FABLE VI.

Echo, having often amused Juno with her stories, to give time to Jupiter’s mistresses to make their escape, the Goddess, at last, punishes her for the deception. She is slighted and despised by Narcissus, with whom she falls in love.

He, much celebrated by fame throughout the cities of Aonia, gave unerring answers to the people consulting him. The azure Liriope was the first to make essay and experiment of his infallible voice; whom once Cephisus encircled in his winding stream, and offered violence to, when enclosed by his waters. The most beauteous Nymph produced an infant from her teeming womb, which even then might have been beloved, and she called him Narcissus. Being consulted concerning him, whether he was destined to see the distant season of mature old age; the prophet, expounding destiny, said, “If he never recognizes himself.” Long did the words of the soothsayer appear frivolous; but the event, the thing itself, the manner of his death, and the novel nature of his frenzy, confirmed it.

And now the son of Cephisus had added one to three times five years, and he might seem to be a boy and a young man as well. Many a youth, and many a damsel, courted him; but there was so stubborn a pride in his youthful beauty, that no youths, no damsels made any impression on him. The noisy Nymph, who has neither learned to hold her tongue after another speaking, nor to speak first herself, resounding Echo, espied him, as he was driving the timid stags into his nets. Echo was then a body, not a voice; and yet the babbler had no other use of her speech than she now has, to be able to repeat the last words out of many.

Juno had done this; because when often she might have been able to detect the Nymphs in the mountains in the embrace of her husband, Jupiter, she purposely used to detain the Goddess with a long story, until the Nymphs had escaped. After the daughter of Saturn perceived this, she said, “But small exercise of this tongue, with which I have been deluded, shall be allowed thee, and a very short use of thy voice.” And she confirmed her threats by the event. Still, in the
end of one’s speaking she redoubles the voice, and returns the words she hears. When, therefore, she beheld Narcissus wandering through the pathless forests, and fell in love with him, she stealthily followed his steps; and the more she followed him, the nearer flame did she burn. In no other manner than as when the native sulphur, spread around the tops of torches, catches the flame applied to it. Ah! how often did she desire to accost him in soft accents, and to employ soft entreaties! Nature resists, and suffers her not to begin; but what Nature does permit, that she is ready for; to await his voice, to which to return her own words.

By chance, the youth, being separated from the trusty company of his attendants, cries out, “Is there any one here?” and Echo answers “Here!” He is amazed; and when he has cast his eyes on every side, he cries out with a loud voice, “Come!” Whereon she calls the youth who calls. He looks back; and again, as no one comes, he says, “Why dost thou avoid me?” and just as many words as he spoke, he receives. He persists; and being deceived by the imitation of an alternate voice, he says, “Let us come together here;” and Echo, that could never more willingly answer any sound whatever, replies, “Let us come together here!” and she follows up her own words, and rushing from the woods is going to throw her arms around the neck she has so longed for. He flies; and as he flies, he exclaims, “Remove thy hands from thus embracing me; I will die first, before thou shalt have the enjoyment of me.” She answers nothing but “Have the enjoyment of me.” Thus rejected, she lies hid in the woods, and hides her blushing face with green leaves, and from that time lives in lonely caves; but yet her love remains, and increases from the mortification of her refusal. Watchful cares waste away her miserable body; leanness shrivels her skin, and all the juices of her body fly off in air. Her voice and her bones alone are left.

Her voice still continues, but they say that her bones received the form of stones. Since then, she lies concealed in the woods, and is never seen on the mountains: but is heard in all of them. It is her voice alone which remains alive in her.

EXPLANATION.

It appears much more reasonable to attempt the explanation of this story on the grounds of natural philosophy than of history. The poets, in their fondness for basing every subject upon fiction, probably invented the fable, to explain what to them
appeared an extraordinary phenomenon. By way of embellishing their story, they tell us that Echo was the daughter of the Air and the Tongue, and that the God Pan fell in love with her; by which, probably, the simple fact is meant, that some person, represented under the name of that god, endeavored to trace the cause of this phenomenon.

If, however, we should endeavor to base the story upon purely historical grounds, we may suppose that it took its rise from some Nymph, who wandered so far into the woods as to be unable to find her way out again; and from the fact that those who went to seek her, hearing nothing but the echo of their own voices, brought back the strange but unsatisfactory intelligence that the Nymph had been changed into a voice.

FABLE VII.

Narcissus falls in love with his own shadow, which he sees in a fountain; and, pining to death, the Gods change him into a flower, which still bears his name.

Thus had he deceived her, thus, too, other Nymphs that sprung from the water or the mountains, thus the throng of youths before them. Some one, therefore, who had been despised by him, lifting up his hands towards heaven, said, “Thus, though he should love, let him not enjoy what he loves!” Rhamnusia\textsuperscript{74} assented to a prayer so reasonable. There was a clear spring, like silver, with its unsullied waters, which neither shepherds, nor she-goats feeding on the mountains, nor any other cattle, had touched; which neither bird nor wild beast had disturbed, nor bough falling from a tree. There was grass around it, which the neighboring water nourished, and a wood, that suffered the stream to become warm with no rays of the sun. Here the youth, fatigued both with the labor of hunting and the heat, lay down, attracted by the appearance of the spot, and the spring; and, while he was endeavoring to quench his thirst, another thirst grew upon him.

While he is drinking, being attracted with the reflection of his own form, seen \textit{in the water}, he falls in love with a thing that has no substance; \textit{and} he thinks that to be a body, which is \textit{but} a shadow. He is astonished at himself, and remains unmoved with the same countenance, like a statue formed of Parian marble.\textsuperscript{75}

Lying on the ground, he gazes on his eyes \textit{like} two stars, and fingers worthy of Bacchus, and hair worthy of Apollo, and his youthful cheeks and ivory neck, and the comeliness of his mouth,
and his blushing complexion mingled with the whiteness of snow; and everything he admires, for which he himself is worthy to be admired. In his ignorance, he covets himself; and he that approves, is himself the thing approved. While he pursues he is pursued, and at the same moment he inflames and burns. How often does he give vain kisses to the deceitful spring; how often does he thrust his arms, catching at the neck he sees, into the middle of the water, and yet he does not catch himself in them. He knows not what he sees, but what he sees, by it is he inflamed; and the same mistake that deceives his eyes, provokes them. Why, credulous youth, dost thou vainly catch at the lying image? What thou art seeking is nowhere; what thou art in love with, turn but away and thou shalt lose it; what thou seest, the same is but the shadow of a reflected form; it has nothing of its own. It comes and stays with thee; with thee it will depart, if thou canst but depart thence.

No regard for food, no regard for repose, can draw him away thence; but, lying along upon the overshadowed grass, he gazes upon the fallacious image with unsatiated eyes, and by his own sight he himself is undone. Raising himself a little while, extending his arms to the woods that stand around him, he says, "Was ever, O, ye woods! any one more fatally in love? For ye know, and have been a convenient shelter for many a one. And do you remember any one, who thus pined away, during so long a time, though so many ages of your life has been spent? It both pleases me and I see it; but what I see, and what pleases me, yet I cannot obtain; so great a mistake possesses one in love; and to make me grieve the more, neither a vast sea separates us, nor a long way, nor mountains, nor a city with its gates closed; we are kept asunder by a little water. He himself wishes to be embraced; for as

often as I extend my lips to the limpid stream, so often does he struggle towards me with his face held up; you would think he might be touched. It is a very little that stands in the way of lovers. Whoever thou art, come up hither. Why, dear boy, the choice one, dost thou deceive me? or whither dost thou retire, when pursued? Surely, neither my form nor my age is such as thou shouldst shun; the Nymphs, too, have courted me. Thou encourageth I know not what hopes in me with that friendly look, and when I extend my arms to thee, thou willingly extendest thine; when I smile, thou smilest in return; often, too, have I observed thy tears, when I was weeping; my signs, too, thou returnest by thy nods, and, as I guess by the motion of thy beauteous mouth, thou returnest words that come not to my ears. In thee 'tis I, I now perceive; nor does my form deceive me. I burn with the love of myself, and both raise the flames and endure them. What shall I do? Should I be entreated, or should I entreat? What, then, shall I entreat? What I desire is in my power; plenty has made me poor. Oh! would that I could depart
from my own body! a new wish, indeed, in a lover; I could wish that what I am in love with was away. And now grief is taking away my strength, and no long period of my life remains; and in my early days am I cut off; nor is death grievous to me, now about to get rid of my sorrows by death. I wish that he who is beloved could enjoy a longer life. Now we two, of one mind, shall die in the extinction of one life."

Thus he said, and, with his mind but ill at ease, he returned to the same reflection, and disturbed the water with his tears; and the form was rendered defaced by the moving of the stream; when he saw it beginning to disappear, he cried aloud, "Whither dost thou fly? Stay, I beseech thee! and do not in thy cruelty abandon thy lover; let it be allowed me to behold that which I may not touch, and to give nourishment to my wretched frenzy." And, while he was grieving, he tore his garment from the upper border, and beat his naked breast with his palms, white as marble. His breast, when struck, received a little redness, no otherwise than as apples are wont, which are partly white and partly red; or as a grape, not yet ripe, in the parti-colored clusters, is wont to assume a purple tint. Soon as he beheld this again in the water, when clear, he could not endure it any longer; but, as yellow wax with the fire, or the hoar frost of the morning, is wont to waste away with the warmth of the sun, so he, consumed by love, pined away, and wasted by degrees with a hidden flame. And now, no longer was his complexion of white mixed with red; neither his vigor nor his strength, nor the points which had charmed when seen so lately, nor even his body, which formerly Echo had been in love with, now remained. Yet, when she saw these things, although angry, and mindful of his usage of her, she was grieved, and, as often as the unhappy youth said, "Alas!" she repeated, "Alas!" with re-echoing voice; and when he struck his arms with his hands, she, too, returned the like sound of a blow.

His last accents, as he looked into the water, as usual, were these: "Ah, youth, beloved in vain!" and the spot returned just as many words; and after he had said, "Farewell!" Echo, too, said, "Farewell!" He laid down his wearied head upon the green grass, when night closed the eyes that admired the beauty of their master; and even then, after he had been received into the infernal abodes, he used to look at himself in the Stygian waters. His Naiad sisters lamented him, and laid their hair, cut off, over their brother; the Dryads, too, lamented him, and Echo resounded to their lamentations. And now they were preparing the funeral pile, and the shaken torches, and the bier. The body was nowhere to be found. Instead of his body, they found a yellow flower, with white leaves encompassing it in the middle.
EXPLANATION.

If this story is based upon any historical facts, they are entirely lost to us; as all we learn
from history concerning Narcissus, is the

fact that he was a Thespian by birth. The Fable seems rather to be intended as a

useful moral lesson, disclosing the fatal effects of self-love. His pursuit, too, of his own
image, ever retiring from his embrace, strongly resembles the little reality that exists in
many of those pleasures which mankind so eagerly pursue.

Pausanias, in his Boeotica, somewhat varies the story. He tells us that Narcissus
having lost his sister, whom he tenderly loved, and who resembled him very much, and
was his constant companion in the chase, thought, on seeing himself one day in a
fountain, that it was the shade of his lost sister, and, thereupon, pined away and died of
grief. According to him, the fountain was near a village called Donacon, in the country
of the Thespians. Pausanias regards the account of his change into the flower which
bears his name as a mere fiction, since Pamphus says that Proserpina, when carried
away, long before the time of Narcissus, gathered that flower in the fields of Enna; and
that the same flower was sacred to her. Persons sacrificing to the Furies, or
Eumenides, used to wear chaplets made of the Narcissus, because that flower
commonly grew about graves and sepulchres.

Tiresias, who predicted the untoward fate of Narcissus, was, as we are informed by
Apollodorus, the son of Evenus and Chariclo, and was the most renowned soothsayer
of his time. He lost his life by drinking of the fountain of Telphusa when he was
overheated; or, as some suppose, through the unwholesome quality of the water. As he
lived to a great age, and became blind towards the end of his life, the story, which Ovid
mentions, was invented respecting him. Another version of it was, that he lost his sight,
by reason of his having seen Minerva while bathing. This story was very probably
based either upon the fact that he had composed a Treatise upon the Animal Functions
of the Sexes, or that he had promulgated the doctrine that the stars had not only souls
(a common opinion in those times), but also that they were of different sexes. He is
supposed to have lived about 1200 years before the Christian era.