

disposition to practical activity, the Romans, with the cold severity and practical understanding of their national character, were less susceptible of impressions of the senses than the Greeks, and were more devoted to every-day reality than to the idealizing poetic contemplation of nature. These differences in the habits and feelings of the Greeks and Romans are reflected in their literature, as is ever the case with the intellectual expression of national character. Here, too, we must notice the acknowledged difference that exists in the organic structure of their respective languages, notwithstanding the affinity between the races. The language of ancient Latium possesses less flexibility, a more limited adaptation of words, a stronger character of "practical tendency" than of ideal mobility. Moreover, the predilection evinced in the Augustan age for imitating Greek images must have been detrimental to the free outpouring of native feelings, and to the free expression of the natural bent of the mind; but still there were some powerful minds, which, inspired by love of country, were able by creative individuality, by elevation of thought, and by the gentle grace of their representations, to surmount all these obstacles. The great poem of nature, which Lucretius has so richly decked with the charms of his poetic genius, embraces the whole Cosmos. It has much affinity with the writings of Empedocles and Parmenides, the archaic diction of the versification heightening the earnestness of the descriptions. Poetry is here closely interwoven with philosophy, without, however, falling into that frigidity of style which, in contrast with Plato's richly fanciful mode of treating nature, was so severely blamed by Menander the Rhetorician, in the sentence he pronounced on the Hymns of Nature.\* My brother has shown with much ingenuity the striking analogies and differences which have arisen from the amalgamation of metaphysical abstractions with poetry in the ancient Greek didactic poems, as in the works of Lucretius, and in the episode *Bhagavad* of the Indian Epic *Mahabhar-*

\* *Menandri Rhetoris Comment. de Encomiis, ex rec. Heeren, 1785, sect. i., cap. 5, p. 38, 39.* The severe critic terms the didactic poem *On Nature* a frigid composition (*ψυχρότερον*), in which the forces of nature are brought forward divested of their personality—Apollo as light, Hera as the concentration of all the phenomena of the atmosphere, and Jupiter as heat. Plutarch also ridicules the so-called poems of nature, which have only the form of poetry (*de Aud. Poet.*, p. 27, Steph.). According to the Stagirite (*de Poet.*, c. i.), Empedocles was more a physiologist than a poet, and has nothing in common with Homer but the rhythmical measure used by both.