

south of Italy; we also find them taking such complete possession of Asia Minor, and extending their arts and influence so far into the interior as to press upon the Persian monarchy, and render it a matter of political necessity that the rulers of that vast empire should attempt to cut down the main stem, that they might disencumber themselves from the branches. We cannot, upon any other supposition, account for their Persian wars; or for the expedition of Xerxes, otherwise apparently so wild and unnecessary.

The high polish to which the Greeks brought the arts of literature, sculpture and architecture, must be accounted for by other causes; but it is easy to see how this habit of commercial activity should, by producing a constant stimulus of fresh ideas, urge them on to make discovery after discovery, improvement after improvement, and even to create that constant craving for something new, which was so characteristic of them that it passed into an ancient by-word. We know that their learned men travelled to the East to study at the most celebrated schools of philosophy which were still taught by the priests in those countries; and we can easily imagine how the vast mental activity which, on their return, they found prevailing among their countrymen, would induce them to display and make the most of their acquired knowledge. We can easily imagine how it would lead them to complete those systems of philosophy, of which they had obtained the rudiments in the East—how it would stimulate them to original thinking, till they produced new systems of their own.

We find that this was the course they actually took. They imported the knowledge of the East, and they carefully polished and worked up every part of it which was suitable for effect on the masses. They made immense progress in metaphysics, rhetoric, mathematics, and every other science which is dependent upon pure reasoning; gaining little ground, however, and it is a most singular fact in the philosophy of the mind, in those enquiries which depend for their successful prosecution upon careful and repeated practical experiment. They made little progress in chemistry, astronomy, and some other branches of natural philosophy.

And here I would remark, in passing, that the mental tendency among the Greeks was quite different from that of the Eastern people. The aim of Eastern philosophy, was distinctiveness; while that of the Greek was abstraction. The Egyptians erred, by carrying the desire of distinctiveness too far; the Greeks, by extending their abstract reasoning to subjects to which it did not apply. The people of the East were never satisfied, till they made an important truth apparent to their senses. No sooner did they make a discovery than they set to work to symbolize it—to attempt to draw it down from heaven, and make it apparent to the eye and the touch. They ransacked all animate and inanimate nature, for fancied resemblances to those ideas of the beautiful or great, which their philosophy had made plain to their intellect. The flower, the tree, or the animal in which the resemblance was found, became an emblem; from an emblem, it passed gradually among the vulgar, into an actual personification; until, by the extension of this process, we can account for the otherwise incomprehensible multiplication of objects of idolatrous worship among them. Their train of thinking was essentially symbolic, their language was the same—this still continues to be a striking peculiarity of Eastern style—presenting nature in such graceful extravagance, as even yet to captivate us in infancy, and delight us in age.

The Greeks, again, were never satisfied with the mere possession of a