

shades of oblivion. To-day's iconoclasts must not cut away the roots of our intellectual life. The thoughts and feelings of the past interpret and shed light upon those of the present. The electric fire is ever flashing out, illuminating the whole intellectual world. The whole course of the world tends to unity. Gradually the great drama is unfolding; each scene is interpreted in the light of the one that precedes it, but all are vitally connected, and only in their oneness do they reflect the full glory of God.

And so we are prepared to sympathise with the ancients in their ideas respecting a future existence, or state. For by virtue of our common humanity we are in sympathy with those that lived long ago. All other things find a response in our hearts, as well, then, the solemn and mysterious subjects of death and a hereafter. We stand with the Greek, the Egyptian, the Roman, in the chamber of death. We stand face to face with the same realities. If a gleam of light shoots athwart the darkness, we see it together. With them we stand in the awful silence. With them we seek an answer to eager, searching questionings. With them we gaze upon the scenes of their father-land, when the birds are at rest, when peace and silence reign along the banks of their rivers, when there is no rustle of leaf, no ripple of water, when the twilight gathers round and the sun is sinking behind the western hills, where the hill-tops stand glorified, where from out the mist and gloom we look across the shaded river upon the peaks reflecting the sun-set, upon those hill-tops which reflect the tender glow of an unearthly light, and together get our first intimations of immortality, as the earthly becomes transmuted into the heavenly.

The ancients had no power to "ally the shadowy with the sun-lit side." Their brilliant fancy could place the gods amid the glittering glory of Olympus, where ambrosia and nectar yielded them the elements of everlasting life, and where there was no decay, no death. But on earth Jupiter's arm was powerless to avert the stroke of death. Young and old withered away before the breath of the gaunt destroyer. Friends surrounded the bier, lamentations were heard, and up and down the land the funeral pyres were burning. Here the fate of the spirit becomes of infinite importance, just here where the curtain falls, and no voice came to them from out the intervital gloom, and so they might use the words of Beattie's Minstrel:

Nor yet for the ravage of winter I mourn;
Kind Nature the embryo blossom will have;
But when shall spring visit the mouldering urn?
O when shall day dawn on the night of the grave!

That the ancients were profoundly impressed with the fleeting nature of this life is abundantly evident from their writings. The music suddenly turns from strains of martial fire, and sounding joy and sunshine and enters the regions of mist and gloom, and there

darkling sings in mournful yet beautiful strains the rapid passage of man into the great unknown. This universal wailing must have had a cause. This cause must have had its root in something deep in human nature—some conviction that this life is a dream, that we bear relations to something beyond and above us. We hear this mournful note in Homer, likening the race of man to leaves; in Sophocles comparing man to phantoms and shadows and speaking of waves of calamity ever rolling over the homes of mortals; in Æschylus, who sees in life a picture that a shadow may spoil; in Euripides, who again and again deems mortal things a shadow; in Pindar's Nemean and Pythian odes, in which he says, fate shakes from the stem the fluttering flower—the wave of death comes alike on all, the high and the low. Even the mirth-loving and jolly Horace often sings in minor key of the brevity of life and the certainty of death. But we need not multiply names. To the ancients existence was a mystery; mystery brooded over the portals of the tomb, and shrouded the unexplored future. Passing out from the deep darkness of the past, man drifted on into the deeper darkness of the future. There was nothing to rift the murky vault so that light might come to the seeker, and so those plaintive notes of the ancients, which come to us in a wailing surge of sound.

Still man clung to the hope of immortality. To find the basis of the finest poetry of the ancient Greeks and Romans, we must recognise their belief in a future state of rewards and punishments. This belief is the soul that breathes through and animates their immortal productions. Their works thus have infused into them the charm and witchery and thrilling power of the supernatural. With what graphic and startling power have the ancients pictured the abodes of the bad and the good! We hear the lashes of the Furies as they forever fall, and the eternal wail of the tortured as it rings through the murky regions of despair. We also look upon the beautiful gardens and smiling meadows of Elysium. There the birds ever warble, and rivers ever glide between banks fringed with laurel. No taint falls upon the pure air. The good here dwell in halcyon repose and perfect happiness.

With respect to existence after death we find ideas ranging all the way from the dim and shadowy outline given by Homer and Hesiod to the definite and elaborate description of Virgil. Many have noted the wide divergence between Homer on the one hand, and Pindar and Virgil on the other. In Homer the departed flit about as mere umbræ, with nothing to relieve the dread monotony. In Pindar the throne of judgment is set, and justice meted out to all. Here there is a marked advance respecting the ideas of a Hereafter—an advance which told upon the moral and intellectual condition of the people.