præa in Italy, and chiefly inhabited the promontory of Minerva, upon the top of which that goddeſs had a temple, as ſome affirm, built by Ulyſſes. Here there was a renowned academy, in the reign of the Sirens, famous for eloquence and the liberal ſciences, which gave occaſion to the invention of this fable of the ſweetneſs of the voice and attracting ſongs of the Sirens. But why then are they fabled to be deſtroyers, and painted in ſuch dreadful colours ? We are told, that at laſt the ſtudents abuſed their knowledge, to the colour­ing of wrong, the corruption of manners, and the ſubversion of government; that is, in the language of poe­try, they were feigned to be transformed into monſters, and with their muſic to have enticed paſſengers to their ruin, who there conſumed their patrimonies, and poiſoned their virtues with riot and effeminacy. The place is now called *Maſſa.* Some writers tell us of a certain bay, contracted within winding ſtraits and broken cliffs, which, by the ſinging of the winds and beating of the waters, returns a delightful harmony, that allures the paſſenger to approach, who is immediately thrown againſt the rocks, and ſwallowed up by the violent eddies. Thus Horace, moraliling, calls idleneſs a *Si­ren.*

*— Vitanda est improba Siren Desidia.*

But the fable may be applied to all pleaſures in ge­neral, which, if too eagerly purſued, betray the incau­tious into ruin ; while wise men, like Ulyſſes, making uſe of their reason, ſtop their ears againſt their inſinuations.

The learned Mr Bryant ſays, that the Sirens were Cuthite and Canaanitiſh prieſts, who had founded tem­ples in Sicily, which were rendered infamous on account of the women who officiated. They were much ad­dicted to cruel rites, ſo that the ſhores upon which they reſided are deſcribed as covered with the bones of men deſtroyed by their artifice. *Virgil. Æneid.* lib. v. v. 864.

All ancient authors agree in telling us, that Sirens in­habited the coaſt of Sicily. The name, according to Bochart, who derives it from the Phoenician language, implies a ſongſtress. Hence it is probable, ſays Dr Bur­ney, that in ancient times there may have been excellent fingers, but of corrupt morals, on the coaſt of Sicily, who, by ſeducing voyagers, gave rise to this fable. And if this conjecture be well founded, he obſerves, the Muſes are not the only pagan divinities who pre­ſerved their influence over mankind in modern times ; for every age has its Sirens, and every Siren her vota­ries ; when beauty and talents, both powerful in themſelves, are united, they become ſtill more attractive.

Siren, in zoology, a genus of animals belonging to the claſs of *amphibia* and the order of *meantes.* It is a biped, naked, and furniſhed with a tail ; the feet are brachiated with claws.@@ This animal was diſcovered by Dr Garden in Carolina ; it is found in ſwampy and muddy places, by the sides of pools, under the trunks of old trees that hang over the water. The natives call it by the name of *mud-inguana.* Linnæus firſt ap­prehended, that it was the larva of a kind of lizard ; but as its fingers are furniſhed with claws, and it makes a croaking noiſe, he concluded from theſe properties, as

well as from the ſituation of the anus, that it could not be the larva of the lizard, and therefore formed of it a new genus under the name of si*ren.* He was alſo obli­ged to eſtabliſh for this uncommon animal a new order called *meantes or gliders :* the animals of which are am­phibious, breathing by means of gills and lungs, and furniſhed with arms and claws.

SIREX, in zoology, a genus of animals belonging to the claſs of *inſects,* and to the order of *hymenopterae.* The mouth has two ſtrong jaws ; there are two truncated palpi or feelers, filiform antennæ, an xſerted, ſtiff, ſerrated sting, a feſſile, mucronated abdomen, and lanceolated wings. There are ſeven ſpecies.

SIRIUM, in botany; a genus of plants belonging to the claſs of tetra*ndria* and order of *mοnοgynia.* The calyx is quadrifid ; there is no corolla ; the nectarium is quadriphyllous and crowning the throat of the calyx ; the germen is below the corolla; the ſtigma is trifid, and the berry trilocular. There is only one ſpecies, the myrtifolium.

SIRIUS, in aſtronomy, a bright ſtar in the conſtellation Canis. See Astronomy, n⁰ 403, &c.

SIRLET (Flavius), an eminent Roman engraver on precious ſtones : his Lacoon, and repreſentations in mi­niature of antique ſtatues at Rome, are very valuable and ſcarce. He died in 1737.

SIROCCO, a periodical wind which generally blows in Italy and Dalmatia every year about Eaſter. It blows from the ſouth-eaſt by ſouth : it is attended with heat, but not rain ; its ordinary period is twenty days, and it uſually ceaſes at ſunset.@@ When the ſcirocco does not blow in this manner, the ſummer is almoſt free from weſterly winds, whirlwinds, and ſtorms. This wind is prejudicial to plants, drying and burning up the buds ; though it hurts not men any otherwise than by cauſing an extraordinary weakneſs and laſſitude; inconveniences that are fully compenſated by a plentiful fiſhing, and a good crop of corn on the mountains. In the ſummer time, when the weſterly wind ceaſes for a day, it is a ſign that the firocco will blow the day following, which uſually begins with a sort of whirl­wind.

SISKIN. See FringIlla.

SISON, Bastard-stonE parsley, in botany : A genus of plants belonging to the claſs of *pentandria,* and to the order of *digynia ;* and in the natural ſyſtem arranged under the 45th order, *umbellatœ.* The fruit is egg-ſhaped and ſtreaked ; the involucra are ſubtetraphyllous. There are ſeven ſpecies; the amomum, inun­datum, ſegetum, verticillatum, ſalſum, canadenſe, and ammi. The four firſt are natives of Great Britain.

I. The *amomum,* common barſtard parſley, or field ſtone- wort, is a biennial plant about three feet high, growing wild in many places of Britain. Its ſeeds are ſmall, ſtriated, of an oval figure and brown colour. Their taſte is warm and aromatic. Their whole flavour is ex­tracted by ſpirit of wine, which elevates very little of it in diſtillation ; and hence the ſpirituous extract has the flavour in great perfection, while the watery extract has very little. A tincture drawn with pure ſpirit is of a green colour. The ſeeds have been eſteemed aperient, diuretic, and carminative ; but are little regarded in the preſent practice. 2. The *inundatum,* leaſt water-parſnep. The ſtem is about eight or ten inches high, branched,

@@@[mu] Phil. Trans. vol. lvi. p. 189.

@@@[mu] Fortis's Travels into Dalmatia, p. 277.