

ion, universally diffused up to the sixteenth century, as to the *meteoric* origin of the comets, has long done. While these bodies were considered by the astrological corporation of "Chaldeans in Babylon," by the greater part of the Pythagorean school, and by Apollonius Myndius, as cosmical bodies reappearing at definite periods in long planetary orbits, the powerful anti-Pythagorean school of Aristotle and that of Epigenes, controverted by Seneca, declared the comets to be productions of meteorological processes in our atmosphere.\*

\* There were divisions of opinion at Babylon in the learned Chaldean school of astrologers, as well as among the Pythagoreans, and, properly speaking, among all ancient schools. Seneca (*Nat. Quæst.*, vii., 3) quotes the antagonistic evidence of Apollonius Myndius and Epigenes. The latter is seldom mentioned, yet Plinius (vii., 57) represents him as "gravis auctor in primis," as does also, without praise, Censorius, *De die Natali*, cap. xvii., and Stob., *Ecl. Phys.*, i., 29, p. 586, ed. Heeren. (Compare Lobeck, *Aglaoph.*, xi.) Diodorus (xv., 50) believes that the universal and prevailing opinion among the Babylonian astrologers (the Chaldeans) was, that the comets reappeared at definite times in their *certain* orbits. The division which prevailed between the Pythagoreans as to the planetary nature of the comets, and which is mentioned by Aristotle (*Meteorol.*, lib. i., cap. vi., 1) and Pseudo-Plutarch (*De Plac. Philos.*, lib. iii., cap. ii.), extended, according to the former (*Meteorol.*, i., 8, 2), also to the nature of the *Milky Way*, the forsaken course of the Sun, or of the overthrown Phaëton. (Compare also Letronne, in the *Mém. de l'Acad. des Inscriptions*, 1839, tom. xii., p. 108.) By some of the Pythagoreans the opinion of Aristotle was advanced, "that the comets belonged to the number of those planets which, like Mercury, only became visible after a long time when rising in the course above the horizon." In the extremely fragmentary Pseudo-Plutarch it is said that they "ascend at definite times after a complete revolution." A great deal of matter, contained in separate works, referring to the nature of the comets, has been lost to us—that of Arrian, which Stobæus employed; of Charimander, whose mere name has been retained only by Seneca and Pappus. Stobæus brings forward, as the opinion of the Chaldeans (*Eclog.*, lib. i., cap. xxv., p. 61, *Christ. Plantinus*), that the reason the comets remain so seldom visible to us is because they hide themselves in the *depths* of the ether (of space), like the fish in the depths of the ocean. The most graceful, and, in spite of its rhetorical coloring, the best founded opinion of antiquity, and the one corresponding most closely with present views, is that of Seneca. In the *Nat. Quæst.*, lib. vii., cap. xxii., xxv., and xxxi., we read, "Non enim existimo cometem subitaneum ignem sed inter æterna opera naturæ. Quid enim miramur, cometas, tam rarum mundi spectaculum, nondum teneri legibus certis? nec initia illorum finesque patescere, quorum ex ingentibus intervallis recursus est? Nondum sunt anni quingenti, ex quo Græcia . . . stellis numeros et nomina fecit. Multæque hodie sunt gentes, quæ tantum facie noverit cælum; quæ nondum sciant, cur Luna deficiat, quare obumbretur. Hoc apud nos quoque nuper ratio ad certum perduxit. Veniet tempus, quo ista, quæ nunc latent, in lucem dies extrahat et longioris ævi diligentia. Veniet tempus, quo posteri nostri tam aperta nos nescisse mirentur. Eleusis servat, quod ostendat revi