

deities, forbade the thought of propagating their religious opinions. Did one request a sailor to cease from the adoration of Neptune, or a soldier from that of Mars, he would be listened to with astonishment and ridicule. If asked to transfer their reverence to Vulcan or Ceres, for example, instead, these feelings of contempt would be increased. "My good friend" would the first say, "I am a sailor, not a mechanic;" and the second; "I am a soldier, not a farmer." So far was the diversity of deities carried, according to the various qualities impersonated, that the Greeks had one god who was worshipped as the incarnation of blind impetuosity upon the battle field, and another who was supposed to preside over organization and method in warlike arrangements, either or both of which they invoked, according to circumstances.

Since the ideas of locality and of limited jurisdiction were thus attached to the imaginary duties of antiquity, to transfer their worship from one place to another was evidently impossible, and would no more occur to them, than the attempt to bring the climate of England to Hindostan, would to us. But in addition all this, heathens would not undertake the labors of missionaries if there had existed ought in their systems capable of being adapted to such a purpose. In connection with some of the temples, the worship of some of the gods of antiquity, there were *mysteries* as they were termed; to the knowledge of which, candidates, after undergoing a certain probation, and performing prescribed ceremonies, were cautiously admitted. The treasures of information possessed by the initiated were, as they boasted, immense. They supported their pretensions by the garb of secrecy with which they enshrouded their every movement, and by the magnificent spectacles which they devised at stated intervals, for the gratification and awe of the multitude. They professed to be able to solve all the difficult questions regarding the creation of the world, the existence of evil in the universe, and the like, which have ever distracted mankind; and to teach how to satisfy all the ardent longings, more especially for eternal life, which agitate the human heart. But their professions were only a splendid hypocrisy. Those who were admitted to an acquaintance with the empty delusions of which the mysteries were composed, were prevented indeed, by the most solemn and dreadful oaths from revealing what they had witnessed; and perhaps, in part, by a feeling of shame at the manner in which they had suffered themselves to be deceived. It is pretty well ascertained also, that in connection with some of them the utmost lasciviousness and debauchery were allowed, if not enjoined,—an additional reason why the real facts of the case should not be lightly revealed. For, in that event, the initiated, instead of winning the reverence of the people at large, would speedily become the victims of their wrath. But whatever might be the real knowledge communicated by admission to

these solemnities, it is evident that their whole character was opposed to the idea of benefiting mankind generally by their diffusion. Their gospel was only introduced for the select few,—not for the multitude. In perusing the Old Testament, nothing is more singular than the opposition of the Mosaic law, to the use of groves as places of worship; and the uniform incination of the Israelites, when they lapsed into idolatry, to frequent these gloomy recesses. The same practice seems to have been common among all nations. Now it is quite certain that the effects were immoral in the highest degree. But to engage in immorality was not the ostensible reason why the worshippers concealed their rites in such places. Like the Druids in Britain, the professed object was to veil, from the uninitiated the mysterious ceremonies which were avowed to embody the highest knowledge. We know the tendency of seeming mystery to pique curiosity,—how it fills us with awe of those already admitted, and invests them with an authority to which otherwise they would not dare to lay claim. Thus were the Israelites, already sufficiently repelled from Jehovah by the felt contrast between his purity and power, and their corruption and feebleness, at all times ready to yield to the seductions of those who promised to unfold to them, in the worship of the grove, the secrets of the universe. In opposition to all this, it seems to have been an object of peculiar interest in the Mosaic law, to render every act of social worship a public transaction. No secret rite, like these of the Egyptians, or Greeks was allowed. Every religious ceremony was performed in the open view of the world, and accordingly during the various reformations which occurred under the reign of pious kings in Judah, they signalized their zeal, by cutting down the groves, where the people burnt incense to idols. The only exception to this publicity in Judaism was the annual visit of the high priest to the holy of holies,—a portion of the sanctuary which he alone was permitted to enter. But even in this case, the whole of the ceremonies which he was to perform, were strictly defined in a book open to the inspection of any of the people; and the object was, not to terrify by secrecy, but to impress an ignorant nation with the awful sanctity of Jehovah.

The view taken in this article of the heathen idea of God, is illustrated by the account contained in II. Kings, xvii., of the people whom Shalmeneser transferred from Babylon and elsewhere to the cities of Samaria whence he had carried away the Israelites into captivity. These people being too limited in number to check the undue increase of wild beasts, ascribed the misfortunes which befell them to the anger of Jehovah, the "God of the land" whom they knew not how to worship. Priests were accordingly sent out to instruct them in "the answer of the God of the land" while at the same time, they continued in their own houses, or when several belonged