not unfrequently Ωϰεαυης @@(X) ; and adored it as the parent of all their deities. What then muſt the people have thought when they found their moſt revered god, at the command of a ſervant of Jehovah, converted into blood, and all his ſacred offspring into ſtinking carcaſes ? To conceive their conſternation, if it can be conceived, the reader muſt re­member, that the Egyptian priests held blood in the utmoſt abhorrence, as a thing of which the very touch would deep­ly pollute them, and require immediate and ſolemn expia­tion. The ſame ſacred river was a second time polluted, when it ſent forth frogs, which covered all the land of Egypt, and died in the houſes, in the villages, and in the fields ; thus rendering it impoſſible for the people to avoid the touch of dead bodies, though from every ſuch contact they believed themſelves to contract an impurity, which, in the case before us, muſt have been the more grievous, that in the whole country there was not left a pool of uninfected water to waſh away the ſtain.

The third plague inflicted upon the Egyptians was, the converting of the dust of the land into lice, upon man and upon beaſt, throughout the whole kingdom. To see the propriety of this miracle as a judgment upon their idolatry, we muſt recollect their utter abhorrence of all kinds of ver­min, and their extreme attention to external purity above every other people perhaps that has hitherto exiſted on the face of the earth. Upon this head they were more particu­larly ſolicitous when about to enter the temples of their gods; for Herodotus informs us, that their prieſts wore li­nen raiment only, and ſhaved off every hair from their heads and bodies, that there might be no *louſe* or other deteſtable object upon them when performing their duty to the gods. This plague therefore, while it laſted, made it impoſſible for them to perform their idolatrous worſhip, without giving ſuch offence to their deities as they imagined could never be forgiven. Hence we find, that on the production of the lice, the prieſts and magicians perceived immediately from what hand the miracle had come, and exclaimed, “ This is the finger of God!” The fourth plague seems to have been likewiſe acknowledged to be the finger of God, if not by the magicians, at leaſt by Pharaoh ; for in a fit of terror he agreed that the Iſraelites ſhould go and serve the Lord. That he was terrified at the ſwarms of flies which infeſted the whole country, except the land of Goſhen, will excite no wonder, when it is known that the worſhip of the fly originated in Egypt ; whence it was car­ried by the Caphtorim to Paleſtine ; by the Phoenicians to Sidon, Tyre, and Babylon ; and from theſe regions to other parts of the world. The denunciation of this plague was delivered to Pharaoh early in the morning, when he was on the banks of the Nile, probably paying his accuſtomed de­votion to his greateſt god ; and when he found himself and his people tormented by a swarm of ſubordinate divinities, who executed the judgment of Jehovah in defiance of the power of the ſupreme *numen* of Egypt, he muſt have been convinced, had any candour remained in his mind, that the whole syſtem of his superſtition was a mass of abſurdities, and that his gods were only humble inſtruments at the diſpoſal of a Superior Power. He was not, however, convin­ced ; he was only alarmed, and quickly relapſed into his wonted obſtinacy. The fifth plague therefore, the murrain among the cattle, brought death and deſtruction upon his moſt revered gods themſelves. Neither Oſiris, nor Isis, nor Ammon, nor Pan, had power to save his brute repreſentatives. The sacred bull, and heifer, and ram, and goat, were carried off by the ſame malady which ſwept away all the other herds of deities, theſe *dii stercorei,* who lived on grass and hay. The impreſſion of this puniſhment muſt have been awful upon the minds of the Egyptians, but perhaps not equal to that which ſucceeded it.

In Egypt there were ſeveral altars on which human ſacrifices were offered ; and from the deſcription of the perſons qualified to be victims, it appears that thoſe unhappy beings muſt have been foreigners, as they were required to have bright hair and a particular complexion. The hair of the Iſraelites was much brighter than that of the Egyp­tians, and their complexions fairer ; and therefore there can be little doubt but that, during their reſidence in Egypt, they were made to furniſh the victims demanded by the bloody gods. Theſe victims being burnt alive on a high altar, and thus ſacrificed for the good of the nation, their aſhes were gathered together by the prieſts, and ſcattered up­wards in the air, that a bleſſing might be entailed on every place to which an atom of this duſt ſhould be wasted. Mo­les too, by the direction of the true God, took aſhes of the furnace, probably of one of thoſe very furnaces in which ſome of his countrymen had been burnt, and ſprinkling them towards heaven in the sight of Pharaoh, brought boils and blains upon all the people, of so malignant a na­ture, that the magicians and the other miniſters of the medi­cal gods, with which Egypt abounded beyond all other coun­tries, could not themſelves eſcape the infection.

The powers of darkness were thus foiled; but the heart of the monarch was ſtill hardened. Deſtruction was therefore next brought upon him and his country by the elements, which were among the earlieſt idol deities not only of the Egyptians, but of every other polytheiſtic nation, “ The Lord rain­ed hail upon the land of Egypt ; ſo that there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, ſuch as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt ſince it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beaſt ; and the hail ſmote every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field.” This was a dreadful calamity in itſelf ; and the horror which it excited in the minds of the people muſt have been greatly aggravated by the well-known fact, that Egypt is bleſſed with a sky uncommonly ſerene ; that in the greateſt part of it rain has never been ſeen at any other time ſince the crea­tion of the world ; and that a slight and tranſient ſhower is the utmoſt that in the ordinary courte of nature falls any­where throughout the country. The ſmall quantity of ve­getables which was left undeſtroyed by the fire and the hail was afterwards devoured by locuſts, which by a ſtrong eaſt wind were brought in ſuch numbers from Arabia, where they abound at all times, that they covered the whole face of the earth, and did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees, ſo that there remained not any green thing in the trees or in the herbs of the field through all the land of Egypt.

The ninth plague which the obſtinacy of Pharoah brought upon his country, whilſt it ſeverely puniſhed the Egyptians for their cruelty to the Hebrews, ſtruck at the very foundation of all idolatry. We have elſewhere shown, that the firſt ob­jects of idolatrous worſhip were the contending powers of light and darkneſs (see Polytheism) ; and that the bene­volent principle, or the power of light, was everywhere be­lieved to maintain a constant ſuperiority over the power of darkness. Such was the faith of the ancient Persians ; and ſuch, as a very learned writer has lately proved, was like-

@@@(X) Whence came the Greek word οϰεανος *the ocean.*