

Introduction

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wanderings, he returns with undiminished gladness, just as each day the sun reappears in the east with undiminished splendour.

But as the minutes go by, the sun rising in the heavens is invested with a more dazzling majesty, and he becomes Chrysâôr, the lord of the golden sword, the invincible weapon which never misses its mark. Now begins (II.) his westward journey to Pytho, so named, the story went, because the sun-god there slew the great dragon which meets its doom at the hand of every solar hero, as Vritra, the biting snake, who lurks in the dark cloud, is smitten by the club of Indra, the rain-giver. The rest of the legend accounts for the greatness of the Delphian temple, and the pre-eminence of the oracle which was inspired with the wisdom of Apollo.

In the tale of Niobê (III.) Phœbus is seen armed with his irresistible arrows, dealing death to all at whom he aims them. The beauty of the children of Niobê is the beauty of clouds flushed with the light of morning, which are scattered presently from before the face of the morning sun. Her tears are the rain-drops which turn to ice on the mountain-summits, where men fancy that they see her form hardened into stone.

The story of Dapînê (IV.) is but one of a large class of legends which relate the love of the Sun for the Dawn, who flies at his approach, and at length, as he draws nearer to her, vanishes away. Still, although his first love is gone, other brides await him in other lands; but in the tale of Kyrênê (V.) we have an instance of mythological language applied to an event to which we may assign something of an historical character in its bare outline. The myth, which spoke of the maiden whom Apollo loved and carried to Libya, thus represents the fact that "the town of Kyrênê in Thessaly sent a colony to Libya under the auspices of Apollo."¹

The legend of Hermes (VI.) is so transparent that, the clue being once furnished, we trace with ease the old mythical phrases even in the minutest details. Hermes,

¹ Max Müller, *Comparative Mythology*, Chips from a German Workshop, ii. 68.