen's *Julin* and Helmold's *Veneta*, by an investigation of Othere's *Schiringsheal*, and which I endeavoured to point out in a pamphlet I published in the German language, and a copy of which I had the pleasure of presenting, amongst others, to Professor Dahlman himself at the Germanisten Versammlung at Lübeck in 1847. To return, however, to the *Cwena land* and *sae*, it is evident that the commentators, who are principally induced by their bearings to Sweon land to look upon the latter as the White Sea, have overlooked the circumstance that the same name is found earlier as an arm of the Wendel or Mediterranean Sea; and it is evident that one denomination cannot be taken in a double meaning; and therefore, when we find Alfred following the boundaries of Europe from Greece, "Crecalande ut on þone Wendelsae Þnord on þone Garsaege pe man Cwen sae haet", it is certain that we have here an arm of the Wendel Sea (here mistaken for the ocean) that runs from Greece to the north, and it cannot also afterwards be the White Sea. It will be necessary to bring this, in conformity with the subsequent mention of *Cwen-Sae*, more to the northward, which, as I have just said, has been hitherto principally attended to.

In Welsh topography no designation scarcely recurs oftener than *Gwent* (or, according to Welsh pronunciation, and as it

may be written, *Cwent*) in various modifications, as Gwyndyd, Gwenedd, Gynneth, Gwynne, &c. &c.; and on the authority of Gardnor's *History of Monmouthshire* (Appendix 14.), under which I willingly cloak my ignorance of the Welsh language, I learn that *Gwent* or *Went* is "spelt with or without a *G*, according to the word that precedes it, according to certain rules of grammar in the ancient British language, and that *Venedotia* for North Wales is from the same root." The author might certainly have said, "the same word Latinized." But exactly the same affinity or identity of names is found in a locality that suits the place we are in search of: in an arm of the Mediterranean stretching from Greece northwards; viz. in the Adriatic, which had for its earliest name *Sirus Venedicus*, translated in modern Italian into *Golfo di Venezia*.

Of the multitudes of authorities for this assumption I need only mention Strabo, who calls the first settlers on its northern end (whence the whole gulph was denominated) [Greek: Everoi]; or Livy, who merely Latinizes the term as *Heneti*, lib. i. cap. i., "Antenorem cum multitudine Henetum." With the fable of Antenor and his Trojan colony we have at present no further relation. The name alone, and its universality at this locality, is all that we require. I shall now show that we can follow these Veneti (which, that it is a generic name of situation, I must now omit to prove, from the compression necessary for your miscellany) without a break, in an uninterrupted chain, to the north, and to a position that suits Alfred's other locality

much more fitting, than the White Sea. The province of *Vindelicia* would carry us to the Boden See (Lake of Constance), which Pomponius Mela, lib. iii. cap. i. ad finem, calls *Lacus Venedicus*. This omitting the modern evidences of this name and province in Windisch-Grätz, Windisch-Feistriz, &c. &c., brings us sufficiently in contact with the Slavonic and Wendic people of Bohemia to track the line through them to the two Lausitz, where we are in immediate proximity to the Spree Wald. There the Wends (pronounce *Vends*) still maintain a distinct and almost independent community, with peculiar manners, and, it is believed, like the gypsies, an elected or hereditary king; and where, and round Lüchow, in Hanover, the few remnants of this once potent nation are awaiting their final and gradual absorption into the surrounding German nations. Whenever, in the north of Germany, a traveller meets with a place or district ending in *wits, itz, pitz, &c.*, wherever situate, or whatever language the inhabitants speak, he may put it down as originally Wendish; and the multitude of such terminations will show him how extensively this people was spread over those countries. Itzenplitz, the name of a family once of great consequence in the Mark of Brandenburg is ultra-Wendish. It will, therefore, excite no wonder that we find, even in Tacitus, Veneti along their coasts and Ptolemy, who wrote about a century and a half later than Strabo or Livy, seems to have improved the terminology of the ancients in the interval; for, speaking of the Sarmatian tribes, he calls these Veneti [Greek: Ouenedai par

holon ton Ouenedikon kolpon]. Here we find the truest guide for the pronunciation, or, rather, for the undigammaising of the Latin *V* and the Welsh *W*, as *Ouenetoi*, which is proved in many distant and varying localities. St. Ouen, the Welsh Owen and Evan, and the patron saint of Rouen, no doubt had his name (if he ever existed at all) coined from the French Veneti of Armorica, amongst which he lived; and when foreigners wish to render the English name *Edward* as spoken, they write *Edouard* and Robert the Wizzard, the Norman conqueror of Sicily and Apulia, has his name transformed, to suit Italian ears, into *Guiscard*, and as William into *Gulielmi*. Thus, therefore, the whole coast of Prussia, from Pomerania, as far, perhaps, as known, and certainly all the present Prussia Proper, was the *Sinus Venedicus*, Ptolemy's [Greek: kolpon]; and this was also Alfred's Cwen-Sae, for the north. I admit that when Alfred follows Orosius, he uses *Adriatic* for the *Golfo de Venezia*, but when he gives us his independent researches, he uses an indigenous name. Professor Porthan, of Abo in Finland, published a Swedish translation, with notes, of the *Voyages of Othere and Wulfstan* in the *Kongl. Vitterhets Historie och Antiquitet Academiens Handlingar, sjette Delen*. Stockholm, 1800, p. 37-106., in which he expressly couples Finland with Cwenland; and, in fact, considering the identity of *Cwen* and *Ven*, and the convertibility of the *F* and *V* in all languages, *Ven* and *Fen* and *Cwen* will all be identical: but I believe he might have taken a hint from Bussæus, who, in addition to his note at p. 13., gives at p. 22. an extract from the

Olaf Tryvassons Saga, where "Finmland edr Quenland" (Finland or Quenland) are found conjoined as synonyms. Professor Rask, who gives the original text, and a Danish translation in the *Transactions of the Shandinavish Litteratur Selkskab* for 1815, as "Otter og Wulfstans Korte Reideberetninger," &c., though laudatory in the extreme of Porthan, and differing from him on some minor points, yet fully agrees in finding the Cwen-Sea within the Baltic: and he seems to divide this inland sea into two parts by a line drawn north and south through Bornholm, of which the eastern part is called the Cwen or Serminde, or Samatian Sea.

Be that as it may, the above is one of a series of deductions by which I am prepared to prove, that as the land geography of Germany by Alfred is restricted to the valleys of the Weichsel (Wisle), the Oder, the Elbe, and the Weser, so the sea voyages are confined to the debouchures of such of these rivers as flow into the Baltic. This would give a combined action of purpose to both well suited to the genius of the monarch and the necessities of an infant trade, requiring to be made acquainted with coasts and countries accessible to their rude navigation and limited commercial enterprise. So prudent a monarch would never have thought of noting down, for the instruction and guidance of his subjects and posterity, the account of a voyage which even now, after an interval of ten centuries of continued nautical improvements, and since the discovery of the compass, is not unattended with danger, nor accomplished in less than a year's

time wasted.

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REMARKABLE PROPOSITION CONCERNING IRELAND

The following passage, which contains a curious proposition relating to Ireland, will probably be new and interesting to many readers of "NOTES AND QUERIES," since the book from which I extract it is a scarce one, and not often read. Among the many various schemes that have of late been propounded for the improvement of our sister country, this is perhaps not the least remarkable, and shows that the *questio vexata*, "What is to be done with Ireland?" is one of two centuries' standing. James Harrington, in his *Oceana, the Introduction*, (pp. 35, 36., Toland's Edition, 1700), speaking of Ireland under the name of Panopea, says,—

"Panopea, the soft Mother of a slothful and pusillanimous people, is a neighbor Iland, antiently subjected by the Arms of *Oceana*; since almost depopulated for shaking the Yoke, and at length replanted with a new Race. But (through what virtues of the Soil, or vice of the Air, soever it be), they com still to degenerat. Wherefore seeing it is neither likely to yield men fit for Arms, nor necessary it should; it had bin the Interest of *Oceana* so to have dispos'd of this Province, being both rich in the nature of the Soil, and full of commodious Ports for Trade, that it might have bin order'd for the best in relation to

her Purse, which, in my opinion (if it had been thought upon in time), might have bin best don by planting it with *Jews*, allowing them their own Rights and Laws; for that would have brought then suddenly from all parts of the World, and in sufficient numbers. And though the *Jews* be now altogether for merchandize, yet in the Land of *Canaan* (except since their exile, from whence they have not bin Landlords), they were altogether for Agriculture, and there is no cause why a man should doubt, but having a fruitful Country and excellent Ports too, they would be good at both. *Panopea* well peopled, would be worth a matter of four millions of dry rents; that is besides the advantage of the Agriculture and Trade, which, with a Nation of that Industry, coms at least to as much more. Wherefore *Panopea* being farm'd out to the *Jews* and their Heirs for ever, for the pay of a provincial Army to protect them during the term of seven years, and for two millions annual Revenue from that time forward, besides the customs which would pay the provincial Army, would have bin a bargain of such advantage both to them and this Commonwealth, as is not to be found otherwise by either. To receive the *Jews* after any other manner into a Commonwealth, were to maim it; for they of all Nations never incorporat, but taking up the room of a Limb, are no use or office to the body, while they suck the nourishment which would sustain a natural and useful member."

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NEWS

A FEW *OLD* MATERIALS FOR ITS ELUCIDATION

"*Novaum*, vulgo *Nouvelle*. Ugitio: '*Rumor, murmur, quod vulgo dicitur Novum.*' Occurrit non semel in Epistolis Marini Sanuti. '*Novis de Obitu Papæ auditis,*' in Regesta Universitatis Paris, an. 1394, *Spicileg. Acher.*, tom vi. p. 60."

So far Ducange, who also refers to the following:

"Supervenerunt nobis *Nova* certa de morte, videlicet quorundam Nobilium, nobis adhærentium, captorum per partem dieti Philippi in Britannia, et de speciali Præcepto suo Parisiis ignominiosæ morti traditorum; nec non de Strage, &c. &c."—*Charta an.* 1346, apud Rymer, t. v. p. 497.

The derivation of this word has been so strenuously and ably discussed by the contending parties in your pages, that I have no intention of interfering (non nostrum tantas componere lites) further than to furnish a few materials bearing on the subject, which may not have come under their notice.

It seems uncertain whether *Newes* was considered by our ancestors *plural* or *singular*. Resolute John Florio is sadly

inconsistent in his use of it: in his *World of Wordes*, ed. 1598, we have:

"*Nova*, newe, fresh, a noueltie, a *newe report*.

"*Novella*, a tale, a nouell, a noueltie, a discourse, a *newes* a message."

In Queen Anna's *World of Wordes*, 1611:

"*Nova*, a noueltie, a *new report*.

"*Novella*, a *tiding*, or *newes*.

"*Novellante*, a teller of *newes* or *tidings*."

Here we have *newes* treated both as *singular* and *plural*! while we have *tiding* as the singular of *tidings*, a form which, from long disuse, would now appear strange to us. In the following extract from Florio's very amusing book of Dialogues, *Second Frutes*, 1591, he makes *newes* decidedly plural:—

"C. What doo they say abroad? what *newes* have you, Master Tiberio? T. Nothing that I know; can you tell whether the post be come? C. No, Sir; they saye in the Exchange that the great Turke makes great preparation to warre with the Persian. T. 'Tis but a deuce; *these be newes* cast abroad to feede the common sorte, I doo not beleeeue them.... C. Yea, but *they* are written to verie worshipful merchants. T. By so much the lesse doo I beleeeue them; doo not you know that euerie yeare *such newes are* spreade abroad? C. I am almost of your minde, for I seldome see these written reports prove true. T. Prognostications, *newes*, deuces, and letters from forraine countries (good Master

Cæsar), are but used as confections to feed the common people withal. C. A man must give no more credite to Exchange and Powles' *newes* than to fugitiues promises and plaiers fables."

In Thomas's *Principal Rules of the Italian Grammer, with a Dictionarie*, printed by Thomas Powell in 1562, but written in 1548, we have—

"*Novella*, a tale, a parable, or a *neweltee*.

"*Novelluzza*, an *ynkelyng*.

"*Novellare*, to tell tales or *newes*."

In the title page of a rare little volume printed in 1616, we have the adjective *new* in apposition with the substantive *newes*, thus:

"Sir Thomas Overburie his Wife, with new Elegies upon his (now knowne) untimely death. Whereunto are annexed *New Newes* and Characters written by himselfe and other learned Gentlemen. Editio septima. London: printed by Edward Griffin for Lawrence Lisle, 1616, 12mo."

The head of one section is—

"*Newes* from any-whence, or, *Old Truth* under a supposal of *Noueltie*."

Chaucer uses for *the newe* and of *the newe* (sc. fashion) elliptically. *Tiding* or *Tidings*, from the A.-S. *Tid-an*, evidently preceded *newes* in the sense of intelligence, and may not *newes* therefore be an elliptic form of *new-tidinges*? Or, as our ancestors had *newelté* and *neweltés*, can it have been a contraction of the

latter? If we are to suppose with Mr. Hickson that *news* was "adopted bodily into the language," we must not go to the High-German, from which our early language has derived scarcely anything, but to the Neder-Duytsch, from the frequent and constant communication with the Low Countries in the sixteenth century. The following passages from Kilian's *Thesaurus*, printed by Plantin, at Antwerp, in 1573, are to the purpose, and may serve to show how the word was formed:—

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