

the advancement of ideas on these subjects from the age of Homer to Virgil's time.

The Homeric hell is Erebus, the house of Hades or Pluto, and is placed at an indefinite distance below the earth, in the far East. Below Erebus, as far as Erebus is below the earth, is Tartarus, where are punished the Titans and other offenders against Zeus. Homer makes no mention of the "Isles of the Blest" of Pindar, but speaks of the Elysian Plain in the far region of the sunset. "No snow is there, nor any rain, nor great storms, but always the River Ocean sendeth forth the breeze of the shrill West to blow cool on men." Here we shall find Rhadamanthus, son of Zeus, (whom, we shall notice, Virgil places in a very different locality), and thither shall pass Menelaus without dying, *because Helen, daughter of Zeus, is his wife*; mark you! not on account of any high moral qualifications of his own, but simply because he happened to become united to one of the royal family of Jove.

After a blood-offering we enter Erebus, and what first strikes us is its darkness, dreariness, chilliness. The air is full of gloomy feeling of the grave. The ghosts crouch here and there, or flit about singly, or go trooping by in crowds, but are all mere semblances (*cidola*), and only after drinking the sheep's blood, regain enough of the faculties of the living to be able to converse. Hell is not laid out so that we can understand it exactly. Homer would appear not to have had a very distinct idea of what he wished to describe as Erebus. Everything is indistinct, uncertain. On extensive plains of gloom we behold warrior-wraiths drive their chariots, and hurl their long spears; hunters pursue their game; in fact, the ghosts appear to have the same occupations in the nether world as the would above.

But those who come near us appear dissatisfied, unhappy. They seem to occupy themselves as they do merely to pass the time, not that they are given any pleasure by so doing. They move about, looking frigid, with acid countenance, as though their good warm bodies would be a comfort to them here. Their feeling on the subject of life in Erebus is well voiced by Great Achilles's shade, who says:

"Talk not of ruling in this dolorous gloom;

Nor think vain words (he cried) can ease my doom.

Rather I choose laboriously to bear
A weight of woes, and breathe the vital air,
A slave to some poor hind that toils for bread,
Than reign the sceptred monarch of the dead."

SUCH an after-life, then, as Homer painted could be anything but enticing, when so great a hero as Achilles met with such a miserable reward for all his magnanimity and self-sacrifice. Plato, in his third Republic, censures Homer severely for putting such words into the mouth of Achilles, remarking that "such a picture of after life was dangerous to morals, that it would prevent youths from doing great and noble deeds at the risk of their lives; that patriots would soon disappear, and men would become cowards and slaves." But there must have been traditions and opinions among his countrymen in Homer's time, upon which he founded his theories of after-life. He should scarcely be blamed. It merely goes to show what little hope there was after death for men in that day, according to the prevalent philosophy, and Homer could not be expected to conceive ideas which it required centuries of experience and progress towards the truth to implant in men's minds.

In the Homeric Hell, the only sins mentioned as meeting with special punishment are those against the gods. We read of Tityus having his bowels eternally torn out by a vulture, for having attempted to violate the goddess Latona; and perjurers are mentioned as undergoing terrible torments.

"Witness thou first, thou greatest power above,

.....
And ye fell furies of the realms of night,
Who rule the dead, and horrid woes prepare,
For perjured kings and all who falsely swear."

But no mention is made of any social sins being punished. With the exception of those who have sinned against Heaven, the shades mingle indiscriminately in their abode of gloom. But those whose bones lie unburied are forbidden to hold converse or communion with the other phantoms. Only two other punishments are describe I besides that of Tityus, those of Tantalus and Sisyphus, the former of whom forever vainly endeavours to sip the crystal brook, or taste the luscious fruit; while the latter eternally rolls a huge stone up a mountain, but no sooner