

sable-plumaged Night conceived in the boundless bosom of Erebus, and laid an egg, from which, in the revolution of ages, sprung Love, resplendent with golden pinions. Love fecundated the dark-winged Chaos, and gave origin to the race of birds.”*

Pythagorean Doctrines.—Pythagoras, who resided for more than twenty years in Egypt, and according to Cicero, had visited the East, and conversed with the Persian philosophers, introduced into his own country, on his return, the doctrine of the gradual deterioration of the human race from an original state of virtue and happiness : but if we are to judge of his theory concerning the destruction and renovation of the earth from the sketch given by Ovid, we must concede it to have been far more philosophical than any known version of the cosmogonies of Oriental or Egyptian sects.

Although Pythagoras is introduced by the poet as delivering his doctrine in person, some of the illustrations are derived from natural events which happened after the death of the philosopher. But notwithstanding these anachronisms, we may regard the account as a true picture of the tenets of the Pythagorean school in the Augustan age ; and although perhaps partially modified, it must have contained the substance of the original scheme. Thus considered, it is extremely curious and instructive ; for we here find a comprehensive and masterly summary of almost all the great causes of change now in activity on the globe, and these adduced in confirmation of a principle of a perpetual and gradual revolution inherent in the nature of our terrestrial system. These doctrines, it is true, are not directly applied to the explanation of geological phenomena ; or, in other words, no attempt is made to estimate what may have been in past ages, or what may hereafter be, the aggregate amount of change brought about by such never-ending fluctuations. Had this been the case, we might have been called upon to admire so extraordinary an anticipation with no less interest than astronomers, when they endeavour to define by what means the Samian philosopher came to the knowledge of the Copernican system.

Let us now examine the celebrated passages to which we have been adverting † :—

“Nothing perishes in this world ; but things merely vary and change their form. To be born, means simply that a thing begins to be something different from what it was before ; and dying, is ceasing to be the same thing. Yet, although nothing retains long the same image, the sum of the whole remains constant.” These general propositions are then confirmed by a series of examples, all derived from natural appearances, except the first, which refers to the golden age giving place to the age of iron. The illustrations are thus consecutively adduced.

1. Solid land has been converted into sea.
2. Sea has been changed into land. Marine shells lie far distant from the deep, and the anchor has been found on the summit of hills.

* Aristophanes, *Birds*, 694.

† Ovid's *Metamor.* lib. 15.