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THE RISE AND FALL OF ATHENS

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Table of Contents

Volume I

Table of Contents

BOOK I.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

Situation and Soil of Attica.—The Pelasgians its earliest Inhabitants.—Their Race and Language akin to the Grecian.—Their varying Civilization and Architectural Remains.—Cecrops.—Were the earliest Civilizers of Greece foreigners or Greeks?—The Foundation of Athens.—The Improvements attributed to Cecrops.—The Religion of the Greeks cannot be reduced to a simple System.—Its Influence upon their Character and Morals, Arts and Poetry.—The Origin of Slavery and Aristocracy.

I. To vindicate the memory of the Athenian people, without disguising the errors of Athenian institutions;—and, in narrating alike the triumphs and the reverses—the grandeur and the decay—of the most eminent of ancient states, to record the causes of her imperishable influence on mankind, not alone in political change or the fortunes of fluctuating war, but in the arts, the letters, and the social habits, which are equal elements in the history of a people;—this is the object that I set before me;—not unreconciled to the toil of years, if, serving to divest of some party errors, and to diffuse through a wider circle such knowledge as is

yet bequeathed to us of a time and land, fertile in august examples and in solemn warnings—consecrated by undying names and memorable deeds.

II. In that part of earth termed by the Greeks Hellas, and by the Romans Graecia [2], a small tract of land known by the name of Attica, extends into the Aegaean Sea—the southeast peninsula of Greece. In its greatest length it is about sixty, in its greatest breadth about twenty-four, geographical miles. In shape it is a rude triangle—on two sides flows the sea—on the third, the mountain range of Parnes and Cithaeron divides the Attic from the Boeotian territory. It is intersected by frequent but not lofty hills, and, compared with the rest of Greece, its soil, though propitious to the growth of the olive, is not fertile or abundant. In spite of painful and elaborate culture, the traces of which are yet visible, it never produced a sufficiency of corn to supply its population; and this, the comparative sterility of the land, may be ranked among the causes which conduced to the greatness of the people. The principal mountains of Attica are, the Cape of Sunium, Hymettus, renowned for its honey, and Pentelicus for its marble; the principal streams which water the valleys are the capricious and uncertain rivulets of Cephisus and Ilissus [3]—streams breaking into lesser brooks, deliciously pure and clear. The air is serene—the climate healthful—the seasons temperate. Along the hills yet breathe the wild thyme, and the odorous plants which, everywhere prodigal in Greece, are more especially fragrant in that lucid sky;—and still the atmosphere colours with peculiar and various taints the marble of the existent temples and the face of the mountain landscapes.

III. I reject at once all attempt to penetrate an unfathomable obscurity for an idle object. I do not pause to inquire whether, after the destruction of Babel, Javan was the first settler in Attica, nor is it reserved for my labours to decide the solemn controversy whether Ogyges was the contemporary of Jacob or of Moses. Neither shall I suffer myself to be seduced into any lengthened consideration of those disputes, so curious and so inconclusive, relative to the origin of the Pelasgi (according to Herodotus the earliest inhabitants of Attica), which have vainly agitated the learned. It may amuse the antiquary to weigh gravely the several doubts as to the derivation of their name from Pelasgus or from Peleg—to connect the scattered fragments of tradition—and to interpret either into history or mythology the language of fabulous genealogies. But our subtlest hypotheses can erect only a fabric of doubt, which, while it is tempting to assault, it is useless to defend. All that it seems to me necessary to say of the Pelasgi is as follows:—They are the earliest race which appear to have exercised a dominant power in Greece. Their kings can be traced by tradition to a time long prior to the recorded genealogy of any other tribe, and Inachus, the father of the Pelasgian Phoroneus, is but another name for the remotest era to which Grecian chronology can ascend [4]. Whether the Pelasgi were anciently a foreign or a Grecian tribe, has been a subject of constant and celebrated discussion. Herodotus, speaking of some settlements held to be Pelaigic, and existing in his time, terms their language “barbarous;” but Mueller, nor with argument insufficient, considers that the expression of the historian would apply only to a peculiar

dialect; and the hypothesis is sustained by another passage in Herodotus, in which he applies to certain Ionian dialects the same term as that with which he stigmatizes the language of the Pelasgic settlements. In corroboration of Mueller's opinion we may also observe, that the "barbarous-tongued" is an epithet applied by Homer to the Carians, and is rightly construed by the ancient critics as denoting a dialect mingled and unpolished, certainly not foreign. Nor when the Agamemnon of Sophocles upbraids Teucer with "his barbarous tongue," [6] would any scholar suppose that Teucer is upbraided with not speaking Greek; he is upbraided with speaking Greek inelegantly and rudely. It is clear that they who continued with the least adulteration a language in its earliest form, would seem to utter a strange and unfamiliar jargon to ears accustomed to its more modern construction. And, no doubt, could we meet with a tribe retaining the English of the thirteenth century, the language of our ancestors would be to most of us unintelligible, and seem to many of us foreign. But, however the phrase of Herodotus be interpreted, it would still be exceedingly doubtful whether the settlements he refers to were really and originally Pelasgic, and still more doubtful whether, if Pelasgia they had continued unalloyed and uncorrupted their ancestral language. I do not, therefore, attach any importance to the expression of Herodotus. I incline, on the contrary, to believe, with the more eminent of English scholars, that the language of the Pelasgi contained at least the elements of that which we acknowledge as the Greek;—and from many arguments I select the following:

1st. Because, in the states which we know to have been peopled by the Pelasgi (as Arcadia and Attica), and whence the population were not expelled by new tribes, the language appears no less Greek than that of those states from which the Pelasgi were the earliest driven. Had they spoken a totally different tongue from later settlers, I conceive that some unequivocal vestiges of the difference would have been visible even to the historical times.

2dly. Because the Hellenes are described as few at first—their progress is slow—they subdue, but they do not extirpate; in such conquests—the conquests of the few settled among the many—the language of the many continues to the last; that of the few would influence, enrich, or corrupt, but never destroy it.

3dly. Because, whatever of the Grecian language pervades the Latin [7], we can only ascribe to the Pelasgic colonizers of Italy. In this, all ancient writers, Greek and Latin, are agreed. The few words transmitted to us as Pelasgic betray the Grecian features, and the Lamina Borgiana (now in the Borgian collection of Naples, and discovered in 1783) has an inscription relative to the Siculi or Sicani, a people expelled from their Italian settlements before any received date of the Trojan war, of which the character is Pelasgic—the language Greek.

IV. Of the moral state of the Pelasgi our accounts are imperfect and contradictory. They were not a petty horde, but a vast race, doubtless divided, like every migratory people, into numerous tribes, differing in rank, in civilization [8], and in many peculiarities of character. The Pelasgi in one country might appear as herdsmen or as savages; in

another, in the same age, they might appear collected into cities and cultivating the arts. The history of the East informs us with what astonishing rapidity a wandering tribe, once settled, grew into fame and power; the camp of to-day —the city of to-morrow—and the “dwellers in the wilderness setting up the towers and the palaces thereof.” [9] Thus, while in Greece this mysterious people are often represented as the aboriginal race, receiving from Phoenician and Egyptian settlers the primitive blessings of social life, in Italy we behold them the improvers in agriculture [10] and first teachers of letters. [11]

Even so early as the traditional appearance of Cecrops among the savages of Attica, the Pelasgians in Arcadia had probably advanced from the pastoral to the civil life; and this, indeed, is the date assigned by Pausanias to the foundation of that ancestral Lycosura, in whose rude remains (by the living fountain and the waving oaks of the modern Diaphorte) the antiquary yet traces the fortifications of “the first city which the sun beheld.” [12] It is in their buildings that the Pelasgi have left the most indisputable record of their name. Their handwriting is yet upon their walls! A restless and various people—overrunning the whole of Greece, found northward in Dacia, Illyria, and the country of the Getae, colonizing the coasts of Ionia, and long the master-race of the fairest lands of Italy—they have passed away amid the revolutions of the elder earth, their ancestry and their descendants alike unknown;—yet not indeed the last, if my conclusions are rightly drawn: if the primitive population of Greece—themselves Greek—founding the language, and kindred with the blood, of the later and more

illustrious Hellenes—they still made the great bulk of the people in the various states, and through their most dazzling age: Enslaved in Laconia—but free in Athens—it was their posterity that fought the Mede at Marathon and Plataea—whom Miltiades led—for whom Solon legislated—for whom Plato thought—whom Demosthenes harangued. Not less in Italy than in Greece the parents of an imperishable tongue, and, in part, the progenitors of a glorious race, we may still find the dim track of their existence wherever the classic civilization flourished—the classic genius breathed. If in the Latin, if in the Grecian tongue, are yet the indelible traces of the language of the Pelasgi, the literature of the ancient, almost of the modern world, is their true descendant!

V. Despite a vague belief (referred to by Plato) of a remote and perished era of civilization, the most popular tradition asserts the Pelasgic inhabitants of Attica to have been sunk into the deepest ignorance of the elements of social life, when, either from Sais, an Egyptian city, as is commonly supposed, or from Sais a province in Upper Egypt, an Egyptian characterized to posterity by the name of Cecrops is said to have passed into Attica with a band of adventurous emigrants.

The tradition of this Egyptian immigration into Attica was long implicitly received. Recently the bold skepticism of German scholars—always erudite—if sometimes rash—has sufficed to convince us of the danger we incur in drawing historical conclusions from times to which no historical researches can ascend. The proofs upon which rest the reputed arrival of Egyptian colonizers, under Cecrops, in

Attica, have been shown to be slender—the authorities for the assertion to be comparatively modern—the arguments against the probability of such an immigration in such an age, to be at least plausible and important. Not satisfied, however, with reducing to the uncertainty of conjecture what incautiously had been acknowledged as fact, the assailants of the Egyptian origin of Cecrops presume too much upon their victory, when they demand us to accept as a counter fact, what can be, after all, but a counter conjecture. To me, impartially weighing the arguments and assertions on either side, the popular tradition of Cecrops and his colony appears one that can neither be tacitly accepted as history, nor contemptuously dismissed as invention. It would be, however, a frivolous dispute, whether Cecrops were Egyptian or Attican, since no erudition can ascertain that Cecrops ever existed, were it not connected with a controversy of some philosophical importance, viz., whether the early civilizers of Greece were foreigners or Greeks, and whether the Egyptians more especially assisted to instruct the ancestors of a race that have become the teachers and models of the world, in the elements of religion, of polity, and the arts.

Without entering into vain and futile reasonings, derived from the scattered passages of some early writers, from the ambiguous silence of others—and, above all, from the dreams of etymological analogy or mythological fable, I believe the earliest civilizers of Greece to have been foreign settlers; deducing my belief from the observations of common sense rather than from obscure and unsatisfactory research. I believe it,

First—Because, what is more probable than that at very early periods the more advanced nations of the East obtained communication with the Grecian continent and isles? What more probable than that the maritime and roving Phoenicians entered the seas of Greece, and were tempted by the plains, which promised abundance, and the mountains, which afforded a fastness? Possessed of a superior civilization to the hordes they found, they would meet rather with veneration than resistance, and thus a settlement would be obtained by an inconsiderable number, more in right of intelligence than of conquest.

But, though this may be conceded with respect to the Phoenicians, it is asserted that the Egyptians at least were not a maritime or colonizing people: and we are gravely assured, that in those distant times no Egyptian vessel had entered the Grecian seas. But of the remotest ages of Egyptian civilization we know but little. On their earliest monuments (now their books!) we find depicted naval as well as military battles, in which the vessels are evidently those employed at sea. According to their own traditions, they colonized in a remote age. They themselves laid claim to Danaus: and the mythus of the expedition of Osiris is not improbably construed into a figurative representation of the spread of Egyptian civilization by the means of colonies. Besides, Egypt was subjected to more than one revolution, by which a large portion of her population was expelled the land, and scattered over the neighbouring regions [13]. And even granting that Egyptians fitted out no maritime expedition—they could easily have transplanted themselves in Phoenician vessels, or Grecian rafts—from Asia into

Greece. Nor can we forget that Egypt [14] for a time was the habitation, and Thebes the dominion, of the Phoenicians, and that hence, perhaps, the origin of the dispute whether certain of the first foreign civilizers of Greece were Phoenicians or Egyptians: The settlers might come from Egypt, and be by extraction Phoenicians: or Egyptian emigrators might well have accompanied the Phoenician. [15]

2dly. By the evidence of all history, savage tribes appear to owe their first enlightenment to foreigners: to be civilized, they conquer or are conquered—visit or are visited. For a fact which contains so striking a mystery, I do not attempt to account. I find in the history of every other part of the world, that it is by the colonizer or the conqueror that a tribe neither colonizing nor conquering is redeemed from a savage state, and I do not reject so probable an hypothesis for Greece.

3dly. I look to the various arguments of a local or special nature, by which these general probabilities may be supported, and I find them unusually strong: I cast my eyes on the map of Greece, and I see that it is almost invariably on the eastern side that these eastern colonies are said to have been founded: I turn to chronology, and I find the revolutions in the East coincide in point of accredited date with the traditional immigrations into Greece: I look to the history of the Greeks, and I find the Greeks themselves (a people above all others vain of aboriginal descent, and contemptuous of foreign races) agreed in according a general belief to the accounts of their obligations to foreign settlers; and therefore (without additional but doubtful arguments from any imaginary traces of Eastern, Egyptian,

Phoenician rites and fables in the religion or the legends of Greece in her remoter age) I see sufficient ground for inclining to the less modern, but mere popular belief, which ascribes a foreign extraction to the early civilizers of Greece: nor am I convinced by the reasonings of those who exclude the Egyptians from the list of these primitive benefactors.

It being conceded that no hypothesis is more probable than that the earliest civilizers of Greece were foreign, and might be Egyptian, I do not recognise sufficient authority for rejecting the Attic traditions claiming Egyptian civilizers for the Attic soil, in arguments, whether grounded upon the fact that such traditions, unreferred to by the more ancient, were collected by the more modern, of Grecian writers—or upon plausible surmises as to the habits of the Egyptians in that early age. Whether Cecrops were the first—whether he were even one—of these civilizers, is a dispute unworthy of philosophical inquirers [16]. But as to the time of Cecrops are referred, both by those who contend for his Egyptian, and those who assert his Attic origin, certain advances from barbarism, and certain innovations in custom, which would have been natural to a foreigner, and almost miraculous in a native, I doubt whether it would not be our wiser and more cautious policy to leave undisturbed a long accredited conjecture, rather than to subscribe to arguments which, however startling and ingenious, not only substitute no unanswerable hypothesis, but conduce to no important result. [17]

VI. If Cecrops were really the leader of an Egyptian colony, it is more than probable that he obtained the

possession of Attica by other means than those of force. To savage and barbarous tribes, the first appearance of men, whose mechanical inventions, whose superior knowledge of the arts of life—nay, whose exterior advantages of garb and mien [18] indicate intellectual eminence, till then neither known nor imagined, presents a something preternatural and divine. The imagination of the wild inhabitants is seduced, their superstitions aroused, and they yield to a teacher—not succumb to an invader. It was probably thus, then, that Cecrops with his colonists would have occupied the Attic plain—conciliated rather than subdued the inhabitants, and united in himself the twofold authority exercised by primeval chiefs—the dignity of the legislator, and the sanctity of the priest. It is evident that none of the foreign settlers brought with them a numerous band. The traditions speak of them with gratitude as civilizers, not with hatred as conquerors. And they did not leave any traces in the establishment of their language:—a proof of the paucity of their numbers, and the gentle nature of their influence—the Phoenician Cadmus, the Egyptian Cecrops, the Phrygian Pelops, introduced no separate and alien tongue. Assisting to civilize the Greeks, they then became Greeks; their posterity merged and lost amid the native population.

VII. Perhaps, in all countries, the first step to social improvement is in the institution of marriage, and the second is the formation of cities. As Menes in Egypt, as Fohi in China, so Cecrops at Athens is said first to have reduced into sacred limits the irregular intercourse of the sexes [19], and reclaimed his barbarous subjects from a wandering and unprovidential life, subsisting on the spontaneous produce

of no abundant soil. High above the plain, and fronting the sea, which, about three miles distant on that side, sweeps into a bay peculiarly adapted for the maritime enterprises of an earlier age, we still behold a cragged and nearly perpendicular rock. In length its superficies is about eight hundred, in breadth about four hundred, feet [20]. Below, on either side, flow the immortal streams of the Ilissus and Cephisus. From its summit you may survey, here, the mountains of Hymettus, Pentelicus, and, far away, “the silver-bearing Laurium;” below, the wide plain of Attica, broken by rocky hills—there, the islands of Salamis and Aegina, with the opposite shores of Argolis, rising above the waters of the Saronic Bay. On this rock the supposed Egyptian is said to have built a fortress, and founded a city [21]; the fortress was in later times styled the Acropolis, and the place itself, when the buildings of Athens spread far and wide beneath its base, was still designated polis, or the CITY. By degrees we are told that he extended, from this impregnable castle and its adjacent plain, the limit of his realm, until it included the whole of Attica, and perhaps Boeotia [22]. It is also related that he established eleven other towns or hamlets, and divided his people into twelve tribes, to each of which one of the towns was apportioned—a fortress against foreign invasion, and a court of justice in civil disputes.

If we may trust to the glimmering light which, resting for a moment, uncertain and confused, upon the reign of Cecrops, is swallowed up in all the darkness of fable during those of his reputed successors—it is to this apocryphal personage that we must refer the elements both of

agriculture and law. He is said to have instructed the Athenians to till the land, and to watch the produce of the seasons; to have imported from Egypt the olive-tree, for which the Attic soil was afterward so celebrated, and even to have navigated to Sicily and to Africa for supplies of corn. That such advances from a primitive and savage state were not made in a single generation, is sufficiently clear. With more probability, Cecrops is reputed to have imposed upon the ignorance of his subjects and the license of his followers the curb of impartial law, and to have founded a tribunal of justice (doubtless the sole one for all disputes), in which after times imagined to trace the origin of the solemn Areopagus.

VIII. Passing from these doubtful speculations on the detailed improvements effected by Cecrops in the social life of the Attic people, I shall enter now into some examination of two subjects far more important. The first is the religion of the Athenians in common with the rest of Greece; and the second the origin of the institution of slavery.

The origin of religion in all countries is an inquiry of the deepest interest and of the vaguest result. For, the desire of the pious to trace throughout all creeds the principles of the one they themselves profess—the vanity of the learned to display a various and recondite erudition—the passion of the ingenious to harmonize conflicting traditions—and the ambition of every speculator to say something new upon an ancient but inexhaustible subject, so far from enlightening, only perplex our conjectures. Scarcely is the theory of to-day established, than the theory of to-morrow is invented to oppose it. With one the religion of the Greeks is but a type

of the mysteries of the Jews, the event of the deluge, and the preservation of the ark; with another it is as entirely an incorporation of the metaphysical solemnities of the Egyptian;—now it is the crafty device of priests, now the wise invention of sages. It is not too much to say, that after the profoundest labours and the most plausible conjectures of modern times, we remain yet more uncertain and confused than we were before. It is the dark boast of every pagan mythology, as one of the eldest of the pagan deities, that “none among mortals hath lifted up its veil!”

After, then, some brief and preliminary remarks, tending to such hypotheses as appear to me most probable and simple, I shall hasten from unprofitable researches into the Unknown, to useful deductions from what is given to our survey—in a word, from the origin of the Grecian religion to its influence and its effects; the first is the province of the antiquary and the speculator; the last of the historian and the practical philosopher.

IX. When Herodotus informs us that Egypt imparted to Greece the names of almost all her deities, and that his researches convinced him that they were of barbarous origin, he exempts from the list of the Egyptian deities, Neptune, the Dioscuri, Juno, Vesta, Themis, the Graces, and the Nereids [23]. From Africa, according to Herodotus, came Neptune, from the Pelasgi the rest of the deities disclaimed by Egypt. According to the same authority, the Pelasgi learned not their deities, but the names of their deities (and those at a later period), from the Egyptians [24]. But the Pelasgi were the first known inhabitants of Greece—the first known inhabitants of Greece had therefore their especial

deities, before any communication with Egypt. For the rest we must accept the account of the simple and credulous Herodotus with considerable caution and reserve. Nothing is more natural—perhaps more certain—than that every tribe [25], even of utter savages, will invent some deities of their own; and as these deities will as naturally be taken from external objects, common to all mankind, such as the sun or the moon, the waters or the earth, and honoured with attributes formed from passions and impressions no less universal;—so the deities of every tribe will have something kindred to each other, though the tribes themselves may never have come into contact or communication.

The mythology of the early Greeks may perhaps be derived from the following principal sources:—First, the worship of natural objects;—and of divinities so formed, the most unequivocally national will obviously be those most associated with their mode of life and the influences of their climate. When the savage first intrusts the seed to the bosom of the earth—when, through a strange and unaccountable process, he beholds what he buried in one season spring forth the harvest of the next—the EARTH itself, the mysterious garner, the benign, but sometimes the capricious reproducer of the treasures committed to its charge—becomes the object of the wonder, the hope, and the fear, which are the natural origin of adoration and prayer. Again, when he discovers the influence of the heaven upon the growth of his labour—when, taught by experience, he acknowledges its power to blast or to mellow—then, by the same process of ideas, the HEAVEN also assumes the character of divinity, and becomes a new

agent, whose wrath is to be propitiated, whose favour is to be won. What common sense thus suggests to us, our researches confirm, and we find accordingly that the Earth and the Heaven are the earliest deities of the agricultural Pelasgi. As the Nile to the fields of the Egyptian—earth and heaven to the culture of the Greek. The effects of the SUN upon human labour and human enjoyment are so sensible to the simplest understanding, that we cannot wonder to find that glorious luminary among the most popular deities of ancient nations. Why search through the East to account for its worship in Greece? More easy to suppose that the inhabitants of a land, whom the sun so especially favoured —saw and blessed it, for it was good, than, amid innumerable contradictions and extravagant assumptions, to decide upon that remoter shore, whence was transplanted a deity, whose effects were so benignant, whose worship was so natural, to the Greeks. And in the more plain belief we are also borne out by the more sound inductions of learning. For it is noticeable that neither the moon nor the stars—favourite divinities with those who enjoyed the serene nights, or inhabited the broad plains of the East—were (though probably admitted among the Pelasgic deities) honoured with that intense and reverent worship which attended them in Asia and in Egypt. To the Pelasgi, not yet arrived at the intellectual stage of philosophical contemplation, the most sensible objects of influence would be the most earnestly adored. What the stars were to the East, their own beautiful Aurora, awaking them to the delight of their genial and temperate climate, was to the early Greeks.

Of deities, thus created from external objects, some will rise out (if I may use the expression) of natural accident and local circumstance. An earthquake will connect a deity with the earth—an inundation with the river or the sea. The Grecian soil bears the marks of maritime revolution; many of the tribes were settled along the coast, and perhaps had already adventured their rafts upon the main. A deity of the sea (without any necessary revelation from Africa) is, therefore, among the earliest of the Grecian gods. The attributes of each deity will be formed from the pursuits and occupations of the worshippers—sanguinary with the warlike—gentle with the peaceful. The pastoral Pelasgi of Arcadia honoured the pastoral Pan for ages before he was received by their Pelasgic brotherhood of Attica. And the agricultural Demeter or Ceres will be recognised among many tribes of the agricultural Pelasgi, which no Egyptian is reputed, even by tradition [26], to have visited.

The origin of prayer is in the sense of dependance, and in the instinct of self-preservation or self-interest. The first objects of prayer to the infant man will be those on which by his localities he believes himself to be most dependant for whatever blessing his mode of life inclines him the most to covet, or from which may come whatever peril his instinct will teach him the most to deprecate and fear. It is this obvious truth which destroys all the erudite systems that would refer the different creeds of the heathen to some single origin. Till the earth be the same in each region—till the same circumstances surround every tribe—different impressions, in nations yet unconverted and uncivilized, produce different deities. Nature suggests a God, and man

invests him with attributes. Nature and man, the same as a whole, vary in details; the one does not everywhere suggest the same notions—the other cannot everywhere imagine the same attributes. As with other tribes, so with the Pelasgi or primitive Greeks, their early gods were the creatures of their own early impressions.

As one source of religion was in external objects, so another is to be found in internal sensations and emotions. The passions are so powerful in their effects upon individuals and nations, that we can be little surprised to find those effects attributed to the instigation and influence of a supernatural being. Love is individualized and personified in nearly all mythologies; and LOVE therefore ranks among the earliest of the Grecian gods. Fear or terror, whose influence is often so strange, sudden, and unaccountable—seizing even the bravest—spreading through numbers with all the speed of an electric sympathy—and deciding in a moment the destiny of an army or the ruin of a tribe—is another of those passions, easily supposed the afflatus of some preternatural power, and easily, therefore, susceptible of personification. And the pride of men, more especially if habitually courageous and warlike, will gladly yield to the credulities which shelter a degrading and unwonted infirmity beneath the agency of a superior being. TERROR, therefore, received a shape and found an altar probably as early at least as the heroic age. According to Plutarch, Theseus sacrificed to Terror previous to his battle with the Amazons;—an idle tale, it is true, but proving, perhaps, the antiquity of a tradition. As society advanced from barbarism arose more intellectual creations

—as cities were built, and as in the constant flux and reflux of martial tribes cities were overthrown, the elements of the social state grew into personification, to which influence was attributed and reverence paid. Thus were fixed into divinity and shape, ORDER, PEACE, JUSTICE, and the stern and gloomy ORCOS [27], witness of the oath, avenger of the perjury.

This, the second source of religion, though more subtle and refined in its creations, had still its origin in the same human causes as the first, viz., anticipation of good and apprehension of evil. Of deities so created, many, however, were the inventions of poets—(poetic metaphor is a fruitful mother of mythological fable)—many also were the graceful refinements of a subsequent age. But some (and nearly all those I have enumerated) may be traced to the earliest period to which such researches can ascend. It is obvious that the eldest would be connected with the passions—the more modern with the intellect.

It seems to me apparent that almost simultaneously with deities of these two classes would arise the greater and more influential class of personal divinities which gradually expanded into the heroic dynasty of Olympus. The associations which one tribe, or one generation, united with the heaven, the earth, or the sun, another might obviously connect, or confuse, with a spirit or genius inhabiting or influencing the element or physical object which excited their anxiety or awe: And, this creation effected—so what one tribe or generation might ascribe to the single personification of a passion, a faculty, or a moral and social principle, another would just as naturally refer to a personal

and more complex deity:—that which in one instance would form the very nature of a superior being, in the other would form only an attribute—swell the power and amplify the character of a Jupiter, a Mars, a Venus, or a Pan. It is in the nature of man, that personal divinities once created and adored, should present more vivid and forcible images to his fancy than abstract personifications of physical objects and moral impressions. Thus, deities of this class would gradually rise into pre-eminence and popularity above those more vague and incorporeal—and (though I guard myself from absolutely solving in this manner the enigma of ancient theogonies) the family of Jupiter could scarcely fail to possess themselves of the shadowy thrones of the ancestral Earth and the primeval Heaven.

A third source of the Grecian, as of all mythologies, was in the worship of men who had actually existed, or been supposed to exist. For in this respect errors might creep into the calendar of heroes, as they did into the calendar of saints (the hero-worship of the moderns), which has canonized many names to which it is impossible to find the owners. This was probably the latest, but perhaps in after-times the most influential and popular addition to the aboriginal faith. The worship of dead men once established, it was natural to a people so habituated to incorporate and familiarize religious impressions—to imagine that even their primary gods, first formed from natural impressions (and, still more, those deities they had borrowed from stranger creeds)—should have walked the earth. And thus among the multitude in the philosophical ages, even the loftiest of the Olympian dwellers were vaguely supposed to have known humanity;—their immortality but the apotheosis of the benefactor or the hero.

X. The Pelasgi, then, had their native or aboriginal deities (differing in number and in attributes with each different tribe), and with them rests the foundation of the Greek mythology. They required no Egyptian wisdom to lead them to believe in superior powers. Nature was their primeval teacher. But as intercourse was opened with the East from the opposite Asia—with the North from the neighbouring Thrace, new deities were transplanted and old deities received additional attributes and distinctions, according as the fancy of the stranger found them assimilate to the divinities he had been accustomed to adore. It seems to me,

that in Saturn we may trace the popular Phoenician deity—in the Thracian Mars, the fierce war-god of the North. But we can scarcely be too cautious how far we allow ourselves to be influenced by resemblance, however strong, between a Grecian and an alien deity. Such a resemblance may not only be formed by comparatively modern innovations, but may either be resolved to that general likeness which one polytheism will ever bear towards another, or arise from the adoption of new attributes and strange traditions;—so that the deity itself may be homesprung and indigenous, while bewildering the inquirer with considerable similitude to other gods, from whose believers the native worship merely received an epithet, a ceremony, a symbol, or a fable. And this necessity of caution is peculiarly borne out by the contradictions which each scholar enamoured of a system gives to the labours of the speculator who preceded him. What one research would discover to be Egyptian, another asserts to be Phoenician; a third brings from the North; a fourth from the Hebrews; and a fifth, with yet wilder imagination, from the far and then unpenetrated caves and woods of India. Accept common sense as our guide, and the contradictions are less irreconcilable—the mystery less obscure. In a deity essentially Greek, a Phoenician colonist may discover something familiar, and claim an ancestral god. He imparts to the native deity some Phoenician features—an Egyptian or an Asiatic succeeds him—discovers a similar likeness—introduces similar innovations. The lively Greek receives—amalgamates—appropriates all: but the aboriginal deity is not the less Greek. Each speculator may be equally right in establishing a partial

resemblance, precisely because all speculators are wrong in asserting a perfect identity.

It follows as a corollary from the above reasonings, that the religion of Greece was much less uniform than is popularly imagined; 1st, because each separate state or canton had its own peculiar deity; 2dly, because, in the foreign communication of new gods, each stranger would especially import the deity that at home he had more especially adored. Hence to every state its tutelary god—the founder of its greatness, the guardian of its renown. Even in the petty and limited territory of Attica, each tribe, independent of the public worship, had its peculiar deities, honoured by peculiar rites.

The deity said to be introduced by Cecrops is Neith, or more properly Naith [28]—the goddess of Sais, in whom we are told to recognise the Athene, or Minerva of the Greeks. I pass over as palpably absurd any analogy of names by which the letters that compose the word Keith are inverted to the word Athene. The identity of the two goddesses must rest upon far stronger proof. But, in order to obtain this proof, we must know with some precision the nature and attributes of the divinity of Sais—a problem which no learning appears to me satisfactorily to have solved. It would be a strong, and, I think, a convincing argument, that Athene is of foreign origin, could we be certain that her attributes, so eminently intellectual, so thoroughly out of harmony with the barbarism of the early Greeks, were accorded to her at the commencement of her worship. But the remotest traditions (such as her contest with Neptune for the possession of the soil), if we take the more simple

interpretation, seem to prove her to have been originally an agricultural deity, the creation of which would have been natural enough to the agricultural Pelasgi;—while her supposed invention of some of the simplest and most elementary arts are sufficiently congenial to the notions of an unpolished and infant era of society. Nor at a long subsequent period is there much resemblance between the formal and elderly goddess of Daedalian sculpture and the glorious and august Glaucopis of Homer—the maiden of celestial beauty as of unrivalled wisdom. I grant that the variety of her attributes renders it more than probable that Athene was greatly indebted, perhaps to the “Divine Intelligence,” personified in the Egyptian Naith—perhaps also, as Herodotus asserts, to the warlike deity of Libya—nor less, it may be, to the Onca of the Phoenicians [29], from whom in learning certain of the arts, the Greeks might simultaneously learn the name and worship of the Phoenician deity, presiding over such inventions. Still an aboriginal deity was probably the nucleus, round which gradually gathered various and motley attributes. And certain it is, that as soon as the whole creation rose into distinct life, the stately and virgin goddess towers, aloof and alone, the most national, the most majestic of the Grecian deities—rising above all comparison with those who may have assisted to decorate and robe her, embodying in a single form the very genius, multiform, yet individual as it was, of the Grecian people—and becoming among all the deities of the heathen heaven what the Athens she protected became upon the earth.