SCULPTURE is the art of imitating visible form by means of solid substances, such as marble, wood, or metals. The art is one of very great antiquity, and is gene­rally thought to have originated from idolatry, as it was found necessary to place before the people the images of their gods, to enliven the fervour of their devotion. The pyramids and obelisks of Egypt, which were probably temples, or rather altars, dedicated to the sun, were covered with hierogly­phical emblems of men, beasts, birds, fishes, and reptiles, at a period prior to that in which there is any unexception­able evidence that mere statue-worship prevailed even in that nursery of idolatry.

But though it appears thus evident that picture-writing was the first employment of the sculptor, we are far from imagining that idolatrous worship did not contribute to carry his art to that perfection which it attained in some of the nations of antiquity. Even in the dark ages of Eu­rope, when the other fine arts were almost extinguished, the ceremonies of the Church of Rome, and the veneration which she taught for her saints and martyrs, preserved among the Italians some vestiges of the sister arts of sculp­ture and painting ; and therefore, as human nature is every­where the same, it is reasonable to believe that a similar ve­neration for heroes and demigods would, among the ancient nations, have a similar effect. But if this be so, the pre­sumption is, that the Chaldæans were the first who invent­ed the art of hewing blocks of wood and stone into the figures of men and other animals ; for the Chaldæans were unquestionably the first idolaters, and their early progress in sculpture is confirmed by the united testimonies of Be- rosus, Alexander Polyhistor, Apollodorus, and Pliny, not to mention the eastern tradition that the father of Abraham was a sculptor.

Against this conclusion, however, Mr Bromley, in his History of the Fine Arts, has urged some plausible argu­ments. In stating these, he professes not to be original, or to derive his information from the fountain-head of anti­quity. He adopts, as he tells us, the theory of a French writer, who maintains, that in the year of the world 1949,

about three hundred years after the deluge, the Scythians under Brouma, a descendant of Magog the son of Japhet, extended their conquests over the greater part of Asia. Ac­cording to this system, Brouma was not only the civilizer of India, and the author of the Brahminical doctrines, but also diffused the principles of the Scythian mythology over Egypt, Phoenicia, Greece, and the continent of Asia.

Of these principles Mr Bromley has given us no distinct enumeration ; the account which he gives of them is not to be found in one place, but must be collected from a va­riety of distant passages. In attempting therefore to pre­sent the substance of his scattered hints in one view, we shall not be confident that we have omitted none of them. The ox, says he, was the Scythian emblem of the genera­tor of animal life, and hence it became the principal divi­nity of the Arabians. The serpent was the symbol of the source of intelligent nature. These were the common points of union in all the first religions of the earth. From Egypt the Israelites carried with them a religious venera­tion for the ox and the serpent. Their veneration for the ox appeared soon after they marched into the wilderness, when, in the absence of Moses, they called upon Aaron to make them gods which should go before them. The idea of having an idol to go before them, says our author, was completely Scythian ; for so the Scythians acted in all their progress throughout Asia, with this difference, that their idol was a living animal. The Israelites having gained their favourite god, which was an ox, not a calf, as it is rendered in the book of Exodus, next proceeded to hold a festival, which was to be accompanied with dancing; a species of gaiety common in the festivals which were held in adoration of the emblematic *urotal* or ox, in that very part of Arabia, near Mount Sinai, where this event took place. It is mentioned too as a curious and important fact, that the ox which was revered in Arabia was called *Adonai.* Accordingly Aaron, announcing the feast to the ox or golden calf, speaks thus, *To-morrow is a feast to Adonai,* which is in our translation rendered *to the Lord.* In the time of Jeroboam we read of the golden calves set up as objects of worship at Bethel and