

influence which the apparent solar motion exerted upon the seasons, and the rising of particular stars as the forerunner of periods, might induce them to feel an especial interest in astronomical phenomena, and be a reason for the choice that was made of them as emblems. But whatever influence these thoughts may have had upon their minds, there can be no doubt that they were still more governed by a pervading and universal belief in astrology, or the influence of the stars upon the moral character, the intellectual powers, and the individual fortunes of mankind. The cylinders found in the ruins of Babylon, Nineveh, and other ancient cities, might be mentioned as proofs of this statement; for they are generally acknowledged to be horoscopical devices employed by individuals as signets, and only differing from the seal now employed in being of a cylindrical form, and containing the engraved representation of the planets at birth, instead of the device assigned by the College of Heraldry. But we have only occasion to look at the works of the most ancient poets to find the high value that was attributed to the engravings of celestial bodies, for almost the only device used on the armour and shields of warriors was a representation of celestial bodies or phenomena. We often read of the flaming star, by which is probably meant a comet, as having been employed; Achilles bore on his shield the full-orbed moon, Orion, and the Pleiades; and the shield of Tydeus was marked

“With this proud argument; a sable sky
 Burning with stars, and in the midst full-orbed
 A silver moon.”

It may also be mentioned, that the designation of warriors and legislators as the sons of the gods was not received in its literal application, as if their descent could be traced from them; but is another proof of the universal belief of astrology among the Greeks and Romans, and means nothing more than that they were born under the influence of a certain star, for stars were invested with the attributes of divinity. Lucan is explicit on this point where he says, “How can we suppose that Æneas was the son of Venus, Minos of Jupiter, Ascalaphus of Mars, and Autolychus of Mercury? All of them were beloved by the gods; but Venus beheld one, Jupiter another, and Mars another at their respective natiuities; for which soever presided at the time of birth was supposed to