

## Early Greek Philosophy.

Mr. John Burnet, M.A., whose title-page styles him Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, but who has recently been appointed to a professorship in a Scotch University, has made in this volume a contribution of great value to the history of philosophy. It is almost, if not quite, the one work in this field from an English scholar for twenty years; and in this time, as he notes, great progress has been made: ("philology" in the second sentence of Mr. Burnet's preface must be an error for "philosophy"). The particular point of view of this admirable work is derived from the later studies in anthropology and history. Mr. Burnet has an advantage over previous students of his subject in the researches of the last generation which have made no small alteration in the estimate to be put upon much in the ideas of the early Greeks which was simply obscure or puzzling, but which has been illuminated by comparison with the beliefs of other nations. Mr. Burnet contends that early Greek philosophy was chiefly cosmological and physical, and that it is a mistake to read into the fragments of Thales, Herakleitos, Anaxagoras and Pythagoras mystical ideas, which were, in fact, entirely remote from their minds. Four sentences from the chapter on Pythagoras must suffice us in commending to all students of philosophy a volume which will be henceforth indispensable to them :

Further examples of the close relation between Pythagorean and savage modes of thought might easily be given; but these are probably enough to justify our general view. The kinship of men and beasts, the abstinence from flesh and the doctrine of metempsychosis all hang together, and form a perfectly intelligible whole for any one who has bestowed the slightest attention on the mental habits of primitive men everywhere. Were this all we knew of Pythagoras we should be tempted to delete his name from the history of philosophy altogether, and to relegate him, with Epimenides and Onomakritos, to the class of medicine men. We shall see, however, that such a description of him would be inadequate.

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