

ascribe the inequality of the Nile at different seasons to the influence of the sun upon its springs alone, the other cause of change, the rains, being here excluded; and that, on this supposition, the same relative effects would be produced whether the sun increase the sources in winter by melting the snows, or diminish them in summer by what he calls *drawing* them upwards.

This specimen of the early efforts of the Greeks in physical speculations, appears to me to speak strongly for the opinion that their philosophy on such subjects was the native growth of the Greek mind, and owed nothing to the supposed lore of Egypt and the East; an opinion which has been adopted with regard to the Greek Philosophy in general by the most competent judges on a full survey of the evidence.⁵ Indeed, we have no evidence whatever that, at any period, the African or Asiatic nations (with the exception perhaps of the Indians) ever felt this importunate curiosity with regard to the definite application of the idea of cause and effect to visible phenomena; or drew so strong a line between a fabulous legend and a reason rendered; or attempted to ascend to a natural cause by classing together phenomena of the same kind. We may be well excused, therefore, for believing that they could not impart to the Greeks what they themselves did not possess; and so far as our survey goes, physical philosophy has its origin, apparently spontaneous and independent, in the active and acute intellect of Greece.

Sect. 2.—Primitive Mistake in Greek Physical Philosophy.

WE now proceed to examine with what success the Greeks followed the track into which they had thus struck. And here we are obliged to confess that they very soon turned aside from the right road to truth, and deviated into a vast field of error, in which they and their successors have wandered almost to the present time. It is not necessary here to inquire why those faculties which appear to be bestowed upon us for the discovery of truth, were permitted by Providence to fail so signally in answering that purpose; whether, like the powers by which we seek our happiness, they involve a responsibility on our part, and may be defeated by rejecting the guidance of a higher faculty; or whether these endowments, though they did not immedi-

⁵ Thirlwall, *Hist. Gr.*, ii. 130; and, as there quoted, Ritter, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, i. 159-178.