cies is bounded by curve lines. Plane ſuperficies is that which has no inequality in it, nor riſings, nor ſinkings, but lies evenly and ſtraight throughout, ſo that a right line may wholly coincide with it in all parts and directions. Con­vex ſuperficies is that which is curved and riſes outwards. Concave ſuperficies is curved and sinks inward. See Geo­metry.

SUPERFINE, in the manufactories, a term uſed to expreſs the ſuperlative fineneſs of a ſtuff : thus a cloth, a cam­blet, &c. are ſaid to be ſuperfine when made of the fineſt wool, &c. or when they are the fineſt that can be made.

SUPERFLUOUS interval, in music, is one that ex­ceeds a true diatonic interval by a ſemitone minor. See Interval.

SUPERINTENDANT, denotes an ecclesiaſtical ſupe­rior in ſeveral reformed churches where epiſcopacy is not admitted : particularly among the Lutherans in Germany, and the Calviniſts in ſome other places.

The ſuperintendant is ſimilar to a biſhop ; only his power is ſomewhat more reſtrained than that of our dioceſan biſhops. He is the chief paſtor, and has the direc­tion of all the inferior paſtors within his diſtrict or dioceſe. In Germany they had formerly ſuperintendants general, who were ſuperior to the ordinary ſuperintendants. Theſe, in reality, were archbiſhops ; but the dignity is funk into diſuſe ; and at preſent none but the ſuperintendant of Wirtemberg aſſumes the quality of ſuperintendant general.

SUPERIOR, a perſon raised above another in rank, of­fice, or talents.

Superior, in Scots law. See Law, N⁰ clxiv. 2. clxv. 2. & clxvi.

SUPERLATIVE, in grammar, one of the three de­grees of compariſon, being that inflection of adjective nouns that ſerves to augment and heighten their signification, and ſhows the quality of the thing denoted to be in the higheſt degree. See Grammar.

SUPERNUMERARY, ſomething over and above a fix­ed number. In ſeveral of the offices are ſupernumerary clerks, to be ready on extraordinary occaſions.

SUPERPARTICULAR proportion, or *Ratio,* is that in which the greater term exceeds the leſs by unit or 1. As the ratio of 1 to 2, or 2 to 3, or 3 to 4, &c.

SUPERPARTIENT proportion, or *Ratio,* is when the greater term contains the leſs term once, and leaves ſome number greater than 1 remaining. As the ratio of 3 to 5, which is equal to that of 1 to 1 2/3; ; of 7 to 10, which is equal to that of 1 to 1 3/7, &c.

SUPERSEDEAS, in law, a writ iſſued in divers caſes, importing in general a command to ſtay or forbear ſome or­dinary proceedings in law, which in appearance ought to be done or purſued, were it not for the cauſe whereon this writ is granted.

Thus a man regularly is to have a ſurety of peace againſt him of whom he will ſwear he is afraid ; and the juſtice re­quired hereunto cannot deny it him : yet, if the party be formerly bound to the peace, either in chancery or elsewhere, this writ lies to stay the juſtice from doing that which otherwiſe he ought not to deny.

SUPERSTITION, a word that has been uſed ſo inde­finitely, that it is difficult to determine its preciſe meaning. From its reſemblance in sound to the Latin word *ſuperstes,* “ a survivor," it is evidently derived from it, and different attempts have been made to trace their connection in ligni­fication. Balbus, in the dialogue *De Natura Deorum* of Ci­cero, ſays, that they who prayed and ſacrificed whole days that their children might *ſurvive* them, were called ſuperstitious. Lactantius cenſures this etymology, and ſays they were not called ſuperſtitious who wiſhed that their chil­dren might ſurvive them (for this we all wiſh), but becauſe they who ſurvived their parents worſhipped their images. Others again ſay, that ſuperſtition is derived from *ſuperstes,* becauſe it consiſted in considering the dead as if they were alive. But theſe etymologies are ſolely conjectural ; and we consider conjectures as abſurd in philology as we do in ſcience; they may miſlead, but are ſeldom of any benefit. The uſual meaning affixed to the word s*uperstition,* both in the Latin and Engliſh languages, is ſo different from superst*es,* that its change of meaning muſt be owing to ſome accident which it is in vain to inquire after. If we had not known that the word *paganus* “ a pagan” was derived from *pagus* **“ a** village,” becauſe the heathens in a certain period of the Chriſtian hiſtory lived in villages, the whims and fancies of etymologiſts would not have thrown much light on the ſub­ject.

Without labouring, from the aid of etymology, to define ſuperſtition, which is a word of a very extenſive ſignification, we will conſider to what objects it is applied ; and then, by obſerving what is common to them all, we ſhall be enabled to fix with ſome degree of precision the meaning of the term. We apply it to the idolatry of the heathens ;we apply it alſo to the Jews, who made the will of God of no effect by their traditions, and ſubſtituted cere­monies in place of the religion of their fathers. We ſay al­ſo that Chriſtians are guilty of ſuperſtition ; the Roman Catholics, who believe in tranſubſtantiation and in the ef­ficacy of prayers to ſaints ; and thoſe Proteſtants who eſteem baptiſm and the Lord’s ſupper, and the punctual perform­ance of other ceremonies, without regard to morality, as ſufficient to enfure ſalvation. Thoſe perſons alſo are reckoned ſuperſtitious who believe, without any evidence, that prophecies are ſtill uttered by the divine inſpiration, and that miracles are ſtill performed. The word is alſo extend­ed to thoſe who believe in witchcraft, magic, and appari­tions, or that the divine will is declared by omens or au­gury ; that the fortune of individuals can be affected by things indifferent, by things deemed lucky or unlucky, or that diſeaſes can be cured by words, charms, and incanta­tions.

Through all the particulars which we have enumerated, there runs one general idea, the belief of what is falſe and contrary to reaſon. From this, however, we muſt not ſuppose that whatever is falſe and contrary to reaſon may be deno­minated ſuperſtition. We think that it is falſe and irratio­nal to ſuppoſe that there ever lived on earth a race of men who walked on one leg, and had their eyes in their breaſt ; or that there were giants 90 feet high : yet we do not call the philoſopher who believes theſe chimeras ſuperſtitious, but credulous. Superſtition has always a reference to God, to religion, or to beings ſuperior to man. We do not however diſtinguiſh all falſe and irrational opinions in religion by the name of ſuperſtition. We do not, for inſtance, apply this name to the opinions which ſome of the ancients entertained, that God is the ſoul of the world, and that men are only portions of him ſeparated for a time, or that the ſoul after death lives ſucceſſively in different bodies. If we examine the ſubject with more attention, we ſhall diſcover that the foundation of ſuperſtition is ignorance of the moral attri­butes of God ; for we never ſay a man is ſuperſtitious for en­tertaining erroneous opinions of the natural attributes of God. Some of the Socinians have denied the preſcience of God ; and a French philoſopher has not only rejected the belief that He is a ſpirit, but has preſumed to ſay that he is compoſed of a ſpecies of cryſtals. The first of theſe opinions diſcovers very imperfect ideas of God, and the second is the height of impiety and abſurdity ; yet the