SEA-LIGHTS.

Sea-Light, and Lighthouse, are terms which, although not strictly synonymous, are indifferently employed to denote the same thing. A *Sea-light* may be defined as *a light so modified and directed as to present to the mariner an ap­pearance which shall at once enable him to judge of his position during the night, in the same manner as the sight of a landmark would do during the dag.*

The early history of lighthouses is very uncertain ; and many ingenious antiquaries, finding the want of authentic records, have endeavoured to supply the deficiency by con­jectures based upon casual and obscure allusions in ancient writers, and have invented many vague and unsatisfactory hypotheses on the subject, drawn from the heathen mytho­logy. Some writers have gone so far as to imagine, that the Cylcopes were the keepers of lighthouses ; whilst others have actually maintained that Cyclops was intended, by a bold prosopopoeia, to represent a lighthouse itself. A no­tion so fanciful deserpes little consideration ; and in order to show how ill it accords with that mythology of which it is intended to be an exposition, it seems enough to quote the lines from the ninth Odyssey, where Homer, after de­scribing the darkness of the night, informs us that the fleet of Ulysses actually struck the shore of the Cyclopean island, before it could be seen.

**\*Evd, oυτtr *τηι> vησov lσlt>pακcv υφθdλμinσιv* \*Oυτ, *oυr κύματα μaκpa κυXιv∂oμtva πoτ'ι χtρσov ,Eισiboμ(∣ι ιrp'ιv vηat Hjσσi∖uovς eπικ(∖σat***

*Odyss.* ix. 146.

There does not appear any better reason for supposing, that under the history of Tithonus, Chiron, or any other personage of antiquity, the idea of a lighthouse was con­veyed ; for such suppositions, however reconcileable they may appear with some parts of the mythology, involve ob­vious inconsistencies with others. Nor does it seem at all probable, that in those early times, when navigation was so little practised, the advantages of beacon-lights were so ge­nerally known and acknowledged, as to render them the objects of mythological allegory.

About three hundred years before the Christian era, Chares, the disciple of Lysippus, constructed the celebrated brazen statue, called the Colossus of Rhodes, which was of such dimensions as to allow vessels to sail into the harbour between its legs, which spanned the entrance. There is con­sidcrable probability in the idea, that this figure served the μurposesofa lighthouse; but we do not reraember any passage in ancient writers, where this use of the Colossus is expressly mentioned There is much inconsistency in the account of this fabric by early writers, who, in describing the distant ob­jects which could be seen from it, appear to have forgotten the height which they assign to the figure. It was partly de­molished by an earthquake, about eighty years after its com­pletion ; and so late as the year 672 of our era, the brass of which it was composed, was sold by the Saracens to a Jewish merchant of Edessa, for a sum, it is said, equal to L.36,000.

Little is known with certainty regarding the Pharos of Alexandria, which was regarded by the ancients as one of

the seven wonders of the world. It was built by Ptolemy Philadelphus, about 300 years before Christ ; and it is re­corded by Strabo, that the architect Sostratus, the son of Dex- iphanes, having first secretly cut his own name on the solid walls of the building, covered the words with plaster, and, in obedience to Ptolemy’s command, made the following in­scription on the plaster : “King Ptolemy to the gods, the saviours, for the benefit of sailors.” What truth there may be in this account of the fraud of Sostratus, there is now no means of determining ; and the story is only now in­teresting, in so far as it shows the object of the royal founder and the use of the tower. The accounts which have reached us of the dimensions of this remarkable edi­fice, are exceedingly various ; and many of the statements regarding the distance at which it could be seen, are clearly fabulous. Josephus approaches nearest to probability, and informs us, that the fire which was kept constantly burning in the top, was visible by seamen at a distance equal to about forty miles. If the reports of some writers are to be believed, this tower must have far exceeded in size the great pyramid itself; but the fact that a building of compar­atively so late a date, should have so completely disappear­ed, whilst the pyramid remains almost unchanged, is a suf­ficient reason for rejecting, as erroneous, the dimensions which have been assigned by most writers to the Pharos of Alexandria. Some have pretended that large mirrors were employed to direct the rays of the beacon-light on its top, in the most advantageous direction; but there is nothing like respectable evidence in favour of this supposition. Others, with greater probability, have imagined that this celebrated beacon was known to mariners, simply by the uncertain and rude light afforded by a common fire. In speaking of the Pharos,@@1 the poet Lucan, on most occasions sufficiently fond of the marvellous, takes no notice of the gigantic mirrors which it is said to have contained. It is true that, by using the word “ *lampada,"* which can only with propriety be ap­plied to a more perfect mode of illumination than an open tire, he appears to indicate that the *“flaminis" of* which he speaks, were not so produced. The word *lampada* may, however, be used metaphorically ; and *flammis* would, in this case, not improperly describe the irregular appearance of a common fire. Those who are desirous of knowing all that occurs in ancient authors, on the subject of the Pharos of Alexandria, may consult Pliny, 1. xxxvi. c. 12.; 1. v. c. 13., and 1. xiii c. 11. Strabo, 1. xvii. p. 791, et seq. Cæsar, *comment. de Bell, civil,* 1. iii. Pompon. Mela. 1. ii. c. 7. Ammian. Marcellin. 1. xxii. c. 16. Joseph, *de Bell. Judaic.* 1. vi. Nicolas Lloyd’s *Lexicon Geographicum,* and the *Notitia Orbis Antiqui* of Celarius, 1. iv. c. 1, p. 13.

Mr. Moore, in his *History of Ireland,* (vol. i. p. 1G.) speaks of the Tower of Coruña, which he says is mentioned in the traditionary history of that country, as a lighthouse erected for the use of the Irish in their frequent early in­tercourse with Spain. In confirmation of this opinion, he cites a somewhat obscure passage from Æthius, the cosmo- grapher. This in all probability is the tower which Hum­boldt mentions in his Narrative under the name of the *Iron*

@@@, Septima nox, Zepbyro nunquam laxante rudentes, Ostendit Phariis Ægyptia littora *flammis.*

Sed prius orta dies nocturnum *lampada* texit,

Quam tutas intraret aquas.