

Before I enter upon a description of my personal examination of the island, it will be advisable to trace a brief outline of the geographical position of Cyprus, which caused its early importance in the history of the human race, and which has been accepted by the British government as sufficiently unchanged to warrant a military occupation in 1878, as a strategical point that dominates the eastern portion of the Mediterranean, and supplies the missing link in the chain of fortified ports from England to the shores of Egypt.

In the world's infancy oceans were unknown seas upon which the vessels of the ancients rarely ventured beyond the sight of land ; without the compass the interminable blue water was a terrible wilderness full of awe and wonder. The Phœnicians, who first circumnavigated Africa by passing through the then existing canal between Suez and the Nile, coasted the whole voyage, as did in later years the famous Portuguese, Vasco di Gama, and stations were formed along the shores at convenient intervals. Hanno the Carthaginian coasted to an uncertain and contested point upon the western shores of Africa, but no ocean commercial port was known to have existed in the early days of maritime adventure. The Mediterranean offered peculiar advantages of physical geography ; its great length and comparatively narrow width embraced a vast area, at the same time that it afforded special facilities for commerce in the numerous ports and islands that would form a refuge in stress of weather.