

Lives of the Necromancers

William Godwin

The Project Gutenberg EBook of Lives of the Necromancers, by William Godwin

Copyright laws are changing all over the world. Be sure to check the copyright laws for your country before downloading or redistributing this or any other Project Gutenberg eBook.

This header should be the first thing seen when viewing this Project Gutenberg file. Please do not remove it. Do not change or edit the header without written permission.

Please read the "legal small print," and other information about the eBook and Project Gutenberg at the bottom of this file. Included is important information about your specific rights and restrictions in how the file may be used. You can also find out about how to make a donation to Project Gutenberg, and how to get involved.

****Welcome To The World of Free Plain Vanilla Electronic Texts****

****eBooks Readable By Both Humans and By Computers, Since 1971****

*******These eBooks Were Prepared By Thousands of Volunteers!*******

Title: Lives of the Necromancers

Author: William Godwin

Release Date: December, 2004 [EBook #7082]
[This file was first posted on March 8, 2003]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ISO-8859-1

***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK, LIVES OF THE NECROMANCERS *****

Wendy Crockett, Carlo Traverso, Charles Franks and the Online
Distributed Proofreading Team

This file was produced from images generously made available by the
Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF/Gallica) at <http://gallica.bnf.fr>.

Livros Grátis

<http://www.livrosgratis.com.br>

Milhares de livros grátis para download.

[Transcriber's Note: Footnotes have been numbered sequentially and moved to the end of the text.]

LIVES OF THE NECROMANCERS:

OR

AN ACCOUNT OF THE MOST EMINENT PERSONS IN SUCCESSIVE AGES, WHO HAVE CLAIMED FOR THEMSELVES, OR TO WHOM HAS BEEN IMPUTED BY OTHERS,

THE

EXERCISE OF MAGICAL POWER.

BY WILLIAM GODWIN.

LONDON

Frederick J Mason, 444, West Strand

1834

PREFACE.

The main purpose of this book is to exhibit a fair delineation of the credulity of the human mind. Such an exhibition cannot fail to be productive of the most salutary lessons.

One view of the subject will teach us a useful pride in the abundance of our faculties. Without pride man is in reality of little value. It is pride that stimulates us to all our great undertakings. Without pride, and the secret persuasion of extraordinary talents, what man would take up the pen with a view to produce an important work, whether of imagination and poetry, or of profound science, or of acute and subtle reasoning and intellectual anatomy? It is pride in this sense that makes the great general and the consummate legislator, that animates us to tasks the most laborious, and causes us to shrink from no difficulty, and to be confounded and overwhelmed with no obstacle that can be interposed in our path.

Nothing can be more striking than the contrast between man and the inferior animals. The latter live only for the day, and see for the most part only what is immediately before them. But man lives in the past and the future. He reasons upon and improves by the past; he records the acts of a long series of generations: and he looks into

future time, lays down plans which he shall be months and years in bringing to maturity, and contrives machines and delineates systems of education and government, which may gradually add to the accommodations of all, and raise the species generally into a nobler and more honourable character than our ancestors were capable of sustaining.

Man looks through nature, and is able to reduce its parts into a great whole. He classes the beings which are found in it, both animate and inanimate, delineates and describes them, investigates their properties, and records their capacities, their good and evil qualities, their dangers and their uses.

Nor does he only see all that is; but he also images all that is not. He takes to pieces the substances that are, and combines their parts into new arrangements. He peoples all the elements from the world of his imagination. It is here that he is most extraordinary and wonderful. The record of what actually is, and has happened in the series of human events, is perhaps the smallest part of human history. If we would know man in all his subtleties, we must deviate into the world of miracles and sorcery. To know the things that are not, and cannot be, but have been imagined and believed, is the most curious chapter in the annals of man. To observe the actual results of these imaginary phenomena, and the crimes and cruelties they have caused us to commit, is one of the most instructive studies in which we can possibly be engaged. It is here that man is most astonishing, and that we contemplate with most admiration the discursive and unbounded nature of his faculties.

But, if a recollection of the examples of the credulity of the human mind may in one view supply nourishment to our pride, it still more obviously tends to teach us sobriety and humiliation. Man in his genuine and direct sphere is the disciple of reason; it is by this faculty that he draws inferences, exerts his prudence, and displays the ingenuity of machinery, and the subtlety of system both in natural and moral philosophy. Yet what so irrational as man? Not contented with making use of the powers we possess, for the purpose of conducting to our accommodation and well being, we with a daring spirit inquire into the invisible causes of what we see, and people all nature with Gods "of every shape and size" and angels, with principalities and powers, with beneficent beings who "take charge concerning us lest at any time we dash our foot against a stone," and with devils who are perpetually on the watch to perplex us and do us injury. And, having familiarised our minds with the conceptions of these beings, we immediately aspire to hold communion with them. We represent to ourselves God, as "walking in the garden with us in the cool of the day," and teach ourselves "not to forget to entertain strangers, lest by so doing we should repel angels unawares."

No sooner are we, even in a slight degree, acquainted with the laws of nature, than we frame to ourselves the idea, by the aid of some invisible ally, of suspending their operation, of calling out meteors in the sky, of commanding storms and tempests, of arresting the motion of the heavenly bodies, of producing miraculous cures upon the bodies of our fellow-men, or afflicting them with disease and death, of calling up the deceased from the silence of the grave, and compelling them to disclose "the secrets of the world unknown."

But, what is most deplorable, we are not contented to endeavour to

secure the aid of God and good angels, but we also aspire to enter into alliance with devils, and beings destined for their rebellion to suffer eternally the pains of hell. As they are supposed to be of a character perverted and depraved, we of course apply to them principally for purposes of wantonness, or of malice and revenge. And, in the instances which have occurred only a few centuries back, the most common idea has been of a compact entered into by an unprincipled and impious human being with the sworn enemy of God and man, in the result of which the devil engages to serve the capricious will and perform the behests of his blasphemous votary for a certain number of years, while the deluded wretch in return engages to renounce his God and Saviour, and surrender himself body and soul to the pains of hell from the end of that term to all eternity. No sooner do we imagine human beings invested with these wonderful powers, and conceive them as called into action for the most malignant purposes, than we become the passive and terrified slaves of the creatures of our own imaginations, and fear to be assailed at every moment by beings to whose power we can set no limit, and whose modes of hostility no human sagacity can anticipate and provide against. But, what is still more extraordinary, the human creatures that pretend to these powers have often been found as completely the dupes of this supernatural machinery, as the most timid wretch that stands in terror at its expected operation; and no phenomenon has been more common than the confession of these allies of hell, that they have verily and indeed held commerce and formed plots and conspiracies with Satan.

The consequence of this state of things has been, that criminal jurisprudence and the last severities of the law have been called forth to an amazing extent to exterminate witches and witchcraft. More especially in the sixteenth century hundreds and thousands were burned alive within the compass of a small territory; and judges, the directors of the scene, a Nicholas Remi, a De Lancre, and many others, have published copious volumes, entering into a minute detail of the system and fashion of the witchcraft of the professors, whom they sent in multitudes to expiate their depravity at the gallows and the stake.

One useful lesson which we may derive from the detail of these particulars, is the folly in most cases of imputing pure and unmingled hypocrisy to man. The human mind is of so ductile a character that, like what is affirmed of charity by the apostle, it "believeth all things, and endureth all things." We are not at liberty to trifle with the sacredness of truth. While we persuade others, we begin to deceive ourselves. Human life is a drama of that sort, that, while we act our part, and endeavour to do justice to the sentiments which are put down for us, we begin to believe we are the thing we would represent.

To shew however the modes in which the delusion acts upon the person through whom it operates, is not properly the scope of this book. Here and there I have suggested hints to this purpose, which the curious reader may follow to their furthest extent, and discover how with perfect good faith the artist may bring himself to swallow the grossest impossibilities. But the work I have written is not a treatise of natural magic. It rather proposes to display the immense wealth of the faculty of imagination, and to shew the extravagances of which the man may be guilty who surrenders himself to its guidance.

It is fit however that the reader should bear in mind, that what is put down in this book is but a small part and scantling of the acts of sorcery and witchcraft which have existed in human society. They have

been found in all ages and countries. The torrid zone and the frozen north have neither of them escaped from a fruitful harvest of this sort of offspring. In ages of ignorance they have been especially at home; and the races of men that have left no records behind them to tell almost that they existed, have been most of all rife in deeds of darkness, and those marvellous incidents which especially astonish the spectator, and throw back the infant reason of man into those shades and that obscurity from which it had so recently endeavoured to escape.

I wind up for the present my literary labours with the production of this book. Nor let any reader imagine that I here put into his hands a mere work of idle recreation. It will be found pregnant with deeper uses. The wildest extravagances of human fancy, the most deplorable perversion of human faculties, and the most horrible distortions of jurisprudence, may occasionally afford us a salutary lesson. I love in the foremost place to contemplate man in all his honours and in all the exaltation of wisdom and virtue; but it will also be occasionally of service to us to look into his obliquities, and distinctly to remark how great and portentous have been his absurdities and his follies.

May 29, 1834.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

AMBITIOUS NATURE OF MAN

HIS DESIRE TO PENETRATE INTO FUTURITY

DIVINATION

AUGURY

CHIROMANCY

PHYSIOGNOMY

INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS

CASTING OF LOTS

ASTROLOGY

ORACLES

DELPHI

THE DESIRE TO COMMAND AND CONTROL FUTURE EVENTS

COMMERCE WITH THE INVISIBLE WORLD

SORCERY AND ENCHANTMENT

WITCHCRAFT

COMPACTS WITH THE DEVIL

IMPS

TALISMANS AND AMULETS

NECROMANCY

ALCHEMY

FAIRIES

ROSICRUCIANS

SYLPHS AND GNOMES, SALAMANDERS AND UNDINES

EXAMPLES OF NECROMANCY AND WITCHCRAFT FROM THE BIBLE

THE MAGI, OR WISE MEN OF THE EAST

EGYPT

STATUE OF MEMNON
TEMPLE OF JUPITER AMMON: ITS ORACLES
CHALDEA AND BABYLON
ZOROASTER

GREECE

DEITIES OF GREECE
DEMIGODS
DAEDALUS
THE ARGONAUTS
MEDEA
CIRCE
ORPHEUS
AMPHION
TIRESIAS
ABARIS
PYTHAGORAS
EPIMENIDES
EMPEDOCLES
ARISTEAS
HERMOTIMUS
THE MOTHER OF DEMARATUS, KING OF SPARTA
ORACLES
INVASION OF XERXES INTO GREECE
DEMOCRITUS
SOCRATES

ROME

VIRGIL
POLYDORUS
DIDO
ROMULUS
NUMA
TULLUS HOSTILIUS
ACCIUS NAVIUS
SERVIUS TULLIUS
THE SORCERESS OF VIRGIL
CANIDIA
ERICHTHO
SERTORIUS
CASTING OUT DEVILS
SIMON MAGUS
ELYMAS, THE SORCERER
NERO
VESPASIAN
APOLLONIUS OF TYANA
APULEIUS
ALEXANDER THE PAPHLAGONIAN

REVOLUTION PRODUCED IN THE HISTORY OF NECROMANCY AND WITCHCRAFT UPON
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY
MAGICAL CONSULTATIONS RESPECTING THE LIFE OF THE EMPEROR

HISTORY OF NECROMANCY IN THE EAST

GENERAL SILENCE OF THE EAST RESPECTING INDIVIDUAL NECROMANCERS
ROCAIL
HAKEM, OTHERWISE MACANNA
ARABIAN NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS
PERSIAN TALES

STORY OF A GOULE
ARABIAN NIGHTS
RESEMBLANCE OF THE TALES OF THE EAST AND OF EUROPE
CAUSES OF HUMAN CREDULITY

DARK AGES OF EUROPE
MERLIN
ST. DUNSTAN

COMMUNICATION OF EUROPE AND THE SARACENS
GERBERT, POPE SILVESTER II
BENEDICT THE NINTH
GREGORY THE SEVENTH
DUFF, KING OF SCOTLAND
MACBETH
VIRGIL
ROBERT OF LINCOLN
MICHAEL SCOT
THE DEAN OF BADAJOZ
MIRACLE OF THE TUB OF WATER
INSTITUTION OF FRIARS
ALBERTUS MAGNUS
ROGER BACON
THOMAS AQUINAS
PETER OF AONO
ENGLISH LAW OF HIGH TREASON
ZIITO
TRANSMUTATION OF METALS
ARTEPHIUS
RAYMOND LULLI
ARNOLD OF VILLENEUVE
ENGLISH LAWS RESPECTING TRANSMUTATION

REVIVAL OF LETTERS
JOAN OF ARC
ELEANOR COBHAM, DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER
RICHARD III

SANGUINARY PROCEEDINGS AGAINST WITCHCRAFT
SAVONAROLA
TRITHEMIUS
LUTHER
CORNELIUS AGRIPPA
FAUSTUS
SABELLICUS
PARACELSUS
CARDAN
QUACKS, WHO IN COOL BLOOD UNDERTOOK TO OVERREACH MANKIND
BENVENUTO CELLINI
NOSTRADAMUS
DOCTOR DEE
EARL OF DERBY
KING JAMES'S VOYAGE TO NORWAY
JOHN FIAN
KING JAMES'S DEMONOLOGY
STATUTE, 1 JAMES I
FORMAN AND OTHERS
LATEST IDEAS OF JAMES ON THE SUBJECT
LANCASHIRE WITCHES

LADY DAVIES
EDWARD FAIRFAX
DOCTOR LAMB
URBAIN GRANDIER
ASTROLOGY
WILLIAM LILLY
MATTHEW HOPKINS
CROMWEL
DOROTHY MATELEY
WITCHES HANGED BY SIR MATTHEW HALE
WITCHCRAFT IN SWEDEN
WITCHCRAFT IN NEW ENGLAND

CONCLUSION

LIVES OF THE NECROMANCERS

The improvements that have been effected in natural philosophy have by degrees convinced the enlightened part of mankind that the material universe is every where subject to laws, fixed in their weight, measure and duration, capable of the most exact calculation, and which in no case admit of variation and exception. Whatever is not thus to be accounted for is of mind, and springs from the volition of some being, of which the material form is subjected to our senses, and the action of which is in like manner regulated by the laws of matter. Beside this, mind, as well as matter, is subject to fixed laws; and thus every phenomenon and occurrence around us is rendered a topic for the speculations of sagacity and foresight. Such is the creed which science has universally prescribed to the judicious and reflecting among us.

It was otherwise in the infancy and less mature state of human knowledge. The chain of causes and consequences was yet unrecognized; and events perpetually occurred, for which no sagacity that was then in being was able to assign an original. Hence men felt themselves habitually disposed to refer many of the appearances with which they were conversant to the agency of invisible intelligences; sometimes under the influence of a benignant disposition, sometimes of malice, and sometimes perhaps from an inclination to make themselves sport of the wonder and astonishment of ignorant mortals. Omens and portents told these men of some piece of good or ill fortune speedily to befall them. The flight of birds was watched by them, as foretoking somewhat important. Thunder excited in them a feeling of supernatural terror. Eclipses with fear of change perplexed the nations. The phenomena of the heavens, regular and irregular, were anxiously remarked from the same principle. During the hours of darkness men were apt to see a supernatural being in every bush; and they could not cross a receptacle for the dead, without expecting to encounter some one of the departed uneasily wandering among graves, or commissioned to reveal somewhat momentous and deeply affecting to the survivors. Fairies danced in the moonlight glade; and something preternatural perpetually occurred to fill the living with admiration and awe.

All this gradually reduced itself into a system. Mankind, particularly in the dark and ignorant ages, were divided into the strong and the

weak; the strong and weak of animal frame, when corporeal strength more decidedly bore sway than in a period of greater cultivation; and the strong and weak in reference to intellect; those who were bold, audacious and enterprising in acquiring an ascendancy over their fellow-men, and those who truckled, submitted, and were acted upon, from an innate consciousness of inferiority, and a superstitious looking up to such as were of greater natural or acquired endowments than themselves. The strong in intellect were eager to avail themselves of their superiority, by means that escaped the penetration of the multitude, and had recourse to various artifices to effect their ends. Beside this, they became the dupes of their own practices. They set out at first in their conception of things from the level of the vulgar. They applied themselves diligently to the unravelling of what was unknown; wonder mingled with their contemplation; they abstracted their minds from things of ordinary occurrence, and, as we may denominate it, of real life, till at length they lost their true balance amidst the astonishment they sought to produce in their inferiors. They felt a vocation to things extraordinary; and they willingly gave scope and line without limit to that which engendered in themselves the most gratifying sensations, at the same time that it answered the purposes of their ambition.

As these principles in the two parties, the more refined and the vulgar, are universal, and derive their origin from the nature of man, it has necessarily happened that this faith in extraordinary events, and superstitious fear of what is supernatural, has diffused itself through every climate of the world, in a certain stage of human intellect, and while refinement had not yet got the better of barbarism. The Celts of antiquity had their Druids, a branch of whose special profession was the exercise of magic. The Chaldeans and Egyptians had their wise men, their magicians and their sorcerers. The negroes have their foretellers of events, their amulets, and their reporters and believers of miraculous occurrences. A similar race of men was found by Columbus and the other discoverers of the New World in America; and facts of a parallel nature are attested to us in the islands of the South Seas. And, as phenomena of this sort were universal in their nature, without distinction of climate, whether torrid or frozen, and independently of the discordant manners and customs of different countries, so have they been very slow and recent in their disappearing. Queen Elizabeth sent to consult Dr. John Dee, the astrologer, respecting a lucky day for her coronation; King James the First employed much of his learned leisure upon questions of witchcraft and demonology, in which he fully believed and sir Matthew Hale in the year 1664 caused two old women to be hanged upon a charge of unlawful communion with infernal agents.

The history of mankind therefore will be very imperfect, and our knowledge of the operations and eccentricities of the mind lamentably deficient, unless we take into our view what has occurred under this head. The supernatural appearances with which our ancestors conceived themselves perpetually surrounded must have had a strong tendency to cherish and keep alive the powers of the imagination, and to penetrate those who witnessed or expected such things with an extraordinary sensitiveness. As the course of events appears to us at present, there is much, though abstractedly within the compass of human sagacity to foresee, which yet the actors on the scene do not foresee: but the blindness and perplexity of short-sighted mortals must have been wonderfully increased, when ghosts and extraordinary appearances were conceived liable to cross the steps and confound the projects of men

at every turn, and a malicious wizard or a powerful enchanter might involve his unfortunate victim in a chain of calamities, which no prudence could disarm, and no virtue could deliver him from. They were the slaves of an uncontrollable destiny, and must therefore have been eminently deficient in the perseverance and moral courage, which may justly be required of us in a more enlightened age. And the men (but these were few compared with the great majority of mankind), who believed themselves gifted with supernatural endowments, must have felt exempt and privileged from common rules, somewhat in the same way as the persons whom fiction has delighted to portray as endowed with immeasurable wealth, or with the power of rendering themselves impassive or invisible. But, whatever were their advantages or disadvantages, at any rate it is good for us to call up in review things, which are now passed away, but which once occupied so large a share of the thoughts and attention of mankind, and in a great degree tended to modify their characters and dictate their resolutions.

As has already been said, numbers of those who were endowed with the highest powers of human intellect, such as, if they had lived in these times, would have aspired to eminence in the exact sciences, to the loftiest flights of imagination, or to the discovery of means by which the institutions of men in society might be rendered more beneficial and faultless, at that time wasted the midnight oil in endeavouring to trace the occult qualities and virtues of things, to render invisible spirits subject to their command, and to effect those wonders, of which they deemed themselves to have a dim conception, but which more rational views of nature have taught us to regard as beyond our power to effect. These sublime wanderings of the mind are well entitled to our labour to trace and investigate. The errors of man are worthy to be recorded, not only as beacons to warn us from the shelves where our ancestors have made shipwreck, but even as something honourable to our nature, to show how high a generous ambition could soar, though in forbidden paths, and in things too wonderful for us.

Nor only is this subject inexpressibly interesting, as setting before us how the loftiest and most enterprising minds of ancient days formerly busied themselves. It is also of the highest importance to an ingenuous curiosity, inasmuch as it vitally affected the fortunes of so considerable a portion of the mass of mankind. The legislatures of remote ages bent all their severity at different periods against what they deemed the unhallowed arts of the sons and daughters of reprobation. Multitudes of human creatures have been sacrificed in different ages and countries, upon the accusation of having exercised arts of the most immoral and sacrilegious character. They were supposed to have formed a contract with a mighty and invisible spirit, the great enemy of man, and to have sold themselves, body and soul, to everlasting perdition, for the sake of gratifying, for a short term of years, their malignant passions against those who had been so unfortunate as to give them cause of offence. If there were any persons who imagined they had entered into such a contract, however erroneous was their belief, they must of necessity have been greatly depraved. And it was but natural that such as believed in this crime, must have considered it as atrocious beyond all others, and have regarded those who were supposed guilty of it with inexpressible abhorrence. There are many instances on record, where the persons accused of it, either from the depth of their delusion, or, which is more probable, harassed by persecution, by the hatred of their fellow-creatures directed against them, or by torture, actually confessed themselves guilty. These instances are too numerous, not to

constitute an important chapter in the legislation of past ages. And, now that the illusion has in a manner passed away from the face of the earth, we are on that account the better qualified to investigate this error in its causes and consequences, and to look back on the tempest and hurricane from which we have escaped, with chastened feelings, and a sounder estimate of its nature, its reign, and its effects.

AMBITIOUS NATURE OF MAN

Man is a creature of boundless ambition.

It is probably our natural wants that first awaken us from that lethargy and indifference in which man may be supposed to be plunged previously to the impulse of any motive, or the accession of any uneasiness. One of our earliest wants may be conceived to be hunger, or the desire of food.

From this simple beginning the history of man in all its complex varieties may be regarded as proceeding.

Man in a state of society, more especially where there is an inequality of condition and rank, is very often the creature of leisure. He finds in himself, either from internal or external impulse, a certain activity. He finds himself at one time engaged in the accomplishment of his obvious and immediate desires, and at another in a state in which these desires have for the present been fulfilled, and he has no present occasion to repeat those exertions which led to their fulfilment. This is the period of contemplation. This is the state which most eminently distinguishes us from the brutes. Here it is that the history of man, in its exclusive sense, may be considered as taking its beginning.

Here it is that he specially recognises in himself the sense of power. Power in its simplest acceptation, may be exerted in either of two ways, either in his procuring for himself an ample field for more refined accommodations, or in the exercise of compulsion and authority over other living creatures. In the pursuit of either of these, and especially the first, he is led to the attainment of skill and superior adroitness in the use of his faculties.

No sooner has man reached to this degree of improvement, than now, if not indeed earlier, he is induced to remark the extreme limitedness of his faculties in respect to the future; and he is led, first earnestly to desire a clearer insight into the future, and next a power of commanding those external causes upon which the events of the future depend. The first of these desires is the parent of divination, augury, chiromancy, astrology, and the consultation of oracles; and the second has been the prolific source of enchantment, witchcraft, sorcery, magic, necromancy, and alchemy, in its two branches, the unlimited prolongation of human life, and the art of converting less precious metals into gold.

HIS DESIRE TO PENETRATE INTO FUTURITY.

Nothing can suggest to us a more striking and stupendous idea of the faculties of the human mind, than the consideration of the various arts by which men have endeavoured to penetrate into the future, and to command the events of the future, in ways that in sobriety and truth are entirely out of our competence. We spurn impatiently against the narrow limits which the constitution of things has fixed to our aspirations, and endeavour by a multiplicity of ways to accomplish that which it is totally beyond the power of man to effect.

DIVINATION.

Divination has been principally employed in inspecting the entrails of beasts offered for sacrifice, and from their appearance drawing omens of the good or ill success of the enterprises in which we are about to engage.

What the divination by the cup was which Joseph practised, or pretended to practise, we do not perhaps exactly understand. We all of us know somewhat of the predictions, to this day resorted to by maid-servants and others, from the appearance of the sediment to be found at the bottom of a tea-cup. Predictions of a similar sort are formed from the unpremeditated way in which we get out of bed in a morning, or put on our garments, from the persons or things we shall encounter when we first leave our chamber or go forth in the air, or any of the indifferent accidents of life.

AUGURY.

Augury has its foundation in observing the flight of birds, the sounds they utter, their motions whether sluggish or animated, and the avidity or otherwise with which they appear to take their food. The college of augurs was one of the most solemn institutions of ancient Rome.

CHIROMANCY.

Chiromancy, or the art of predicting the various fortunes of the individual, from an inspection of the minuter variations of the lines to be found in the palm of the human hand, has been used perhaps at one time or other in all the nations of the world.

PHYSIOGNOMY.

Physiognomy is not so properly a prediction of future events, as an attempt to explain the present and inherent qualities of a man. By unfolding his propensities however, it virtually gave the world to understand the sort of proceedings in which he was most likely to engage. The story of Socrates and the physiognomist is sufficiently known. The physiognomist having inspected the countenance of the philosopher, pronounced that he was given to intemperance, sensuality, and violent bursts of passion, all of which was so contrary to his character as universally known, that his disciples derided the physiognomist as a vain-glorious pretender. Socrates however presently put them to silence, by declaring that he had had an original propensity to all the vices imputed to him, and had only conquered the

propensity by dint of a severe and unremitted self-discipline.

INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS.

Oneirocriticism, or the art of interpreting dreams, seems of all the modes of prediction the most inseparable from the nature of man. A considerable portion of every twenty-four hours of our lives is spent in sleep; and in sleep nothing is at least more usual, than for the mind to be occupied in a thousand imaginary scenes, which for the time are as realities, and often excite the passions of the mind of the sleeper in no ordinary degree. Many of them are wild and rambling; but many also have a portentous sobriety. Many seem to have a strict connection with the incidents of our actual lives; and some appear as if they came for the very purpose to warn us of danger, or prepare us for coming events. It is therefore no wonder that these occasionally fill our waking thoughts with a deep interest, and impress upon us an anxiety of which we feel it difficult to rid ourselves. Accordingly, in ages when men were more prone to superstition, than at present, they sometimes constituted a subject of earnest anxiety and inquisitiveness; and we find among the earliest exercises of the art of prediction, the interpretation of dreams to have occupied a principal place, and to have been as it were reduced into a science.

CASTING OF LOTS.

The casting of lots seems scarcely to come within the enumeration here given. It was intended as an appeal to heaven upon a question involved in uncertainty, with the idea that the supreme Ruler of the skies, thus appealed to, would from his omniscience supply the defect of human knowledge. Two examples, among others sufficiently remarkable, occur in the Bible. One of Achan, who secreted part of the spoil taken in Jericho, which was consecrated to the service of God, and who, being taken by lot, confessed, and was stoned to death. [1] The other of Jonah, upon whom the lot fell in a mighty tempest, the crew of the ship enquiring by this means what was the cause of the calamity that had overtaken them, and Jonah being in consequence cast into the sea.

ASTROLOGY.

Astrology was one of the modes most anciently and universally resorted to for discovering the fortunes of men and nations. Astronomy and astrology went hand in hand, particularly among the people of the East. The idea of fate was most especially bound up in this branch of prophecy. If the fortune of a man was intimately connected with the position of the heavenly bodies, it became evident that little was left to the province of his free will. The stars overruled him in all his determinations; and it was in vain for him to resist them. There was something flattering to the human imagination in conceiving that the planets and the orbs on high were concerned in the conduct we should pursue, and the events that should befall us. Man resigned himself to his fate with a solemn, yet a lofty feeling, that the remotest portions of the universe were concerned in the catastrophe that awaited him. Beside which, there was something peculiarly seducing in the apparently profound investigation of the professors of astrology. They busied themselves with the actual position of the heavenly bodies, their conjunctions and oppositions; and of

consequence there was a great apparatus of diagrams and calculation to which they were prompted to apply themselves, and which addressed itself to the eyes and imaginations of those who consulted them.

ORACLES.

But that which seems to have had the greatest vogue in times of antiquity, relative to the prediction of future events, is what is recorded of oracles. Finding the insatiable curiosity of mankind as to what was to happen hereafter, and the general desire they felt to be guided in their conduct by an anticipation of things to come, the priests pretty generally took advantage of this passion, to increase their emoluments and offerings, and the more effectually to inspire the rest of their species with veneration and a willing submission to their authority. The oracle was delivered in a temple, or some sacred place; and in this particular we plainly discover that mixture of nature and art, of genuine enthusiasm and contriving craft, which is so frequently exemplified in the character of man.

DELPHI.

The oracle of Apollo at Delphi is the most remarkable; and respecting it we are furnished with the greatest body of particulars. The locality of this oracle is said to have been occasioned by the following circumstance. A goat-herd fed his flocks on the acclivity of mount Parnassus. As the animals wandered here and there in pursuit of food, they happened to approach a deep and long chasm which appeared in the rock. From this chasm a vapour issued; and the goats had no sooner inhaled a portion of the vapour, than they began to play and frisk about with singular agility. The goat-herd, observing this, and curious to discover the cause, held his head over the chasm; when, in a short time, the fumes having ascended to his brain, he threw himself into a variety of strange attitudes, and uttered words, which probably he did not understand himself, but which were supposed to convey a prophetic meaning.

This phenomenon was taken advantage of, and a temple to Apollo was erected on the spot. The credulous many believed that here was obviously a centre and focus of divine inspiration. On this mountain Apollo was said to have slain the serpent Python. The apartment of the oracle was immediately over the chasm from which the vapour issued. A priestess delivered the responses, who was called Pythia, probably in commemoration of the exploit which had been performed by Apollo. She sat upon a tripod, or three-legged stool, perforated with holes, over the seat of the vapours. After a time, her figure enlarged itself, her hair stood on end, her complexion and features became altered, her heart panted and her bosom swelled, and her voice grew more than human. In this condition she uttered a number of wild and incoherent phrases, which were supposed to be dictated by the God. The questions which were offered by those who came to consult the oracle were then proposed to her, and her answers taken down by the priest, whose office was to arrange and methodize them, and put them into hexameter verse, after which they were delivered to the votaries. The priestess could only be consulted on one day in every month.

Great ingenuity and contrivance were no doubt required to uphold the credit of the oracle; and no less boldness and self-collectedness on

the part of those by whom the machinery was conducted. Like the conjurors of modern times, they took care to be extensively informed as to all such matters respecting which the oracle was likely to be consulted. They listened probably to the Pythia with a superstitious reverence for the incoherent sentences she uttered. She, like them, spent her life in being trained for the office to which she was devoted. All that was rambling and inapplicable in her wild declamation they consigned to oblivion. Whatever seemed to bear on the question proposed they preserved. The persons by whom the responses were digested into hexameter verse, had of course a commission attended with great discretionary power. They, as Horace remarks on another occasion, [2] divided what it was judicious to say, from what it was prudent to omit, dwelt upon one thing, and slurred over and accommodated another, just as would best suit the purpose they had in hand. Beside this, for the most part they clothed the apparent meaning of the oracle in obscurity, and often devised sentences of ambiguous interpretation, that might suit with opposite issues, whichever might happen to fall out. This was perfectly consistent with a high degree of enthusiasm on the part of the priest. However confident he might be in some things, he could not but of necessity feel that his prognostics were surrounded with uncertainty. Whatever decisions of the oracle were frustrated by the event, and we know that there were many of this sort, were speedily forgotten; while those which succeeded, were conveyed from shore to shore, and repeated by every echo. Nor is it surprising that the transmitters of the sentences of the God should in time arrive at an extraordinary degree of sagacity and skill. The oracles accordingly reached to so high a degree of reputation, that, as Cicero observes, no expedition for a long time was undertaken, no colony sent out, and often no affair of any distinguished family or individual entered on, without the previously obtaining their judgment and sanction. Their authority in a word was so high, that the first fathers of the Christian church could no otherwise account for a reputation thus universally received, than by supposing that the devils were permitted by God Almighty to inform the oracles with a more than human prescience, that all the world might be concluded in idolatry and unbelief, [3] and the necessity of a Saviour be made more apparent. The gullibility of man is one of the most prominent features of our nature. Various periods and times, when whole nations have as it were with one consent run into the most incredible and the grossest absurdities, perpetually offer themselves in the page of history; and in the records of remote antiquity it plainly appears that such delusions continued through successive centuries.

THE DESIRE TO COMMAND AND CONTROL FUTURE EVENTS.

Next to the consideration of those measures by which men have sought to dive into the secrets of future time, the question presents itself of those more daring undertakings, the object of which has been by some supernatural power to control the future, and place it in subjection to the will of the unlicensed adventurer. Men have always, especially in ages of ignorance, and when they most felt their individual weakness, figured to themselves an invisible strength greater than their own; and, in proportion to their impatience, and the fervour of their desires, have sought to enter into a league with those beings whose mightier force might supply that in which their weakness failed.

COMMERCE WITH THE INVISIBLE WORLD.

It is an essential feature of different ages and countries to vary exceedingly in the good or ill construction, the fame or dishonour, which shall attend upon the same conduct or mode of behaviour. In Egypt and throughout the East, especially in the early periods of history, the supposed commerce with invisible powers was openly professed, which, under other circumstances, and during the reign of different prejudices, was afterwards carefully concealed, and barbarously hunted out of the pale of allowed and authorised practice. The Magi of old, who claimed a power of producing miraculous appearances, and boasted a familiar intercourse with the world of spirits, were regarded by their countrymen with peculiar reverence, and considered as the first and chiefest men in the state. For this mitigated view of such dark and mysterious proceedings the ancients were in a great degree indebted to their polytheism. The Romans are computed to have acknowledged thirty thousand divinities, to all of whom was rendered a legitimate homage; and other countries in a similar proportion.

SORCERY AND ENCHANTMENT.

In Asia, however, the Gods were divided into two parties, under Oromasdes, the principle of good, and Arimanius, the principle of evil. These powers were in perpetual contention with each other, sometimes the one, and sometimes the other gaining the superiority. Arimanius and his legions were therefore scarcely considered as entitled to the homage of mankind. Those who were actuated by benevolence, and who desired to draw down blessings upon their fellow-creatures, addressed themselves to the principle of good; while such unhappy beings, with whom spite and ill-will had the predominance, may be supposed often to have invoked in preference the principle of evil. Hence seems to have originated the idea of sorcery, or an appeal by incantations and wicked arts to the demons who delighted in mischief.

These beings rejoiced in the opportunity of inflicting calamity and misery on mankind. But by what we read of them we might be induced to suppose that they were in some way restrained from gratifying their malignant intentions, and waited in eager hope, till some mortal reprobate should call out their dormant activity, and demand their aid.

Various enchantments were therefore employed by those unhappy mortals whose special desire was to bring down calamity and plagues upon the individuals or tribes of men against whom their animosity was directed. Unlawful and detested words and mysteries were called into action to conjure up demons who should yield their powerful and tremendous assistance. Songs of a wild and maniacal character were chaunted. Noisome scents and the burning of all unhallowed and odious things were resorted to. In later times books and formulas of a terrific character were commonly employed, upon the reading or recital of which the prodigies resorted to began to display themselves. The heavens were darkened; the thunder rolled; and fierce and blinding lightnings flashed from one corner of the heavens to the other. The earth quaked and rocked from side to side. All monstrous and deformed things shewed themselves, "Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimeras dire,"

enough to cause the stoutest heart to quail. Lastly, devils, whose name was legion, and to whose forms and distorted and menacing countenances superstition had annexed the most frightful ideas, crowded in countless multitudes upon the spectator, whose breath was flame, whose dances were full of terror, and whose strength infinitely exceeded every thing human. Such were the appalling conceptions which ages of bigotry and ignorance annexed to the notion of sorcery, and with these they scared the unhappy beings over whom this notion had usurped an ascendancy into lunacy, and prepared them for the perpetrating flagitious and unheard-of deeds.

The result of these horrible incantations was not less tremendous, than the preparations might have led us to expect. The demons possessed all the powers of the air, and produced tempests and shipwrecks at their pleasure. "Castles toppled on their warder's heads, and palaces and pyramids sloped their summits to their foundations;" forests and mountains were torn from their roots, and cast into the sea. They inflamed the passions of men, and caused them to commit the most unheard-of excesses. They laid their ban on those who enjoyed the most prosperous health, condemned them to peak and pine, wasted them into a melancholy atrophy, and finally consigned them to a premature grave. They breathed a new and unblest life into beings in whom existence had long been extinct, and by their hateful and resistless power caused the sepulchres to give up their dead.

WITCHCRAFT.

Next to sorcery we may recollect the case of witchcraft, which occurs oftener, particularly in modern times, than any other alleged mode of changing by supernatural means the future course of events. The sorcerer, as we shall see hereafter, was frequently a man of learning and intellectual abilities, sometimes of comparative opulence and respectable situation in society. But the witch or wizard was almost uniformly old, decrepid, and nearly or altogether in a state of penury. The functions however of the witch and the sorcerer were in a great degree the same. The earliest account of a witch, attended with any degree of detail, is that of the witch of Endor in the Bible, who among other things, professed the power of calling up the dead upon occasion from the peace of the sepulchre. Witches also claimed the faculty of raising storms, and in various ways disturbing the course of nature. They appear in most cases to have been brought into action by the impulse of private malice. They occasioned mortality of greater or less extent in man and beast. They blighted the opening prospect of a plentiful harvest. They covered the heavens with clouds, and sent abroad withering and malignant blasts. They undermined the health of those who were so unfortunate as to incur their animosity, and caused them to waste away gradually with incurable disease. They were notorious two or three centuries ago for the power of the "evil eye." The vulgar, both great and small, dreaded their displeasure, and sought, by small gifts, and fair speeches, but insincere, and the offspring of terror only, to avert the pernicious consequences of their malice. They were famed for fabricating small images of wax, to represent the object of their persecution; and, as these by gradual and often studiously protracted degrees wasted before the fire, so the unfortunate butts of their resentment perished with a lingering, but inevitable death.

COMPACTS WITH THE DEVIL.

The power of these witches, as we find in their earliest records, originated in their intercourse with "familiar spirits," invisible beings who must be supposed to be enlisted in the armies of the prince of darkness. We do not read in these ancient memorials of any league of mutual benefit entered into between the merely human party, and his or her supernatural assistant. But modern times have amply supplied this defect. The witch or sorcerer could not secure the assistance of the demon but by a sure and faithful compact, by which the human party obtained the industrious and vigilant service of his familiar for a certain term of years, only on condition that, when the term was expired, the demon of undoubted right was to obtain possession of the indentured party, and to convey him irremissibly and for ever to the regions of the damned. The contract was drawn out in authentic form, signed by the sorcerer, and attested with his blood, and was then carried away by the demon, to be produced again at the appointed time.

IMPS.

These familiar spirits often assumed the form of animals, and a black dog or cat was considered as a figure in which the attendant devil was secretly hidden. These subordinate devils were called Imps. Impure and carnal ideas were mingled with these theories. The witches were said to have preternatural teats from which their familiars sucked their blood. The devil also engaged in sexual intercourse with the witch or wizard, being denominated *_incubus_*, if his favourite were a woman, and *_succubus_*, if a man. In short, every frightful and loathsome idea was carefully heaped up together, to render the unfortunate beings to whom the crime of witchcraft was imputed the horror and execration of their species.

TALISMANS AND AMULETS.

As according to the doctrine of witchcraft, there were certain compounds, and matters prepared by rules of art, that proved baleful and deadly to the persons against whom their activity was directed, so there were also preservatives, talismans, amulets and charms, for the most [Errata: *_read_* for the most part] to be worn about the person, which rendered him superior to injury, not only from the operations of witchcraft, but in some cases from the sword or any other mortal weapon. As the poet says, he that had this,

Might trace huge forests and unhallowed heaths,--
Yea there, where very desolation dwells,
By grotts and caverns shagged with horrid shades,

nay, in the midst of every tremendous assailant, "might pass on with unblenched majesty," uninjured and invulnerable.

NECROMANCY.

Last of all we may speak of necromancy, which has something in it that so strongly takes hold of the imagination, that, though it is one only of the various modes which have been enumerated for the exercise of magical power, we have selected it to give a title to the present

volume.

There is something sacred to common apprehension in the repose of the dead. They seem placed beyond our power to disturb. "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave."

After life's fitful fever they sleep well:
Nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
Can touch them further.

Their remains moulder in the earth. Neither form nor feature is long continued to them. We shrink from their touch, and their sight. To violate the sepulchre therefore for the purpose of unholy spells and operations, as we read of in the annals of witchcraft, cannot fail to be exceedingly shocking. To call up the spirits of the departed, after they have fulfilled the task of life, and are consigned to their final sleep, is sacrilegious. Well may they exclaim, like the ghost of Samuel in the sacred story, "Why hast thou disquieted me?"

There is a further circumstance in the case, which causes us additionally to revolt from the very idea of necromancy, strictly so called. Man is a mortal, or an immortal being. His frame either wholly "returns to the earth as it was, or his spirit," the thinking principle within him, "to God who gave it." The latter is the prevailing sentiment of mankind in modern times. Man is placed upon earth in a state of probation, to be dealt with hereafter according to the deeds done in the flesh. "Some shall go away into everlasting punishment; and others into life eternal." In this case there is something blasphemous in the idea of intermeddling with the state of the dead. We must leave them in the hands of God. Even on the idea of an interval, the "sleep of the soul" from death to the general resurrection, which is the creed of no contemptible sect of Christians, it is surely a terrific notion that we should disturb the pause, which upon that hypothesis, the laws of nature have assigned to the departed soul, and come to awake, or to "torment him before the time."

ALCHEMY.

To make our catalogue of supernatural doings, and the lawless imaginations of man, the more complete, it may be further necessary to refer to the craft, so eagerly cultivated in successive ages of the world of converting the inferior metals into gold, to which was usually joined the *elixir vitae*, or universal medicine, having the quality of renewing the youth of man, and causing him to live for ever. The first authentic record on this subject is an edict of Dioclesian about three hundred years after Christ, ordering a diligent search to be made in Egypt for all the ancient books which treated of the art of making gold and silver, that they might without distinction be consigned to the flames. This edict however necessarily presumes a certain antiquity to the pursuit; and fabulous history has recorded Solomon, Pythagoras and Hermes among its distinguished votaries. From this period the study seems to have slept, till it was revived among the Arabians after a lapse of five or six hundred years.

It is well known however how eagerly it was cultivated in various countries of the world for many centuries after it was divulged by

Geber. Men of the most wonderful talents devoted their lives to the investigation; and in multiplied instances the discovery was said to have been completed. Vast sums of money were consumed in the fruitless endeavour; and in a later period it seems to have furnished an excellent handle to vain and specious projectors, to extort money from those more amply provided with the goods of fortune than themselves.

The art no doubt is in itself sufficiently mystical, having been pursued by multitudes, who seemed to themselves ever on the eve of consummation, but as constantly baffled when to their own apprehension most on the verge of success. The discovery indeed appears upon the face of it to be of the most delicate nature, as the benefit must wholly depend upon its being reserved to one or a very few, the object being unbounded wealth, which is nothing unless confined. If the power of creating gold is diffused, wealth by such diffusion becomes poverty, and every thing after a short time would but return to what it had been. Add to which, that the nature of discovery has ordinarily been, that, when once the clue has been found, it reveals itself to several about the same period of time.

The art, as we have said, is in its own nature sufficiently mystical, depending on nice combinations and proportions of ingredients, and upon the addition of each ingredient being made exactly in the critical moment, and in the precise degree of heat, indicated by the colour of the vapour arising from the crucible or retort. This was watched by the operator with inexhaustible patience; and it was often found or supposed, that the minutest error in this respect caused the most promising appearances to fail of the expected success. This circumstance no doubt occasionally gave an opportunity to an artful impostor to account for his miscarriage, and thus to prevail upon his credulous dupe to enable him to begin his tedious experiment again.

But, beside this, it appears that those whose object was the transmutation of metals, very frequently joined to this pursuit the study of astrology, and even the practice of sorcery. So much delicacy and nicety were supposed to be required in the process for the transmutation of metals, that it could not hope to succeed but under a favourable conjunction of the planets; and the most flourishing pretenders to the art boasted that they had also a familiar intercourse with certain spirits of supernatural power, which assisted them in their undertakings, and enabled them to penetrate into things undiscoverable to mere human sagacity, and to predict future events.

FAIRIES.

Another mode in which the wild and erratic imagination of our ancestors manifested itself, was in the creation of a world of visionary beings of a less terrific character, but which did not fail to annoy their thoughts, and perplex their determinations, known by the name of Fairies.

There are few things more worthy of contemplation, and that at the same time tend to place the dispositions of our ancestors in a more amiable point of view, than the creation of this airy and fantastic race. They were so diminutive as almost to elude the organs of human sight. They were at large, even though confined to the smallest dimensions. They "could be bounded in a nutshell, and count themselves kings of infinite space."

Their midnight revels, by a forest-side
Or fountain, the belated peasant saw,
Or dreamed he saw, while overhead the moon
Sat arbitress, and nearer to the earth
Wheeled her pale course--they, on their mirth and dance
Intent, with jocund music charmed his ear;
At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.

Small circles marked the grass in solitary places, the trace of their little feet, which, though narrow, were ample enough to afford every accommodation to their pastime.

The fairy tribes appear to have been every where distinguished for their patronage of truth, simplicity and industry, and their abhorrence of sensuality and prevarication. They left little rewards in secret, as tokens of their approbation of the virtues they loved, and by their supernatural power afforded a supplement to pure and excellent intentions, when the corporeal powers of the virtuous sank under the pressure of human infirmity. Where they conceived displeasure, the punishments they inflicted were for the most part such as served moderately to vex and harass the offending party, rather than to inflict upon him permanent and irremediable evils.

Their airy tongues would syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.

They were supposed to guide the wandering lights, that in the obscurity of the night beguiled the weary traveller "through bog, through bush, through brake, through briar." But their power of evil only extended, or was only employed, to vex those who by a certain obliquity of conduct gave occasion for their reproofs. They besides pinched and otherwise tormented the objects of their displeasure; and, though the mischiefs they executed were not of the most vital kind, yet, coming from a supernatural enemy, and being inflicted by invisible hands, they could not fail greatly to disturb and disorder those who suffered from them.

There is at first sight a great inconsistency in the representations of these imaginary people. For the most part they are described to us as of a stature and appearance, almost too slight to be marked by our grosser human organs. At other times however, and especially in the extremely popular tales digested by M. Perrault, they shew themselves in indiscriminate assemblies, brought together for some solemn festivity or otherwise, and join the human frequenters of the scene, without occasioning enquiry or surprise. They are particularly concerned in the business of summarily and without appeal bestowing miraculous gifts, sometimes as a mark of special friendship and favour, and sometimes with a malicious and hostile intention.--But we are to consider that spirits

Can every form assume; so soft
And uncompounded is their essence pure;
Not tied or manacled with joint or limb,
Like cumbrous flesh; but, in what shape they choose,
Dilated or condensed, bright or obscure,
Can execute their airy purposes,
And works of love or enmity fulfil.

And then again, as their bounties were shadowy, so were they specially apt to disappear in a moment, the most splendid palaces and magnificent exhibitions vanishing away, and leaving their disconcerted dupe with his robes converted into the poorest rags, and, instead of glittering state, finding himself suddenly in the midst of desolation, and removed no man knew whither.

One of the mischiefs that were most frequently imputed to them, was the changing the beautiful child of some doating parents, for a babe marked with ugliness and deformity. But this idea seems fraught with inconsistency. The natural stature of the fairy is of the smallest dimensions; and, though they could occasionally dilate their figure so as to imitate humanity, yet it is to be presumed that this was only for a special purpose, and, that purpose obtained, that they shrank again habitually into their characteristic littleness. The change therefore can only be supposed to have been of one human child for another.

ROSICRUCIANS.

Nothing very distinct has been ascertained respecting a sect, calling itself Rosicrucians. It is said to have originated in the East from one of the crusaders in the fourteenth century; but it attracted at least no public notice till the beginning of the seventeenth century. Its adherents appear to have imbibed their notions from the Arabians, and claimed the possession of the philosopher's stone, the art of transmuting metals, and the elixir vitae.

SYLPHS AND GNOMES, SALAMANDERS AND UNDINES.

But that for which they principally excited public attention, was their creed respecting certain elementary beings, which to grosser eyes are invisible, but were familiarly known to the initiated. To be admitted to their acquaintance it was previously necessary that the organs of human sight should be purged by the universal medicine, and that certain glass globes should be chemically prepared with one or other of the four elements, and for one month exposed to the beams of the sun. These preliminary steps being taken, the initiated immediately had a sight of innumerable beings of a luminous substance, but of thin and evanescent structure, that peopled the elements on all sides of us. Those who inhabited the air were called Sylphs; and those who dwelt in the earth bore the name of Gnomes; such as peopled the fire were Salamanders; and those who made their home in the waters were Undines. Each class appears to have had an extensive power in the elements to which they belonged. They could raise tempests in the air, and storms at sea, shake the earth, and alarm the inhabitants of the globe with the sight of devouring flames. These appear however to have been more formidable in appearance than in reality. And the whole race was subordinate to man, and particularly subject to the initiated. The gnomes, inhabitants of the earth and the mines, liberally supplied to the human beings with whom they conversed, the hidden treasures over which they presided. The four classes were some of them male, and some female; but the female sex seems to have preponderated in all.

These elementary beings, we are told, were by their constitution more long-lived than man, but with this essential disadvantage, that at death they wholly ceased to exist. In the mean time they were inspired

with an earnest desire for immortality; and there was one way left for them, by which this desire might be gratified. If they were so happy as to awaken in any of the initiated a passion the end of which was marriage, then the sylph who became the bride of a virtuous man, followed his nature, and became immortal; while on the other hand, if she united herself to an immoral being and a profligate, the husband followed the law of the wife, and was rendered entirely mortal. The initiated however were required, as a condition to their being admitted into the secrets of the order, to engage themselves in a vow of perpetual chastity as to women. And they were abundantly rewarded by the probability of being united to a sylph, a gnome, a salamander, or an undine, any one of whom was inexpressibly more enchanting than the most beautiful woman, in addition to which her charms were in a manner perpetual, while a wife of our own nature is in a short time destined to wrinkles, and all the other disadvantages of old age. The initiated of course enjoyed a beatitude infinitely greater than that which falls to the lot of ordinary mortals, being conscious of a perpetual commerce with these wonderful beings from whose society the vulgar are debarred, and having such associates unintermittedly anxious to perform their behests, and anticipate their desires. [4]

We should have taken but an imperfect survey of the lawless extravagancies of human imagination, if we had not included a survey of this sect. There is something particularly soothing to the fancy of an erratic mind, in the conception of being conversant with a race of beings the very existence of which is unperceived by ordinary mortals, and thus entering into an infinitely numerous and variegated society, even when we are apparently swallowed up in entire solitude.

The Rosicrucians are further entitled to our special notice, as their tenets have had the good fortune to furnish Pope with the beautiful machinery with which he has adorned the Rape of the Lock. There is also, of much later date, a wild and poetical fiction for which we are indebted to the same source, called Undine, from the pen of Lamotte Fouquet.

EXAMPLES OF NECROMANCY AND WITCHCRAFT FROM THE BIBLE.

The oldest and most authentic record from which we can derive our ideas on the subject of necromancy and witchcraft, unquestionably is the Bible. The Egyptians and Chaldeans were early distinguished for their supposed proficiency in magic, in the production of supernatural phenomena, and in penetrating into the secrets of future time. The first appearance of men thus extraordinarily gifted, or advancing pretensions of this sort, recorded in Scripture, is on occasion of Pharaoh's dream of the seven years of plenty, and seven years of famine. At that period the king "sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all the wise men; but they could not interpret the dream," [5] which Joseph afterwards expounded.

Their second appearance was upon a most memorable occasion, when Moses and Aaron, armed with miraculous powers, came to a subsequent king of Egypt, to demand from him that their countrymen might be permitted to depart to another tract of the world. They produced a miracle as the evidence of their divine mission: and the king, who was also named

Pharaoh, "called before him the wise men and the sorcerers of Egypt, who with their enchantments did in like manner" as Moses had done; till, after some experiments in which they were apparently successful, they at length were compelled to allow themselves overcome, and fairly to confess to their master, "This is the finger of God!" [6]

The spirit of the Jewish history loudly affirms, that the Creator of heaven and earth had adopted this nation for his chosen people, and therefore demanded their exclusive homage, and that they should acknowledge no other God. It is on this principle that it is made one of his early commands to them, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." [7] And elsewhere the meaning of this prohibition is more fully explained: "There shall not be found among you any one that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer: [8] these shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones." [9]

The character of an enchanter is elsewhere more fully illustrated in the case of Balaam, the soothsayer, who was sent for by Balak, the king of Moab, that he might "curse the people of Israel. The messengers of the king came to Balaam with the rewards of divination in their hand;" [10] but the soothsayer was restrained from his purpose by the God of the Jews, and, where he came to curse, was compelled to bless. He therefore "did not go, as at other times, to seek for enchantments," [11] but took up his discourse, and began, saying, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel!" [12]

Another example of necromantic power or pretension is to be found in the story of Saul and the witch of Endor. Saul, the first king of the Jews, being rejected by God, and obtaining "no answer to his enquiries, either by dreams, or by prophets, said to his servants, seek me a woman that has a familiar spirit. And his servants, said, Lo, there is a woman that has a familiar spirit at Endor." Saul accordingly had recourse to her. But, previously to this time, in conformity to the law of God, he "had cut off those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land;" and the woman therefore was terrified at his present application. Saul re-assured her; and in consequence the woman consented to call up the person he should name. Saul demanded of her to bring up the ghost of Samuel. The ghost, whether by her enchantments or through divine interposition we are not told, appeared, and prophesied to Saul, that he and his son should fall in battle on the succeeding day, [13] which accordingly came to pass.

Manasseh, a subsequent king in Jerusalem, "observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards, and so provoked God to anger." [14]

It appears plainly from the same authority, that there were good spirits and evil spirits, "The Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up, and fall before Ramoth Gilead? And there came a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him: I will go forth, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said, Thou shalt persuade him." [15]

In like manner, we are told, "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number the people; and God was displeased with the

thing, and smote Israel, so that there fell of the people seventy thousand men." [16]

Satan also, in the Book of Job, presented himself before the Lord among the Sons of God, and asked and obtained leave to try the faithfulness of Job by "putting forth his hand," and despoiling the patriarch of "all that he had."

Taking these things into consideration, there can be no reasonable doubt, though the devil and Satan are not mentioned in the story, that the serpent who in so crafty a way beguiled Eve, was in reality no other than the malevolent enemy of mankind under that disguise.

We are in the same manner informed of the oracles of the false Gods; and an example occurs of a king of Samaria, who fell sick, and who "sent messengers, and said to them, Go, and enquire of Baalzebub, the God of Ekron, whether I shall recover of this disease." At which proceeding the God of the Jews was displeased, and sent Elijah to the messengers to say, "Is it because there is not a God in Israel, that you go to enquire of Baalzebub, the God of Ekron? Because the king has done this, he shall not recover; he shall surely die." [17]

The appearance of the Wise Men of the East again occurs in considerable detail in the Prophecy of Daniel, though they are only brought forward there, as discoverers of hidden things, and interpreters of dreams. Twice, on occasion of dreams that troubled him, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, "commanded to be called to him the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans" of his kingdom, and each time with similar success. They confessed their incapacity; and Daniel, the prophet of the Jews, expounded to the king that in which they had failed. Nebuchadnezzar in consequence promoted Daniel to be master of the magicians. A similar scene occurred in the court of Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, in the case of the hand-writing on the wall.

It is probable that the Jews considered the Gods of the nations around them as so many of the fallen angels, or spirits of hell, since, among other arguments, the coincidence of the name of Beelzebub, the prince of devils, [18] with Baalzebub, the God of Ekron, could scarcely have fallen out by chance.

It seemed necessary to enter into these particulars, as they occur in the oldest and most authentic records from which we can derive our ideas on the subject of necromancy, witchcraft, and the claims that were set up in ancient times to the exercise of magical power. Among these examples there is only one, that of the contention for superiority between Moses and the Wise Men of Egypt in which we are presented with their pretensions to a visible exhibition of supernatural effects.

THE MAGI, OR WISE MEN OF THE EAST.

The Magi, or Wise Men of the East, extended their ramifications over Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, India, and probably, though with a different name, over China, and indeed the whole known world. Their profession was of a mysterious nature. They laid claim to a familiar intercourse with the Gods. They placed themselves as mediators between heaven and earth, assumed the prerogative of revealing the will of beings of a

nature superior to man, and pretended to show wonders and prodigies that surpassed any power which was merely human.

To understand this, we must bear in mind the state of knowledge in ancient times, where for the most part the cultivation of the mind, and an acquaintance with either science or art, were confined to a very small part of the population. In each of the nations we have mentioned, there was a particular caste or tribe of men, who, by the prerogative of their birth, were entitled to the advantages of science and a superior education, while the rest of their countrymen were destined to subsist by manual labour. This of necessity gave birth in the privileged few to an overweening sense of their own importance. They scarcely regarded the rest of their countrymen as beings of the same species with themselves; and, finding a strong line of distinction cutting them off from the herd, they had recourse to every practicable method for making that distinction still stronger. Wonder is one of the most obvious means of generating deference; and, by keeping to themselves the grounds and process of their skill, and presenting the results only, they were sure to excite the admiration and reverence of their contemporaries. This mode of proceeding further produced a re-action upon themselves. That which supplied and promised to supply to them so large a harvest of honour and fame, unavoidably became precious in their eyes. They pursued their discoveries with avidity, because few had access to their opportunities in that respect, and because, the profounder were their researches, the more sure they were of being looked up to by the public as having that in them which was sacred and inviolable. They spent their days and nights in these investigations. They shrank from no privation and labour. At the same time that in these labours they had at all times an eye to their darling object, an ascendancy over the minds of their countrymen at large, and the extorting from them a blind and implicit deference to their oracular decrees. They however loved their pursuits for the pursuits themselves. They felt their abstraction and their unlimited nature, and on that account contemplated them with admiration. They valued them (for such is the indestructible character of the human mind) for the pains they had bestowed on them. The sweat of their brow grew into a part as it were of the intrinsic merit of the articles; and that which had with so much pains been attained by them, they could not but regard as of inestimable worth.

EGYPT.

The Egyptians took the lead in early antiquity, with respect to civilisation and the stupendous productions of human labour and art, of all other known nations of the world. The pyramids stand by themselves as a monument of the industry of mankind. Thebes, with her hundred gates, at each of which we are told she could send out at once two hundred chariots and ten thousand warriors completely accoutred, was one of the noblest cities on record. The whole country of Lower Egypt was intersected with canals giving a beneficent direction to the periodical inundations of the Nile; and the artificial lake Moeris was dug of a vast extent, that it might draw off the occasional excesses of the overflowings of the river. The Egyptians had an extraordinary custom of preserving their dead, so that the country was peopled almost as numerously with mummies prepared by extreme assiduity and skill, as with the living.

And, in proportion to their edifices and labours of this durable sort,

was their unwearied application to all the learning that was then known. Geometry is said to have owed its existence to the necessity under which they were placed of every man recognising his own property in land, as soon as the overflowings of the Nile had ceased. They were not less assiduous in their application to astronomy. The hieroglyphics of Egypt are of universal notoriety. Their mythology was of the most complicated nature. Their Gods were infinitely varied in their kind; and the modes of their worship not less endlessly diversified. All these particulars still contributed to the abstraction of their studies, and the loftiness of their pretensions to knowledge. They perpetually conversed with the invisible world, and laid claim to the faculty of revealing things hidden, of foretelling future events, and displaying wonders that exceeded human power to produce.

A striking illustration of the state of Egypt in that respect in early times, occurs incidentally in the history of Joseph in the Bible. Jacob had twelve sons, among whom his partiality for Joseph was so notorious, that his brethren out of envy sold him as a slave to the wandering Midianites. Thus it was his fortune to be placed in Egypt, where in the process of events he became the second man in the country, and chief minister of the king. A severe famine having visited these climates, Jacob sent his sons into Egypt to buy corn, where only it was to be found. As soon as Joseph saw them, he knew them, though they knew not him in his exalted situation; and he set himself to devise expedients to settle them permanently in the country in which he ruled. Among the rest he caused a precious cup from his stores to be privily conveyed into the corn-sack of Benjamin, his only brother by the same mother. The brothers were no sooner departed, than Joseph sent in pursuit of them; and the messengers accosted them with the words, "Is not this the cup in which my lord drinketh, and whereby also he divineth? Ye have done evil in taking it away." [19] They brought the strangers again into the presence of Joseph, who addressed them with severity, saying, "What is this deed that ye have done? Wot ye not that such a man as I could certainly divine?" [20]

From this story it plainly appears, that the art of divination was extensively exercised in Egypt, that the practice was held in honour, and that such was the state of the country, that it was to be presumed as a thing of course, that a man of the high rank and distinction of Joseph should professedly be an adept in it.

In the great contention for supernatural power between Moses and the magicians of Egypt, it is plain that they came forward with confidence, and did not shrink from the debate. Moses's rod was turned into a serpent; so were their rods: Moses changed the waters of Egypt into blood; and the magicians did the like with their enchantments: Moses caused frogs to come up, and cover the land of Egypt; and the magicians also brought frogs upon the country. Without its being in any way necessary to enquire how they effected these wonders, it is evident from the whole train of the narrative, that they must have been much in the practice of astonishing their countrymen with their feats in such a kind, and, whether it were delusion, or to whatever else we may attribute their success, that they were universally looked up to for the extraordinariness of their performances.

While we are on this subject of illustrations from the Bible, it may be worth while to revert more particularly to the story of Balaam. Balak the king of Moab, sent for Balaam that he might come and curse the invaders of his country; and in the sequel we are told, when the

prophet changed his curses into a blessing, that he did not "go forth, as at other times, to seek for enchantments." It is plain therefore that Balak did not rely singly upon the eloquence and fervour of Balaam to pour out vituperations upon the people of Israel, but that it was expected that the prophet should use incantations and certain mystical rites, upon which the efficacy of his foretelling disaster to the enemy principally depended.

STATUE OF MEMNON.

The Magi of Egypt looked round in every quarter for phenomena that might produce astonishment among their countrymen, and induce them to believe that they dwelt in a land which overflowed with the testimonies and presence of a divine power. Among others the statue of Memnon, erected over his tomb near Thebes, is recorded by many authors. Memnon is said to have been the son of Aurora, the Goddess of the morning; and his statue is related to have had the peculiar faculty of uttering a melodious sound every morning when touched by the first beams of day, as if to salute his mother; and every night at sunset to have imparted another sound, low and mournful, as lamenting the departure of the day. This prodigy is spoken of by Tacitus, Strabo, Juvenal and Philostratus. The statue uttered these sounds, while perfect; and, when it was mutilated by human violence, or by a convulsion of nature, it still retained the property with which it had been originally endowed. Modern travellers, for the same phenomenon has still been observed, have asserted that it does not owe its existence to any prodigy, but to a property of the granite, of which the statue or its pedestal is formed, which, being hollow, is found in various parts of the world to exhibit this quality. It has therefore been suggested, that the priests, having ascertained its peculiarity, expressly formed the statue of that material, for the purpose of impressing on it a supernatural character, and thus being enabled to extend their influence with a credulous people. [21]

TEMPLE OF JUPITER AMMON: ITS ORACLES.

Another of what may be considered as the wonders of Egypt, is the temple of Jupiter Ammon in the midst of the Great Desert. This temple was situated at a distance of no less than twelve days' journey from Memphis, the capital of the Lower Egypt. The principal part of this space consisted of one immense tract of moving sand, so hot as to be intolerable to the sole of the foot, while the air was pregnant with fire, so that it was almost impossible to breathe in it. Not a drop of water, not a tree, not a blade of grass, was to be found through this vast surface. It was here that Cambyses, engaged in an impious expedition to demolish the temple, is said to have lost an army of fifty thousand men, buried in the sands. When you arrived however, you were presented with a wood of great circumference, the foliage of which was so thick that the beams of the sun could not pierce it. The atmosphere of the place was of a delicious temperature; the scene was every where interspersed with fountains; and all the fruits of the earth were found in the highest perfection. In the midst was the temple and oracle of the God, who was worshipped in the likeness of a ram. The Egyptian priests chose this site as furnishing a test of the zeal of their votaries; the journey being like the pilgrimage to Jerusalem or Mecca, if not from so great a distance, yet attended in many respects with perils more formidable. It was not safe to attempt

the passage but with moderate numbers, and those expressly equipped for expedition.

Bacchus is said to have visited this spot in his great expedition to the East, when Jupiter appeared to him in the form of a ram, having struck his foot upon the soil, and for the first time occasioned that supply of water, with which the place was ever after plentifully supplied. Alexander the Great in a subsequent age undertook the same journey with his army, that he might cause himself to be acknowledged for the son of the God, under which character he was in all due form recognised. The priests no doubt had heard of the successful battles of the Granicus and of Issus, of the capture of Tyre after a seven months' siege, and of the march of the great conqueror in Egypt, where he carried every thing before him.

Here we are presented with a striking specimen of the mode and spirit in which the oracles of old were accustomed to be conducted. It may be said that the priests were corrupted by the rich presents which Alexander bestowed on them with a liberal hand. But this was not the prime impulse in the business. They were astonished at the daring with which Alexander with a comparative handful of men set out from Greece, having meditated the overthrow of the great Persian empire. They were astonished with his perpetual success, and his victorious progress from the Hellespont to mount Taurus, from mount Taurus to Pelusium, and from Pelusium quite across the ancient kingdom of Egypt to the Palus Mareotis. Accustomed to the practice of adulation, and to the belief that mortal power and true intellectual greatness were the same, they with a genuine enthusiastic fervour regarded Alexander as the son of their God, and acknowledged him as such.--Nothing can be more memorable than the way in which belief and unbelief hold a divided empire over the human mind, our passions hurrying us into belief, at the same time that our intervals of sobriety suggest to us that it is all pure imposition.

CHALDEA AND BABYLON.

The history of the Babylonish monarchy not having been handed down to us, except incidentally as it is touched upon by the historians of other countries, we know little of those anecdotes respecting it which are best calculated to illustrate the habits and manners of a people. We know that they in probability preceded all other nations in the accuracy of their observations on the phenomena of the heavenly bodies. We know that the Magi were highly respected among them as an order in the state; and that, when questions occurred exciting great alarm in the rulers, "the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans," were called together, to see whether by their arts they could throw light upon questions so mysterious and perplexing, and we find sufficient reason, both from analogy, and from the very circumstance that sorcerers are specifically named among the classes of which their Wise Men consisted, to believe that the Babylonian Magi advanced no dubious pretensions to the exercise of magical power.

ZOROASTER.

Among the Chaldeans the most famous name is that of Zoroaster, who is held to have been the author of their religion, their civil policy, their sciences, and their magic. He taught the doctrine of two great

principles, the one the author of good, the other of evil. He prohibited the use of images in the ceremonies of religion, and pronounced that nothing deserved homage but fire, and the sun, the centre and the source of fire, and these perhaps to be venerated not for themselves, but as emblematical of the principle of all good things. He taught astronomy and astrology. We may with sufficient probability infer his doctrines from those of the Magi, who were his followers. He practised enchantments, by means of which he would send a panic among the forces that were brought to make war against him, rendering the conflict by force of arms unnecessary. He prescribed the use of certain herbs as all-powerful for the production of supernatural effects. He pretended to the faculty of working miracles, and of superseding and altering the ordinary course of nature.--There was, beside the Chaldean Zoroaster, a Persian known by the same name, who is said to have been a contemporary of Darius Hystaspes.

GREECE.

Thus obscure and general is our information respecting the Babylonians. But it was far otherwise with the Greeks. Long before the period, when, by their successful resistance to the Persian invasion, they had rendered themselves of paramount importance in the history of the civilised world, they had their poets and annalists, who preserved to future time the memory of their tastes, their manners and superstitions, their strength, and their weakness. Homer in particular had already composed his two great poems, rendering the peculiarities of his countrymen familiar to the latest posterity. The consequence of this is, that the wonderful things of early Greece are even more frequent than the record of its sober facts. As men advance in observation and experience, they are compelled more and more to perceive that all the phenomena of nature are one vast chain of uninterrupted causes and consequences: but to the eye of uninstructed ignorance every thing is astonishing, every thing is unexpected. The remote generations of mankind are in all cases full of prodigies: but it is the fortune of Greece to have preserved its early adventures, so as to render the beginning pages of its history one mass of impossible falsehoods.

DEITIES OF GREECE.

The Gods of the Greeks appear all of them once to have been men. Their real or supposed adventures therefore make a part of what is recorded respecting them. Jupiter was born in Crete, and being secreted by his mother in a cave, was suckled by a goat. Being come to man's estate, he warred with the giants, one of whom had an hundred hands, and two others brethren, grew nine inches every month, and, when nine years old, were fully qualified to engage in all exploits of corporeal strength. The war was finished, by the giants being overwhelmed with the thunderbolts of heaven, and buried under mountains.

Minerva was born from the head of her father, without a mother; and Bacchus, coming into the world after the death of his female parent, was inclosed in the thigh of Jupiter, and was thus produced at the proper time in full vigour and strength. Minerva had a shield, in

which was preserved the real head of Medusa, that had the property of turning every one that looked on it into stone. Bacchus, when a child, was seized on by pirates with the intention to sell him for a slave: but he waved a spear, and the oars of the sailors were turned into vines, which climbed the masts, and spread their clusters over the sails; and tigers, lynxes and panthers, appeared to swim round the ship, so terrifying the crew that they leaped overboard, and were changed into dolphins. Bacchus, in his maturity, is described as having been the conqueror of India. He did not set out on this expedition like other conquerors, at the head of an army. He rode in an open chariot, which was drawn by tame lions. His attendants were men and women in great multitudes, eminently accomplished in the arts of rural industry. Wherever he came, he taught men the science of husbandry, and the cultivation of the vine. Wherever he came, he was received, not with hostility, but with festivity and welcome. On his return however, Lycurgus, king of Thrace, and Pentheus, king of Thebes, set themselves in opposition to the improvements which the East had received with the most lively gratitude; and Bacchus, to punish them, caused Lycurgus to be torn to pieces by wild horses, and spread a delusion among the family of Pentheus, so that they mistook him for a wild boar which had broken into their vineyards, and of consequence fell upon him, and he expired amidst a thousand wounds.

Apollo was the author of plagues and contagious diseases; at the same time that, when he pleased, he could restore salubrity to a climate, and health and vigour to the sons of men. He was the father of poetry, and possessed in an eminent degree the gift of foretelling future events. Hecate, which was one of the names of Diana, was distinguished as the Goddess of magic and enchantments. Venus was the Goddess of love, the most irresistible and omnipotent impulse of which the heart of man is susceptible. The wand of Mercury was endowed with such virtues, that whoever it touched, if asleep, would start up into life and alacrity, and, if awake, would immediately fall into a profound sleep. When it touched the dying, their souls gently parted from their mortal frame; and, when it was applied to the dead, the dead returned to life. Neptune had the attribute of raising and appeasing tempests: and Vulcan, the artificer of heaven and earth, not only produced the most exquisite specimens of skill, but also constructed furniture that was endowed with a self-moving principle, and would present itself for use or recede at the will of its proprietor. Pluto, in perpetrating the rape of Proserpine, started up in his chariot through a cleft of the earth in the vale of Enna in Sicily, and, having seized his prize, disappeared again by the way that he came.

Ceres, the mother of Proserpine, in her search after her lost daughter, was received with peculiar hospitality by Celeus, king of Eleusis. She became desirous of remunerating his liberality by some special favour. She saw his only child laid in a cradle, and labouring under a fatal distemper. She took him under her protection. She fed him with milk from her own breast, and at night covered him with coals of fire. Under this treatment he not only recovered his strength, but shot up miraculously into manhood, so that what in other men is the effect of years, was accomplished in Triptolemus in as many hours. She gave him for a gift the art of agriculture, so that he is said to have been the first to teach mankind to sow and to reap corn, and to make bread of the produce.

Prometheus, one of the race of the giants, was peculiarly distinguished for his proficiency in the arts. Among other extraordinary productions

he formed a man of clay, of such exquisite workmanship, as to have wanted nothing but a living soul to cause him to be acknowledged as the paragon of the world. Minerva beheld the performance of Prometheus with approbation, and offered him her assistance. She conducted him to heaven, where he watched his opportunity to carry off on the tip of his wand a portion of celestial fire from the chariot of the sun. With this he animated his image; and the man of Prometheus moved, and thought, and spoke, and became every thing that the fondest wishes of his creator could ask. Jupiter ordered Vulcan to make a woman, that should surpass this man. All the Gods gave her each one a several gift: Venus gave her the power to charm; the Graces bestowed on her symmetry of limb, and elegance of motion; Apollo the accomplishments of vocal and instrumental music; Mercury the art of persuasive speech; Juno a multitude of rich and gorgeous ornaments; and Minerva the management of the loom and the needle. Last of all, Jupiter presented her with a sealed box, of which the lid was no sooner unclosed, than a multitude of calamities and evils of all imaginable sorts flew out, only Hope remaining at the bottom.

Deucalion was the son of Prometheus and Pyrrha, his niece. They married. In their time a flood occurred, which as they imagined destroyed the whole human race; they were the only survivors. By the direction of an oracle they cast stones over their shoulders; when, by the divine interposition, the stones cast by Deucalion became men, and those cast by Pyrrha women. Thus the earth was re-peopled.

I have put down a few of these particulars, as containing in several instances the qualities of what is called magic, and thus furnishing examples of some of the earliest occasions upon which supernatural powers have been alleged to mix with human affairs.

DEMIGODS.

The early history of mortals in Greece is scarcely separated from that of the Gods. The first adventurer that it is perhaps proper to notice, as his exploits have I know not what of magic in them, is Perseus, the founder of the metropolis and kingdom of Mycenae. By way of rendering his birth illustrious, he is said to have been the son of Jupiter, by Danae, the daughter of Acrisius, king of Argos. The king, being forewarned by an oracle that his daughter should bear a son, by whose hand her father should be deprived of life, thought proper to shut her up in a tower of brass. Jupiter, having metamorphosed himself into a shower of gold, found his way into her place of confinement, and became the father of Perseus. On the discovery of this circumstance, Acrisius caused both mother and child to be inclosed in a chest, and committed to the waves. The chest however drifted upon the lands of a person of royal descent in the island of Seriphos, who extended his care and hospitality to both. When Perseus grew to man's estate, he was commissioned by the king of Seriphos to bring him the head of Medusa, one of the Gorgons. Medusa had the wonderful faculty, that whoever met her eyes was immediately turned into stone; and the king, who had conceived a passion for Danae, sent her son on this enterprise, with the hope that he would never come back alive. He was however favoured by the Gods; Mercury gave him wings to fly, Pluto an invisible helmet, and Minerva a mirror-shield, by looking in which he could discover how his enemy was disposed, without the danger of meeting her eyes. Thus equipped, he accomplished his undertaking, cut off the head of the Gorgon, and pursed it in a bag. From this exploit he proceeded

to visit Atlas, king of Mauritania, who refused him hospitality, and in revenge Perseus turned him into stone. He next rescued Andromeda, daughter of the king of Ethiopia, from a monster sent by Neptune to devour her. And, lastly, returning to his mother, and finding the king of Seriphos still incredulous and obstinate, he turned him likewise into a stone.

The labours of Hercules, the most celebrated of the Greeks of the heroic age, appear to have had little of magic in them, but to have been indebted for their success to a corporal strength, superior to that of all other mortals, united with an invincible energy of mind, which disdained to yield to any obstacle that could be opposed to him. His achievements are characteristic of the rude and barbarous age in which he lived: he strangled serpents, and killed the Erymanthian boar, the Nemean lion, and the Hydra.

DAEDALUS.

Nearly contemporary with the labours of Hercules is the history of Pasiphae and the Minotaur; and this brings us again within the sphere of magic. Pasiphae was the wife of Minos, king of Crete, who conceived an unnatural passion for a beautiful white bull, which Neptune had presented to the king. Having found the means of gratifying her passion, she became the mother of a monster, half-man and half-bull, called the Minotaur. Minos was desirous of hiding this monster from the observation of mankind, and for this purpose applied to Daedalus, an Athenian, the most skilful artist of his time, who is said to have invented the axe, the wedge, and the plummet, and to have found out the use of glue. He first contrived masts and sails for ships, and carved statues so admirably, that they not only looked as if they were alive, but had actually the power of self-motion, and would have escaped from the custody of their possessor, if they had not been chained to the wall.

Daedalus contrived for Minos a labyrinth, a wonderful structure, that covered many acres of ground. The passages in this edifice met and crossed each other with such intricacy, that a stranger who had once entered the building, would have been starved to death before he could find his way out. In this labyrinth Minos shut up the Minotaur. Having conceived a deep resentment against the people of Athens, where his only son had been killed in a riot, he imposed upon them an annual tribute of seven noble youths, and as many virgins to be devoured by the Minotaur. Theseus, son of the king of Athens, put an end to this disgrace. He was taught by Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, how to destroy the monster, and furnished with a clue by which afterwards to find his way out of the labyrinth.

Daedalus for some reason having incurred the displeasure of Minos, was made a prisoner by him in his own labyrinth. But the artist being never at an end of his inventions, contrived with feathers and wax to make a pair of wings for himself, and escaped. Icarus, his son, who was prisoner along with him, was provided by his father with a similar equipment. But the son, who was inexperienced and heedless, approached too near to the sun in his flight; and, the wax of his wings being melted with the heat, he fell into the sea and was drowned.

THE ARGONAUTS.

Contemporary with the reign of Minos occurred the expedition of the Argonauts. Jason, the son of the king of Iolchos in Thessaly, was at the head of this expedition. Its object was to fetch the golden fleece, which was hung up in a grove sacred to Mars, in the kingdom of Colchis, at the eastern extremity of the Euxine sea. He enlisted in this enterprise all the most gallant spirits existing in the country, and among the rest Hercules, Theseus, Orpheus and Amphion. After having passed through a multitude of perils, one of which was occasioned by the Cyanean rocks at the entrance of the Euxine, that had the quality of closing upon every vessel which attempted to make its way between them and crushing it to pieces, a danger that could only be avoided by sending a dove before as their harbinger, they at length arrived.

MEDEA.

The golden fleece was defended by bulls, whose hoofs were brass, and whose breath was fire, and by a never-sleeping dragon that planted itself at the foot of the tree upon which the fleece was suspended. Jason was prepared for his undertaking by Medea, the daughter of the king of the country, herself an accomplished magician, and furnished with philtres, drugs and enchantments. Thus equipped, he tamed the bulls, put a yoke on their necks, and caused them to plough two acres of the stiffest land. He killed the dragon, and, to complete the adventure, drew the monster's teeth, sowed them in the ground, and saw an army of soldiers spring from the seed. The army hastened forward to attack him; but he threw a large stone into the midst of their ranks, when they immediately turned from him, and, falling on each other, were all killed with their mutual weapons.

The adventure being accomplished, Medea set out with Jason on his return to Thessaly. On their arrival, they found Aeson, the father of Jason, and Pelias, his uncle, who had usurped the throne, both old and decrepid. Jason applied to Medea, and asked her whether among her charms she had none to make an old man young again. She replied she had: she drew the impoverished and watery blood from the body of Aeson; she infused the juice of certain potent herbs into his veins; and he rose from the operation as fresh and vigorous a man as his son.

The daughters of Pelias professed a perfect willingness to abdicate the throne of Iolchos; but, before they retired, they requested Medea to do the same kindness for their father which she had already done for Aeson. She said she would. She told them the method was to cut the old man in pieces, and boil him in a kettle with an infusion of certain herbs, and he would come out as smooth and active as a child.

The daughters of Pelias a little scrupled the operation. Medea, seeing this, begged they would not think she was deceiving them. If however they doubted, she desired they would bring her the oldest ram from their flocks, and they should see the experiment. Medea cut up the ram, cast in certain herbs, and the old bell-wether came out as beautiful and innocent a he-lamb as was ever beheld. The daughters of Pelias were satisfied. They divided their father in pieces; but he was never restored either to health or life.

From Iolchos, upon some insurrection of the people, Medea and Jason fled to Corinth. Here they lived ten years in much harmony. At the end of that time Jason grew tired of his wife, and fell in love with

Glauce, daughter of the king of Corinth. Medea was greatly exasperated with his infidelity, and, among other enormities, slew with her own hand the two children she had borne him before his face, Jason hastened to punish her barbarity; but Medea mounted a chariot drawn by fiery dragons, fled through the air to Athens, and escaped.

At Athens she married Aegeus, king of that city. Aegeus by a former wife had a son, named Theseus, who for some reason had been brought up obscure, unknown and in exile. At a suitable time he returned home to his father with the intention to avow his parentage. But Medea was beforehand with him. She put a poisoned goblet into the hands of Aegeus at an entertainment he gave to Theseus, with the intent that he should deliver it to his son. At the critical moment Aegeus cast his eyes on the sword of Theseus, which he recognised as that which he had delivered with his son, when a child, and had directed that it should be brought by him, when a man, as a token of the mystery of his birth. The goblet was cast away; the father and son rushed into each other's arms; and Medea fled from Athens in her chariot drawn by dragons through the air, as she had years before fled from Corinth.

CIRCE.

Circe was the sister of Aeetes and Pasiphae, and was, like Medea, her niece, skilful in sorcery. She had besides the gift of immortality. She was exquisitely beautiful; but she employed the charms of her person, and the seducing grace of her manners to a bad purpose. She presented to every stranger who landed in her territory an enchanted cup, of which she intreated him to drink. He no sooner tasted it, than he was turned into a hog, and was driven by the magician to her sty. The unfortunate stranger retained under this loathsome appearance the consciousness of what he had been, and mourned for ever the criminal compliance by which he was brought to so melancholy a pass.

ORPHEUS.

Cicero [22] quotes Aristotle as affirming that there was no such man as Orpheus. But Aristotle is at least single in that opinion. And there are too many circumstances known respecting Orpheus, and which have obtained the consenting voice of all antiquity, to allow us to call in question his existence. He was a native of Thrace, and from that country migrated into Greece. He travelled into Egypt for the purpose of collecting there the information necessary to the accomplishment of his ends. He died a violent death; and, as is almost universally affirmed, fell a sacrifice to the resentment and fury of the women of his native soil. [23]

Orpheus was doubtless a poet; though it is not probable that any of his genuine productions have been handed down to us. He was, as all the poets of so remote a period were, extremely accomplished in all the arts of vocal and instrumental music. He civilised the rude inhabitants of Greece, and subjected them to order and law. He formed them into communities. He is said by Aristophanes [24] and Horace [25] to have reclaimed the savage man, from slaughter, and an indulgence in food that was loathsome and foul. And this has with sufficient probability been interpreted to mean, that he found the race of men among whom he lived cannibals, and that, to cure them the more completely of this horrible practice, he taught them to be contented

to subsist upon the fruits of the earth. [26] Music and poetry are understood to have been made specially instrumental by him to the effecting this purpose. He is said to have made the hungry lion and the famished tiger obedient to his bidding, and to put off their wild and furious natures.

This is interpreted by Horace [27] and other recent expositors to mean no more than that he reduced the race of savages as he found them, to order and civilisation. But it was at first perhaps understood more literally. We shall not do justice to the traditions of these remote times, if we do not in imagination transport ourselves among them, and teach ourselves to feel their feelings, and conceive their conceptions. Orpheus lived in a time when all was enchantment and prodigy. Gifted and extraordinary persons in those ages believed that they were endowed with marvellous prerogatives, and acted upon that belief. We may occasionally observe, even in these days of the dull and the literal, how great is the ascendancy of the man over the beast, when he feels a full and entire confidence in that ascendancy. The eye and the gesture of man cannot fail to produce effects, incredible till they are seen. Magic was the order of the day; and the enthusiasm of its heroes was raised to the highest pitch, and attended with no secret misgivings. We are also to consider that, in all operations of a magical nature, there is a wonderful mixture of frankness and *_bonhommie_* with a strong vein of cunning and craft. Man in every age is full of incongruous and incompatible principles; and, when we shall cease to be inconsistent, we shall cease to be men.

It is difficult fully to explain what is meant by the story of Orpheus and Eurydice; but in its circumstances it bears a striking resemblance to what has been a thousand times recorded respecting the calling up of the ghosts of the dead by means of sorcery. The disconsolate husband has in the first place recourse to the resistless aid of music. [28] After many preparatives he appears to have effected his purpose, and prevailed upon the powers of darkness to allow him the presence of his beloved. She appears in the sequel however to have been a thin and a fleeting shadow. He is forbidden to cast his eyes on her; and, if he had obeyed this injunction, it is uncertain how the experiment would have ended. He proceeds however, as he is commanded, towards the light of day. He is led to believe that his consort is following his steps. He is beset with a multitude of unearthly phenomena. He advances for some time with confidence. At length he is assailed with doubts. He has recourse to the auricular sense, to know if she is following him. He can hear nothing. Finally he can endure this uncertainty no longer; and, in defiance of the prohibition he has received, cannot refrain from turning his head to ascertain whether he is baffled, and has spent all his labour in vain. He sees her; but no sooner he sees her, than she becomes evanescent and impalpable; farther and farther she retreats before him; she utters a shrill cry, and endeavours to articulate; but she grows more and more imperceptible; and in the conclusion he is left with the scene around him in all respects the same as it had been before his incantations. The result of the whole that is known of Orpheus, is, that he was an eminently great and virtuous man, but was the victim of singular calamity.

We have not yet done with the history of Orpheus. As has been said, he fell a sacrifice to the resentment and fury of the women of his native soil. They are affirmed to have torn him limb from limb. His head, divided from his body, floated down the waters of the Hebrus, and

miraculously, as it passed along to the sea, it was still heard to exclaim in mournful accents, Eurydice, Eurydice! [29] At length it was carried ashore on the island of Lesbos. [30] Here, by some extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, it found a resting-place in a fissure of a rock over-arched by a cave, and, thus domiciliated, is said to have retained the power of speech, and to have uttered oracles. Not only the people of Lesbos resorted to it for guidance in difficult questions, but also the Asiatic Greeks from Ionia and Aetolia; and its fame and character for predicting future events even extended to Babylon. [31]

AMPHION.

The story of Amphion is more perplexing than that of the living Orpheus. Both of them turn in a great degree upon the miraculous effects of music. Amphion was of the royal family of Thebes, and ultimately became ruler of the territory. He is said, by the potency of his lyre, or his skill in the magic art, to have caused the stones to follow him, to arrange themselves in the way he proposed, and without the intervention of a human hand to have raised a wall about his metropolis. [32] It is certainly less difficult to conceive the savage man to be rendered placable, and to conform to the dictates of civilisation, or even wild beasts to be made tame, than to imagine stones to obey the voice and the will of a human being. The example however is not singular; and hereafter we shall find related that Merlin, the British enchanter, by the power of magic caused the rocks of Stonehenge, though of such vast dimensions, to be carried through the air from Ireland to the place where we at present find them.--Homer mentions that Amphion, and his brother Zethus built the walls of Thebes, but does not describe it as having been done by miracle. [33]

TIRESIAS.

Tiresias was one of the most celebrated soothsayers of the early ages of Greece. He lived in the times of Oedipus, and the war of the seven chiefs against Thebes. He was afflicted by the Gods with blindness, in consequence of some displeasure they conceived against him; but in compensation they endowed him beyond all other mortals with the gift of prophecy. He is said to have understood the language of birds. He possessed the art of divining future events from the various indications that manifest themselves in fire, in smoke, and in other ways, [34] but to have set the highest value upon the communications of the dead, whom by spells and incantations he constrained to appear and answer his enquiries; [35] and he is represented as pouring out tremendous menaces against them, when they shewed themselves tardy to attend upon his commands. [36]

ABARIS.

Abaris, the Scythian, known to us for his visit to Greece, was by all accounts a great magician. Herodotus says [37] that he is reported to have travelled over the world with an arrow, eating nothing during his journey. Other authors relate that this arrow was given to him by Apollo, and that he rode upon it through the air, over lands, and seas, and all inaccessible places. [38] The time in which he flourished is very uncertain, some having represented him as having constructed

the Palladium, which, as long as it was preserved, kept Troy from being taken by an enemy, [39] and others affirming that he was familiar with Pythagoras, who lived six hundred years later, and that he was admitted into his special confidence. [40] He is said to have possessed the faculty of foretelling earthquakes, allaying storms, and driving away pestilence; he gave out predictions wherever he went; and is described as an enchanter, professing to cure diseases by virtue of certain words which he pronounced over those who were afflicted with them. [41]

PYTHAGORAS.

The name of Pythagoras is one of the most memorable in the records of the human species; and his character is well worthy of the minutest investigation. By this name we are brought at once within the limits of history properly so called. He lived in the time of Cyrus and Darius Hystaspes, of Croesus, of Pisistratus, of Polycrates, tyrant of Samos, and Amasis, king of Egypt. Many hypotheses have been laid down respecting the precise period of his birth and death; but, as it is not to our purpose to enter into any lengthened discussions of that sort, we will adopt at once the statement that appears to be the most probable, which is that of Lloyd, [42] who fixes his birth about the year before Christ 586, and his death about the year 506.

Pythagoras was a man of the most various accomplishments, and appears to have penetrated in different directions into the depths of human knowledge. He sought wisdom in its retreats of fairest promise, in Egypt and other distant countries. [43] In this investigation he employed the earlier period of his life, probably till he was forty, and devoted the remainder to such modes of proceeding, as appeared to him the most likely to secure the advantage of what he had acquired to a late posterity. [44]

He founded a school, and delivered his acquisitions by oral communication to a numerous body of followers. He divided his pupils into two classes, the one neophytes, to whom was explained only the most obvious and general truths, the other who were admitted into the entire confidence of the master. These last he caused to throw their property into a common stock, and to live together in the same place of resort. [45] He appears to have spent the latter half of his life in that part of Italy, called Magna Graecia, so denominated in some degree from the numerous colonies of Grecians by whom it was planted, and partly perhaps from the memory of the illustrious things which Pythagoras achieved there. [46] He is said to have spread the seeds of political liberty in Crotona, Sybaris, Metapontum, and Rhegium, and from thence in Sicily to Tauromenium, Catana, Agrigentum and Himera. [47] Charondas and Zaleucus, themselves famous legislators, derived the rudiments of their political wisdom from the instructions of Pythagoras. [48]

But this marvellous man in some way, whether from the knowledge he received, or from his own proper discoveries, has secured to his species benefits of a more permanent nature, and which shall outlive the revolutions of ages, and the instability of political institutions. He was a profound geometrician. The two theorems, that the internal angles of every right-line triangle are equal to two right angles, [49] and that the square of the hypotenuse of every right angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides, [50] are

ascribed to him. In memory of the latter of these discoveries he is said to have offered a public sacrifice to the Gods; and the theorem is still known by the name of the Pythagorean theorem. He ascertained from the length of the Olympic course, which was understood to have measured six hundred of Hercules's feet, the precise stature of that hero. [51] Lastly, Pythagoras is the first person, who is known to have taught the spherical figure of the earth, and that we have antipodes; [52] and he propagated the doctrine that the earth is a planet, and that the sun is the centre round which the earth and the other planets move, now known by the name of the Copernican system. [53]

To inculcate a pure and a simple mode of subsistence was also an express object of pursuit to Pythagoras. He taught a total abstinence from every thing having had the property of animal life. It has been affirmed, as we have seen, [54] that Orpheus before him taught the same thing. But the claim of Orpheus to this distinction is ambiguous; while the theories and dogmas of the Samian sage, as he has frequently been styled, were more methodically digested, and produced more lasting and unequivocal effects. He taught temperance in all its branches, and a resolute subjection of the appetites of the body to contemplation and the exercises of the mind; and, by the unremitting discipline and authority he exerted over his followers, he caused his lessons to be constantly observed. There was therefore an edifying and an exemplary simplicity that prevailed as far as the influence of Pythagoras extended, that won golden opinions to his adherents at all times that they appeared, and in all places. [55]

One revolution that Pythagoras worked, was that, whereas, immediately before, those who were most conspicuous among the Greeks as instructors of mankind in understanding and virtue, styled themselves sophists, professors of wisdom, this illustrious man desired to be known only by the appellation of a philosopher, a lover of wisdom. [56] The sophists had previously brought their denomination into discredit and reproach, by the arrogance of their pretensions, and the imperious way in which they attempted to lay down the law to the world.

The modesty of this appellation however did not altogether suit with the deep designs of Pythagoras, the ascendancy he resolved to acquire, and the oracular subjection in which he deemed it necessary to hold those who placed themselves under his instruction. This wonderful man set out with making himself a model of the passive and unscrupulous docility which he afterwards required from others. He did not begin to teach till he was forty years of age, and from eighteen to that period he studied in foreign countries, with the resolution to submit to all his teachers enjoined, and to make himself master of their least communicated and most secret wisdom. In Egypt in particular, we are told that, though he brought a letter of recommendation from Polycrates, his native sovereign, to Amasis, king of that country, who fully concurred with the views of the writer, the priests, jealous of admitting a foreigner into their secrets, baffled him as long as they could, referring him from one college to another, and prescribing to him the most rigorous preparatives, not excluding the rite of circumcision. [57] But Pythagoras endured and underwent every thing, till at length their unwillingness was conquered, and his perseverance received its suitable reward.

When in the end Pythagoras thought himself fully qualified for the task he had all along had in view, he was no less strict in prescribing

ample preliminaries to his own scholars. At the time that a pupil was proposed to him, the master, we are told, examined him with multiplied questions as to his principles, his habits and intentions, observed minutely his voice and manner of speaking, his walk and his gestures, the lines of his countenance, and the expression and management of his eye, and, when he was satisfied with these, then and not till then admitted him as a probationer. [58] It is to be supposed that all this must have been personal. As soon however as this was over, the master was withdrawn from the sight of the pupil; and a noviciate of three and five, in all eight years, [59] was prescribed to the scholar, during which time he was only to hear his instructor from behind a curtain, and the strictest silence was enjoined him through the whole period. As the instructions Pythagoras received in Egypt and the East admitted of no dispute, so in his turn he required an unreserved submission from those who heard him: *autos iphae* "the master has said it," was deemed a sufficient solution to all doubt and uncertainty. [60]

To give the greater authority and effect to his communications Pythagoras hid himself during the day at least from the great body of his pupils, and was only seen by them at night. Indeed there is no reason to suppose that any one was admitted into his entire familiarity. When he came forth, he appeared in a long garment of the purest white, with a flowing beard, and a garland upon his head. He is said to have been of the finest symmetrical form, with a majestic carriage, and a grave and awful countenance. [61] He suffered his followers to believe that he was one of the Gods, the Hyperborean Apollo, [62] and is said to have told Abaris that he assumed the human form, that he might the better invite men to an easiness of approach and to confidence in him. [63] What however seems to be agreed in by all his biographers, is that he professed to have already in different ages appeared in the likeness of man: first as Aethalides, the son of Mercury; and, when his father expressed himself ready to invest him with any gift short of immortality, he prayed that, as the human soul is destined successively to dwell in various forms, he might have the privilege in each to remember his former state of being, which was granted him. From Aethalides he became Euphorbus, who slew Patroclus at the siege of Troy. He then appeared as Hermodimus, then Pyrrhus, a fisherman of Delos, and finally Pythagoras. He said that a period of time was interposed between each transmigration, during which he visited the seat of departed souls; and he professed to relate a part of the wonders he had seen. [64] He is said to have eaten sparingly and in secret, and in all respects to have given himself out for a being not subject to the ordinary laws of nature. [65]

Pythagoras therefore pretended to miraculous endowments. Happening to be on the sea-shore when certain fishermen drew to land an enormous multitude of fishes, he desired them to allow him to dispose of the capture, which they consented to, provided he would name the precise number they had caught. He did so, and required that they should throw their prize into the sea again, at the same time paying them the value of the fish. [66] He tamed a Daunian bear by whispering in his ear, and prevailed on him henceforth to refrain from the flesh of animals, and to feed on vegetables. By the same means he induced an ox not to eat beans, which was a diet specially prohibited by Pythagoras; and he called down an eagle from his flight, causing him to sit on his hand, and submit to be stroked down by the philosopher. [67] In Greece, when he passed the river Nessus in Macedon, the stream was heard to salute him with the words "Hail, Pythagoras!" [68] When Abaris addressed him as one of the heavenly host, he took the stranger aside, and convinced

him that he was under no mistake, by exhibiting to him his thigh of gold: or, according to another account, he used the same sort of evidence at a certain time, to satisfy his pupils of his celestial descent. [69] He is said to have been seen on the same day at Metapontum in Italy, and at Taurominium in Sicily, though these places are divided by the sea, so that it was conceived that it would cost several days to pass from one to the other. [70] In one instance he absented himself from his associates in Italy for a whole year; and when he appeared again, related that he had passed that time in the infernal regions, describing likewise the marvellous things he had seen. [71] Diogenes Laertius, speaking of this circumstance affirms however that he remained during this period in a cave, where his mother conveyed to him intelligence and necessaries, and that, when he came once more into light and air, he appeared so emaciated and colourless, that he might well be believed to have come out of Hades.

The close of the life of Pythagoras was, according to every statement, in the midst of misfortune and violence. Some particulars are related by Iamblichus, [72] which, though he is not an authority beyond all exception, are so characteristic as seem to entitle them to the being transcribed. This author is more circumstantial than any other in stating the elaborate steps by which the pupils of Pythagoras came to be finally admitted into the full confidence of the master. He says, that they passed three years in the first place in a state of probation, carefully watched by their seniors, and exposed to their occasional taunts and ironies, by way of experiment to ascertain whether they were of a temper sufficiently philosophical and firm. At the expiration of that period they were admitted to a noviciate, in which they were bound to uninterrupted silence, and heard the lectures of the master, while he was himself concealed from their view by a curtain. They were then received to initiation, and required to deliver over their property to the common stock. They were admitted to intercourse with the master. They were invited to a participation of the most obscure theories, and the abstrusest problems. If however in this stage of their progress they were discovered to be too weak of intellectual penetration, or any other fundamental objection were established against them, they were expelled the community; the double of the property they had contributed to the common stock was paid down to them; a head-stone and a monument inscribed with their names were set up in the place of meeting of the community; they were considered as dead; and, if afterwards they met by chance any of those who were of the privileged few, they were treated by them as entirely strangers.

Cylon, the richest man, or, as he is in one place styled, the prince, of Crotona, had manifested the greatest partiality to Pythagoras. He was at the same time a man of rude, impatient and boisterous character. He, together with Perialus of Thurium, submitted to all the severities of the Pythagorean school. They passed the three years of probation, and the five years of silence. They were received into the familiarity of the master. They were then initiated, and delivered all their wealth into the common stock. They were however ultimately pronounced deficient in intellectual power, or for some other reason were not judged worthy to continue among the confidential pupils of Pythagoras. They were expelled. The double of the property they had contributed was paid back to them. A monument was set up in memory of what they had been; and they were pronounced dead to the school.

It will easily be conceived in what temper Cylon sustained this degradation. Of Perialus we hear nothing further. But Cylon, from

feelings of the deepest reverence and awe for Pythagoras, which he had cherished for years, was filled even to bursting with inextinguishable hatred and revenge. The unparalleled merits, the venerable age of the master whom he had so long followed, had no power to control his violence. His paramount influence in the city insured him the command of a great body of followers. He excited them to a frame of turbulence and riot. He represented to them how intolerable was the despotism of this pretended philosopher. They surrounded the school in which the pupils were accustomed to assemble, and set it on fire. Forty persons perished in the flames. [73] According to some accounts Pythagoras was absent at the time. According to others he and two of his pupils escaped. He retired from Crotona to Metapontum. But the hostility which had broken out in the former city, followed him there. He took refuge in the Temple of the Muses. But he was held so closely besieged that no provisions could be conveyed to him; and he finally perished with hunger, after, according to Laertius, forty days' abstinence. [74]

It is difficult to imagine any thing more instructive, and more pregnant with matter for salutary reflection, than the contrast presented to us by the character and system of action of Pythagoras on the one hand, and those of the great enquirers of the last two centuries, for example, Bacon, Newton and Locke, on the other. Pythagoras probably does not yield to any one of these in the evidences of true intellectual greatness. In his school, in the followers he trained resembling himself, and in the salutary effects he produced on the institutions of the various republics of Magna Graecia and Sicily, he must be allowed greatly to have excelled them. His discoveries of various propositions in geometry, of the earth as a planet, and of the solar system as now universally recognised, clearly stamp him a genius of the highest order.

Yet this man, thus enlightened and philanthropical, established his system of proceeding upon narrow and exclusive principles, and conducted it by methods of artifice, quackery and delusion. One of his leading maxims was, that the great and fundamental truths to the establishment of which he devoted himself, were studiously to be concealed from the vulgar, and only to be imparted to a select few, and after years of the severest noviciate and trial. He learned his earliest lessons of wisdom in Egypt after this method, and he conformed through life to the example which had thus been delivered to him. The severe examination that he made of the candidates previously to their being admitted into his school, and the years of silence that were then prescribed to them, testify this. He instructed them by symbols, obscure and enigmatical propositions, which they were first to exercise their ingenuity to expound. The authority and dogmatical assertions of the master were to remain unquestioned; and the pupils were to fashion themselves to obsequious and implicit submission, and were the furthest in the world from being encouraged to the independent exercise of their own understandings. There was nothing that Pythagoras was more fixed to discountenance, than the communication of the truths upon which he placed the highest value, to the uninitiated. It is not probable therefore that he wrote any thing: all was communicated orally, by such gradations, and with such discretion, as he might think fit to adopt and to exercise.

Delusion and falsehood were main features of his instruction. With what respect therefore can we consider, and what manliness worthy of his high character and endowments can we impute to, his discourses delivered from behind a curtain, his hiding himself during the day,

and only appearing by night in a garb assumed for the purpose of exciting awe and veneration? What shall we say to the story of his various transmigrations? At first sight it appears in the light of the most audacious and unblushing imposition. And, if we were to yield so far as to admit that by a high-wrought enthusiasm, by a long train of maceration and visionary reveries, he succeeded in imposing on himself, this, though in a different way, would scarcely less detract from the high stage of eminence upon which the nobler parts of his character would induce us to place him.

Such were some of the main causes that have made his efforts perishable, and the lustre which should have attended his genius in a great degree transitory and fugitive. He was probably much under the influence of a contemptible jealousy, and must be considered as desirous that none of his contemporaries or followers should eclipse their master. All was oracular and dogmatic in the school of Pythagoras. He prized and justly prized the greatness of his attainments and discoveries, and had no conception that any thing could go beyond them. He did not encourage, nay, he resolutely opposed, all true independence of mind, and that undaunted spirit of enterprise which is the atmosphere in which the sublimest thoughts are most naturally generated. He therefore did not throw open the gates of science and wisdom, and invite every comer; but on the contrary narrowed the entrance, and carefully reduced the number of aspirants. He thought not of the most likely methods to give strength and permanence and an extensive sphere to the progress of the human mind. For these reasons he wrote nothing; but consigned all to the frail and uncertain custody of tradition. And distant posterity has amply avenged itself upon the narrowness of his policy; and the name of Pythagoras, which would otherwise have been ranked with the first luminaries of mankind, and consigned to everlasting gratitude, has in consequence of a few radical and fatal mistakes, been often loaded with obloquy, and the hero who bore it been indiscriminately classed among the votaries of imposture and artifice.

EPIMENIDES.

Epimenides has been mentioned among the disciples of Pythagoras; but he probably lived at an earlier period. He was a native of Crete. The first extraordinary circumstance that is recorded of him is, that, being very young, he was sent by his father in search of a stray sheep, when, being overcome by the heat of the weather, he retired into a cave, and slept fifty-seven years. Supposing that he had slept only a few hours, he repaired first to his father's country-house, which he found in possession of a new tenant, and then to the city, where he encountered his younger brother, now grown an old man, who with difficulty was brought to acknowledge him. [75] It was probably this circumstance that originally brought Epimenides into repute as a prophet, and a favourite of the Gods.

Epimenides appears to have been one of those persons, who make it their whole study to delude their fellow-men, and to obtain for themselves the reputation of possessing supernatural gifts. Such persons, almost universally, and particularly in ages of ignorance and wonder, become themselves the dupes of their own pretensions. He gave out that he was secretly subsisted by food brought to him by the nymphs; and he is said to have taken nourishment in so small quantities, as to be exempted from the ordinary necessities of nature.

[76] He boasted that he could send his soul out of his body, and recal it, when he pleased; and alternately appeared an inanimate corpse, and then again his life would return to him, and he appear capable of every human function as before. [77] He is said to have practised the ceremony of exorcising houses and fields, and thus rendering them fruitful and blessed. [78] He frequently uttered prophecies of events with such forms of ceremony and such sagacious judgment, that they seemed to come to pass as he predicted.

One of the most memorable acts of his life happened in this manner. Cylon, the head of one of the principal families in Athens, set on foot a rebellion against the government, and surprised the citadel. His power however was of short duration. Siege was laid to the place, and Cylon found his safety in flight. His partisans forsook their arms, and took refuge at the altars. Seduced from this security by fallacious promises, they were brought to judgment and all of them put to death. The Gods were said to be offended with this violation of the sanctions of religion, and sent a plague upon the city. All things were in confusion, and sadness possessed the whole community. Prodigies were perpetually seen; the spectres of the dead walked the streets; and terror universally prevailed. The sacrifices offered to the gods exhibited the most unfavourable symptoms. [79] In this emergency the Athenian senate resolved to send for Epimenides to come to their relief. His reputation was great. He was held for a holy and devout man, and wise in celestial things by inspiration from above. A vessel was fitted out under the command of one of the first citizens of the state to fetch Epimenides from Crete. He performed various rites and purifications. He took a certain number of sheep, black and white, and led them to the Areopagus, where he caused them to be let loose to go wherever they would. He directed certain persons to follow them, and mark the place where they lay down. He enquired to what particular deity the spot was consecrated, and sacrificed the sheep to that deity; and in the result of these ceremonies the plague was stayed. According to others he put an end to the plague by the sacrifice of two human victims. The Athenian senate, full of gratitude to their benefactor, tendered him the gift of a talent. But Epimenides refused all compensation, and only required, as an acknowledgment of what he had done, that there should be perpetual peace between the Athenians and the people of Gnosus, his native city. [80] He is said to have died shortly after his return to his country, being of the age of one hundred and fifty-seven years. [81]

EMPEDOCLES.

Empedocles has also been mentioned as a disciple of Pythagoras. But he probably lived too late for that to have been the case. His principles were in a great degree similar to those of that illustrious personage; and he might have studied under one of the immediate successors of Pythagoras. He was a citizen of Agrigentum in Sicily; and, having inherited considerable wealth, exercised great authority in his native place. [82] He was a distinguished orator and poet. He was greatly conversant in the study of nature, and was eminent for his skill in medicine. [83] In addition to these accomplishments, he appears to have been a devoted adherent to the principles of liberty. He effected the dissolution of the ruling council of Agrigentum, and substituted in their room a triennial magistracy, by means of which the public authority became not solely in the hands of the rich as before, but was shared by them with expert and intelligent men of an inferior

class. [84] He opposed all arbitrary exercises of rule. He gave dowries from his own stores to many young maidens of impoverished families, and settled them in eligible marriages. [85] He performed many cures upon his fellow-citizens; and is especially celebrated for having restored a woman to life, who had been apparently dead, according to one account for seven days, but according to others for thirty. [86]

But the most memorable things known of Empedocles, are contained in the fragments of his verses that have been preserved to us. In one of them he says of himself, "I well remember the time before I was Empedocles, that I once was a boy, then a girl, a plant, a glittering fish, a bird that cut the air." [87] Addressing those who resorted to him for improvement and wisdom, he says, "By my instructions you shall learn medicines that are powerful to cure disease, and re-animate old age; you shall be able to calm the savage winds which lay waste the labours of the husbandman, and, when you will, shall send forth the tempest again; you shall cause the skies to be fair and serene, or once more shall draw down refreshing showers, re-animating the fruits of the earth; nay, you shall recal the strength of the dead man, when he has already become the victim of Pluto." [88] Further, speaking of himself, Empedocles exclaims: "Friends, who inhabit the great city laved by the yellow Acragas, all hail! I mix with you a God, no longer a mortal, and am every where honoured by you, as is just; crowned with fillets, and fragrant garlands, adorned with which when I visit populous cities, I am revered by both men and women, who follow me by ten thousands, enquiring the road to boundless wealth, seeking the gift of prophecy, and who would learn the marvellous skill to cure all kinds of diseases." [89]

The best known account of the death of Empedocles may reasonably be considered as fabulous. From what has been said it sufficiently appears, that he was a man of extraordinary intellectual endowments, and the most philanthropical dispositions; at the same time that he was immoderately vain, aspiring by every means in his power to acquire to himself a deathless remembrance. Working on these hints, a story has been invented that he aspired to a miraculous way of disappearing from among men; and for this purpose repaired, when alone, to the top of Mount Aetna, then in a state of eruption, and threw himself down the burning crater: but it is added, that in the result of this perverse ambition he was baffled, the volcano having thrown up one of his brazen sandals, by means of which the mode of his death became known. [90]

ARISTEAS.

Herodotus tells a marvellous story of one Aristeas, a poet of Proconnesus, an island of the Propontis. This man, coming by chance into a fuller's workshop in his native place, suddenly fell down dead. As the man was of considerable rank, the fuller immediately, quitting and locking up his shop, proceeded to inform his family of what had happened. The relations went accordingly, having procured what was requisite to give the deceased the rites of sepulture, to the shop; but, when it was opened, they could discover no vestige of Aristeas, either dead or alive. A traveller however from the neighbouring town of Cyzicus on the continent, protested that he had just left that place, and, as he set foot in the wherry which had brought him over, had met Aristeas, and held a particular conversation with him. Seven

years after, Aristeeas reappeared at Proconnesus, resided there a considerable time, and during this abode wrote his poem of the wars of the one-eyed Arimaspians and the Gryphons. He then again disappeared in an unaccountable manner. But, what is more than all extraordinary, three hundred and forty years after this disappearance, he shewed himself again at Metapontum, in Magna Graecia, and commanded the citizens to erect a statue in his honour near the temple of Apollo in the forum; which being done, he raised himself in the air; and flew away in the form of a crow. [91]

HERMOTIMUS.

Hermotimus, or, as Plutarch names him, Hermodorus of Clazomene, is said to have possessed, like Epimenides, the marvellous power of quitting his body, and returning to it again, as often, and for as long a time as he pleased. In these absences his unembodied spirit would visit what places he thought proper, observe every thing that was going on, and, when he returned to his fleshy tabernacle, make a minute relation of what he had seen. Hermotimus had enemies, who, one time when his body had lain unanimated unusually long, beguiled his wife, made her believe that he was certainly dead, and that it was disrespectful and indecent to keep him so long in that state. The woman therefore placed her husband on the funeral pyre, and consumed him to ashes; so that, continues the philosopher, when the soul of Hermotimus came back again, it no longer found its customary receptacle to retire into. [92] Certainly this kind of treatment appeared to furnish an infallible criterion, whether the seeming absences of the soul of this miraculous man were pretended or real.

THE MOTHER OF DEMARATUS, KING OF SPARTA.

Herodotus [93] tells a story of the mother of Demaratus, king of Sparta, which bears a striking resemblance to the fairy tales of modern times. This lady, afterward queen of Sparta, was sprung from opulent parents, but, when she was born, was so extravagantly ugly, that her parents hid her from all human observation. According to the mode of the times however, they sent the babe daily in its nurse's arms to the shrine of Helen, now metamorphosed into a Goddess, to pray that the child might be delivered from its present preternatural deformity. On these occasions the child was shrouded in many coverings, that it might escape being seen. One day as the nurse came out of the temple, a strange woman met her, and asked her what she carried so carefully concealed. The nurse said it was a female child, but of opulent parents, and she was strictly enjoined that it should be seen by no one. The stranger was importunate, and by dint of perseverance overcame the nurse's reluctance. The woman took the babe in her arms, stroked down its hair, kissed it, and then returning it to the nurse, said that it should grow up the most perfect beauty in Sparta. So accordingly it proved: and the king of the country, having seen her, became so enamoured of her, that, though he already had a wife, and she a husband, he overcame all obstacles, and made her his queen.

ORACLES.

One of the most extraordinary things to be met with in the history of ancient times is the oracles. They maintained their reputation for

many successive centuries. The most famous perhaps were that of Delphi in Greece, and that of Jupiter Ammon in the deserts of Lybia. But they were scattered through many cities, many plains, and many islands. They were consulted by the foolish and the wise; and scarcely anything considerable was undertaken, especially about the time of the Persian invasion into Greece, without the parties having first had recourse to these; and they in most cases modified the conduct of princes and armies accordingly. To render the delusion more successful, every kind of artifice was put in practice. The oracle could only be consulted on fixed days; and the persons who resorted to it, prefaced their application with costly offerings to the presiding God. Their questions passed through the hands of certain priests, residing in and about the temple. These priests received the embassy with all due solemnity, and retired. A priestess, or Pythia, who was seldom or never seen by any of the profane vulgar, was the immediate vehicle of communication with the God. She was cut off from all intercourse with the world, and was carefully trained by the attendant priests. Spending almost the whole of her time in solitude, and taught to consider her office as ineffably sacred, she saw visions, and was for the most part in a state of great excitement. The Pythia, at least of the Delphian God, was led on with much ceremony to the performance of her office, and placed upon the sacred tripod. The tripod, we are told, stood over a chasm in the rock, from which issued fumes of an inebriating quality. The Pythia became gradually penetrated through every limb with these fumes, till her bosom swelled, her features enlarged, her mouth foamed, her voice seemed supernatural, and she uttered words that could sometimes scarcely be called articulate. She could with difficulty contain herself, and seemed to be possessed, and wholly overpowered, with the God. After a prelude of many unintelligible sounds, uttered with fervour and a sort of frenzy, she became by degrees more distinct. She uttered incoherent sentences, with breaks and pauses, that were filled up with preternatural efforts and distorted gestures; while the priests stood by, carefully recording her words, and then reducing them into a sort of obscure signification. They finally digested them for the most part into a species of hexameter verse. We may suppose the supplicants during this ceremony placed at a proper distance, so as to observe these things imperfectly, while the less they understood, they were ordinarily the more impressed with religious awe, and prepared implicitly to receive what was communicated to them. Sometimes the priestess found herself in a frame, not entirely equal to her function, and refused for the present to proceed with the ceremony.

The priests of the oracle doubtless conducted them in a certain degree like the gypsies and fortune-tellers of modern times, cunningly procuring to themselves intelligence in whatever way they could, and ingeniously worming out the secrets of their suitors, at the same time contriving that their drift should least of all be suspected. But their main resource probably was in the obscurity, almost amounting to unintelligibility, of their responses. Their prophecies in most cases required the comment of the event to make them understood; and it not seldom happened, that the meaning in the sequel was found to be the diametrically opposite of that which the pious votaries had originally conceived.

In the mean time the obscurity of the oracles was of inexpressible service to the cause of superstition. If the event turned out to be such as could in no way be twisted to come within the scope of the response, the pious suitor only concluded that the failure was owing

to the grossness and carnality of his own apprehension, and not to any deficiency in the institution. Thus the oracle by no means lost credit, even when its meaning remained for ever in its original obscurity. But, when, by any fortunate chance, its predictions seemed to be verified, then the unerringness of the oracle was lauded from nation to nation; and the omniscience of the God was admitted with astonishment and adoration.

It would be a vulgar and absurd mistake however, to suppose that all this was merely the affair of craft, the multitude only being the dupes, while the priests in cold blood carried on the deception, and secretly laughed at the juggle they were palming on the world. They felt their own importance; and they cherished it. They felt that they were regarded by their countrymen as something more than human; and the opinion entertained of them by the world around them, did not fail to excite a responsive sentiment in their own bosoms. If their contemporaries willingly ascribed to them an exclusive sacredness, by how much stronger an impulse were they led fully to receive so flattering a suggestion! Their minds were in a perpetual state of exaltation; and they believed themselves specially favoured by the God whose temple constituted their residence. A small matter is found sufficient to place a creed which flatters all the passions of its votaries, on the most indubitable basis. Modern philosophers think that by their doctrine of gases they can explain all the appearances of the Pythia; but the ancients, to whom this doctrine was unknown, admitted these appearances as the undoubted evidence of an interposition from heaven.

It is certainly a matter of the extremest difficulty, for us in imagination to place ourselves in the situation of those who believed in the ancient polytheistical creed. And yet these believers nearly constituted the whole of the population of the kingdoms of antiquity. Even those who professed to have shaken off the prejudices of their education, and to rise above the absurdities of paganism, had still some of the old leaven adhering to them. One of the last acts of the life of Socrates, was to order the sacrifice of a cock to be made to Aesculapius.

Now the creed of paganism is said to have made up to the number of thirty thousand deities. Every kingdom, every city, every street, nay, in a manner every house, had its protecting God. These Gods were rivals to each other; and were each jealous of his own particular province, and watchful against the intrusion of any neighbour deity upon ground where he had a superior right. The province of each of these deities was of small extent; and therefore their watchfulness and jealousy of their appropriate honours do not enter into the slightest comparison with the Providence of the God who directs the concerns of the universe. They had ample leisure to employ in vindicating their prerogatives. Prophecy was of all means the plainest and most obvious for each deity to assert his existence, and to enforce the reverence and submission of his votaries. Prophecy was that species of interference which was least liable to the being confuted and exposed. The oracles, as we have said, were delivered in terms and phrases that were nearly unintelligible. If therefore they met with no intelligible fulfilment, this lost them nothing; and, if it gained them no additional credit, neither did it expose them to any disgrace. Whereas every example, where the obscure prediction seemed to tally with, and be illustrated by any subsequent event, was hailed with wonder and applause, confirmed the faith of the true believers,

and was held forth as a victorious confutation of the doubts of the infidel.

INVASION OF XERXES INTO GREECE.

It is particularly suitable in this place to notice the events which took place at Delphi upon occasion of the memorable invasion of Xerxes into Greece. This was indeed a critical moment for the heathen mythology. The Persians were pointed and express in their hostility against the altars and the temples of the Greeks. It was no sooner known that the straits of Thermopylae had been forced, than the priests consulted the God, as to whether they should bury the treasures of the temple, so to secure them against the sacrilege of the invader. The answer of the oracle was: "Let nothing be moved; the God is sufficient for the protection of his rights." The inhabitants therefore of the neighbourhood withdrew: only sixty men and the priest remained. The Persians in the mean time approached. Previously to this however, the sacred arms which were placed in the temple, were seen to be moved by invisible hands, and deposited on the declivity which was on the outside of the building. The invaders no sooner shewed themselves, than a miraculous storm of thunder and lightning rebounded and flashed among the multiplied hills which surrounded the sacred area, and struck terror into all hearts. Two vast fragments were detached from the top of mount Parnassus, and crushed hundreds in their fall. A voice of warlike acclamation issued from within the walls. Dismay seized the Persian troops. The Delphians then, rushing from their caverns, and descending from the summits, attacked them with great slaughter. Two persons, exceeding all human stature, and that were said to be the demigods whose fanes were erected near the temple of Apollo, joined in the pursuit, and extended the slaughter. [94] It has been said that the situation of the place was particularly adapted to this mode of defence. Surrounded and almost overhung with lofty mountain-summits, the area of the city was inclosed within crags and precipices. No way led to it but through defiles, narrow and steep, shadowed with wood, and commanded at every step by fastnesses from above. In such a position artificial fires and explosion might imitate a thunder storm. Great pains had been taken, to represent the place as altogether abandoned; and therefore the detachment of rocks from the top of mount Parnassus, though effected by human hands, might appear altogether supernatural.

Nothing can more forcibly illustrate the strength of the religious feeling among the Greeks, than the language of the Athenian government at the time of the second descent of the Persian armament upon their territory, when they were again compelled to abandon their houses and land to the invader. Mardonius said to them: "I am thus commissioned by the king of Persia, he will release and give back to you your country; he invites you to choose a further territory, whatever you may think desirable, which he will guarantee to you to govern as you shall judge fit. He will rebuild for you, without its costing you either money or labour, the temples which in his former incursion he destroyed with fire. It is in vain for you to oppose him by force, for his armies are innumerable." To which the Athenians replied, "As long as the sun pursues his course in the heavens, so long will we resist the Persian invader." Then turning to the Spartan ambassadors who were sent to encourage and animate them to persist, they added, "It is but natural that your employers should apprehend that we might give way and be discouraged. But there is no sum of money so vast, and no

region so inviting and fertile, that could buy us to concur in the enslaving of Greece. Many and resistless are the causes which induce us to this resolve. First and chiefest, the temples and images of the Gods, which Xerxes has burned and laid in ruins, and which we are called upon to avenge to the utmost, instead of forming a league with him who made this devastation. Secondly, the consideration of the Grecian race, the same with us in blood and in speech, the same in religion and manners, and whose cause we will never betray. Know therefore now, if you knew not before, that, as long as a single Athenian survives, we will never swerve from the hostility to Persia to which we have devoted ourselves."

Contemplating this magnanimous resolution, it is in vain for us to reflect on the absurdity, incongruity and frivolousness, as we apprehend it, of the pagan worship, inasmuch as we find, whatever we may think of its demerits, that the most heroic people that ever existed on earth, in the hour of their direst calamity, regarded a zealous and fervent adherence to that religion as the most sacred of all duties. [95]

DEMOCRITUS.

The fame of Democritus has sustained a singular fortune. He is represented by Pliny as one of the most superstitious of mortals. This character is founded on certain books which appeared in his name. In these books he is made to say, that, if the blood of certain birds be mingled together, the combination will produce a serpent, of which whoever eats will become endowed with the gift of understanding the language of birds. [96] He attributes a multitude of virtues to the limbs of a dead camelion: among others that, if the left foot of this animal be grilled, and there be added certain herbs, and a particular unctuous preparation, it will have the quality to render the person who carries it about him invisible. [97] But all this is wholly irreconcilable with the known character of Democritus, who distinguished himself by the hypothesis that the world was framed from the fortuitous concourse of atoms, and that the soul died with the body. And accordingly Lucian, [98] a more judicious author than Pliny, expressly cites Democritus as the strenuous opposer of all the pretenders to miracles. "Such juggling tricks," he says, "call for a Democritus, an Epicurus, a Metrodorus, or some one of that temper, who should endeavour to detect the illusion, and would hold it for certain, even if he could not fully lay open the deceit, that the whole was a lying pretence, and had not a spark of reality in it."

Democritus was in reality one of the most disinterested characters on record in the pursuit of truth. He has been styled the father of experimental philosophy. When his father died, and the estate came to be divided between him and two brothers, he chose the part which was in money, though the smallest, that he might indulge him [Errata: _read_ himself] in travelling in pursuit of knowledge. He visited Egypt and Persia, and turned aside into Ethiopia and India. He is reported to have said, that he had rather be the possessor of one of the cardinal secrets of nature, than of the diadem of Persia.

SOCRATES.

Socrates is the most eminent of the ancient philosophers. He lived in

the most enlightened age of Greece, and in Athens, the most illustrious of her cities. He was born in the middle ranks of life, the son of a sculptor. He was of a mean countenance, with a snub nose, projecting eyes, and otherwise of an appearance so unpromising, that a physiognomist, his contemporary, pronounced him to be given to the grossest vices. But he was of a penetrating understanding, the simplest manners, and a mind wholly bent on the study of moral excellence. He at once abjured all the lofty pretensions, and the dark and recondite pursuits of the most applauded teachers of his time, and led those to whom he addressed his instructions from obvious and irresistible data to the most unexpected and useful conclusions. There was something in his manner of teaching that drew to him the noblest youth of Athens. Plato and Xenophon, two of the most admirable of the Greek writers, were among his pupils. He reconciled in his own person in a surprising degree poverty with the loftiest principles of independence. He taught an unreserved submission to the laws of our country. He several times unequivocally displayed his valour in the field of battle, while at the same time he kept aloof from public offices and trusts. The serenity of his mind never forsook him. He was at all times ready to teach, and never found it difficult to detach himself from his own concerns, to attend to the wants and wishes of others. He was uniformly courteous and unpretending; and, if at any time he indulged in a vein of playful ridicule, it was only against the presumptuously ignorant, and those who were without foundation wise in their own conceit.

Yet, with all these advantages and perfections, the name of Socrates would not have been handed down with such lustre to posterity but for the manner of his death. He made himself many enemies. The plainness of his manner and the simplicity of his instructions were inexpressibly wounding to those (and they were many), who, setting up for professors, had hitherto endeavoured to dazzle their hearers by the loftiness of their claims, and to command from them implicit submission by the arrogance with which they dictated. It must be surprising to us, that a man like Socrates should be arraigned in a country like Athens upon a capital accusation. He was charged with instilling into the youth a disobedience to their duties, and propagating impiety to the Gods, faults of which he was notoriously innocent. But the plot against him was deeply laid, and is said to have been twenty years in the concoction. And he greatly assisted the machinations of his adversaries, by the wonderful firmness of his conduct upon his trial, and his spirited resolution not to submit to any thing indirect and pusillanimous. He defended himself with a serene countenance and the most cogent arguments, but would not stoop to deprecation and intreaty. When sentence was pronounced against him, this did not induce the least alteration of his conduct. He did not think that a life which he had passed for seventy years with a clear conscience, was worth preserving by the sacrifice of honour. He refused to escape from prison, when one of his rich friends had already purchased of the jailor the means of his freedom. And, during the last days of his life, and when he was waiting the signal of death, which was to be the return of a ship that had been sent with sacrifices to Delos, he uttered those admirable discourses, which have been recorded by Xenophon and Plato to the latest posterity.

But the question which introduces his name into this volume, is that of what is called the demon of Socrates. He said that he repeatedly received a divine premonition of dangers impending over himself and others; and considerable pains have been taken to ascertain the cause

and author of these premonitions. Several persons, among whom we may include Plato, have conceived that Socrates regarded himself as attended by a supernatural guardian who at all times watched over his welfare and concerns.

But the solution is probably of a simpler nature. Socrates, with all his incomparable excellencies and perfections, was not exempt from the superstitions of his age and country. He had been bred up among the absurdities of polytheism. In them were included, as we have seen, a profound deference for the responses of oracles, and a vigilant attention to portents and omens. Socrates appears to have been exceedingly regardful of omens. Plato tells us that this intimation, which he spoke of as his demon, never prompted him to any act, but occasionally interfered to prevent him or his friends from proceeding in any thing that would have been attended with injurious consequences. [99] Sometimes he described it as a voice, which no one however heard but himself; and sometimes it shewed itself in the act of sneezing. If the sneezing came, when he was in doubt to do a thing or not to do it, it confirmed him; but if, being already engaged in any act, he sneezed, this he considered as a warning to desist. If any of his friends sneezed on his right hand, he interpreted this as a favourable omen; but, if on his left, he immediately relinquished his purpose. [100] Socrates vindicated his mode of expressing himself on the subject, by saying that others, when they spoke of omens, for example, by the voice of a bird, said the bird told me this, but that he, knowing that the omen was purely instrumental to a higher power, deemed it more religious and respectful to have regard only to the higher power, and to say that God had graciously warned him. [101] One of the examples of this presage was, that, going along a narrow street with several companions in earnest discourse, he suddenly stopped, and turned another way, warning his friends to do the same. Some yielded to him, and others went on, who were encountered by the rushing forward of a multitude of hogs, and did not escape without considerable inconvenience and injury. [102] In another instance one of a company among whom was Socrates, had confederated to commit an act of assassination. Accordingly he rose to quit the place, saying to Socrates, "I will be back presently." Socrates, unaware of his purpose, but having received the intimation of his demon, said to him earnestly, "Go not." The conspirator sat down. Again however he rose, and again Socrates stopped him. At length he escaped, without the observation of the philosopher, and committed the act, for which he was afterwards brought to trial. When led to execution, he exclaimed, "This would never have happened to me, if I had yielded to the intimation of Socrates." [103] In the same manner, and by a similar suggestion, the philosopher predicted the miscarriage of the Athenian expedition to Sicily under Nicias, which terminated with such signal disaster. [104] This feature in the character of Socrates is remarkable, and may shew the prevalence of superstitious observances, even in persons whom we might think the most likely to be exempt from this weakness.

ROME.

VIRGIL.

From the Greeks let us turn to the Romans. The earliest examples to

our purpose occur in the Aeneid. And, though Virgil is a poet, yet is he so correct a writer, that we may well take for granted, that he either records facts which had been handed down by tradition, or that, when he feigns, he feigns things strikingly in accord with the manners and belief of the age of which he speaks.

POLYDORUS.

One of the first passages that occur, is of the ghost of the deceased Polydorus on the coast of Thrace. Polydorus, the son of Priam, was murdered by the king of that country, his host, for the sake of the treasures he had brought with him from Troy. He was struck through with darts made of the wood of the myrtle. The body was cast into a pit, and earth thrown upon it. The stems of myrtle grew and flourished. Aeneas, after the burning of Troy, first attempted a settlement in this place. Near the spot where he landed he found a hillock thickly set with myrtle. He attempted to gather some, thinking it might form a suitable screen to an altar which he had just raised. To his astonishment and horror he found the branches he had plucked, dropping with blood. He tried the experiment again and again. At length a voice from the mound was heard, exclaiming, "Spare me! I am Polydorus;" and warning him to fly the blood-stained and treacherous shore.

DIDO.

We have a more detailed tale of necromancy, when Dido, deserted by Aeneas, resolves on self-destruction. To delude her sister as to her secret purpose, she sends for a priestess from the gardens of the Hesperides, pretending that her object is by magical incantations again to relumine the passion of love in the breast of Aeneas. This priestess is endowed with the power, by potent verse to free the oppressed soul from care, and by similar means to agitate the bosom with passion which is free from its empire. She can arrest the headlong stream, and cause the stars to return back in their orbits. She can call up the ghosts of the dead. She is able to compel the solid earth to rock, and the trees of the forest to descend from their mountains. To give effect to the infernal spell, Dido commands that a funeral pyre shall be set up in the interior court of her palace, and that the arms of Aeneas, what remained of his attire, and the marriage bed in which Dido had received him, shall be heaped upon it. The pyre is hung round with garlands, and adorned with branches of cypress. The sword of Aeneas and his picture are added. Altars are placed round the pyre; and the priestess, with dishevelled hair, calls with terrific charms upon her three hundred Gods, upon Erebus, chaos, and the three-faced Hecate. She sprinkles around the waters of Avernus, and adds certain herbs that had been cropped by moonlight with a sickle of brass. She brings with her the excrescence which is found upon the forehead of a new-cast foal, of the size of a dried fig, and which unless first eaten by the mare, the mother never admits her young to the nourishment of her milk. After these preparations, Dido, with garments tucked up, and with one foot bare, approached the altars, breaking over them a consecrated cake, and embracing them successively in her arms. The pyre was then to be set on fire; and, as the different objects placed upon it were gradually consumed, the charm became complete, and the ends proposed to the ceremony were expected to follow. Dido assures her sister, that she well knew the unlawfulness of her proceeding, and protests that nothing but irresistible necessity

should have compelled her to have recourse to these unhallowed arts. She finally stabs herself, and expires.

ROMULUS.

The early history of Rome is, as might be expected, interspersed with prodigies. Romulus himself, the founder, after a prosperous reign of many years, disappeared at last by a miracle. The king assembled his army to a general review, when suddenly, in the midst of the ceremony, a tempest arose, with vivid lightnings and tremendous crashes of thunder. Romulus became enveloped in a cloud, and, when, shortly after, a clear sky and serene heavens succeeded, the king was no more seen, and the throne upon which he had sat appeared vacant. The people were somewhat dissatisfied with the event, and appear to have suspected foul play. But the next day Julius Proculus, a senator of the highest character, shewed himself in the general assembly, and assured them, that, with the first dawn of the morning, Romulus had stood before him, and certified to him that the Gods had taken him up to their celestial abodes, authorising him withal to declare to his citizens, that their arms should be for ever successful against all their enemies. [105]

NUMA.

Numa was the second king of Rome: and, the object of Romulus having been to render his people soldiers and invincible in war, Numa, an old man and a philosopher, made it his purpose to civilise them, and deeply to imbue them with sentiments of religion. He appears to have imagined the thing best calculated to accomplish this purpose, was to lead them by prodigies and the persuasion of an intercourse with the invisible world. A shield fell from heaven in his time, which he caused to be carefully kept and consecrated to the Gods; and he conceived no means so likely to be effectual to this end, as to make eleven other shields exactly like the one which had descended by miracle, so that, if an accident happened to any one, the Romans might believe that the one given to them by the divinity was still in their possession.[106]

Numa gave to his people civil statutes, and a code of observances in matters of religion; and these also were enforced with a divine sanction. Numa met the goddess Egeria from time to time in a cave; and by her was instructed in the institutions he should give to the Romans: and this barbarous people, awed by the venerable appearance of their king, by the sanctity of his manners, and still more by the divine favour which was so signally imparted to him, received his mandates with exemplary reverence, and ever after implicitly conformed themselves to all that he had suggested. [107]

TULLUS HOSTILIUS.

Tullus Hostilius, the third king of Rome, restored again the policy of Romulus. In his time, Alba, the parent state, was subdued and united to its more flourishing colony. In the mean time Tullus, who during the greater part of his reign had been distinguished by martial achievements, in the latter part became the victim of superstitions. A shower of stones fell from heaven, in the manner, as Livy tells us, of a hail-storm. A plague speedily succeeded to this prodigy. [108]

Tullus, awed by these events, gave his whole attention to the rites of religion. Among other things he found in the sacred books of Numa an account of a certain ceremony, by which, if rightly performed, the appearance of a God, named Jupiter Elicius, would be conjured up. But Tullus, who had spent his best days in the ensanguined field, proved inadequate to this new undertaking. Some defects having occurred in his performance of the magical ceremony, not only no God appeared at his bidding, but, the anger of heaven being awakened, a thunderbolt fell on the palace, and the king, and the place of his abode were consumed together. [109]

ACCIUS NAVIUS.

In the reign of Tarquinius Priscus, the fifth king of Rome, another famous prodigy is recorded. The king had resolved to increase the number of the Roman cavalry. Romulus had raised the first body with the customary ceremony of augury. Tarquinius proposed to proceed in the present case, omitting this ceremony. Accius Navius, the chief augur, protested against the innovation. Tarquin, in contempt of his interference, addressed Accius, saying, "Come, augur, consult your birds, and tell me, whether the thing I have now in my mind can be done, or cannot be done." Accius proceeded according to the rules of his art, and told the king it could be done. "What I was thinking of," replied Tarquinius, "was whether you could cut this whetstone in two with this razor." Accius immediately took the one instrument and the other, and performed the prodigy in the face of the assembled people. [110]

SERVIUS TULLIUS.

Servius Tullius, the sixth king of Rome, was the model of a disinterested and liberal politician, and gave to his subjects those institutions to which, more than to any other cause, they were indebted for their subsequent greatness. Tarquinius subjected nearly the whole people of Latium to his rule, capturing one town of this district after another. In Corniculum, one of these places, Servius Tullius, being in extreme youth, was made a prisoner of war, and subsequently dwelt as a slave in the king's palace. One day as he lay asleep in the sight of many, his head was observed to be on fire. The bystanders, terrified at the spectacle, hastened to bring water that they might extinguish the flames. The queen forbade their assiduity, regarding the event as a token from the Gods. By and by the boy awoke of his own accord, and the flames at the same instant disappeared. The queen, impressed with the prodigy, became persuaded that the youth was reserved for high fortunes, and directed that he should be instructed accordingly in all liberal knowledge. In due time he was married to the daughter of Tarquinius, and was destined in all men's minds to succeed in the throne, which took place in the sequel. [111]

In the year of Rome two hundred and ninety one, forty-seven years after the expulsion of Tarquin, a dreadful plague broke out in the city, and carried off both the consuls, the augurs, and a vast multitude of the people. The following year was distinguished by numerous prodigies; fires were seen in the heavens, and the earth shook, spectres appeared, and supernatural voices were heard, an ox spoke, and a shower of raw flesh fell in the fields. Most of these prodigies were not preternatural; the speaking ox was probably

received on the report of a single hearer; and the whole was invested with exaggerated terror by means of the desolation of the preceding year. [112]

THE SORCERESS OF VIRGIL.

Prodigies are plentifully distributed through the earlier parts of the Roman history; but it is not our purpose to enter into a chronological detail on the subject. And in reality those already given, except in the instance of Tullus Hostilius, do not entirely fall within the scope of the present volume. The Roman poets, Virgil, Horace, Ovid and Lucan, give a fuller insight than the Latin prose-writers, into the conceptions of their countrymen upon the subject of incantations and magic.

The eighth eclogue of Virgil, entitled Pharmaceutria, is particularly to our purpose in this point. There is an Idyll of Theocritus under the same name; but it is of an obscurer character; and the enchantress is not, like that of Virgil, triumphant in the success of her arts.

The sorceress is introduced by Virgil, giving direction to her female attendant as to the due administration of her charms. Her object is to recal Daphnis, whom she styles her husband, to his former love for her. At the same time, she says, she will endeavour by magic to turn him away from his wholesome sense. She directs her attendant to burn vervain and frankincense; and she ascribes the highest efficacy to the solemn chant, which, she says, can call down the moon from its sphere, can make the cold-blooded snake burst in the field, and was the means by which Circe turned the companions of Ulysses into beasts. She orders his image to be thrice bound round with fillets of three colours, and then that it be paraded about a prepared altar, while in binding the knots the attendant shall still say, "Thus do I bind the fillets of Venus." One image of clay and one of wax are placed before the same fire; and as the image of clay hardens, so does the heart of Daphnis harden towards his new mistress; and as the image of wax softens, so is the heart of Daphnis made tender towards the sorceress. She commands a consecrated cake to be broken over the image, and crackling laurels to be burned before it, that as Daphnis had tormented her by his infidelity, so he in his turn may be agitated with a returning constancy. She prays that as the wanton heifer pursues the steer through woods and glens, till at length, worn out with fatigue, she lies down on the oozy reeds by the banks of the stream, and the night-dew is unable to induce her to withdraw, so Daphnis may be led on after her for ever with inextinguishable love. She buries the relics of what had belonged to Daphnis beneath her threshold. She bruises poisonous herbs of resistless virtue which had been gathered in the kingdom of Pontus, herbs, which enabled him who gave them to turn himself into a hungry wolf prowling amidst the forests, to call up ghosts from the grave, and to translate the ripened harvest from the field where it grew to the lands of another. She orders her attendant to bring out to the face of heaven the ashes of these herbs, and [Errata: _dele_ and] to cast them over her head into the running stream, and at the same time taking care not to look behind her. After all her efforts the sorceress begins to despair. She says, "Daphnis heeds not my incantations, heeds not the Gods." She looks again; she perceives the ashes on the altar emit sparkles of fire; she hears her faithful house-dog bark before the door; she says, "Can these things be; or do lovers dream what they desire? It is not

so! The real Daphnis comes; I hear his steps; he has left the deluding town; he hastens to my longing arms!"

CANIDIA.

In the works of Horace occurs a frightful and repulsive, but a curious detail of a scene of incantation. [113] Four sorceresses are represented as assembled, Canidia, the principal, to perform, the other three to assist in, the concoction of a charm, by means of which a certain youth, named Varus, for whom Canidia had conceived a passion, but who regards the hag with the utmost contempt, may be made obsequious to her desires. Canidia appears first, the locks of her dishevelled hair twined round with venomous and deadly serpents, ordering the wild fig-tree and the funereal cypress to be rooted up from the sepulchres on which they grew, and these, together with the egg of a toad smeared with blood, the plumage of the screech-owl, various herbs brought from Thessaly and Georgia, and bones torn from the jaws of a famished dog, to be burned in flames fed with perfumes from Colchis. Of the assistant witches, one traces with hurried steps the edifice, sprinkling it, as she goes, with drops from the Avernus, her hair on her head stiff and erect, like the quills of the sea-hedge-hog, or the bristles of a hunted boar; and another, who is believed by all the neighbourhood to have the faculty of conjuring the stars and the moon down from heaven, contributes her aid.

But, which is most horrible, the last of the assistant witches is seen, armed with a spade, and, with earnest and incessant labour, throwing up earth, that she may dig a trench, in which is to be plunged up to his chin a beardless youth, stripped of his purple robe, the emblem of his noble descent, and naked, that, from his marrow already dry and his liver (when at length his eye-balls, long fixed on the still renovated food which is withheld from his famished jaws, have no more the power to discern), may be concocted the love-potion, from which these hags promise themselves the most marvellous results.

Horace presents before us the helpless victim of their malice, already inclosed in the fatal trench, first viewing their orgies with affright, asking, by the Gods who rule the earth and all the race of mortals, what means the tumult around him? He then intreats Canidia, by her children if ever she had offspring, by the visible evidences of his high rank, and by the never-failing vengeance of Jupiter upon such misdeeds, to say why she casts on him glances, befitting the fury of a stepmother, or suited to a beast already made desperate by the wounds of the hunter.

At length, no longer exhausting himself in fruitless intreaties, the victim has recourse in his agonies to curses on his executioners. He says, his ghost shall haunt them for ever, for no vengeance can expiate such cruelty. He will tear their cheeks with his fangs, for that power is given to the shades below. He will sit, a night-mare, on their bosoms, driving away sleep from their eyes; while the enraged populace shall pursue them with stones, and the wolves shall gnaw and howl over their unburied members. The unhappy youth winds up all with the remark, that his parents who will survive him, shall themselves witness this requital of the sorceresses' infernal deeds.

Canidia, unmoved by these menaces and execrations, complains of the slow progress of her charms. She gnaws her fingers with rage. She

invokes the night and the moon, beneath whose rays these preparations are carried on, now, while the wild beasts lie asleep in the forests, and while the dogs alone bay the superannuated letcher, who relies singly on the rich scents with which he is perfumed for success, to speed her incantations, and signalise their power beneath the roof of him whose love she seeks. She impatiently demands why her drugs should be of less avail than those of Medea, with which she poisoned a garment, that, once put on, caused Creusa, daughter of the king of Corinth, to expire in intolerable torments? She discovers that Varus had hitherto baffled her power by means of some magical antidote; and she resolves to prepare a mightier charm, that nothing from earth or hell shall resist. "Sooner," she says, "shall the sky be swallowed up in the sea, and the earth be stretched a covering over both, than thou, my enemy, shalt not be wrapped in the flames of love, as subtle and tenacious as those of burning pitch."

It is not a little curious to remark the operation of the antagonist principles of superstition and scepticism among the Romans in this enlightened period, as it comes illustrated to us in the compositions of Horace on this subject. In the piece, the contents of which have just been given, things are painted in all the solemnity and terror which is characteristic of the darkest ages. But, a few pages further on, we find the poet in a mock Palinodia deprecating the vengeance of the sorceress, who, he says, has already sufficiently punished him by turning through her charms his flaxen hair to hoary white, and overwhelming him by day and night with ceaseless anxieties. He feels himself through her powerful magic tortured, like Hercules in the envenomed shirt of Nessus, or as if he were cast down into the flames of Aetna; nor does he hope that she will cease compounding a thousand deadly ingredients against him, till his very ashes shall have been scattered by the resistless winds. He offers therefore to expiate his offence at her pleasure either by a sacrifice of an hundred oxen, or by a lying ode, in which her chastity and spotless manners shall be applauded to the skies.

What Ovid gives is only a new version of the charms and philtres of Medea. [114]

ERICHTHO.

Lucan, in his Pharsalia, [115] takes occasion, immediately before the battle which was to decide the fate of the Roman world, to introduce Sextus, the younger son of Pompey, as impatient to enquire, even by the most sacrilegious means, into the important events which are immediately impending. He is encouraged in the attempt by the reflection, that the soil upon which they are now standing, Thessaly, had been notorious for ages as the noxious and unwholesome seat of sorcery and witchcraft. The poet therefore embraces this occasion to expatiate on the various modes in which this detested art was considered as displaying itself. And, however he may have been ambitious to seize this opportunity to display the wealth of his imagination, the whole does not fail to be curious, as an exhibition of the system of magical power so far as the matter in hand is concerned.

The soil of Thessaly, says the poet, is in the utmost degree fertile in poisonous herbs, and her rocks confess the power of the sepulchral song of the magician. There a vegetation springs up of virtue to

compel the Gods; and Colchis itself imports from Thessaly treasures of this sort which she cannot boast as her own. The chaunt of the Thessalian witch penetrates the furthest seat of the Gods, and contains words so powerful, that not the care of the skies, or of the revolving spheres, can avail as an excuse to the deities to decline its force. Babylon and Memphis yield to the superior might; and the Gods of foreign climes fly to fulfil the dread behests of the magician.

Prompted by Thessalian song, love glides into the hardest hearts; and even the severity of age is taught to burn with youthful fires. The ingredients of the poisoned cup, nor the excrescence found on the forehead of the new-cast foal, can rival in efficacy the witching incantation. The soul is melted by its single force. The heart which not all the attractions of the genial bed could fire, nor the influence of the most beautiful form, the wheel of the sorceress shall force from its bent.

But the effects are perhaps still more marvellous that are produced on inanimate and unintellectual nature. The eternal succession of the world is suspended; day delays to rise on the earth; the skies no longer obey their ruler. Nature becomes still at the incantation: and Jove, accustomed to guide the machine, is astonished to find the poles disobedient to his impulse. Now the sorceress deluges the plains with rain, hides the face of heaven with murky clouds, and the thunders roll, unbidden by the thunderer. Anon she shakes her hair, and the darkness is dispersed, and the whole horizon is cleared. At one time the sea rages, urged by no storm; and at another is smooth as glass, in defiance of the tempestuous North. The breath of the enchanter carries along the bark in the teeth of the wind; the headlong torrent is suspended, and rivers run back to their source. The Nile overflows not in the summer; the crooked Meander shapes to itself a direct course; the sluggish Arar gives new swiftness to the rapid Rhone; and the mountains bow their heads to their foundations. Clouds shroud the peaks of the cloudless Olympus; and the Scythian snows dissolve, unurged by the sun. The sea, though impelled by the tempestuous constellations, is counteracted by witchcraft, and no longer beats along the shore. Earthquakes shake the solid globe; and the affrighted inhabitants behold both hemispheres at once. The animals most dreaded for their fury, and whose rage is mortal, become tame; the hungry tiger and the lordly lion fawn at the sorceress's feet; the snake untwines all her folds amidst the snow; the viper, divided by wounds, unites again its severed parts; and the envenomed serpent pines and dies under the power of a breath more fatal than his own.

What, exclaims the poet, is the nature of the compulsion thus exercised on the Gods, this obedience to song and to potent herbs, this fear to disobey and scorn the enchanter? Do they yield from necessity, or is it a voluntary subjection? Is it the piety of these hags that obtains the reward, or by menaces do they secure their purpose? Are all the Gods subject to this control, or, is there one God upon whom it has power, who, himself compelled, compels the elements? The stars fall from heaven at their command. The silver moon yields to their execrations, and burns with a smouldering flame, even as when the earth comes between her and the sun, and by its shadow intercepts its rays; thus is the moon brought lower and more low, till she covers with her froth the herbs destined to receive her malignant influence.

But Erichtho, the witch of the poet, flouts all these arts, as too

poor and timid for her purposes. She never allows a roof to cover her horrid head, or confesses the influence of the Household Gods. She inhabits the deserted tomb, and dwells in a grave from which the ghost of the dead has been previously expelled. She knows the Stygian abodes, and the counsels of the infernals. Her countenance is lean; and her complexion overspread with deadly paleness. Her hair is neglected and matted. But when clouds and tempests obscure the stars, then she comes forth, and defies the midnight lightning. Wherever she treads, the fruits of the earth become withered, and the wholesome air is poisoned with her breath. She offers no prayers, and pours forth no supplications; she has recourse to no divination. She delights to profane the sacred altar with a funereal flame, and pollutes the incense with a torch from the pyre. The Gods yield at once to her voice, nor dare to provoke her to a second mandate. She incloses the living man within the confines of the grave; she subjects to sudden death those who were destined to a protracted age; and she brings back to life the corpses of the dead. She snatches the smoking cinders, and the bones whitened with flame, from the midst of the pile, and wrests the torch from the hand of the mourning parent. She seizes the fragments of the burning shroud, and the embers yet moistened with blood. But, where the sad remains are already hearsed in marble, it is there that she most delights to exercise her sacrilegious power. She tears the limbs of the dead, and digs out their eyes. She gnaws their fingers. She separates with her teeth the rope on the gibbet, and tears away the murderer from the cross on which he hung suspended. She applies to her purposes the entrails withered with the wind, and the marrow that had been dried by the sun. She bears away the nails which had pierced the hands and feet of the criminal, the clotted blood which had distilled from his wounds, and the sinews that had held him suspended. She pounces upon the body of the dead in the battle-field, anticipating the vulture and the beast of prey; but she does not divide the limbs with a knife, nor tear them asunder with her hands: she watches the approach of the wolf, that she may wrench the morsels from his hungry jaws. Nor does the thought of murder deter her, if her rites require the living blood, first spurting from the lacerated throat. She drags forth the foetus from its pregnant mother, by a passage which violence has opened. Wherever there is occasion for a bolder and more remorseless ghost, with her own hand she dismisses him from life; man at every period of existence furnishes her with materials. She drags away the first down from the cheek of the stripling, and with her left hand cuts the favourite lock from the head of the young man. Often she watches with seemingly pious care the dying hours of a relative, and seizes the occasion to bite his lips, to compress his windpipe, and whisper in his expiring organ some message to the infernal shades.

Sextus, guided by the general fame of this woman, sought her in her haunts. He chose his time, in the depth of the night, when the sun is at its lowermost distance from the upper sky. He took his way through the desert fields. He took for companions the associates, the accustomed ministers of his crimes. Wandering among broken graves and crumbling sepulchres, they discovered her, sitting sublime on a ragged rock, where mount Haemus stretches its roots to the Pharsalic field. She was mumbling charms of the Magi and the magical Gods. For she feared that the war might yet be transferred to other than the Emathian fields. The sorceress was busy therefore enchanting the soil of Philippi, and scattering on its surface the juice of potent herbs, that it might be heaped with carcasses of the dead, and saturated with their blood, that Macedon, and not Italy, might receive the bodies of

departed kings and the bones of the noble, and might be amply peopled with the shades of men. Her choicest labour was as to the earth where should be deposited the prostrate Pompey, or the limbs of the mighty Caesar.

Sextus approached, and bespoke her thus: "Oh, glory of Haemonia, that hast the power to divulge the fates of men, or canst turn aside fate itself from its prescribed course, I pray thee to exercise thy gift in disclosing events to come. Not the meanest of the Roman race am I, the offspring of an illustrious chieftain, lord of the world in the one case, or in the other the destined heir to my father's calamity. I stand on a tremendous and giddy height: snatch me from this posture of doubt; let me not blindly rush on, and blindly fall; extort this secret from the Gods, or force the dead to confess what they know."

To whom the Thessalian crone replied: "If you asked to change the fate of an individual, though it were to restore an old man, decrepid with age, to vigorous youth, I could comply; but to break the eternal chain of causes and consequences exceeds even our power. You seek however only a foreknowledge of events to come, and you shall be gratified. Meanwhile it were best, where slaughter has afforded so ample a field, to select the body of one newly deceased, and whose flexible organs shall be yet capable of speech, not with lineaments already hardened in the sun."

Saying thus, Erichtho proceeded (having first with her art made the night itself more dark, and involved her head in a pitchy cloud), to explore the field, and examine one by one the bodies of the unburied dead. As she approached, the wolves fled before her, and the birds of prey, unwillingly sheathing their talons, abandoned their repast, while the Thessalian witch, searching into the vital parts of the frames before her, at length fixed on one whose lungs were uninjured, and whose organs of speech had sustained no wound. The fate of many hung in doubt, till she had made her selection. Had the revival o

Livros Grátis

(<http://www.livrosgratis.com.br>)

Milhares de Livros para Download:

[Baixar livros de Administração](#)

[Baixar livros de Agronomia](#)

[Baixar livros de Arquitetura](#)

[Baixar livros de Artes](#)

[Baixar livros de Astronomia](#)

[Baixar livros de Biologia Geral](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência da Computação](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência da Informação](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência Política](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciências da Saúde](#)

[Baixar livros de Comunicação](#)

[Baixar livros do Conselho Nacional de Educação - CNE](#)

[Baixar livros de Defesa civil](#)

[Baixar livros de Direito](#)

[Baixar livros de Direitos humanos](#)

[Baixar livros de Economia](#)

[Baixar livros de Economia Doméstica](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação - Trânsito](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação Física](#)

[Baixar livros de Engenharia Aeroespacial](#)

[Baixar livros de Farmácia](#)

[Baixar livros de Filosofia](#)

[Baixar livros de Física](#)

[Baixar livros de Geociências](#)

[Baixar livros de Geografia](#)

[Baixar livros de História](#)

[Baixar livros de Línguas](#)

[Baixar livros de Literatura](#)
[Baixar livros de Literatura de Cordel](#)
[Baixar livros de Literatura Infantil](#)
[Baixar livros de Matemática](#)
[Baixar livros de Medicina](#)
[Baixar livros de Medicina Veterinária](#)
[Baixar livros de Meio Ambiente](#)
[Baixar livros de Meteorologia](#)
[Baixar Monografias e TCC](#)
[Baixar livros Multidisciplinar](#)
[Baixar livros de Música](#)
[Baixar livros de Psicologia](#)
[Baixar livros de Química](#)
[Baixar livros de Saúde Coletiva](#)
[Baixar livros de Serviço Social](#)
[Baixar livros de Sociologia](#)
[Baixar livros de Teologia](#)
[Baixar livros de Trabalho](#)
[Baixar livros de Turismo](#)