ON THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE GREEKS.

PART I.

As the mythology of the Greeks is intimately connected with their philosophy and theology, it is not at all wonderful, since the moderns are ignorant of the latter, that they have not genuinely developed the former. Lord Bacon, indeed, has done all, in attempting to unfold this mythology, that great genius, without the assistance of genuine philosophy, is able to effect. But the most piercing sagacity, the most brilliant wit, and the most exquisite subtilty of thought, without this assistance, are here of no avail. It is indeed easy for ingenious men to explain an ancient fable, in a way which to the superficial observer shall appear to be the precise meaning which its inventor designed to convey, though it be in reality very far from the truth. This may be easily accounted for, by considering that all fables are images of truths; but those of the Greeks, of truths with which but few are acquainted. Hence, like pictures of unknown persons, they become the subjects of endless conjecture and absurd opinion, from the similitude which every one fancies he discovers in them to objects which are generally known, and with which he is familiar. He who understands the explanations given by the Platonic philosophers, of these fables, will immediately subscribe to the truth of this observation, as he will find that these interpretations are a scientific development of their external or apparent meaning.

In order to demonstrate this, I shall present the reader with an elucidation of some of the principal fables of the Greeks, by these philosophers, and particularly of those of Homer: preparatory to which, it will be necessary, in the first place, to consider whence the ancients were induced to devise fables; in the second place, to show what the difference is, between the fables of philosophers and those of poets; and in the third place, to enumerate the different species of fables, and give examples of each.

As to the first particular then, the ancients employed fables, looking to two things, nature and our soul. They employed them by looking to nature, and the fabrication of things, as fol-
On the Mythology of the Greeks.

From things that are visible, we believe in things invisible; and from bodies, in incorporeal natures. For, seeing the orderly arrangement of bodies in the universe, we understand that a certain incorporeal power presides over them. As we therefore see that our body is moved, but is no longer so after death, we conceive that it was a certain incorporeal power which moved it. Hence perceiving that we believe in things incorporeal and invisible from things visible and corporeal, fables came to be adopted, in order that we might arrive from things visible to invisible natures; as for instance, that on hearing the adulteries, bonds, and lacerations, of the Gods, the castrations of heaven, and the like, we may not rest satisfied with the apparent meaning of such particulars, but may proceed to the unapparent, and investigate its true signification. After this manner therefore, looking to the nature of things, were fables employed.

But from looking to the human soul, they originated as follows: While we are children we live according to the fancy; but the phantastic part is conversant with figures, and types, and things of this kind. That the phantastic part in us therefore

---

1 The philosopher Sallust likewise, in the following admirable manner, unfolds the reason why fables were employed by the ancients, in his golden treatise On the Gods and the World.

2 The first utility arising from fables is this—that they excite us to inquiry, and do not suffer our reasoning power to remain in indolent rest. That fables therefore are divine, may be shown from those by whom they are employed. For they are used by divinely inspired poets; by the best of philosophers; by those who instituted the mysteries; and by the Gods themselves in oracles. But why fables are divine, it is the province of philosophy to investigate. Since, then, all beings rejoice in similitude, but turn away abhorrent from dissimilitude, it is requisite that assertions about the Gods should be similar to them, in order that they may be adapted to the dignity of their essence, and may render the Gods propitious to those by whom the assertions are made; which can alone be effected through fables. Hence fables imitate the Gods, and the goodness of the Gods, according to the effable and ineffable, the visible and invisible, the perspicuous and the concealed. For as the Gods impart to all men in common the benefits produced by sensibles, but to the wise alone the benefits of intelligibles, thus also fables proclaim to all men that there are Gods; but who they are, and in what their nature consists, they unfold to those who are capable of obtaining this knowledge. They likewise imitate the energies of the Gods. For the world also may be called a fable; bodies, indeed, and sensible things being visibly contained in it, but souls and intellects subsisting in it latently. And besides this, to teach all men the truth concerning the Gods, produces contempt in the stupid, through their inability of understanding it, and indolence in the worthy; but to conceal the truth in fables, prevents the contempt of the former, and compels the latter to philosophize. Why, however, do fables speak of thefts, adulteries, paternal bonds, and other absurd and atrocious deeds? May it not be said, that such narrations are attended with this admirable effect—that the soul, through the apparent absurdity, is immediately led to conceive that these assertions are veils, and that the truth contained in them is arcane?

3 Vid. Cap. III.
On the Mythology of the Greeks.

may be preserved, we employ fables, in consequence of this part rejoicing in fables. It may also be said, that a fable is nothing else than a false discourse; adumbrating the truth: for a fable is the image of truth. But the soul is the image of the natures prior to herself; and hence she rejoices in fables, as an image in an image. As we are therefore from our childhood nourished in fables, it is necessary that they should be introduced. And thus much for the first problem, concerning the origin of fables.

In the second place, let us consider what the difference is between the fables of philosophers and poets. Each, therefore, has something in which it abounds more than, and something in which it is deficient from, the other. Thus for instance, the poetic fable abounds in this—that we must not rest satisfied with the apparent meaning, but pass on to the occult truth. For who, endued with intellect, would believe that Jupiter was desirous of having connexion with Juno, and on the ground, without waiting to go into the bed-chamber? So that the poetic fable abounds, in consequence of asserting such things as do not suffer us to stop at the apparent, but lead us to explore the occult truth. But it is defective in this, that it deceives those of a juvenile age. Plato, therefore, neglects fables of this kind, and banishes Homer from his Republic; because youth, on hearing such fables, will not be able to distinguish what is allegorical from what is not.

Philosophical fables, on the contrary, do not injure those who go no farther than the apparent meaning. Thus for instance, they assert that there are punishments and rivers under the earth: and if we adhere to the literal meaning of these, we shall not be injured. But they are deficient in this, that as their apparent signification does not injure, we often content ourselves with

---

2 Conformably to this definition of a fable by Olympiodorus, Timæus the Locrian, in his treatise τῆς Ὁμήρου ταυτοποιίας προσνομίας, ἢγει: ἡ μὲν γὰρ τὰ συμβατὰ συνωδής των μεταφοράς, ἤνα μὲν εἰκόνα τῶν ὑπερτοίοντος ἐνυπνω τὰς ὅρκους αὐτομοματικάς ἀνάλογος ἐνα μὲν αὖρητη αἰσθήσει, i. e. "For as we sometimes restore bodies to health by things of a noxious nature, when this is not to be effected by such as are most salubrious; thus also we restrain souls [from evil conduct,] by false assertions, when they are incapable of being led by such as are true." So entirely ignorant, however, are many of the present day, even among those that are called learned, of this definition of a fable, that the fables of Homer are continually defamed by these men, as monstrously incongruous, from not perceiving that they have a hidden meaning, and that like the curtains which formerly guarded the adyta of temples from the profane eye, they are the veils of truths the most luminous and divine.

3 Hence it follows that those who are deceived by these fables, i. e. who consider them solely according to their literal meaning, are juvenile in understanding.
this, and do not explore the latent truth. We may also say, that philosophic fables look to the energies of the soul. For if we were entirely intellect alone, and had no connexion with the phantasy, we should not require fables, in consequence of always associating with intellectual natures. If, again, we were entirely irrational, and lived according to the phantasy, and had no other energy than this, it would be requisite that the whole of our life should be fabulous. Since, however, we possess intellect, opinion, and phantasy, demonstrations are given with a view to intellect: and hence Plato says, that if any one is willing to energise according to intellect, he will have demonstrations bound with adamantine chains; if according to opinion, he will have the testimony of renowned persons; and if according to the phantasy, he will have fables by which it is excited; so that from all these he will derive advantage.

Plato therefore rejects the more tragical mode of mythologising adopted by the ancient poets, who thought proper to establish an arcane theology respecting the Gods, and on this account devised wanderings, castrations, battles, and lacerations, of the Gods, and many other symbols of the truth about divine natures, which this theology conceals;—this mode he rejects, and asserts that it is in every respect most foreign from erudition. But he considers those mythological discourses about the Gods, to be more persuasive and more adapted to truth, which assert that a divine nature is the cause of all good, but of no evil; and that it is void of all mutation, comprehending in itself the fountain of truth, but never becoming the cause of any deception to others. For such types of theology Socrates delivers in the Republic.

Hence, all the fables of Plato, guarding the truth in concealment, have not even their externally apparent apparatus, discordant with our undisciplined and unperverted anticipations of divinity. But they bring with them an image of the mundane composition, in which both the apparent beauty is worthy of divinity, and a beauty more divine than this is established in the unapparent lives and powers of its causes.

In the third place, with respect to the different species of fables, they are five in number, and are beautifully unfolded by the philosopher Sallust, in his treatise on the Gods and the World, as follows: “Of fables, some are theological, others physical, others psychical, (or pertaining to soul,) others mate-
On the Mythology of the Greeks.

Thus also he is defined by Plato in the Cratylus to be ἀρχόμενος μνημόνευ, a pure intellect. Saturn, according to the fable, not only devoured his children, but afterwards re-founded them, because intellect not only seeks and procreates, but produces into light and order.

1 I refer the reader who wishes to see the physical species of fables largely unfolded, to the allegories of Herodides or Heracleides in Gale’s Opuscula Mythologica.
pertain to philosophers; the physical and psychical to poets; and the mixed, to the mysteries; since the intention of all mysteries is to conjoin us to the world and the Gods." And thus much for the different species of fables according to the excellent Sallust.

Previous to a development of some of the fables of Homer, it will be requisite to observe that this most divine poet, by combining fiction with historical facts, has delivered to us some very occult, mystic, and valuable information, in those two admirable poems, the Iliad and Odyssey. Hence, by those who directed their attention to this recondite information, he was said, according to the tragical mode of speaking, which was usual with the most ancient writers, to have been blind, because, as Proclus observes, he separated himself from sensible beauty, and extended the intellect of his soul to invisible and true harmony. He was said therefore to be blind, because that intellectual beauty to which he raised himself, cannot be perceived by corporeal eyes. Thus too Orpheus is tragically said to have been lacerated in an all-various manner, because men of that age partially participated of his mystic doctrine. The principal part of it however was received by the Lesbians; and on this account his head, when separated from his body, is said to have been carried to Lesbos. Hence the Platonic Hermas, conformably to this opinion of the hidden meaning of the Iliad, beautifully explains as follows the Trojan war, in his Scholia on the Phaedrus of Plato.

"By Ilion we must understand the generated and material place, which is so denominat from mud and matter, (παρὰ τὴν ἠλέν καὶ τὴν ύλην) and in which there are war and sedition. But the Trojans are material forms, and all the lives which subsist about bodies. Hence also the Trojans are called genuine (οἰκείας). For all the lives which subsist about bodies, and irrational souls, are favorable and attentive to their proper matter. On the contrary, the Greeks are rational souls, coming from Greece, i.e. from the intelligible into matter. Hence the Greeks are called foreigners, (πέλαγος) and vanquish the Trojans, as being of a superior order. But they fight with each other about the image of Helen, as the poet says [about the image of Æneas];

Around the phantom, Greeks and Trojans fight."

---

1 In Plat. Polit. p. 398.
2 Instead of ἔφυξεν in this place, it is necessary to read ἄφιξεν.
3 Iliad V. v. 451.
On the Mythology of the Greeks.

Helen signifying intelligible beauty, being a certain vessel (αληθὸς τῆς υορᾶ), attracting to itself intellect. An efflux therefore of this intelligible beauty is imparted to matter through Venus; and about this efflux of beauty the Greeks fight with the Trojans [i.e. rational with irrational lives]. And those indeed, that oppose and vanquish matter, return to the intelligible world, which is their true country; but those who do not, as is the case with the multitude, are bound to matter. As therefore the prophet in the tenth book of the Republic, previously to the descent of souls, announces to them how they may return, [to their pristine felicity] according to periods of a thousand and ten thousand years; thus also Calchas predicts to the Greeks their return in ten years, the number ten being a symbol of a perfect period. And as in the lives of souls some are elevated through philosophy, others through the amatory art, and others through the royal and warlike disciplines; so with respect to the Greeks, some act with rectitude through prudence, but others through war or love, and their return is different [according to their different pursuits].

It may also be said, that by the Greeks and Trojans, Homer adumbrates the twofold orders of mundane natures, arising from a division of the universe into the incorporeal and the corporeal, and from again dividing the incorporeal into the more intellectual and the more material natures; but the corporeal into the heavens and the sublunar region; the heavens into contrary periods; and the sublunar region into opposite powers. And that he also adumbrates through these, the powers of an opposite characteristic, which subsist in the mundane Gods, in daemons, in souls, and in bodies. "Hence, says Proclus," Homer when enthusiasm enthusiastically, represents Jupiter speaking, and converting to himself the twofold co-ordinations of Gods; becoming himself, as it were, the centre of all the divine genera in the world, and making all things obedient to his intellect. But at one time he conjoins the multitude of Gods to himself without a medium, and at another through Themis as the medium:

---

1 Conformably to this, Proclus in Plat. Polit. p. 396, says, "that all the beauty subsisting about generation [or the regions of sense] from the fabrication of things, is signified by Helen; about which there is a perpetual battle of souls, till the more intellectual having vanquished the more irrational forms of life, return to the place from whence they originally came." For the beauty which is in the realms of generation is an efflux of intelligible beauty.

2 In Tim. p. 300.
On the Mythology of the Greeks.

"But Jove to Themis gives command to call
The Gods to council."

For this Goddess pervading everywhere collects the divine number, and converts it to the demiurgic monad. For the Gods are both separate from mundane affairs, and eternally provide for all things, being at the same time exempt from them through the highest transcendence, and extending their providence everywhere. For their unmingle nature is not without providential energy, nor is their providence mingled with matter. Through transcendency of power, they are not filled with the subjects of their government; and through beneficent will, they make all things similar to themselves; in permanently abiding, proceeding; and in being separated from, being similarly present to, all things. Since, therefore, the Gods that govern the world, and the daemons the attendants of these, receive after this manner unmingle purity, and providential administration from their father; at one time he converts them to himself without a medium, and illuminates them with a separate, unmingle, and pure form of life. Whence also I think he orders them to be separated from all things, to remain exempt in Olympus, and neither convert themselves to Greeks nor Barbarians; which is just the same as to say, that they must transcend the twofold orders of mundane natures, and abide immutably in undestroyed intellectation. But at another time, he converts them to a providential attention to secondary natures, through Themis, calls upon them to direct the mundane battle, and excites different Gods to different works."

As to the recondite meaning of the Odyssey, the opinion of Numenius the Pythagorean appears to me to be highly probable, that Homer in the person of Ulysses represents to us a man who passes in a regular manner over the dark and stormy sea of generation; and thus at length arrives at that region, where tempests and seas are unknown, and finds a nation,

"Who ne'er knew salt, or heard the billows roar."

Odyss. xi. 122. and xxiii. 270.

"For indeed," says Porphyry, "it will not be lawful for any one to depart from this sensible life in a regular way, and in the shortest time, who blinds and irritates his material daemon; but

---

1 Iliad. XX. v. 6.
2 i. e. In the highest and purest intellectual splendor.
3 De Ansto Nympha rum p. 271.
he who dares to do this will be pursued by the anger of the marine and material Gods, whom it is first requisite to appease by sacrifices, labors, and patient endurance; at one time by contending with perturbations, at another time by employing stratagems of various kinds, by all which he transmutes himself into different forms; so that at length being stripped of the torn garments by which his true person was concealed, he may recover the ruined empire of his soul. Nor will he even then be freed from molestation, till he has entirely passed over the raging sea, and taken a long farewell of its storms; till, though connected with a mortal nature, he becomes, through deep attention to intelligible concerns, so ignorant of marine and material operations, as to mistake an oar for a corn-van." Porphyrj adds, "Nor is it proper to believe that interpretations of this kind are forced, and are nothing more than the conjectures of ingenious men; but when we consider the great wisdom of antiquity, and how much Homer excelled in intelligence, and in every kind of virtue, we ought not to doubt, that he has secretly represented the images of divine things under the concealments of fable."

T. TAYLOR.

Walworth.

MISCELLANEA CLASSICA.

NO. XI.

[Continued from No. XLII. p. 280.]


---

¹ i. e. Becoming purified through the exercise of the cathartic virtues; Porphyrj elegantly alludes to this denudation through the exercise of these virtues, in the following passage, in his excellent treatise De Abstinentia. Lib. I. p. 27. Αφανότης ἀπ' αὐτῶν πάλλοις οὖν χειμάτων, τοι τε ορατοι τούτοι Και σωματοι, καὶ οὐς οὐκ οὐκ ἡμι- οεμέδα, προστέχοις ὑπ' τις δεματινές, γυμνως δι' και ἀγαθως εἰς το στάδιον αὐτοθά- πωμα, καὶ τε τής φυσικῆς Ολυμπίας ἀγωνισμοῦ. i. e. "We must therefore divest ourselves of our many garments, both this visible and fleshly garment, and those with which we are inwardly clothed, and which are proximate to the casuaneous vesturets. But we must enter the stadium naked, and without the encumbrance of dress, strenuously contending for the Olympia of the soul."
On the Mythology of the Greeks.

410—422. Quorum nullum fastidium est bone vero est cum signo signum observare magis vero duobus in unum tendentibus (conveniantia signa) specie nostro; tertiio confidam liceat: semper ite praeceperunt numerare poteris anni signa, conference seculum etiam sub stella talis Aurora exoriente transeat vel occidet quale etiam signum nunciat. Impense vero idoneum fuerit contemplandi dependentis instantiisque mensis quartas utrasque; hae enim simul coeuntia mensium terminos habent, quorum maxime dubius est democt noctibus est defectus pulchrum adspectu luna. Quae simul omnia contemplatus ad annum, huoque levi super aestera significabis.

V. 411. Ex Arato Geop. "Oran θέλει πλους σημεία τα το qurq συνεργός, κα\(ε\)βαλέται τα πλείσημα.


[Ibid.]

This Apology forms a part of the fragments of his Commentary on the Republic of Plato, at the end of his Commentary on the Timæus.
On the Mythology of the Greeks. 55

tions, one of which considers the well-ordered division of the divine genera about those two principles, the immediate progeny of the one, the exempt cause of all things, and which according to the opposition of these principles, represents the Gods as acting contrary to each other. For whether it be proper to call those first natures bound and infinity, or monad and indefinite duad, they will entirely appear to be oppositely divided with respect to each other, conformably to which the orders of the Gods are also separated from each other. But the other conception arises from considering the contrariety and variety about the last of things, and referring a discord of this kind to the powers that proximately preside over them, and thus feigning that the Gods, proceeding into a material nature and distributed about it, were with each other. For since the inferior orders are suspended from the government of the more excellent genera of Gods, and preserve the characteristics of their leaders, though in a partial and multiplied manner, they are called by their names; and as they subsist analogously to the first Gods, they appear in their progressions to be the same with their more total causes. And this not only the fables of the Greeks have occultly devised—I mean that leading Gods and their attendants should be called by the same names—but this is also delivered in the initiatory rites of the barbarians. For they say, that attendants suspended from the Gods, particularly rejoice when invoked, to be called by the appellations, and to be invested with the vehicles, of the leaders of their series, and exhibit themselves to theurgists in the place of these leading deities. If, therefore, we refer Minerva, Juno, and Vulcan, when engaged in war below in the sublunary region, and likewise Latona, Diana, and the river Xanthus, to other secondary orders, and which are proximate to divisible and material natures, we ought not to wonder on account of the communion of names. For each series bears the appellation of its monad or principle, and partial spirits love to receive the same denomination with wholes. Hence there are many and all-various Apollos, Neptunes, and Vulcans; and some of them are separate from the universe, others have an allotment about the heavens, others preside over the whole elements, and to others the government of individuals belongs. It is not there-

1 These principles were symbolically called by Orpheus, ether and chaos, enigmatically by Pythagoras, monad and duad, and scientifically by Plato, bound and infinity. See the notes to my translation of the Philebus and Parmenides of Plato.
fore wonderful, if a more partial Vulcan, and who is allotted a daemonical order [or an order pertaining to daemon], possesses a providential dominion over material fire, and which subsists about the earth, or that he should be the inspective guardian of a certain art which operates in brass. For if the providence of the Gods has a diminution according to an ultimate division, being allotted a well-ordered progression supernally from total and united causes, this Vulcanian daemon also will rejoice in the safety of that which he is allotted, and will be hostile to those causes which are corruptive of its constitution. War therefore in such like genera, a division of all-various powers, mutual familiarity and discord, a divisible sympathy with the objects of their government, verbal contentions, revenge through mockery, and other things of this kind, are very properly conceived to take place about the terminations of the divine orders. Hence fables in representing such powers as these discordant with and opposing each other, on account of the subjects over which they providentially preside, do not appear to be very remote from the truth. For the passions of the things governed are proximately referred to these.

This being premised, Homer, to those who consider his poems with attention, will appear to speak about the former mode of divine contention when he says,

"When Saturn was by Jove all-seeing thrust
Beneath the earth."

and in another place respecting Typhon,

"Earth groan'd beneath them; as when angry Jove
Hurls down the forky lightning from above,
On Arims when he the thunder throws,
And fires Typhius with reenewed blows,
Where Typhon, great beneath the burning load,
Still feels the fury of th' avenging God."

For in these verses he obscurely signifies a Titanic war against Jupiter, and what the Orphic writers call precipitations into Tartarus, (zavavrapoecen). But he particularly introduces the Gods warring with each other, and dissenting about human affairs, according to the second conception of divine battles, in which the divine and intellectual disposition of the signets, adopted by the poet, is worthy of the greatest admiration. For

---

1. In the original, οὐκ οὖν Ἐπεξεργάσετα τῷ θεῷ ῥηθεῖν ἀδιόν. But this at present is not to be found in Homer.

2. Iliad. lib. ii. ver. 388, &c.
in describing their battles (who though they are allotted a subsistence at the extremities of the divine progressions, yet are suspended from the Gods, and are proximate to the subjects of their government, and are allied to their leaders), he indicates their sympathy with inferior natures, referring a divided life, battle, and opposition from things in subjection, to the powers by which they are governed; just as Orpheus conjoins with Bacchic images, compositions, divisions, and lamentations, referring all these to them from presiding causes. But Homer represents the alliance of these divisible spirits with the series from which they proceed, by the same names through which he celebrates the powers that are exempt from material natures, and employs numbers and figures adapted to their whole orders. For those who engage in battle are eleven in number, imitating the army of Gods and daemons following Jupiter, and distributed into eleven parts. Of these, those that preside over the better co-ordination are contained in the pentad; for the odd number, the spheric, and the power of leading all secondary natures according to justice, and of extending from the middle to every number, are adapted to those who desire to govern more intellectual and perfect natures, and such as are more allied to the one. But those of an inferior destiny, and who are the guardians of material natures, proceed according to the hexad, possessing indeed a perfective power over the subjects of their providential care through a proper number; but in consequence of this number being even, and co-ordinate with a worse nature, they are subordinate to the other powers. Not is it wonderful if some one should call these genera Gods, through their alliance to their leaders, and should represent them as warring through their proximate care of material natures. The opposition therefore of Neptune and Apollo, signifies that these powers preside over the apparent contrariety of all sublunary wholes: and hence these Gods do not fight with each other. For parts are preserved by their containing wholes as long as they subsist. But the

1 Vld. Illiad. xx. v. 31, &c., and my translation of the Phædrus of Plato.
2 Five is not only an odd, but also a spheric number; for all its multiplications into itself, terminate in five; and therefore end where they began.
3 For six is a perfect number, being equal to the sum of all its parts, which are 3, 2, and 1, the first of these being the half, the second the third, and the last the sixth part of 6. And besides these, it has no other parts.
opposition of Juno and Diana, represents the opposite division of souls in the universe, whether rational or irrational, separate or inseparable, supernatural or natural; the former of these powers presiding over the more excellent order of souls, but the latter bringing forth and producing into light those of an inferior condition. Again, the discord of Minerva and Mars, represents the division of the whole of the war in the sublunary region, into providence subsisting according to intellect, and that which is perfected through necessity; the former power intellectually presiding over contraries, and the latter corroborating their natural powers, and exciting their mutual opposition. But the battle between Hermes and Latona insinuates the all-various differences of souls according to their gnostic and vital motions; Hermes giving perfection to their knowledge, and Latona to their lives; which two often differ from and are contrary to each other. Lastly, the battle between Vulcan and the river Xanthus adorns in a becoming manner the contrary principles of the whole corporeal system; the former assisting the powers of heat and dryness, and the latter of cold and moisture, from which the whole of generation receives its completion. Since however it is requisite that all contraries should end in mutual concord, Venus is present, producing friendship in the adverse parties, but at the same time assisting those powers that belong to the worse co-ordination; because these are especially adorned, when they possess symmetry and familiarity with the better order of contrary natures. And thus much concerning the divine battles of Homer.

The next particular to which I shall solicit the attention of the reader, is the different ways in which the poetry of Homer delivers multiform mutations of immutable natures. The first mode therefore of this mutation indicates the various participations of a divine nature. For that which is simple in the Gods appears various to those by whom it is seen, divinity neither being changed; nor wishing to deceive; but nature herself giving a determination to the characteristics of the Gods, according to the measures of the participants. For that which is participated, being one, is variously participated by intellect, the rational soul, the phantasy, and sense. For the first of these participates

1 That is to say, though Venus is not represented by Homer as actually producing friendship in the adverse Gods, yet this is occultly signified, by her being present: for she is the source of all the harmony, friendship, and analogy in the universe, and of the union of form with matter.
it impartibly, the second in an expanded manner, the third accompanied with figure, and the fourth with passivity. Hence that which is participated, is uniform according to the summit of its subsistence, but multiform according to participation. It is also essentially immutable, and firmly established; but at different times appears various to its participants through the imbecility of their nature. That also which is without weight appears heavy to those that are filled with it. "The miserable heart by which I am received cannot bear me," says some one of the Gods. Whence Homer likewise, perceiving the truth of these things, says of Minerva:

"Loud crash'd the beechen axle with the weight,
For strong and dreadful was the power it bore."

Though it may be said, how can that which is without weight be the cause of weight? But such as is the participant, such necessarily must that which is participated appear. Whether therefore, some of the Gods have appeared similar to guests, or have been seen in some other form, it is not proper to attribute the apparent mutation to them, but we should say that the spectrum is varied in the different recipients. And this is one of the ways in which Homer delivers the mutations of immutable natures.

But there is another way; when a divine nature itself, which is all-powerful, and full of all-various forms, extends various spectacles to those that behold it. For then according to the variety of powers which it possesses, it is said to be changed into many forms, at different times extending different powers; always indeed energising according to all its powers, but perpetually appearing various to the transitive intellections of souls, through the multitude which it comprehends. According to this mode, Proteus also is said to change his proper form to those that behold it, perpetually exhibiting a different appearance. Partial souls therefore, such as ours, beholding Proteus, who is a certain daemoniacal intellect belonging to the series of Neptune, and who

---

1 Hence also Homer, Iliad. xx. v. 151. says, ἱερὰς τε θεοὺς φανερωμένα εναντία, i.e. "O'erpow'ring are the Gods when clearly seen."

2 Iliad. V. v. 838.

3 A divine nature must necessarily produce the sensation of weight in the body by which it is received, from its overpowering energy: for body lies like nonentity before such a nature, and fails, and dies away, as it were, under its influence.
On the Mythology of the Greeks.

possesses many powers, and is full of forms, fancy, whilst at different times they convert themselves to the different forms which he contains, that the transition of their own intellections is a mutation of the intelligible objects. Hence, to those that retain him, he appears to become all things—

"Water, and fire divine, and all that creeps
On earth."  

For such forms as he possesses and comprehends, or rather such as he perpetually is, such does he appear to become, when these forms are considered separately, through the divisible conception of those that behold them.

In the third place therefore, it may be said that the Gods appear to be changed, when the same divinity proceeds according to different orders, and subsides as far as to the last of things, multiplying himself according to number, and descending into subordinate distinctions: for then again fables say, that the divinity which proceeds from on high into this form, is changed to that into which it makes its progression. Thus they say that Minerva was assimilated to Mentor, Mercury to the bird called the sea-gull, and Apollo to a hawk; indicating by this their more daemonical orders, into which they proceed from those of a superior rank. Hence, when fables describe the manifestations of the Gods, they endeavour to preserve them formless and unfigured. Thus when Minerva appears to Achilles, and becomes visible to him alone, the whole camp being present, there Homer does not even fabulously ascribe any form and figure to the Goddess, but only says that she was present, without expressing the manner in which she was present. But when fables intend to signify daemonical appearances, they introduce the Gods under various forms, but these such as are total; as for instance, a human form, of one common to man or woman indefinitely. For thus, again, Neptune and Minerva were present with Achilles:

"Neptune and Pallas haste to his relief,
And, thus in human form address the chief."  

Lastly, when fables relate daemonical manifestations, then they do not think it improper to describe their mutations into individuals and partial natures; whether into particular men, or other animals. For the last of those genera that are the perpetual at-

---

1 Iliad. i. v. 194.  
2 Iliad. xxi. v. 285.
tendants of the Gods, are manifested by these figures. And here you may see how particulars of this kind are devised conformably to the order of things. For that which is simple is adapted to a divine nature, that which is universal to an attendant; and the rational nature to both these; and that which is partial and irrational accords with a daemonic nature. For a life of this kind is connected with the order of daemons. And, thus much for the modes according to which the Homeric fables devise mutations of things immutable, and introduce various forms to uniform natures.

In the next place, let us consider what the lamentations and laughter of the Gods occultly signify in the poetry of Homer. What then is the meaning of Thetis weeping and exclaiming:

"Ah wretched me! unfortunately brave
A son I bore."

For a divine nature is perfectly exempt from pleasure and pain. But though some one should dare to introduce the mundane Gods affected in this manner, yet it is not fit that the Demiurgus of the universe should lament and mourn, both for Hector when pursued by Achilles, and for his son Sarpedon, and exclaim respecting both, Ah me! For such an imitation does not appear to be in any respect adapted to its paradigms, since it ascribes tears to things that are without tears, pain to things void of pain, and in short passion to things free from passion. In answer to these objections, it may be replied, that when the Gods are said to weep for or lament those that are most dear to them, that mode of interpretation must be adopted, which was formerly admitted by the authors of fables, who indicated by tears the providence of the Gods about mortal, generated, and perishable natures. For this object of providential energy, naturally calling for tears, afforded a pretext to the inventors of fables; and through these they obscurely signified providence itself. Hence some one, in a hymn to the Sun, says,

"Phæbus, the much-enduring race of men
Thy tears excite."

And on this account, in the mysteries also, (Proclus adds) we mystically assume sacred lamentations, as symbols of the provi-

---

1 Iliad. xviii. v. 54.
2 In the original, Δικρών μεν σέθην, εστι πολυπλήσθων (lege πολυπλήσθω) γενός αὐτῶν.
On the Mythology of the Greeks.

dence pertaining to us from more excellent natures. The
greatest likewise, and most perfect of the mysteries, deliver in
the arcana, certain sacred laments of Proserpine and Ceres,
and of the greatest Goddess [Rhea] herself.

But it is by no means wonderful, if the last of the genera
which are the perpetual attendants of the Gods, and which
proximately inspect the affairs of mortals should, in consequence
of employing appetites and passions, and having their life in
these, rejoice in the safety of the objects of their providence,
but be afflicted and indignant when they are corrupted, and
should suffer a mutation according to the passions:

"The Nymphs lament when trees are leafless found;
But when the trees through fertilizing rain,
In leaves abound, the Nymphs rejoice again."1

says a certain poet. For all things subsist divinely in the Gods,
but divisibly and daemoniacally in the divided guardians of our
nature. And thus much may suffice concerning the laments
of the Gods.

But with respect to the laughter of the Gods, what shall we
say it is, and why do they laugh in consequence of Vulcan
moving and energising?

"Vulcan ministrant when the Gods beheld,
Amidst them laughter unextinguished rose."2

Theologists, then, say that Vulcan is the Demiurgus and maker
of every thing visible (Jupiter being the Demiurgus both of in-
visible and visible natures). Hence he is said to have construct-
ed habitations for the Gods:

"Then to their proper domes the Gods depart,
Form'd by lame Vulcan with transcendent art."3

And this, in consequence of preparing for them mundane recep-
tacles. He is also said to be lame in both his feet, because he
is the fabricator of things that are last in the progressions of
being (for such are bodies), and which are not able to proceed
into another order. But since every providential energy about
a sensible nature, in which the Gods assist the fabrication of
Vulcan, is said to be the sport of divinity, hence Timæus also

1 Viz. The Eleusinian mysteries.
2 In the original, Νυμφαί μεν ηλιαστρά, οτι δρομιν ουκ εις φολλα,
Νυμφαί δ' αι χαραγών, οτε δραμα, εν θεοις αυτοι.
Proel. in Polit. Plat. p. 384.
3 Iliad. i. v. 599.
4 Iliad. i. v. 605, &c.
On the Mythology of the Greeks.

appears to me to call the mundane Gods junior, as presiding over things which are perpetually in generation, or becoming to be, and which may be considered as ludicrous;—this being the case, the authors of fables are accustomed to call this peculiarity of the providence of the Gods energizing about the world, laughter. And when the poet says, that the Gods being delighted with the motion of Vulcan, laughed with inextinguishable laughter, nothing else is indicated than that they are co-operating artificers; that they jointly give perfection to the art of Vulcan, and supernaturally impart joy to the universe. In short, we must define the laughter of the Gods to be their exuberant energy in the universe, and the cause of the gladness of all mundane natures. But as such a providence is incomprehensible, and the communication of all good from the Gods is never-failing, we must allow that the poet very properly calls their laughter unextinguished. And here you may again see how what we have said is conformable to the nature of things. For fables do not assert that the Gods always weep, but say that they laugh without ceasing. For tears are symbols of their providence in mortal and frail concerns, and which now rise into existence and then perish; but laughter is a sign of their energy in wholes, and those perfect natures in the universe which are perpetually moved with undeviating sameness. On which account I think, when we divide demiurgic productions into Gods and men, we attribute laughter to the generation of the Gods, but tears to the formation of men and animals; whence the poet whom we have before mentioned, in his hymn to the Sun, says,

"Mankind's laborious race thy tears excite,
But the Gods, laughing, blossom'd into light."

But when we make a division into things celestial and sublunary, again; after the same manner, we must assign laughter to the former: and tears to the latter; and when we reason concerning the generations and corruptions of sublunary natures themselves, we must refer the former to the laughter, and the latter to the tears of the Gods. Hence in the mysteries also, those who preside over sacred institutions order both these to be celebrated at stated times. Proclus just adds, that the stupid are neither able to understand things employed by theurgists in secrecy, nor fictions of this kind. For the hearing of both these, when un-
accompanied with science, produces dire and absurd confusion in the lives of the multitude, with respect to the reverence pertaining to divinity.

Let us in the next place consider what is obscurely signified by the connexion of Jupiter with Juno. In order to a development therefore of the fable, it must be observed, that sleep and wakefulness are with great propriety usurped separately in the symbols of fables; wakefulness manifesting the providence of the Gods about the world, but sleep, a life separate from all subordinate natures; though the Gods at one and the same time providentially energize about the universe, and are established in themselves. The father of all mundane natures therefore, may be said to be awake, according to his energy about the world; for wakefulness with us is an energy of sense; but according to a firm establishment in himself, to be asleep, as being separated from sensibles, and exhibiting a life defined according to a perfect intellect. It may also be said, that he consults about human affairs when awake; for according to this life he provides for all mundane concerns; but that when asleep, and led together with Juno to a separate union, he is not forgetful of the other energy, but possessing and energizing conformably to it, at the same time contains both. For he does not like nature, produce secondary beings without intelligence, nor through intelligence is his providence in subordinate natures diminished, but at the same time he both governs the objects of his providence according to justice, and ascends to his intelligible place of survey. The fable therefore indicates this exempt transcendency, when it says that the connexion of Jupiter with Juno was on mount Ida; for there Juno arriving gave herself to the embraces of the mighty Jupiter. What else then shall we say mount Ida obscurely signifies, but the region of ideas, and an intelligible nature, to which Jupiter ascends and elevates Juno through love;—not converting himself to the participant, but through excess of goodness imparting this second union with himself, and with that which is intelligible? For such are the loves of superior beings,—they are conversive of things subordinate to things primary, give completion to the good which they contain, and are perfective of subject natures. The fable, therefore, does not diminish the dignity of the mighty Jupiter, by representing him as having connexion on the ground with Juno, and refusing to enter into her bed-chamber; for by this it insinuates that the connexion was supermundane, and not mundane. The chamber, therefore, constructed by Vulcan, indicates the orderly composition of the universe, and the sensible region: for
Vulcan, as we have said before, is the artificer of every thing visible.

After this, let us concisely show what the poetry of Homer obscurely signifies by the connexion between Mars and Venus, and the bonds of Vulcan. Both these divinities then, I mean Vulcan and Mars, energise about the whole world, the latter separating the contrarieties of the universe, which he also perpetually excites, and inmutably preserves, that the world may be perfect, and filled with forms of every kind; but the former artificially fabricating the whole sensible order, and filling it with physical forms and powers. He also fashions twenty tripods about the heavens, that he may adorn them with the most perfect of many-sided figures, and fabricates various and multiform sublunar species.

Clasps, winding bracelets, necklaces, and chains.

Both these divinities require the assistance of Venus in their energies; the one, that he may insert order and harmony in contraries; and the other, that he may introduce beauty and splendor as much as possible, into sensible fabrications, and render this world the most beautiful of visible natures. But, as Venus is everywhere, Vulcan always enjoys her according to the superior, but Mars according to the inferior, orders of things. Thus, for instance, if Vulcan is supermundane, Mars is mundane; and if the former is celestial, the latter is sublunar. Hence, the one is said to have married Venus according to the will of Jupiter, but the other is fabled to have committed adultery with her. For a communion with the cause of beauty and conciliation, is natural to the Demiurgus of sensibles; but is in a certain respect foreign to the power which presides over division, and imparts the contrariety of mundane natures; for the separating are opposed to the collective genera of Gods. Fables therefore denominate this conspiring union of dissimilar causes, adultery. But a communion of this kind is necessary to the universe, in order that contraries may be co-harmonised, and the mundane war terminate in peace. Since, however, on high among celestial natures, beauty shines forth, together with forms, elegance,

---

1 Odys. viii. v. 266; &c.
2 Vid. Iliad, xviii. v. 370, &c.
3 Viz. The dodecahedron, which is bounded by twelve equal and equilateral pentagons, and consists of twenty solid angles, of which the tripods of Vulcan are images; for every angle of the dodecahedron is formed from the junction of three lines.
4 Iliad, xviii. v. 402.
and the fabrication of Vulcan, but beneath, in the realms of generation, the opposition and war of the elements, contrariety of powers, and in short the gifts of Mars are conspicuous. On this account, the Sun from on high beholds the connexion of Mars and Venus, and discloses it to Vulcan, in consequence of co-operating with all the productions of this divinity. But Vulcan is said to throw over them all various bonds, invisible to the other Gods, as adorning the mundane genera with artificial forms, and producing one system from the contrarieties of Mars, and the co-harmonising benefits of Venus. This however being effected, Apollo, Hermes, and each of the Gods laugh. But their laughter gives subsistence to mundane natures; and inserts efficacious power in the bonds. Since, too, of bonds some are celestial, but others sublunary; on this account Vulcan again dissolves the bonds with which he had bound Mars and Venus, and this he particularly accomplishes in compliance with the request of Neptune; who being willing that the perpetuity of generation should be preserved, and the circle of mutation revolve into itself, thinks it proper that generated natures should be corrupted, and things corrupted be sent back again to generation.

And thus much for an explanation of some of the principal fables of Homer by Proclus. Those who are desirous of a more copious development of the Homeric and other ancient fables, I refer to the Introduction to the second and third books of the Republic in Vol. i. of my translation of Plato, and to my notes on the Cratylus of Plato, and on Pausanias. I shall only add farther at present, for the sake of the few who are capable of such sublime speculations, that the precipitation of Vulcan indicates the progression of a divine nature from on high, as far as to the last fabrication in sensibles, and this so as to be moved, and perfected, and directed by the Demiurgus and father of all things: That the Saturnian bonds manifest the union of the whole fabrication of the universe,¹ with the intellectual and paternal supremacy of Saturn: And that the castrations of Heaven obscurely signify, the separation of the Titanic series from the connective order. For whatever among us appears

¹ Hence, according to the fable, Saturn was bound by Jupiter, who is the Demiurgus or artificer of the universe.

² The Titans are the ultimate artificers of things.

³ Heaven, according to his first subsistence, belongs to the order of Gods, who are denominated intelligible, and at the same time intellectual, and is the source of connexion to all things.
Oriental Customs.

67

to be of a worse condition; and to belong to the inferior co-
ordination of things, fables assume according to a better nature
and power. Thus, for instance, a bond with us impedes and
restrains energy, but there it is a contact and ineffable union
with causes. A precipitation here is a violent motion from
that which is the cause of it; but with the Gods it indicates pro-
lific progression, and an unrestrained and free presence with
all things, without departing from its proper principle, but pro-
ceeding from it through every thing with immutable order.
And castrations in things partial and material; cause a diminu-
tion of power; but in primary causes, they obscurely signify the pro-
gression of secondary natures into a subject order, from their
proper principles; primary natures at the same time remaining
established in themselves undiminished, neither being moved
through the progression of these, nor mutilated by their separa-
tion, nor divided by their distribution in things subordinate.

What must the reader, who is an adept in the theology and
mythology of which the above is an adumbration, think of that
system which asserts, that the Gods of the ancients are the pa-
trarchs and prophets of the Jews? Certainly, that it is nothing
more than Ἰουδαϊκή τούμα, καὶ δινὴ ασέβεια, καὶ μανικιον οὐνο.

Walworth.  THOMAS TAYLOR.

ORIENTAL CUSTOMS,
ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

BY THE REV. S. BURDER.

No. III.—[Continued from No. XLVI. p. 196.]

Rev. iv. 8. They rest not day and night, saying, Holy,
holi, holi, Lord God Almighty. That the holiness of God
was thrice proclaimed, is very emphatical. Instances of repeat-
ing a call three times occur both in the sacred and profane
writings. See Jer. xxii. 29, Ezek. xxi. 27, 2 Cor. xii. 8, Psalm
iv. 17, Matt. xxvi. 44, Dan. vi. 10. The heathens, to show
their sorrow for the death of their friends, called upon them
thrice. (Homer, Odys. ix. 65. Aristophan. in Ran. Virgil,
Æn. vi.) The Delphian Oracle saluted a man thrice king.