

isms of the present world, and sometimes even from the relics of extinct species.* Marvelous flowers and trees spring from this mythic soil, as the giant ash of the Edda-Songs, the world-tree Yggdrasil, whose branches tower above the heavens, while one of its triple roots penetrates to the "foaming caldron springs" of the lower world.† Thus the cloud-region of physical myths is filled with pleasing or with fearful forms, according to the diversity of character in nations and climates; and these forms are preserved for centuries in the intellectual domain of successive generations.

If the present work does not fully bear out its title, the adoption of which I have myself designated as bold and inconsiderate, the charge of incompleteness applies especially to that portion of the Cosmos which treats of spiritual life; that is, the image reflected by external nature on the inner world of thought and feeling. In this portion of my work I have contented myself with dwelling more especially upon those objects which lie in the direction of long-cherished studies; on the manifestation of a more or less lively appreciation of nature in classical antiquity and in modern times; on the fragments of poetical descriptions of nature, the coloring of which has been so essentially influenced by individuality of national character, and the religious monotheistic view of creation; on the fascinating charm of landscape painting; and on the history of the contemplation of the physical universe, that is, the history of the recognition of the universe as a whole, and of the unity of phenomena—a recognition gradually developed during the course of two thousand years.

In a work of so comprehensive a character, the object of which is to give a scientific, and, at the same time, an animated description of nature, a first imperfect attempt must rather lay claim to the merit of inciting than to that of satisfying inquiry. *A Book of Nature*, worthy of its exalted title, can never be accomplished until the physical sciences, notwithstanding their inherent imperfectibility, shall, by their

* M. von Olfer's *Ueberreste vorweltlicher Riesenthier in Beziehung auf Ostasiatische Sagen* in the *Abh. der Berl. Akad.*, 1832, s. 51. On the opinion advanced by Empedocles regarding the cause of the extinction of the earliest animal forms, see Hegel's *Geschichte der Philosophie*, bd. ii., s. 344.

† See, for the world-tree Yggdrasil, and the rushing (foaming) caldron-spring Hvergelmir, the *Deutsche Mythologie* of Jacob Grimm, 1844, s. 530, 756; also Mallet's *Northern Antiquities* (Bohn's edition), 1847 p. 410, 489, and 492, and frontispiece to ditto.