CLASSICAL GREEK LITERATURE

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A HISTORY

OF

CLASSICAL GREEK LITERATURE

BY THE

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THE DRAMATIC POETS

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Ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὐκ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις χρὴ τούτοις τῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων ζητεῖν τὰς καινότητας, ἐν οἷς οὔτε παράδοξον οὔτ' ἄπιστον οὔτ' ἔξω τῶν νομιζομένων οὐδὲν ἔξεστιν εἰπεῖν, ἀλλ' ἡγεῖσθαι τοῦτον χαριέστατον, ὃς ἂν τῶν διεσπαρμένων ἐν ταῖς τῶν ἄλλων διανοίαις ἀθροίσαι τὰ πλεῖστα δυνηθῇ καὶ φράσαι κάλλιστα περὶ αὐτῶν.

ISOCRATES.

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HISTORY

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GREEK LITERATURE.

PART II.

CHAPTER XIV.

DRAMATIC TENDENCIES IN THE SIXTH CENTURY. THE RISE OF TRAGEDY AND SATYRIC DRAMA. THE EXTERNAL APPLIANCES OF GREEK PLAYS.

§ 160. We have now reviewed a long series of Epic and Lyric poems, all of which originated in Asia Minor, and from there passed into Greece and westward. The development of the Æolic and Ionic colonies—if colonies they can be called—had been more rapid than that of the motherland. But the Ionic literature had also taken quick root and flourished in the old country. It was probably to Solon or to Peisistratus that we owe the ordering and systematising of the epos. The elegy found its Hellenic representatives in Solon, in Theognis and Tyrtæus; the choral poetry of Terpander and of Arion made its home not only in Peloponnesus, but with Stesichorus in Sicily, where the rarity of Homeric recitations left it open to the poet to bring the old myths into his choral songs, and give the people what the rhapsodists had elsewhere supplied. It was, in fact, the Æolic songs of Lesbos only that bloomed and faded on their own soil, without wafting their seed across the Ægean to take root and flourish in older Greece. But the personal outpourings of anger, of sorrow, of

wisdom, of experience, which the Ionian elegist and iambist had substituted for the calm of old epic recitation; the common choric song in honour of the gods, with its accompaniments of music and dancing—these had found their way to Greece, and had soon passed on into peculiar developments. The chorus of Alcman, the Lydian Greek, had learned to speak *the poet's sentiments* to his hearers, and so to mediate between the personality of the elegy and the impersonality of the choral hymn. The chorus of Stesichorus had learned to introduce *the national legends* with a new dress and a lyric treatment, and so long as these legends were alive and growing in Greek hearts, they were the sheet anchor of Greek poetry the Atlas whereon the whole world of its literature found a sure support in all its gyrations.

Both these un-Ionic features are found in the highly developed and perfectly finished lyrics of Pindar. The myth is now an integral part of the choric hymn; so is also the word of the poet as a master of wisdom addressing the people through his chorus. But as calm critics have remarked, the occasion of these remarkable poems was not high enough, or the subjects worthy enough, for the splendour of their art. They celebrated local, often trivial, victories; they praised professional trainers, and obscure ancestors, often, we may suspect, by means of invented genealogies. And, in any case, they were the poetry of the aristocracy, and not of the people. This art was consequently also professional, composed and performed for patrons and for pay, offered to the gods, not by the people themselves, but for them, at the hands of singers by trade. These facts agree with the non-patriotic attitude of Pindar, on which I have commented in its place.[1]

The rising democracy of Athens would naturally demand some very different worship, some very different festivals, from those of the old aristocracies. The people who now took part in politics must also take an active part in public religion and its festivals.[2] And for this the first suggestion, as in so many

[1] § 149.

[2] Wilamowitz, *Herakles*, i. p. 77, quotes the *Polity of the Athenians* to show how the Demos abolished professional performances of choral music, and undertook this duty itself. This tract, as is well agreed, is not

other directions, had been given by Peisistratus. With the intention of raising the people and their life to a higher level, while he depressed the aristocrats, he had favoured and promoted the worship of Dionysus, hitherto a rustic religion beyond the pale of the epic Pantheon, but fascinating the old Greeks, as Oriental orgies and cults long afterwards fascinated the effete world of Plutarch, with its violent emotions and engrossing mysteries. This worship of Dionysus was no doubt diffused through the northern Peloponnesus. We hear of Arion naturalising the dithyramb at Corinth, in which the sorrows and escapes of Dionysus were sung by his chorus.

But it is more than doubtful [1] that the dithyrambs of Attica were the real ancestors of any poetry but that of the fourth century, known under the same name. Dithyrambs were in vogue all through classical Athenian literature, but perhaps more eminently so before and after the bloom of tragedy. This latter had, then, its origin in some other choral poetry which came in with the worship of Dionysus from Doric neighbours. Among these we know of one whose name gives us the clue—the *goat* choruses, in which the singers, with that peculiar desire of escaping from themselves into some wild disguise—a desire as universal as civilisation—assumed the mummery of satyrs, and thus posing as personal companions of the God, entered with an intenser sympathy into the story of his anthropomorphic adventures. These choruses seem not to have been professional, or even strolling, as the early mention of a tent for their background would suggest, but rather village choruses, prepared for the vintage feasts of the god.

We shall turn presently to the names of the earliest inventors of tragedy, and the few facts known about them, but it may be well here to say a few words upon the peculiarities of the Attic drama. It has been shown with great ability by Von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf, in the book cited, that the celebrated definition of tragedy which Aristotle lays down and expounds in his *Poetic*, however applicable to tragedy generally, however applicable it might have been to the tragedies of

by Xenophon, but by some earlier aristocratic author writing in the days and in the temper of Alcibiades. Cf. vol. ii. of this work, § 476.

[1] Cf. the whole argument in Wilamowitz, *Herakles*, i. pp. 78-80.

Euripides, had he been able to break wholly with tradition and choose his subjects from actual life, misses the mark as a description of Attic tragedy.[1] In fact, the definition omits essential and includes unessential points. For Æschylus, the great creator of this splendid national poetry, in which the people through their chorus took part; in which the service of the god was satisfied; in which the poet, as a teacher of wisdom, could speak his word through a transparent disguise —Æschylus not only determined that the Ionic recitation of iambics should be fused with the Doric choral song—a fusion never so complete as to efface the distinctness of each of the components—but also, like Homer, like Stesichorus, imported into his new creation the national legends, and determined once for all that no subject but the lives and acts of the heroes, as known in epic mythology, should attain the dignity of the Attic stage. Phrynichus, as we shall see, in the youth of tragedy's first development, tried an advance into recent history. His attempt was condemned by the Athenian public. To define, therefore, Attic tragedy without mention of the definite subject-matter to which it was bound, is to omit its 'essential difference.'

To assert, moreover, with Aristotle, that the 'purification of terror and pity' was the invariable object, errs in two directions. In the first place, the poets were probably not conscious of this æsthetic subtlety, and seem to have openly accepted the simpler *rôle* of moral teachers. Such, at least, is the opinion of Aristophanes, as expressed in his *Frogs*. In the second place, there are other emotions than mere pity and terror—pious awe, fervent patriotism—which are certainly the prominent emotions in our most famous plays. But to Aristotle, a sceptic and an alien, neither piety nor patriotism were likely to appear in their proper force. Yet so intimately were these three factors, faith in the heroic legends, piety towards the gods, devotion to the state, in the life-blood of Attic tragedy, that with them it sank into decay, and passed through Euripides into Menander, whose comedies were the successors, not of Aristophanes', but of Euripides' plays. Here, then, is the proper definition: 'An Attic tragedy is a story from the

[1] See this Def. stated and discussed in vol. ii. § 575 of the present work.

heroic legends, complete in itself, treated poetically in a dignified style to suit a chorus of Attic citizens and two or three actors, intended also for performance as part of the public worship of Dionysus.'[1]

The chorus, then, is the main factor, as we see in the earlier tragedies of Æschylus, who brought his new creation through all its stages up to its highest perfection. The long recitation of the messenger, in which the turning-point of the action is told, is no make-shift or device, but evidently a relic of the very earliest form, where the actor had no other function but to tell his story to the chorus. The freedom in the treatment of characters, which was so often censured by Alexandrian and Roman critics, is no inconsistency, but rather the special point of originality in which the master showed his skill. The framework of the story was given in the myth; not so the finer shades in the character and emotions of the heroes; it is only a vapid criticism, based upon a rigid abstraction from the epic and tragic stories themselves, which compares the creators with a poor image of their work, and declares them at fault. The pedants who censured the Medea of Euripides because she is torn by conflicting emotions, and bursts into uncontrollable tears before she steels her heart and murders her children; the pedants who think that the Iphigenia who offers her life as a heroine should not have pleaded for that life with strong crying and tears,[2] were, after all, but miserable art critics. Not much better is Horace with his fixed types—his *flebilis Ino*, his *tristis Orestes*. Æschylus has even elements of low and common life upon his stage, though Greek comedy in all its history was severed from tragedy by a great gulf, and Plato hazards as a mere drunken fancy what Shakspere has realised for us—the compatibility of tragic and comic genius in the same poet.

Tragedy, therefore, inasmuch as it absorbed and reproduced in its own form all, or almost all, the earlier species of poetry—the epic recitation, the iambic repartee, the elegist's philosophy, the melic song of excitement with musical accompaniment, the choral song of Dorian lands—is the climax and the consummation of Hellenic song. It was perfected by a single genius

[1] Wilamowitz, *op. cit.* p. 107. [2] Cf. below, §§ 203, 217.

in a single generation, and when two rivals arose who took from him the torch, and kept alive the flame—Sophocles could make no advance, and Euripides shows the imminence of decay.

§ 161. We have referred to a rustic and jovial dithyramb common among the lower classes in Peloponnesus, where the choruses imitated the sports and manners of satyrs in attendance on the god, and it is not improbable that these came more into fashion according as the serious choruses to Dionysus wandered from their original purpose, and were even applied to celebrate other personages than the god Dionysus. The proverb *οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον* ('there is no Dionysus in it') preserves the objections of old-fashioned people to such innovations, and these objections were permanently respected by the essentially satyric dithyramb, which was brought to Athens by PRATINAS[1] of Phlius, who with Chœrilus and other poets put it on the stage as a proper completion and necessary adjunct to the nascent tragedy. This Pratinas was a brilliant poet, to judge from a fragment preserved by Athenæus, in which he complains of the increasing prominence of the instrumental accompaniments to the dithyrambs, possibly those of his rival Lasus, and vindicates for his chorus their proper functions.[2] He is called the son of

[1] According to Fick (*Griech. Personennamen*, p. xxxv), this name, which is derived from the Doric form for *πρῶτος*, and is a collateral form for *πρωτῖνος* (= *πρωτίονος*), should be pronounced Πρατῖνας. I cannot find any direct authority in the classics for this quantity.

[2] *Τίς ὁ θόρυβος ὅδε; τί τάδε τὰ χορεύματα;*
τίς ὕβρις ἔμολεν ἐπὶ Διωνυσιάδα πολυπάταγα θυμέλαν;
ἐμὸς ἐμὸς ὁ Βρόμιος· ἐμὲ δεῖ κελαδεῖν, ἐμὲ δεῖ παταγεῖν
ἀν' ὄρεα σύμενον μετὰ Ναϊάδων
οἷα τε κύκνων ἄγοντα ποικιλόπτερον μέλος.
τὰν ἀοιδὰν κατέστασε Πιερὶς βασίλειαν· ὁ δ' αὐλὸς
ὕστερον χορευέτω· καὶ γάρ ἐσθ' ὑπηρέτας.
κώμῳ μόνον θυραμάχοις τε πυγμαχίαισι νέων θέλει παροίνων
ἔμμεναι στρατηλάτας.
παῖε, παῖε τὸν Φρύγ' ἀοιδοῦ
ποικίλου προαχέοντα·
φλέγε τὸν ὀλεσισιαλοκάλαμον,
λαλοβαρυόπα παραμελορυθμοβάταν θ'

Pyrrhonides, and said to have composed thirty-two satyric dramas with fifty tragedies; he contested in Ol. 70 with Æschylus and *Chœrilus*, but was only once successful in carrying off the first prize. His son Aristias was equally celebrated as a satyric dramatist, and was second when Æschylus won with the *Seven against Thebes*, but apparently with a satyric drama of his father's. *Chœrilus* was active from 524 to 468 B.C. (if we believe Suidas), and is celebrated as one of the old tragedians, but still more for his satyric drama, which appears from the proverb, 'When Chœrilus was king among the Satyrs.'

§ 162. In fact all the early dramatists, not excluding Æschylus, laid great stress upon this peculiar style, which, however, passed out of fashion in the next century, especially when Euripides had devised the expedient of supplying its place with a melodrama, or tragedy with comic elements, like the *Alcestis*. The remarkable point about the satyric drama is its marked separation from comedy, and its close attachment to tragedy. It is called '*sportive tragedy*,' and was never composed by comic poets. We have only one extant specimen—the *Cyclops* of Euripides—in which we observe that the protagonist or hero (Odysseus) is not the least ridiculed or lowered in position; in fact, we have no play in which he appears so respectable, but he is accompanied by a chorus of satyrs whose odes show no small traces of the old phallic songs in the rural dithyramb. The general character of the subjects left us in the titles of the satyric plays, and of the fragments (many of which, among the fragments of Æschylus and Sophocles, strike us by their open coarseness), lead us to compare the satyric drama of the Greeks to that peculiar species of drama among us which is comic, though quite distinct from comedy, and which treats some familiar legend or fairy tale with grotesque and conventional accessories. The reader will already have guessed that I refer to the *pantomimes* of the English stage, in which the earlier part is some adaptation of a well-known fairy tale,

ὑπαὶ τρυπάνῳ δέμας πεπλασμένον.
ἦν ἰδοὺ ἄδε σοι δεξιὰ
καὶ ποδὸς διαὸβιφά, θριαμβοδιθύραμβε·
κισσόχαιτ' ἄναξ ἄκουε τὰν ἐμὰν Δώριον χορείαν.

such as *Sinbad* or *Blue Beard*, in which there are horrible and tragic adventures, and generally a respectable chief character, coupled with grotesque accessories and conventional dancing. This curious parallel will illustrate to the English reader many of the difficulties in the position of the satyric drama at Athens.

It is remarkable that the old dithyrambs were spoken of as introductions to the more solemn cyclic choirs, whereas their dramatic outcome was always played after the tragedies. The critics are ready with æsthetical reasons for this, but we are left at a loss for historical facts. Though a flavour of humour was not foreign to the tragedy of Euripides, nor even to that of Æschylus, there seems no doubt that the early Greek drama did not afford scope for the violent contrasts so striking in Shakespeare, and preferred to relegate the low and the grotesque into a separate play associated with solemn tragedy. The extant *Cyclops* is a sort of farce without much extravagance, observing in its hero the decorum suited to a tragic writer, and giving to Silenus and to his attendant satyrs an evidently conventional character of laziness, drunkenness and license. The real contest was in that day among the tragedies, and this afterpiece was probably given while the public was discussing the previous plays. In later days the satyric drama seems to have been abandoned, and therefore all the other extant specimens were lost. It is a misfortune that we do not possess at least one from the hands of an acknowledged master in this department, or from the epoch when it had real importance. But the *Cyclops* explains to us the structure and style of these pieces. These few words may suffice to dispose of this byway of the Greek drama. I now return to the more important history of serious tragedy.

§ 163. All our authorities are agreed that despite the various approaches and hints at tragedy before *Thespis*—the Peloponnesians counted sixteen poets of Dorian tragedy before him—he was really the originator of that sort of poetry. We only know that he belonged to the deme or village of Icaria, on the borders of the Megarid, and doubtless in constant intercourse with these people, among whom the worship of Dionysus was said to be particularly at home. It is to be noticed that the

neighbouring town of Eleusis, to which all Icarians must have constantly come, was apparently the chief place for the deeper worship of Dionysus Zagreus, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that this double experience of the local choruses to Dionysus at Icaria, and the solemn mimic rites of the mysteries, were the determining features of his great discovery.

For in what did this discovery consist? As was well known, tragic elements were present in Homer, and the characteristic dialogues in the old epics were far more dramatic than the early tragedies not only of Thespis, but of Æschylus. The misfortunes of heroes had already been sung by the dithyrambic choruses at Sicyon, and a mimetic character given to such performances by the expressive gestures of the choirs of Lasus. We have no reason to think that Thespis added a dialogue to the cyclic choruses, or lyrical element from which he started. From what is told us we merely infer that he to some extent separated the leader of the chorus from the rest, and made him introduce and interrupt the choral parts with some sort of epic recitation. What metre he used for this recitation we know not, nor the subjects he treated, for the titles transmitted by Suidas are of forgeries by Heracleides Ponticus, and Thespis probably left nothing written. Yet he certainly aimed at some illusion, by which he escaped from himself, and entered into the feelings of another person, when he undertook, as we are told, to perform the part of leader to his chorus. For he disguised himself, and so far imitated reality that Solon is said (by Plutarch) to have been greatly offended at the performance, and to have indignantly denounced the deliberate lying implied in his acting. Of course we must cast aside the nonsense, talked by Horace, of his being a strolling player, going about in a cart to fairs and markets. Not only did Horace confuse the origins of tragedy and of comedy, but the poetical requirements of the Athenian public trained by the enlightened policies of Solon and Peisistratus. In the Athens where Lasus, and Simonides, and Anacreon, and presently Pindar, found favour, no rude village song could find favour; nay, we rather see an over-artificial taste prevailing in the lyric poetry of that date.

Thespis composed his dramas from about Ol. 61 for city

feasts and for an educated audience. The mere setting up of a stage, and donning of a mask, could not in such an atmosphere give to any poet the title of a great originator. Though the story just cited from Plutarch contradicts the inference, we would fain believe that an acquaintance with the mysteries, and deeper theology of the day, suggested to Thespis the representation of human sorrow for a moral purpose. There seems no trace of this idea in the earlier dithyrambs, which sang or acted the adventures of Dionysus merely as a cult, and not as a moral lesson. But it seems that with Thespis may have arisen the great conception which we see full-blown in Æschylus—the intention of the drama to purify human sympathy by exercising it on great and apparently disproportioned afflictions of heroic men, when the iron hand of a stern and unforgiving Providence chastises old transgressions, or represses the revolt of private judgment against established ordinance.

§ 164. It is quite plain that the portraiture of suffering was fully comprehended by the next among the old tragedians, *Phrynichus*, son of Polyphradmon, whom Aristophanes[1] often refers to as an old master of quaint sweetness, and in his day still a favourite with the last generation. There are several other persons of the name, one of them a comic poet,[2] so that we cannot be sure concerning the allusions to him. His son Polyphradmon, evidently called after the grandfather, seems to have contended with Æschylus. We have not sufficient fragments remaining to form a strict judgment, nor can we now decide how much of the development of tragedy was directly due to him. He is said to have been the first to introduce female characters, and to use the trochaic tetrameter in tragedy. It is also certain that he understood the use of dialogue, by separating the

[1] *Av.* 748: ἔνθεν ὡσπερεὶ μέλιττα
Φρύνιχος ἀμβροσίων μελέων ἀπεβόσκετο καρπὸν
ἀεὶ φέρων γλυκεῖαν ᾠδάν.

Vesp. 219: μινυρίζοντες μέλη
ἀρχαιομελεσιδωνιφρυνιχήρατα.

Cf. also v. 269. I quote uniformly from the 5th ed. of Dindorf's *Poetæ Scenici*.

[2] Cf. on these various persons the discussion of Meineke, *Hist. Com. Græc.* pp. 146, sq.

actor from the leader of the chorus, and making them respond to each other. Trimeters and Ionics *a minore* were metres not unknown to him, but he was most esteemed among later Greeks for his lyrical excellence, as the scholiasts on Aristophanes tell us. Pausanias[1] alludes to his having first introduced the fatal brand in the story of Meleager in Greek tragedy, not, however, as an invention of his own, and quotes the lines in question.[2] His *Phœnissæ* was a particularly celebrated play; but we must imagine chiefly a succession of lyrical choruses, with little or no action, like the earlier tragedies of Æschylus. It seems that the play was brought out[3] by Themistocles as Choregus, and with special reference to his own achievements, which were growing old in the memories of the Athenians, in Ol. 75, 4; and this is the earliest exact notice we have of a tragic competition such as was afterwards the rule at Athens. It is said that this play was the model on which Æschylus formed his *Persæ*. More celebrated is the story of the *Capture of Miletus* (Μιλήτου ἅλωσις), brought out by the poet in Ol. 71, which described lyrically the capture and destruction of the greatest of Ionic cities. The whole theatre, says Herodotus, burst into tears, fined him 1,000 drachmas for having reminded them of their domestic troubles, and directed that no one for the future should use this drama.[4] There has been a great deal of æsthetic lucubration on this celebrated act of the Athenian public—much talk of the ideal, and the desire to escape from the woes of common life into an ideal atmosphere. I feel more confidence in the critics who suspect a political reason for the play, and still more for the heavy fine. Possibly the poet belonged to a party who had urged active aid for Miletus, and his drama was a bitter and telling reproof to the timid or peace party, who may, nevertheless, have been politically the leaders of the people, and able to inflict upon him a fine for harrowing the public mind with his painful and

[1] x. 31, 4.

[2] κρυερὸν γὰρ οὐκ
ἤλυξεν μόρον, ὠκεῖα δέ νιν φλὸξ κατεδαίσατο,
δαλοῦ περθομένου ματρὸς ὑπ' αἰνᾶς κακουηχάνου.

[3] *Themist.* 5, as Plutarch tells us.

[4] vi. 21. I suppose he means—use this story for a drama.

distressing play. We see from the success of Æschylus' *Persæ* that they had no objection to being reminded of their domestic successes—certainly domestic in as real a sense as the events of Miletus—and I fancy covert allusions to present politics or other events were always well received by the Athenians; but they were certainly right to discourage the presenting of recent events upon the stage, for Greek tragedy was in no way suited for historical purposes.

There remain about seven titles of Phrynichus' plays, most of them the names of nations, which seems to imply the importance of his chorus. All the older tragic poets were said to be dancing-masters, and to have taught anyone who wished to learn; it is even said that the Athenians appointed Phrynichus to a military command, on account of his skill in performing the Pyrrhic war dance.

§ 165. Having now given a sufficient account of the forerunners of Æschylus, it may be well to say something of the materials at the disposal of the Greek tragic poets, of their theatres, stage, actors, and general appointments.[1]

It is necessary to give a brief description of the Greek theatres themselves, in order to help the reader better to imagine for himself the old tragic performances, and in order to obviate certain errors which were current on the subject, and have only been removed by recent researches. The earliest stone theatre of which we know the date was the theatre of Dionysus at Athens, built (Ol. 70) against the south slope of the Acropolis. It was adorned and enlarged by the orator Lycurgus (about Ol. 112), when administering the finances. We are told that before its building a wooden structure was used for plays, but that on the occasion of a contest between Æschylus and Pratinas it broke down, and then the Athenians determined to erect a permanent one for the purpose. We are not told where the old wooden theatre was situated, but as the story implies that the *spectators* fell (for the stage always remained a

[1] These questions have been discussed in several special works, founded upon recent researches. Those of Albert Müller (*Griech. Bühnenalterthümer*) and of Mr. Haigh (*The Attic Theatre*, Oxford, 1889), are both excellent. Dr. Dörpfeld's researches are not yet fully reported.

wooden platform), it is unlikely that the old site could have coincided with the new, where the steep incline of the hill made all artificial scaffolding unnecessary. If the site *was* retained, we should imagine the audience of the primitive tragedies and, no doubt, of the older cyclic choruses, to have sat all round the performance, so that while at one side the hill served for tiers of seats, on the other a corresponding incline was constructed of wood. It would then have been this side only which could break down, and the new stone theatre may have been on the modified principle of enlarging one side of the primitive amphitheatre to hold all the spectators, and giving the actors a better stage with a rear and side entrances—a necessary change when the various illusions of varying dress and scenery were invented and came into use. While this conjecture would explain the occurrence of the accident on the present site of the theatre, it must be carefully noted that quite a different place at Athens also bore the name of *orchestra*,[1] or dancing place, and may have had wooden seats applied in the same way. This orchestra was a small platform on the north slope of the Areopagus, just above the agora, on which the statues of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, and these only, were set up. Being above the throng of the agora, it seems to have been used in later days as a place for book-stalls. However this may be, the stone theatre of Dionysus became the model for similar buildings all over the Greek world, which everywhere (except at Mantinea) utilised the slope of a hill for the erection of stone seats in ascending tiers. These great buildings were also used by democracies for their public assemblies. Many of them still remain, though in no case, of course, has the wooden stage survived; but most of them have been modified by Roman work, especially in the form of permanent and lofty walls of masonry at the back of the stage. Happily in some cities the Roman theatre was built separately, and near the Greek, and this is the case at Athens and at Syracuse. The others which are most perfect, such as that of Aspendus in Pamphylia, and

[1] This word is never used for the middle of the theatre by Aristophanes, or by any of the early Comic poets. Its absence from the *Fragg. Com. Græc.* is striking.

Taormina in Sicily, contain Greek and Roman work jumbled together. But there are remains throughout all Greek-speaking lands of these theatres, in which plays were performed as soon as Athens had shown the way. At Epidauros, Argos, Mantinea, Megalopolis, in the Peloponnesus alone, there are huge remains of Greek theatres. The smallest and steepest known to me is that of Chæronea in Bœotia.

The whole circuit of seats, generally semicircular (sometimes even a greater, but never a less segment of a circle), was called τὸ κοῖλον, and held the sitting room (ἐδώλιον) of the spectators, who were called *the theatre*, as we say *the house*, in old times. It was separated into concentric strips by one or more walks called διαζώματα. A radiating series of flights of steps (κατατομαί), ascending from below, divided these strips of seats into wedge-formed divisions (κερκίδες). In most cases, the spectators came in at the sides, between the stage and the seats, and ascended by these steps. The seats were broad and comfortable, but each person brought a cushion, or had it brought for him by a slave, who was not allowed to wait during the performance. In some later theatres there were outside staircases, which brought the spectators to the top of the theatre, where they entered the highest level through a colonnade. The audience had no covering over them, and were exposed to all extremes of weather. We do not know what was done in the case of rain, but it is probable that the stage had a penthouse projecting from the back wall, which protected the actors. The price of admission was fixed at two obols for the Athenian theatre, which went to the manager for its support, and which was paid from the public funds to the poorer citizens at Athens, in the days of the Athenian Empire, by way of affording all of them the opportunity of joint religious enjoyment which the feast of Dionysus offered Women and boys were admitted to the tragedies, but the former were certainly excluded from the comedies in older days, and for obvious reasons. There were reserved seats in front. and the privilege of admission to them (προεδρία) was highly prized. It was given to magistrates and foreign ambassadors in early days, but on the marble armchairs of the front row in the theatre of Dionysus, as re-discovered in 1862,

the names of religious dignitaries are inscribed, the priest of Dionysus Eleutherios possessing the central stall. This arrangement may not, however, date before the days of Herodes Atticus. There is no evidence whatever that the Athenian democracy allowed the front seats to be reserved for the richer classes who could pay a higher entrance fee.[1]

The current statement that the Athenian theatre held nearly 30,000 (cf. Mr. Haigh, *op. cit.* p. 122) is based on the misprision of a remark in Plato's *Symposium*, and has long since been rejected by me after a careful measurement. Dr. Dörpfeld's plan will show 15,000 to be the maximum. But Greek theatres were large and open. It is consequently evident that all could not have seen or heard delicate points. This had no small effect upon the way in which Greek tragedies were brought upon the stage. Nevertheless, in the great theatre of Syracuse, I myself tested its acoustic properties, and found that a friend talking in his ordinary tone could be heard perfectly at the farthest seat—this, too, with the back of the stage open; whereas it was in the old performances closed by lofty scenes, and an upper story from which gods were shown.

§ 166. We pass from the circle of spectators to the part of the building (*ὀρχήστρα*) corresponding to the pit of modern theatres. The greater part of this was smoothed, empty, and strewed with sand, hence called *κονίστρα*. In the centre was an altar to Dionysus (*θυμέλη*), the relic of the old times when nothing but choral dances had been held in the area round the altar. But in the part nearest the stage, which corresponds to our stage boxes and orchestra, was a raised floor of wood, called, more specially and scenically, orchestra, or dancing place of the chorus, beginning at the altar, and communicating by steps with the stage, which was somewhat higher. The chorus was a sort of stage audience, at times addressing the actors, and answering them through their leader, at times reflecting upon them independently, especially in the choral songs, which

[1] This has been often asserted, owing to a misconception of the passage in Plato, *Apol. Socr.* § 26, which speaks of buying the work of Anaxagoras at the other orchestra above mentioned for a drachme.

divided what we may call the acts of the play. The chorus was not an ideal spectator, far from it, but rather represented the average morality or courage of the public, as contrasted with the heroic character of the protagonist, or chief actor. Thus we find it frequently supporting the deuteragonist, or second actor, who was a foil for the principal personage. As M. Patin admirably remarks, *àpropos* of the chorus of the *Antigone*:[1] 'It has not been sufficiently observed what moral defects the Greek poets attach to the part which in these plays represents the interests of general morality. While assigning to the chorus those lofty ideas of order and of justice which dwell in every heart, and come naturally from the lips of all as the voice of conscience, they took care to add to this somewhat imaginary rôle, by way of realism, the vulgar features common to every multitude. The speech of the chorus was pure and noble; its conduct cowardly, cautious, selfish, and marked by the weakness and egotism which are the vice of the common herd, and are only wanting in the exceptional few, both of tragedy and of real life.' But when it watched the progress of the play, the scenes must have been not unlike the play within the play in Hamlet, except that the great personages were in the Greek play the observed of the inferior observers. The entrances to the orchestra were the same as those of the audience, from the sides (πάροδοι), between the stage and the tiers of seats, and it is certain that there was no separate place for musicians, as the accompaniments to the choral songs, which were sung apparently in unison, were of the slightest kind—perhaps a single fluteplayer behind the scenes.

From the orchestra we mount by a few steps to the stage, and its appurtenances. It was technically called προσκήνιον, or the place in front of the σκηνή, which was originally the king's tent, or dwelling of the chief character, but, in ordinary Greek parlance, nothing more than the background of the stage. A particular place in the centre of the proscenium, or stage, appears to have been slightly raised, and specially used in great declamations: this was called the λογεῖον. The whole stage was

[1] *Sophocle*, p. 260.

very high and narrow, spanning all the way from one side of the huge circle of spectators to the other. As the chorus were brought forward to their place in the orchestra, the Greek theatre required no deep stage room, and had ample space for its very few characters within a narrow place.[1] There was certainly one passage leading out from under the stage, and known technically as Charon's stairs; but the old stages which I have examined show such complicated substructures, so many separate short walls and passages in their foundations, that I fancy there must have been more to be done under the Greek stage than most scholars imagine. The front of the raised stage, which was hidden by the scenic orchestra, was called *ὑποσκήνιον*.

§ 167. There was not much change of dress in the Greek plays, but still some green room must have been required; it is never alluded to by our authorities, and was, I fancy, a wooden structure at the side of the stage, which could be removed with the other woodwork. In the back wall of the stage, the doors, three in number, indicated the position of the actor who first entered through them.[2] The middle door was for the chief actor, the right for his foil or supporter (deuteragonist), the left for his contrast or opponent (tritagonist). These parts were as much fixed as those of the soprano, tenor, and barytone in modern operas, but of course for musical and æsthetical reasons the two principal voices are there co-ordinated; whereas this was never done by the Greeks. Messengers, who played an important part in reciting stirring scenes, came in, if from the home or city of the actors, by the right parodos; if from abroad, by the left side of the theatre, and went out by

[1] With the decay of the chorus, the stage was made narrower, and the ornamental front with marble figures, which we admire in the present remains of the theatre at Athens, was not built till the third century A.D., and was moved back eight or nine yards from the original limit of the proscenium, in the days of elaborate choric dances, and of dialogues between the chorus and the actors. The decoration of this surface seems to imply that no scaffolding for an orchestra was then required in front of it.

[2] It is not to be imagined that this was an absolute rule. The chief personage was in most plays easily to be distinguished without any such formality. Cf. Bernhardy, ii. p. 93.

the orchestra; we find that in some theatres an additional door at each end of the stage was provided for this purpose. These fixed arrangements served to a certain extent instead of play bills, which the Greeks did not use. The back scene was, as I have said, lofty, and made of painted wooden panels and hangings, for when the Romans came to build similar theatres, they built up this scene of masonry, which still remains in many places—most perfectly at the splendid theatre of Aspendus in Pamphylia. The upper story represented by this architectural front was called *episcenium*, and the wings, when they came forward and closed the ends of the stage, *parascenia*. When change of place was required, there existed scene shifting, in the sense of drawing back to the sides temporary structures. As there was seldom, if ever, more than one change of scene in a Greek tragedy, we can imagine the movable scenes used first, and drawn away, along with the revolution of the *periacti*, to make way for the view painted on the permanent back scene of the stage. For it is certain that at the parascenia were fixed two lofty triangular prisms, called revolvers (περίακτοι), on each face of which a different scene was painted, so that, according as the 'foreign parts' especially of the play changed, the right περίακτος μηχανή was turned (ἐκκυκλεῖν). These prisms must also have served to conceal such scenes as were drawn back, when not required. There was some complicated machinery in the upper story of the back scene, which enabled the gods to appear in the air, and address the actors from a place called the gods' stage (θεολογεῖον). This machinery seems to have been hidden by a large curtain (κατάβλημα) hung from above, but I suspect that this device did not exist in the early days of tragedy.

It is important to notice the lofty and permanent character of the wooden, and afterwards brick, structures at the back of the stage, as it destroys various sentimental notions of modern art critics about the lovely natural scenery selected by the Greeks to form the background of their stage. It is still believed by many that the Greeks desired to combine the beauties of a lovely view with the ideal splendour of mythical tragic heroes.

Modern research has completely exploded the absurd idea. It is possible that, at the highest and worst back seats, some lofty mountain behind the stage might have been visible, but I am sure the intention of all the arrangements was to exclude such disturbance, and to fix the attention of the spectators on the play and its scenic surroundings. The sites of the Greek theatres were simply determined by the ground, and if almost every ascending slope near a city in Greece affords a fair prospect of sea and islands, and rugged outlines, we know that the Greeks of all civilised people thought least about landscapes as such, and neglected the picturesque.

§ 168. This reflection leads me naturally to say a few words about the scene-painting of the Greeks. When Æschylus arose, painting was in its infancy, and it was not till the empire of Athens was well established that the first great artist Polygnotus (about Ol. 78) rose into fame. But he was altogether a figure painter, and seems to have known nothing of perspective. Towards the end of Æschylus' life, Agatharchus first began to study the art of scene-painting, with the view of producing some illusion by means of perspective, and wrote a treatise on the subject. The optical questions involved were taken up by Anaxagoras and Democritus, and Apollodorus (about 400 B.C.) may be regarded as having brought to perfection this branch of art. Both he and Agatharchus are classed as skenographers, or skiographers (*σκηνογράφοι*, *σκιογράφοι*), these terms being used as synonymous, and showing that the painting of shadows was first attempted in order to produce effects of perspective in scene-painting. There can be no doubt, from an analysis of the scenes of our extant plays, that the great majority of these paintings was architectural, and the representation of Greek palaces and temples, with their many long straight lines, particularly required a knowledge of perspective. It is not certain that the old Greeks, in spite of their philosophic studies, were very perfect in this respect, for the architectural subjects in the Pompeian frescoes are very faulty, perhaps, however, because they were the work of ignorant persons, who never learnt the better traditions of the ancients. Some few plays were laid in camps, and wild deserts,

such as the *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* of Sophocles; but by this time scene-painting had become an established art. To judge from the landscapes of Pompeii, these scenes had a very lofty blue sky painted above them, which was doubtless intended to exclude the natural background from the spectators. In the comedies, concerning which we have but little information in detail, familiar and everyday scenes in Attica must have been painted, and it would be most interesting to know what amount of reality satisfied the Athenian audience. In the tragedies, the scenes were either of remote palaces, or at least of palaces and cities in ancient and mythical times, so that no close approximation to the cities of the period would be required.

§ 169. Above all, we must insist upon the staid and conservative character of all the Attic tragedy. The *subjects* were almost as fixed as the scenery, being always, or almost always, subjects from the Trojan and Theban cycle, with occasional excursions into the myths about Heracles. But in treating the Trojan myths, we find a distinct avoidance of the Iliad and Odyssey, and a use of the cyclic poems instead. There are indeed a few titles from our Homer, but they are so constantly satyric dramas, that I suppose this was according to some rule, and that Homer, from his sanctity, or owing to the too great familiarity of the audience with him, was deliberately avoided.

The uniformity of subjects was moreover paralleled by the uniformity of the dress—the festal costume of Bacchus—and by the fixed masks for the characters, which allowed no play of feature. So also I fancy the older actors to have been monotonous and simple in their playing. Later on we know that they became popular and were a much distinguished class, and then they began to take liberties with their texts, as we hear from many scholia. These liberties were repressed by a wholesome law of the orator Lycurgus, who enacted that official copies of the plays of the three great tragic masters should be made, and no new performance of them allowed without the applicant for the chorus and his company having their acting copies compared with the state MS.

As soon as tragic choruses and other dramatic performances

became recognised by the state at Athens, they were not left to chance or to individual enterprise. The chorus was dressed and trained at the public expense, and the poet who desired to have his piece performed must go to the archon,[1] and ask to have a chorus assigned to him. The actors were said to have been distributed by lot, but in later days, we find particular actors so associated with poets that some more permanent connection must be assumed. The archon granted choruses to the most promising applicants, so that young and unknown poets were fain to produce their piece under the name of an influential friend. The poet, with the aid of a professional choir master, trained his chorus in the lyrical songs, and in early days took the chief acting part himself.

§ 170. Unfortunately we know hardly anything of the way in which the competitions were managed, or how many plays were produced on the same day, and in succession. We know certainly that they were composed (even by Euripides) in *tetralogies*, in groups of four, and their average length being moderate, I fancy a trilogy would not take up more time than the playing of *Hamlet*, followed by a short farce or satyric drama. But how could the audience endure more than this at one time; and yet we know that many of our extant plays obtained the third prize, showing that twelve plays must have been acted. It is absolutely certain that such a competition must have lasted several days, and I believe that twelve plays was the limit; for when I note the difficulty of 'obtaining a chorus,' and that even good poets were refused; when I also observe that the third place was considered a disgrace, I infer that the number of competitors must have been limited, and that there were not lower places than the third to be assigned. But when we hear that Sophocles contended, 'play against play,' by way of novelty, and that single plays from a group were called victorious, and yet that Euripides competed with groups, none of which has survived entire, we find ourselves in hopeless perplexities.

As to the adjudication of the prizes, it was made by judges selected from the audience by lot, and no doubt led by the

[1] The *eponymus* at the *Dionysia*, the king archon at the *Lenæa*.

public reception of the piece; but their decision seems often to have been exceedingly bad. As we have not the rival pieces of any competition for comparison, we may not dogmatise; but still, when the scholiasts wonder at the *Œdipus Rex* being defeated, and when we find the *Medea* disgraced by obtaining the third place, we cannot help suspecting that the judgment of the day was utterly wrong. Each victory was commemorated by a tripod, which was erected on an ornamental pillar or building like the choragic monument of Lysicrates, still extant at Athens, and from these inscribed monuments were drawn the valuable didascalia which Aristotle first collected, and from which Aristophanes (of Byzantium) afterwards compiled his invaluable prefaces to all the plays. Our extant prefaces seem to copy their chronological data—the year of the play, its competitors, and its place—whenever they vouchsafe us such information. Had Aristophanes' work been preserved, the whole history of the drama would be in a far different condition.

§ 171. There is still some hope of further light on this important point. Fragments of lists of dramatic authors, and their victories, are still being found about the acropolis and the theatre at Athens, and from the publications of them by Kumanudes in the *Athenaion*, Bergk has endeavoured to reconstruct the chronology of the drama.[1] His conclusions have been contested by Köhler,[2] and are as yet uncertain. But he has probably established this much, that while the tragic contests were carried on at the greater Dionysia in the city, and in spring time, and recorded since about Ol. 64, the winter feast of the Lenæa in the suburbs was originally devoted to comedy, which was not recognised by the state till about Ol. 79. In Ol. 84 new regulations were introduced, probably by Pericles, according to which tragic contests were established at the Lenæa, and comic admitted to the greater Dionysia. From this time both kinds of contests were carried on at both feasts, and in the great theatre.[3] But as the *Lenæa* was only a home feast, and not

[1] Cf. *Rhein. Mus.* for 1879, pp. 292, sq.

[2] In the *Memoirs of the German Arch. Inst. of Athens*, vol. iii. pp. 104, sq.

[3] The *lesser* or *country Dionysia* were celebrated at a theatre in the Peiræus, which has recently been discovered. Cf. Ἀθήναιον for August 1880.

attended by strangers, a victory gained there was by no means of the same importance as a victory before the great concourse of citizens and visitors in the spring, and consequently they were separately catalogued. This accounts for variations in the number of prizes ascribed to the poets, some lists comprising all, others only the city prizes. No poet (except Sophocles) seems to have gained this latter distinction often, and many prolific authors obtained it only once or twice. But, as has been already remarked, the verdict of the judges is not to be taken as a conclusive estimate of real merit.

CHAPTER XV.

ÆSCHYLUS.

§ 172. THE facts known to us about the life of Æschylus are few, and decked out with many fables. He was the son of Euphorion, born at Eleusis, the town of the Mysteries, in 525 B.C. He contended with Chœrilus and Pratinas, as well as Phrynichus, from about 500 B.C., and there is no doubt that he learned a great deal from the art of the latter. His first tragic victory was in Ol. 73, 4 (485), and from this time down to the middle of the century he worked with all the energy and patience of a great genius at his art. He fought in the battles of the great Persian war, and was wounded, it is said, at Marathon, at which his brother Kynægirus fell. He contended against Simonides with an elegy to be inscribed over the fallen, but was defeated. According to the most credible account he won thirteen tragic victories. He confessed it impossible to excel the Hymn to Zeus of the obscure Tynnichus, on account of its antique piety, which gave it the character of an inspiration.[1] And yet he is reported to have been exceedingly hurt at the success of Sophocles in tragedy, by whom he was defeated in 468 B.C. This may have induced him to leave Athens and go to Sicily, an island which he had already visited in Ol. 76 at the invitation of Hiero, for whom he had written a local piece called the *Ætnæans*, to celebrate the foundation of the city of Ætna on the site of the earlier (and later) Catana. He also brought out at Syracuse a new edition of his *Persians*. A better cause alleged for his second departure from Athens was the suspicion or accusation under which he lay of having divulged the Mysteries. He is even said to have been publicly attacked, and, though he pleaded that he was unaware of his

[1] Cf. Bergk, *FLG.*, p. 1111.

crime, was saved with difficulty by the Areopagus. If this be so, we can understand his splendid advocacy of that ancient and venerable court, when attacked by Ephialtes, in his *Eumenides*, the third play of the extant trilogy with which he conquered in Ol. 80, 2 (458). He must have been at this moment one of the most important leaders of the conservative party, and have had far more weight through his plays than most men could attain by their eloquence on the bema. Nevertheless we hear of his dying at Gela in Sicily within three years of this great triumph. The people of Gela erected him a splendid tomb; the Athenians not only set up his statue in public, but rewarded and equipped any choregus in after days who would bring out again his works upon the stage.

Even this brief sketch can hardly be called certain as to its facts; the many fables about his relationships, about his death, and about his professional jealousies have been here deliberately omitted. Three personal recollections of him still survive, beyond the remark on Tynnichus. He was sitting beside Ion of Chios at the Isthmian games; the audience cried out when one of the boxers got a severe blow, whereupon he nudged Ion, and said: 'See what training does; the man who is struck says nothing, while the spectators cry out.'[1] He is said to have described his tragedies as morsels (τεμάχη) gathered from the mighty feasts of Homer. Pausanias (i. 14, 5) says that when his end was at hand, he made mention of none of his fame as a poet, but wrote the name of his father and city, and that the grove of Marathon and the Medes who disembarked there were witnesses of his valour. This points to some epitaph which Pausanias regarded as genuine. Of his plays there remain seventy-two titles, of which over sixty seem genuine, and a good many fragments, but only seven actual pieces: the *Supplices* (ἱκετιδες), probably brought out in Ol. 71, or 72; the *Persæ*, 76, 4; the *Seven against Thebes*, 78, 1[2]; the *Prometheus Vinctus*, not before 75, 2, in which the eruption

[1] This is reported by Plutarch, *De profect. in virt.* c. 8.

[2] The statement put into Æschylus' mouth in the *Frogs* (v. 1026, sq.) seems as if this usually received order were wrong, and the *Seven against Thebes* came earlier than the *Persæ*.

of Ætna alluded to in the play occurred, but probably as late as Ol. 79. Lastly, his greatest and most perfect work, the Orestean trilogy, consisting of the *Agamemnon*, *Choephori*, and *Eumenides*, in Ol. 80, 2, shortly before his death.

§ 173. I take the *Supplices* first, because it is decidedly a specimen of the early and simple tragedy developed by Æschylus; nor do I agree with some great critics who have thought it composed as late as Ol. 79, on account of its complimentary allusions to Argos. In the first place the chorus is the principal actor in this play—the daughters of Danaus, who have come as *Suppliants* to Argos, to escape the marriage of their cousins, the sons of Ægyptus. In the next place, the number of the chorus in the play seems to have been fifty, whereas in Æschylus' later days it was reduced to fifteen or twelve persons. There is indeed a notice of Suidas that Sophocles raised the old number twelve to fifteen, which would imply twelve Suppliants only; but the fixed traditional number of the Danaides, and the ample space on the orchestra, in a play where there was no dancing, seem to make the full number not impossible in this play. I have no doubt that it was the requirements of this play which at all events made the critics think of fifty choristers. The main body of the piece consists in long choric songs complaining of the violence of the sons of Ægyptus, the unholy character of the marriage they proposed, and the anxieties of the fugitives. These odes are merely interrupted by the actors—their father Danaus, Pelasgus, the King of Argos, and the petulant Egyptian herald, who endeavours to hurry them off to the ship which has just arrived to bring them back. The King of Argos is represented as a respectable monarch, who, though absolute, will not decide without appealing to the vote of his people, who generously accept the risk of protecting the Suppliants. But the cautious benevolence of Pelasgus, and the insolence of the Egyptian herald, can hardly be called character-drawing, and the whole drama, having hardly any plot, is a good specimen of that simple structure with which Attic tragedy developed itself out of a mere cyclic chorus. It is remarkable, however, that though the individuals are so slightly sketched, there is the

most distinct characterising of nationalities throughout the play. Not only is the very speech of the Danaides full of strange-sounding words, as if to suggest their foreign origin, but there is the strongest aversion conveyed by the poet for the Egyptians, as a violent and barbarous people, whose better few can only find protection in Argos. The Argives, again, are described as an honourable, somewhat democratic people, not perhaps very different from the stage Athenians under Theseus. There is little known of the other plays in the trilogy, or of the satyric piece which followed. The horror of a marriage with cousins seems so absurd in the Egyptian princesses that it must have been explained by the course of a preceding play, and the critics are agreed that the so-called *Danaides* followed, wherein the marriage and murder of the sons of Ægyptus took place, and the trial of Hypermnestra, who alone disobeyed her father. She seems to have been acquitted by the interference of Aphrodite herself, on the ground of her own all-powerful influence on the human mind, and from her speech Athenæus has preserved for us some fine lines.[1]

Though this play is the least striking of those extant, and, from the little attention paid to it, very corrupt, and often hard to decipher, there are all the highest Æschylean features in germ throughout it. Thus in the very first chorus, not to speak of the elegant allusion to the nightingale, already celebrated in the Odyssey, there is a splendid passage on the Divine Providence, which breathes all the lofty theology so admirable in Æschylus.[2]

1 ἐρᾷ μὲν ἁγνὸς οὐρανὸς τρῶσαι χθόνα,
ἔρως δὲ γαῖαν λαμβάνει γάμου τυχεῖν·
ὄμβρος δ' ἀπ' εὐνάεντος οὐρανοῦ πεσὼν
ἔκυσε γαῖαν· ἡ δὲ τίκτεται βροτοῖς
μήλων τε βοσκὰς καὶ βίον Δημήτριον·
δενδρῶτις ὥρα δ' ἐκ νοτίζοντος γάμου
τέλειός ἐστι. τῶν δ' ἐγὼ παραίτιος.

vv. 86, sq. : Διὸς ἵμερος οὐκ εὐθήρατος ἐτύχθη,
πάντα τοι φλεγέθει
κὰν σκότῳ μελαίνᾳ ξὺν τύχᾳ
μερόπεσσι λαοῖς,

So also future punishments are threatened.[1] The concluding prayer of blessing on Argos, sung by the grateful Suppliants, is very fine, and there is all through the play an abundance of that mighty diction in which the epithets and figures come rolling in upon us like Atlantic waves. It is this feature in Æschylus which makes him so untranslateable.[2]

I will observe, in conclusion, that the description of Io's wanderings (in the ode, vv. 525, sq.) is a foretaste of the much fuller treatment of the same subject in the later *Prometheus*.

πίπτει δ' ἀσφαλὲς οὐδ' ἐπὶ νώτῳ,
κορυφᾷ Διὸς εἰ κρανθῇ πρᾶγμα τέλειον.
δαυλοὶ γὰρ πραπίδων
δάσκιοί τε τείνουσιν πόροι,
κατιδεῖν ἄφραστοι.
ἱάπτει δ' ἐλπίδων
ἀφ' ὑψιπύργων πανώλεις βροτοὺς,
βίαν δ' οὔτιν' ἐξοπλίζει,
τὰν ἄποινον δαιμονίων· ἥμενον ἄνω φρόνημά πως
αὐτόθεν ἐξέπραξεν ἔμπας, ἑδράνων ἐφ' ἁγνών.

And vv. 590, sq. :

τίν' ἂν θεῶν ἐνδικωτέροισιν
κεκλοίμαν εὐλόγως ἐπ' ἔργοις.
πατὴρ φυτουργός, αὐτόχειρ ἄναξ
γένους παλαιόφρων μέγας
τέκτων, τὸ πᾶν μῆχαρ οὔριος Ζεύς.
ὑπ' ἀρχᾶς δ' οὔτινος θοάζων
τὸ μεῖον κρεισσόνων κρατύνειν
οὔτινος ἄνωθεν ἡμένου σέβει κάτω.
πάρεστι δ' ἔργον ὡς ἔπος
σπεῦσαί τι τῶν βούλιος φέρει φρήν.

[1] vv. 227–33, and v. 416.

[2] Thus we have (vv. 34, sq.):

ἔνθα δὲ λαίλαπι
χειμωνοτύπῳ, βροντῇ στεροπῇ τ'
ὀμβροφόροισίν τ' ἀνέμοις ἀγρίας
ἄλλος ἀντήσαντες ὄλοιντο.

Again, v. 350: λυκοδίωκτον ὡς δάμαλιν ἄμ πέτραις
ἠλιβάτοις, ἵν' ἀλκᾷ πίσυνος μέμυκε
φράζουσα βοτῆρι μόχθους.

And

ἄχορον ἀκίθαριν δακρυογόνον Ἄρη.

And the wonderful—

λισσὰς αἰγίλιψ ἀπρόσδεικτος οἰόφρων κρεμὰς γυπιὰς πέτρα.

§ 174. The *Persæ* is profoundly interesting, apart from literary questions, for it is the first approach to a piece of contemporary history among the Greeks. Here we have the battle of Salamis described by an eyewitness, and the impressions made on the heroes of Marathon recorded with a poet's utterance.[1] The problem of making an ideal picture from materials of the present day was more imperative for a Greek than for any modern poet, and it is with no small acuteness that Racine (in the preface to his *Bajazet*) explains the artifice, and applies it in his own way. As M. Patin well puts it: 'il dépaysa, en quelque sorte, son sujet, et lui donna cette perspective lointaine nécessaire à l'illusion tragique.'[2] Racine thought that to *his* audience the Turks were strange and mysterious enough for ideal purposes, just as Æschylus had devised the plan of laying his scene at the Persian court, where even living characters would not strike the audience as too close to themselves. By this means Æschylus avoids all the difficulties which beset him, and moreover was able to convey certain moral lessons to his audience by his picture of the despotic society in which Xerxes lived. It has been remarked that though the play teems with Persian names, not a single Athenian is mentioned; nay, even the celebrated Ameinias, whom many commentators call the poet's brother, is anonymous, and his ship only noted as a 'Greek ship.' Of course, the mention of any special name in the Attic theatre would have excited all manner of disturbing sympathies and antipathies.

The general features of the play being borrowed, as we are told, from the celebrated *Phœnissæ* of Phrynichus, it was of that archaic and simple structure which admitted almost no

[1] The differences between Æschylus and Herodotus, which are less than might be expected, have often been discussed by critics. Cf. Blakesley's *Herod.* vol. ii. p. 404. The introduction of modern subjects had already been attempted by Phrynichus (above, p. 11), not only in his *Capture of Miletus*, but in his *Phœnissæ*. It was again attempted in later days by Moschion and Philiscus in their *Themistocles*, and probably by others also. Cf. Meineke, *Hist. Com. Græc.* p 522.

[2] Eratosthenes says it was brought out at Syracuse at Hiero's request, which gives still more point to Patin's remark.

action, and very little play of various feeling. The chorus is here also of the first importance, and takes its place as an actor in the play. It is composed of elders left in charge of Xerxes' kingdom during his absence, who in the opening scene express their anxieties concerning the state of the Persian Empire. Atossa, the king's mother, next appears to tell her alarms, and then a breathless messenger narrates the defeat and destruction of the great host in a very splendid narrative. The chorus, in despair, are advised by Atossa to help her in calling up the spirit of Darius, who is represented as a great and just ruler, whose prophetic advice might still save his people. But he merely foretells, with calm dignity, the remaining defeat at Platæa, and gives no hope of returning fortune. After a choral song in praise of his great conquests, Xerxes appears in strong contrast, and the play ends with a long *commos* or ode of lamentation for him and the chorus—a common feature at the close of Greek tragedies, for which we moderns feel little sympathy.

The play is not very difficult, and the text in a much better condition than that of most of Æschylus' other plays. Its merits have been generally underrated, and it seems to have been left for M. Patin to discover, with the delicate sense of his nation, the finer points missed by other critics. The ghost of Darius in particular is to be noted as, perhaps, the only *character ghost* in the history of tragedy. He is brought up mainly to enable the poet to gather together the various triumphs of the Greeks, which could not be embraced in the limits of the action. But far beyond this particular requirement, Æschylus has endowed the vision of the great monarch with a certain splendid calm, a repose from the troubles of this mortal life, an indifference to all violent despair, which comes out strangely in his opening words to Atossa, and in his parting farewell.[1] The contrast with the erring, suffering, perturbed spirit of Hamlet's father will strike every reader. As for the other characters of the play, they merely exhibit various phases of grief, all modulated and varied according to the natural requirements of the persons. The grief of the messenger is patriotic, he thinks of the losses of Persia only; and yet there

[1] vv. 706-8, and 840–2.

is in him that fullness and explicitness of detail which mark the self-importance of a man of little dignity, when he becomes the bearer of weighty, even though lamentable, news. The grief of the queen is personal, she has her mind fixed on her son. That of the chorus is vehement and headstrong, almost seditious; that of Xerxes, gloomy and despairing; that of Darius, as we have said, is a calm and divine melancholy, which cannot disturb his eternal serenity. Thus a single theme is varied through all manner of tempers. Though the general merit of the piece is greater than that of the *Supplices*, there are not so many fine and striking passages. More especially the theology preached by Darius is by no means so lofty as that cited above from the earlier play. The lines in which Atossa describes the offerings of the dead are very beautiful, and very like in grace to the writing of Sophocles.[1]

The invocation of Darius also shows the use of the refrain, which is so effective in Æschylus, and is not common in the other tragedians. We are told in the didascaliæ that this trilogy —viz. the *Phineus*, *Persæ*, *Glaucus*, with the *Prometheus Pyrphoros* —gained the first prize. Of the other plays we know hardly anything, save that the Bœotian campaign, and the Carthaginian defeat in Sicily, were treated. There is a good edition by Teuffel.

§ 175. The *Seven against Thebes* brings us to a more advanced stage of the poet's development. Though the plot is still simple, it is not the chorus, but Eteocles who opens the play, and sustains the principal part. Moreover, the drawing of his character is very clear and sharp, and quite as striking as the warlike characters of the most developed tragedies. After his patriotic speech, a messenger details, with great

[1] vv. 610-18:

νεκροῖσι μειλικτήρια,
βοός τ' ἀφ' ἁγνῆς λευκὸν εὔποτον γάλα,
τῆς τ' ἀνθεμουργοῦ στάγμα, παμφαὲς μέλι,
λιβάσιν ὑδρηλαῖς παοθένου πηγῆς μέτα
ἀκήρατον τε μητρὸς ἀγρίας ἄπο
ποτὸν παλαιᾶς ἀμπέλου γανος τόδε·
τῆς τ' αἰὲν ἐν φυλλοισι θαλλούσης ἴσαν
ξανθῆς ἐλαίας καρπὸς εὐδ'δης πάρα,
ἄνθη τε πλεκτὰ, παμφόρου γαίας τέκνα.

beauty, the sacrifice and oath of the seven hostile captains, who swear to meet death rather than to turn back from Thebes.[1] The *parodos* of the chorus is composed with great skill, the precipitous hurried rythms and apparent disorder of the structure speaking clearly the agitation of the Theban maidens at the approach of the enemy. Eteocles breaks in upon them, and reproves them sharply for disturbing the town, and dispiriting the citizens with their lamentations, and prayers to the gods. After a long dialogue, he exhorts them to raise a pæan to the gods, and encourage the people. But the chorus in an anxious and very beautiful strain, still harp upon their fears, upon the horrors of war, and upon the miseries of captured cities.[2]

[1] Mr. A. W. Verrall, in his excellent edition (Macmillan, 1887), throws new light on the whole plot, showing especially that the seven were only leaders of the assault, chosen by Adrastus.

[2] vv. 321–62 :

οἰκτρὸν γὰρ πόλιν ὧδ' ὠγυγίαν
Ἀΐδᾳ προϊάψαι, δορὸς ἄγραν,
δουλίαν ψαφαρᾷ σποδῷ
ὑπ' ἀνδρὸς Ἀχαιοῦ θεόθεν
περθομέναν ἀτίμως,
τὰς δὲ κεχειρωμένας ἄγεσθαι,
ἐή, νέας τε καὶ παλαιὰς
ἱππηδὸν πλοκάμων,
περιρρηγνυμένων φαρέων.
βοᾷ δ' ἐκκενουμένα πόλις,
λαΐδος ὀλλυμένας μιξοθρόου·
βαρείας τοι τύχας προταρβῶ.
πλαυτὸν δ' ἀρτιτρόποις ὠμοδρόπων
νομίμων προπάροιθεν διαμεῖψαι
δωμάτων στυγερὰν ὁδόν.
τί; τὸν φθίμενον γὰρ προλέγω
βέλτερα τῶνδε πράσσειν.
πολλὰ γάρ, εὖτε πτόλις δαμασθῇ,
ἐή, δυστυχῆ τε πράσσει.
ἄλλος δ' ἄλλον ἄγει,
φονεύει, τὰ δὲ καὶ πυρφορεῖ·
καπνῷ χραίνεται πόλισμ' ἅπαν.
μαινόμενος δ' ἐπιπνεῖ λαοδαμας

Then follows the celebrated scene in which the messenger describes the appearance of each chief, while Eteocles and the chorus answer. The length to which it is expanded has been criticised by Euripides. The picture of the sixth, the seer Amphiaraus,[1] is said by Plutarch to have 'brought down the house' by its plain allusion to Aristeides, then in the theatre. When Polynices is described, last of all, the rage of Eteocles bursts forth uncontrollably, and the awful curse resting upon the house of Laius urges him consciously to meet his brother in the field, in spite of the deprecating entreaties of the chorus. After an ode on the sorrows of Œdipus, the news of the Theban victory and the death of the brothers arrives. Presently the bodies are brought in, followed by Antigone and Ismene, who sing a *commos* over them, consisting of doleful reproaches and laments.

But in the last seventy lines the poet blocks out the whole subject of Sophocles' *Antigone*. The herald forbids the burial of Polynices, Antigone rebels, and by a curious device the chorus, dividing, take sides with both Antigone and Ismene, in upholding

μιαίνων εὐσέβειαν Ἄρης.
κορκορυγαὶ δ' ἀν' ἄστυ,
ποτὶ πτόλιν δ' ὀρκάνα πυργῶτις.
πρὸς ἀνδρὸς δ' ἀνὴρ στὰς δορὶ καίνεται·
βλαχαὶ δ' αἱματόεσσαι
τῶν ἐπιμαστιδίων
ἄρτι βρεφῶν βρέμονται.
ἁρπαγαὶ δὲ διαδρομᾶν δμαίμονες·
ξυμβολεῖ φέρων φέροντι,
καὶ κενὸς κενὸν καλεῖ,
ξύννομον θέλων ἔχειν,
οὔτε μεῖον οὔτ' ἴσον λελιμμένοι.
τίν' ἐκ τῶνδ' εἰκάσαι λόγος πάρα;
παντοδαπὸς δὲ καρπὸς
χαμάδις πεσὼν ἀλγύνει κυρήσας.
πικρὸν δ' ὄμμα * * θαλαμηπόλων
πολλὰ δ' ἀκριτόφυρτος
γᾶς δόσις οὐτιδανοῖς
ἐν ῥοθίοις φορεῖται.

[1] vv. 592–4.

and rejecting the decree of the city.[1] M. Patin notes that the same device has been adopted by Schiller in his *Bride of Messina*, and that such a division was not at all unnatural in a Greek chorus. Far from being an ideal spectator, 'les poètes grecs ne se piquaient pas de donner au chœur, représentant de la foule, des sentiments héroïques, et il me semble qu'Eschyle, dans cette peinture rapide, a fort ingénieusement caractérisé les commodes apologies de la poltronnerie politique.

Aristophanes, in his *Frogs*, makes Æschylus quote this play specially for its warlike tone, and for the good effects it produced upon the spirit of the spectators. It won the first prize with its trilogy, consisting of the *Laius*, the *Œdipus*, the *Septem*, and as a satyric afterpiece, the *Sphinx*. This information having been copied from the Medicean didascaliæ discovered in 1848, it is interesting to study the earlier lucubrations of the Germans as to the place of the *Septem* in its trilogy. Only one of their guesses was true, and that was shortly abandoned by its author, Hermann, for more elaborate hypotheses. This collapse of the learned combinations about the grouping of Greek plays has decided me to pass them by in silence, merely giving the facts when preserved in the Greek prefaces, which are acknowledged trustworthy.

§ 176. The *Prometheus Vinctus* brings us to the perfection of Æschylus' art, and to a specimen, unique and unapproachable, of what that wonderful genius could do in *simple* tragedy, that is to say, in the old plotless, motionless, surpriseless drama, made up of speeches and nothing more. There is certainly no other play of Æschylus which has produced a greater impression upon the world, and few remnants of Greek literature are to be compared with it in its eternal freshness and its eternal mystery. We know nothing of the plays connected with it, save that it was followed by a *Prometheus Unbound*, with a chorus of Titans condoling with the god, who was delivered by Heracles from the vulture that gnawed his vitals, and was reconciled with Zeus. Thus this group may

[1] So Aristophanes, in his *Acharnians* (vv. 520, sq.) divides his chorus, half of which is persuaded by Dicæopolis, while the other half remains obstinate and hostile.

have had a peaceful and happy termination, like the great extant trilogy; and we can fancy that the pious Æschylus, when he brought upon the stage conflicts among the gods, would not allow his plays to close in wrath and anguish, as he did the Œdipodean trilogy just discussed. The work before us shows clear marks of development above the earlier plays. Three actors appear in the first scene, the silent figure of Prometheus being evidently a lay figure, from behind which the actor afterwards spoke. The chorus is even more restricted than in the *Seven against Thebes*, and occupies a position not more prominent than in the average plays of Sophocles or Euripides. The dialogue is paramount, and possesses a terseness and power not exceeded by any of the poet's later work. As Eteocles, the heroic warrior, is in the *Seven* the central and the only developed character, so here Prometheus, the heroic sufferer, sustains the whole play. In the first scene he is riven, with taunt and insult, to the rocks by the cruel or timid servants of Zeus. Then he soliloquises. Then he discourses with the sympathetic chorus of ocean nymphs and their cautious father. Then he condoles with the frantic Io, and prophesies her future fates. Lastly, he bids defiance to Zeus, through his herald Hermes, and disappears amid whirlwind and thunder. Yet the interest and pathos of the play never flag.

With a very usual artifice of the poet, satirised by Aristophanes, the chief actor is kept upon the stage silent for some time, during which the expectation of the spectators must have been greatly excited, even though diverted by the exquisite pathos of Hephæstus' address to the suffering god. The outburst of Prometheus, as soon as the insolent ministers of Zeus have left him manacled, but have freed him from the far more galling shackles of proud reserve, is among the great things in the world's poetry. The approach of the ocean nymphs is picturesquely conceived; indeed the whole scenery, laid in the Scythian deserts beyond the Euxine, among gloomy cliffs and caverns, with no interests upon the scene save those of the gods and their colossal conflicts, is weird and wild beyond comparison. The choral odes are not so fine as in the earlier plays, but the dialogue and soliloquies more than com-

pensate for them. The play is probably the easiest of the extant seven, and the text in a good condition, though the critics suspect a good many interpolations made by actors in their stage copies.

§ 177. But the external features of this splendid play are obscured, if possible, by the still greater interest attaching to its intention, and by the great difficulties of explaining the poet's attitude when he brought it upon the stage. For it represents a conflict among the immortal gods—a conflict carried out by violence and settled by force and fraud, not by justice. Zeus especially, his herald, and his subject gods, are represented as hard and fierce characters, maintaining a ruthless tyranny among the immortals; and the suffering Prometheus submits to centuries of torture from motives of pure benevolence to the wretched race of men, whom he had civilised and instructed against the will of Zeus. For this crime, and no other, is he punished by the Father of the Gods, thus set forth as the arch enemy of man.

How did the Athenian audience, who vehemently attacked the poet for divulging the Mysteries, tolerate such a drama? and still more, how did Æschylus, a pious and serious thinker, venture to bring such a subject on the stage with a moral purpose? As to the former question, we know that in all traditional religions, many old things survive which shock the moral sense of more developed ages, and which are yet tolerated even in public services, being hallowed by age and their better surroundings. So we can imagine that any tragic poet, who adhered to the facts of a received myth, would be allowed to draw his characters in accordance with it, especially as these characters were not regarded as fixed, but only held good for the single piece. In the Middle Ages much license was allowed in the mystery plays, but it was condoned and connived at because of the general religiousness of the practice, and because the main outlines of biblical story were the frame for these vagaries. Thus a very extreme distortion of their gods will not offend many who would feel outraged at any open denial of them. It is also to be remembered that despotic sovereignty was the Greek's ideal of happiness *for himself*, and that most nations have thought it not only reconcileable with, but conformable to, the dignity of

the great Father who rules the world. No Athenian, however he sympathised with Prometheus, would think of blaming Zeus for asserting his power and crushing all resistance to his will. I do not therefore think it difficult to understand how the Athenians not only tolerated but appreciated the play.

The question of the poet's intention is far more difficult, and will probably never be satisfactorily answered. The number of interpretations put upon the myth by commentators is astonishing, and yet it is possible that the poet had none of them consciously before his mind's eye. They have been well summed up by Patin[1] under six heads. There are first the *historical* theories, such as that of Diodorus Siculus, a scholiast of Apollonius Rhodius, and others, that make Prometheus a ruler of Egypt or of Scythia, who suffered in his struggles to reclaim his country and its people. Secondly, the *philosophical*, which hold it to be the image of the struggles and trials of humanity against natural obstacles. This seems the view of Welcker, and is certainly that of M. Guignaut. Thirdly, the *moral*, which place the struggle within the breast of the individual, and against his passions, as was done by Bacon, by Calderon, and also by Schlegel, as well as by several older French critics. Fourthly, the *Christian*, much favoured by Catholic divines in France, supported by Jos. de Maistre, Edgar Quinet, Ch. Maquin, and others, who see in the story either the redemption of man, the fall of Satan, or the fall of man, dimly echoed by some tradition from the sacred Scriptures. Garbitius, a Basle editor of the *Prometheus* in 1559, seems to have led the way in this direction. But as Lord Lytton justly observes, 'whatever theological system it shadows forth was rather the gigantic conception of the poet himself than the imperfect revival of any forgotten creed, or the poetical disguise of any existing philosophy.' Yet there is certainly something of disbelief or defiance of the creed of the populace. Fifthly, the *scientific*, which regard it as a mere personification of astronomical facts, as is the fashion with comparative mythologies. Similar attempts seem to have been made of old by the alchemists. Sixthly, there is the *political* interpretation

[1] *Etudes*, i. p. 254. I have added Mr. Lloyd's, from his *Age of Pericles*.

of Mr. Watkiss Lloyd, who thinks the genius of Themistocles and the ingratitude of Athens were the real object of the poet's teaching, though disguised in a myth.[1] There is lastly to be noticed an unique theory, which may be called the *romantic*, propounded by Desmaretz in 1648, when he published a rationalistic imitation of Euemerus, entitled *La Vérité des fables ou l'histoire des dieux de l'antiquité.* He explains how Prometheus betrays his sovereign, Jupiter, for the love of his mistress Pandora, a lady as exacting as any princess of chivalry. He retires in despair to the wastes of the Caucasus, where remorse daily gnaws his heart, and he suffers agonies more dreadful than if an eagle were continually devouring his entrails. Prometheus at the French court of the seventeenth century was sure to cut a strange figure.

There can be no doubt that an acquaintance with the Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries told upon Æschylus' theology, and made him regard the conflicts and sufferings of gods as part of their revelation to men, and we can imagine him accepting even the harshest and most uncivilised myths as part of the established faith, and therefore in some way to be harmonised with the highest morals. Yet it seems very strange that he should represent Zeus as a tyrant, and Prometheus—a god not by any means of importance in public worship—a noble sufferer, punished for his humanity. Still worse, Zeus is represented as the enemy of men, and completely estranged from any interest in their welfare. I do not know how these things are to be explained in such a man as Æschylus, and cannot say which of the more reasonable theories is to be preferred. This seems certain, that the iron power of Destiny was an extremely prominent idea in his mind, and that no more wonderful illustration could be found than this story, in which even the Ruler of the Gods was subject to it, and thus at the mercy of his vanquished but prophetic foe.

§ 178. The history of opinion about the *Prometheus* is somewhat curious. The great French critics of the seventeenth century could not comprehend it, and Voltaire, Fontenelle, and la Harpe were agreed that it was simply a monstrous play, and the

[1] Cf. Bernhardy's Comm. on most of these theories, *LG.* iii. p. 272, sq.

work of an uncultivated boor with some sparks of genius. The colossal conceptions of the great Greek, and the gigantic words with which he strove to compass his thought, were essentially foreign to the rigid form and smooth polish of the French tragedians. Of late years all this feeling has changed. Lemercier, Andrieux, and Edgar Quinet[1] have adopted the tone of Schlegel and Goethe, and everybody is now agreed as to the merit of the play. I would they were equally persuaded of the impossibility of imitating it. There are allusions to two translations or adaptations by the Romans, attributed to Attius, Varro, or Mæcenas. Cicero seems to have been particularly attracted by it. In modern days Calderon's *Estatuta de Prometheo* is said to be a moral allegory on the conflicts in human nature. Milton's Satan is full of recollections of Prometheus, and even the Samson Agonistes, though rather built on an Euripidean model, has many like traits. Byron tells us that this was his great model for all the rebellious heroes who conflict with the course of Providence. Shelley so loved to depict the struggle with a tyrannous deity that he reconstructed for us the *Prometheus Unbound* on his own model. But as Lord Lytton observes, Æschylus' power lies in concentration, whereas the quality of Shelley is diffuseness. Keats' *Hyperion* shows the impress of the same original. Goethe attempted, but never finished a Prometheus. Apart from the unworthy portraits in the *Pandora* of Voltaire and the *Prometheus* of Lefranc de Pompignan, E. Quinet has symbolised the fall of paganism and rise of Christianity in his drama (Paris, 1838), and several later French poets, MM. Lodin de Lalaire, V. de Laprade, and Senneville, have touched the subject—the latter in a tragedy on *Prometheus Delivered* (1844). Thus we have before us in this play of Æschylus one of the greatest and most lasting creations in human art, a model to succeeding ages, and commanding their homage. But no modern in-

[1] I am surprised to find in Villemain (*Litt. du xviii^me^ siècle*, iii. 299) the expression : 'pièce monstrueuse, ou l'on voit arriver l'Océan qui vole, porté sur un animal ailé, et d'autres folies poétiques de l'imagination grecque.' This is a curious sentence for so enlightened and elegant a critic.

terpreter has ever equalled the mighty original. As M. Patin says, it is owing to the unequal satisfaction provided for two very diverse requirements—a combination of great poetic clearness with a religious and philosophic twilight—that the work of Æschylus preserves its immortal freshness. There are German translations by Hartung and F. Jacobs. All earlier English versions may be forgotten in the presence of that of Mrs. Browning. There are editions by Wecklein and Schmidt.

§ 179. We now arrive at the *Oresteia*, the three plays on the fortunes of the house of Atreus, which were Æschylus' last and greatest work. These plays, the *Agamemnon*, *Choephori*, and *Eumenides*, are the only extant specimen of a trilogy, and are inestimable in showing us the way in which the older tragic poets combined three plays on a single subject. But unfortunately our single specimen is quite insufficient to afford us materials for an established theory.

The first of the series, the *Agamemnon*, is the longest and the greatest play left us by Æschylus, and, in my opinion, the greatest of the Greek tragedies we know. There is still no complication in the plot; the scenes follow one another in simple and natural order; but the splendid and consistent drawing of the characters, the deep philosophy of the choral songs, and the general grandeur and gloom which pervade the whole piece, raise it above all that his successors were able to achieve. The central point of interest is the matchless scene between Cassandra and the chorus—a scene which drew even from the writer of the dry didascaliæ an expression of the universal admiration it produced. The play opens with a night view of the palace at Argos, from the roof of which a watchman, in a most picturesque prologue of a homely type, details the long weariness of his watch, and betrays in vague hints the secret sores that fester within the house. But his soliloquy is broken by a shout at the sudden flashing out of the long-expected beacon-light that heralded the fall of Troy. Then follows a long and difficult chorus which reviews all the course of the Trojan war, the omen of the eagles, the prophecies of Calchas, and the sacrifice of Iphigeneia. The hymn marches on in its course, each member closing with the solemn refrain αἴλινον

αἴλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω. The moral views of God and of his Providence are very pure and great, and remind us of the passages above quoted from the *Supplices.*[1]

It is not necessary to follow step by step the plot of a play so easily read in good translations. The character of Clytemnestra is boldly and finely drawn. She is evidently the master spirit of the palace, and seems stronger, not only than Ægisthus, but than Agamemnon, who does not awake in us much interest. Cassandra is of course a character of situation, but is remarkable as the pure creation of the poet, and not suggested by the old forms of the myth. Her prophetic frenzy, her attempts to speak plainly to the sympathetic chorus, her ultimate clearness, and noble despair as she casts away the fillets of the god and enters the house of her doom—all combine to form a scene without parallel in the Greek drama, and which has never been approached by the highest effort of either Sophocles or Euripides. But the play not only stands out alone for dramatic greatness; it abounds everywhere in picturesqueness—in picturesqueness of descrip-

[1] *Ζεύς, ὅστις ποτ' ἐστίν, εἰ τόδ' αὐτῷ φίλον κεκλημένῳ, τοῦτό νιν προσεννέπω. οὐκ ἔχω προσεικάσαι, πάντ' ἐπισταθμώμενος, πλὴν Διός, εἰ τὸ μάταν ἀπὸ φροντίδος ἄχθος χρὴ βαλεῖν ἐτητύμως. οὐδ' ὅστις πάροιθεν ἦν μεγας, παμμάχῳ θράσει βρύων, οὐδὲν ἂν λέξαι πρὶν ὤν, ὃς δ' ἔπειτ' ἔφυ, τριακτῆρος οἴχεται τυχών. Ζῆνα δέ τις προφρόνως ἐπινίκια κλάζων τεύξεται φρενῶν τὸ πᾶν· τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὁδώσαντα, τὸν πάθει μάθος θέντα κυριως ἔχειν. στάζει δ' ἔν θ' ὕπνῳ πρὸ καρδίας ωνησιπήμων πόνος· καὶ παρ' ἀκοντας ἦλθε σωφρονεῖν. δαιμόνων δέ που χάρις, βιαίως σέλμα σεμνὸν ἡμένων.*

tion, as in the speeches of the watchman and the herald Talthybius; in picturesqueness of lyric utterance, as in the famous chorus on the flight of Helen, and the anguish of the deserted Menelaus.[1] Most striking also is the picture of the treacherous beauty under the image of a lion's whelp, brought up and petted in the house, and suddenly turning to its native fierceness.[2]

[1] ἄγουσά τ' ἀντίφερνον Ἰλίῳ φθοράν,
βέβακεν ῥίμφα διὰ πυλᾶν,
ἄτλατα τλᾶσα· πολλὰ δ' ἔστενον
τόδ' ἐννέποντες δόμων προφῆται·
ἰὼ ἰὼ δῶμα δῶμα καὶ πρόμοι,
ἰὼ λέχος καὶ στίβοι φιλάνορες.
πάρεστι σιγᾶσ', ἄτιμος, ἀλοίδορος,
ἄδιστος ἀφεμένων ἰδεῖν.
πόθῳ δ' ὑπερποντίας
φάσμα δόξει δόμων ἀνάσσειν.
εὐμόρφων δὲ κολοσσῶν
ἔχθεται χάρις ἀνδρί.
ὀμμάτων δ' ἐν ἀχηνίαις ἔρρει πᾶσ' Ἀφροδίτα.
ὀνειρόφαντοι δὲ πενθήμονες
πάρεισιν δοκαὶ φέρουσαι χάριν ματαίαν.
μάταν γὰρ, εὖτ' ἂν ἐσθλά τις δοκῶν ὁρᾷ,
παραλλάξασα διὰ χερῶν
βέβακεν ὄψις οὐ μεθύστερον
πτεροῖς ὀπαδοῦσ' ὕπνου κελεύθοις.
τὰ μὲν κατ' οἴκους ἐφ' ἑστίας ἄχη
τάδ' ἐστὶ καὶ τῶνδ' ὑπερβατώτερα.
τὸ πᾶν δ' ἀφ' Ἑλλάδος αἴας συνορμένοις
πένθεια τλησικάρδιος
δόμων ἑκάστου πρέπει.
πολλὰ γοῦν θιγγάνει πρὸς ἦπαρ·
οὓς μὲν γάρ τις ἔπεμψεν
οἶδεν· ἀντὶ δὲ φωτῶν
τεύχη καὶ σποδὸς εἰς ἑκάστου δόμους ἀφικνεῖται.
ὁ χρυσαμοιβὸς δ' Ἄρης σωμάτων
καὶ ταλαντοῦχος ἐν μάχῃ δορὸς
πυρωθὲν ἐξ Ἰλίου
φίλοισι πέμπει βαρὺ
ψῆγμα δυσδάκρυτον αν-
τήνορος σποδοῦ γεμι-
ζων λέβητας εὐθέτους.

[2] vv. 735, sq.

There is one passage which has excited much criticism concerning the chorus. When the voice of Agamemnon is heard within, crying that he is fatally wounded, there seems to be a regular deliberation of the chorus, each member offering his opinion, and summed up by the leader at the end of twenty-five lines. This delay seems very absurd, except we have recourse to the natural solution, that the various members of the chorus were made to speak *simultaneously*, so producing a confused sound of agitated voices, which is precisely what is most dramatic at such a moment. It is well known to actors now that this confused talking of a crowd is only to be produced by making each person on the stage say something definite at the same moment; and I believe Æschylus to have here used this expedient. Why has this natural explanation occurred to no critic? It is remarkable how the chorus, who even after the murder treat Clytemnestra with respect, and only bewail before her their lost king in bitter grief, start up into ungovernable rage when the craven Ægisthus appears to boast of his success. They will not endure from him one word of direction; and so the play ends with the entreaty of the overwrought queen to avoid further violence on this awful day.

The *Agamemnon* suggested the subject of plays to Sophocles and to Ion among the Greeks, and gave rise to various imitations among the early Roman tragedians, as well as by Seneca. In modern days, after a series of obscure attempts among the French of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was imitated (in 1738) by Thompson, in a play which was translated and produced with success in France. It was also imitated by Alfieri (1783), and then in 1796 by Lemercier in a somewhat famous version. But all these modern Agamemnons differ from that of Æschylus in introducing the two main innovations of modern tragedy—an interesting plot or intrigue, and a careful and conscious painting of human passions. The great original appeals to far loftier interests. Thus Alfieri altogether disregards and omits the splendid part of Cassandra, both from his extreme love of simplicity, and in order that he may find room for painting what Æschylus assumes as long since determined—the struggle in Clytemnestra's mind between passion, duty, vengeance, and honour. This development of the

mental conflicts in Clytemnestra is reproduced by Lemercier, who has, however, not made the error of omitting Cassandra. But the Clytemnestra of Æschylus has been for years tutored by her criminal passion. Her struggles with duty have long ceased, and her resolve is fixed. This is no mistake in psychology, no passive adherence (as M. Villemain thinks) to the received legend, but a well-known mental state in a degraded woman.

Among English translations[1] I may specially notice the elegant but not accurate one of the late Dean Milman, in a volume already often cited on the lyric poets. Mr. Fitzgerald, the well-known translator of *Omar Khayyam*, has given us a fine, but free and modified version of the play in his 'Agamemnon, a tragedy taken from the Greek,' most of which, and the best parts of which, are literal translations. So have Conington, Professor Kennedy, Mr. Morshead, and Miss Swanwick; the last also published in a magnificent edition with Flaxman's illustrations. Lastly, Mr. Robert Browning has given us an over-faithful version from his matchless hand—matchless, I conceive, in conveying the deeper spirit of the Greek poets. But in this instance he has outdone his original in ruggedness, owing to his excess of conscience as a translator.

§ 180. The *Choephori*, so called from the chorus carrying vessels with formal offerings for Agamemnon, which follows, is unfortunately very corrupt, and even mutilated at its opening in our MSS. This, as well as the intrinsic sombreness and gloomy vagueness of the play, makes it probably the most difficult of our tragedies in its detail. But the main outline is very simple and massive. The scene discloses the royal portal, and close to it the tomb of Agamemnon. The proximity of the tomb to the palace seems merely determined by stage reasons, and does not rest in any sense upon a tradition that Agamemnon was buried in his citadel, as might be inferred from Dr. Schliemann's conjectures. Indeed, the whole tradition of Agamemnon's being buried at Mycenæ seems unknown to Æschylus, who ignores Diomede, and makes the seat of the great empire of the Atreidæ at Argos.

Orestes[2] in the opening scene declares his return to Argos to

[1] For editions, cf. § 184.

[2] In a passage criticised for its redundancy by Aristophanes in the *Frogs*.

avenge the murder of his father, but he and Pylades stand aside when the chorus of female domestics (probably Trojans) come out in solemn procession to offer libations to the dead. Here Orestes sees and recognises Electra, who discusses with the chorus how she is to perform the commands of Clytemnestra, lately terrified by an ominous dream. They then find the lock of hair offered at the tomb by Orestes, and his foot-tracks, by which Electra is at once convinced of his return. It is evident that Æschylus laid no stress on the recognition scene, and that any marks sufficed for his purpose. But he has naturally not escaped the censure of Euripides, who ridicules this scene in the parallel passage of his *Electra*. When Orestes discovers himself, there follows a splendid dialogue and chorus, I had almost said duet and chorus, in which the children of Agamemnon and their friends pray for help and favour in their vengeance. This scene occupies a large part of the play. At its close Orestes tells his plan of coming as a Phocian stranger and announcing his own death, so as to disarm suspicion, and thus obtaining access to the palace. Here we see the first dawning of a *plot*, or of that complex tragedy which soon supplanted the simpler form. The chorus, who in this play are strictly not only the confidants but accomplices of the royal children, aid in the deception, and when Orestes has been invited within by Clytemnestra, persuade the nurse, who is sent for Ægisthus, to disobey her instructions, and desire him to come alone. This character (Kilissa), with her homely lament over Orestes, and her memories of the vulgar troubles of the nursery, gives great relief to the uniform gloom of the play, and, in her coarsely expressed real grief, contrasts well with the stately but affected lamentation of the queen.[1] After Ægisthus has passed in, and his death-cry has been heard, comes the magnificent scene in which Clytemnestra, suddenly acquainted with the disaster, calls for her double-axe, but is instantly confronted by her son, and sees herself doomed to die. There is here not an idle word, not a touch of surprise or inquiry. She sees and recognises all in a moment. An instant of weakness, the protest of Pylades, a short, hurried

[1] Sophocles seems to have produced a similar character in his *Niobe*, cf. fr. 400; and this nurse was translated into marble in the famous Niobe group, of which we see a Roman copy at Florence.

dialogue between mother and son, and she is brought in to be slain beside her paramour. The scene is then rolled back, and shows Orestes standing over the dead, but already stricken in conscience, and terrified at the dread Furies with which his mother had threatened him. With his flight the play concludes.

So great a subject could not but find imitators. Yet Sophocles and Euripides took quite a different course, as the very title of their plays indicates. Their *Electras* bring into the foreground the sorrows and hopes of the princess, who was doomed by her unnatural mother to long servitude and disgrace, and was sick at heart with hope deferred of her brother's return. Her despair at the announcement of his death, the ill-disguised mental relief of Clytemnestra, the sudden return of Electra's hope, the recognition of Orestes—these have afforded to Sophocles one of his most splendid, and to Euripides a very affecting tragedy. But a far more interesting analogy is suggested by the unconscious parallel of Shakspeare, whose *Hamlet*, dealing with the very same moral problem, gathers into one the parts of Electra and of Orestes, and represents not only the vengeance of the murdered king's son, but the long mental doubts and conflicts of the avenger, living in the palace, and within sight of his adulterous mother and her paramour. Shakespeare has made the queen-mother a weaker, and far less guilty character, and therefore has consistently recoiled from the dreadful crisis of matricide.[1] With him the uncertainty of evidence, in Hamlet, takes the place of the uncertainty of hope, in Electra, whether her brother would indeed return. Instead of the oracles that urge Orestes, and the ever-present tomb of Agamemnon, he employs the apparition of the king in person. These, and other kindred features, make *Hamlet* a very curious and instructive parallel to the *Choephori*, the more curious because accidental. But, like all moderns (even including the later Greeks), Shakespeare has turned from the discussion of great world-problems to personal and psychological interests, and therefore his magnificent play wants the colossal grandeur and the mystic gloom of the less developed, less elaborated, but greater conception of Æschylus.

[1] There is also, of course, the influence of Christianity in its repugnance to bloodshed, a repugnance which the Greek poet would not feel.

§ 181. The *Eumenides* forms a fitting conclusion to the trilogy. It is a play remarkable for many curious features. First, we may notice the quick changes of scene, which violate the ordinary niceties of time and place. We have the rocky fane at Delphi, and its surroundings, in the opening scene, then the inside of the temple, with the sleeping Furies camped about the suppliant; then again the Acropolis of Athens, and then, apparently, the neighbouring Areopagus. The extraordinary character of the chorus is also to be noted. They are not only the chief actors in the play, but in hostility to the other players, and representing a separate principle. Their terrible appearance, their awful attributes, and the dread incantations whereby they seek to charm their victim, so impressed the ancients, that all manner of anecdotes are current as to the effect they produced. The refrain of their song is very striking. [1]

The whole play, though revolving round Orestes' deed, and though calling in at its close a jury of Athenian citizens, is, like the *Prometheus*, a conflict of gods and of great world principles, in which mortals seem hardly worthy to take part.

[1] ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ τεθυμένῳ
τόδε μέλος, παρακοπα,
παραφορὰ φρενοδαλής,
ὕμνος ἐξ Ἐρινύων,
δέσμιος φρενῶν, ἀφόρ-
μικτος, αὐονὰ βροτοῖς.

τοῦτο γὰρ λάχος διανταία
μοῖρ' ἐπέκλωσεν ἐμπέδως ἔχειν,
θνατῶν τοῖσιν αὐτουργίαι ξυμπέσωσιν μάταιοι,
τοῖς δμαρτεῖν, ὅφρ' ἂν γᾶν ὑπέλθῃ· θανὼν δ'
οὐκ ἄγαν ἐλεύθερος.

ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ τεθυμένῳ
τόδε μέλος, παρακοπά,
παραφορὰ φρενοδαλής,
ὕμνος ἐξ Ἐρινύων,
δέσμιος φρενῶν, ἀφόρ-
μικτος, αὐονὰ βροτοῖς.

γιγνομέναισι λάχη τάδ' ἐφ' ἁμὶν ἐκράνθη·
ἀθανάτων δ' ἀπέχειν χέρας, ουδέ τις ἐστὶ
συνδαίτωρ μετάκοινος.
παλλευκων δὲ πέπλων

Yet the play also gives us the first specimen of that love of trial scenes which runs through all the later drama. The Athenians were, as we know, peculiarly addicted to this duty, and became, indeed, a whole nation of jurymen. But in the present case Æschylus was promoting another object, and one which, in the hands of a lesser genius, might have spoilt his artistic work. He wished to show the august origin and solemn purpose of the Court of the Areopagus, which was at that very time being attacked by Ephialtes and Pericles. It should also be observed that this trilogy, unlike that on Œdipus, ends with a peaceful result, and with the solemn settlement of the Furies, under the title of *Eumenides*, in their sacred retreat beneath the rock of the Areopagus. The weary curse which had persecuted the house of Atreus thus becomes exhausted, and Orestes returns purified and justified to his ancestral kingdom.

Though it is deeply to be regretted that no other specimen of a trilogy has survived, it is more than probable that never again was such perfection attained, either in individual plays or in their artistic combination. We have the last and greatest outcome of Æschylus' genius, and Sophocles had already set the example of contending with separate plays. It is, I confess, somewhat shocking to think that a satyric drama, the *Proteus*, was performed after this complete and satisfying series. From the stray fragments of our poet's satyric muse which remain (especially from the *ὀστολόγοι*), we know that a good deal of coarse jesting was permitted and beast nature introduced in these merry afterludes; and we cannot but fancy that the great effect of the trilogy must have been considerably effaced by such an appendix.

§ 182. The *fragments* of Æschylus, though many, are not interesting dramatically, as they seldom give us an insight into the structure of a lost piece, or even poetically, for he was not a poet who strewed his canvas with lyric flowers or sententious

> ἄμοιρος, ἄκληρος ἐτύχθην.
> δωμάτων γὰρ εἰλόμαν
> ἀνατροπάς, ὅταν Ἄρης
> τιθασὸς ὢν φίλον ἕλῃ.
> ἐπὶ τόν, ὦ, διόμενα
> κρατερὸν ὄνθ', ὁμοίως
> μαυροῦμεν ὑφ' αἵματος νέου.

aphorisms, like his successors. He was essentially a tragedian, and every word in his play was meant for its purpose, and for its purpose only. He consequently afforded little scope for collectors of beautiful lines of general application. On mythical questions he is often quoted, and is a most important authority; likewise on geographical questions, for which he had a special fancy, as appears very plainly from his extant plays. He lived at the very time when the Milesian school of Hecatæus had stimulated a taste for these studies, and when the Greeks were beginning to interest themselves about foreign lands. The play which seems to me our greatest loss is the *Myrmidons*, in which the subject was the death of Patroclus, and therefore taken directly from the Iliad, but modernised in a remarkable way by the warmer colouring given to the affection subsisting between Achilles and his friend. It would indeed have been interesting to see more fully the treatment of such a subject by such a poet. The *Ransom of Hector* was also taken from the Iliad, but several other plays on the Trojan cycle were drawn from the events preceding and following the Anger of Achilles.

§ 183. The intelligent student, who has read for himself the extant plays of Æschylus, will form a better judgment of his genius than can be suggested by any general remarks in a sketch like the present. What I here offer by way of reflection is rather meant to guard against false theories and mistaken estimates, than to supply any substitute for the student's own knowledge of so capital a figure in Greek Literature. A comparison with Pindar and Simonides shows how great an advance he made, and how independently he approached the great moral problems which the Greek poets—the established clergy of the day—were obliged to expound. Æschylus was, indeed, essentially a theologian, meaning by that term not merely a man who is deeply interested in religious things, but a man who makes the difficulties and obscurities of morals and of creeds his intellectual study. But, what is more honourable and exceptional, he was so candid and honest a theologian, that he did not approach men's difficulties for the purpose of refuting them, or showing them weak and groundless. On the contrary, though an orthodox and pious man, though clearly convinced of the goodness of Providence and of the pro-

found truth of the religion of his fathers, he was ever stating boldly the contradictions and anomalies in morals and in myths, and thus naturally incurring the odium and suspicion of the professional advocates of religion and their followers. He felt, perhaps instinctively, that a vivid dramatic statement of these problems in his tragedies was better moral education than vapid platitudes about our ignorance, and about our difficulties being only caused by the shortness of our sight. He knew the strength of human will, the dignity of human liberty, the greatness of human self-sacrifice, and yet he will not abate aught from the omnipotence of Providence, the iron constraint of a gloomy fate, the bondage of ancestral guilt. It is quite plain that the thought of his day was influenced by two dark undercurrents, both of which must have touched him—the Orphic mysteries, with their secret rites of sanctification, their dogmas of personal purity and future bliss; and, on the other hand, the Ionic philosophy, which in the hands of Heracleitus had not shunned obscurity and vagueness, but had shown enigmas in all the ordinary phenomena of human life. These influences conspired with the strong unalterable genius of the poet, and produced results quite unique in the history of Literature. For it is evidently absurd to attribute the massiveness and apparent uncouthness of Æschylus, as Schlegel does, to the conditions of nascent tragedy. Phrynichus, his contemporary, was famed for opposite qualities, for gentle sweetness and lyric grace. At no epoch could Æschylus have been softened down into a conventional artist. Many critics speak of him as almost Oriental in some respects—in his bold metaphors, in his wild and irregular imaginings, and yet he is censured by Aristophanes for too much theatrical craft. I suppose the former mean to compare him with the greatest of the Hebrew prophets; nor does the comparison seem unjust, if we confine it to this, that both found strange and striking images to rouse their hearers' imagination, and that neither felt bound by the logic of ordinary reasoning. In this matter Heracleitus and Æschylus are the masters of bold and suggestive inconsequence. But the obscurity of both was that of condensation—a pregnant obscurity, as contrasted with the redundant obscurity of some modern poets, or the artificial obscurity of the Attic epoch. His philosophy is

in the spirit, and not in the diction of his works—in vast conceptions, not in laconic maxims. Both Sophocles (as he himself confesses) and Thucydides, the highest types of the Periclean epoch, are often obscure, but, as I said, are so artificially, not from endeavouring to suggest great half-grasped thoughts, but from a desire to play at hide-and-seek with the reader, and surprise him by cleverness of expression. We always feel that Æschylus thought more than he expressed, that his strained compounds are never affected or unnecessary. Although, therefore, he violated the rules which bound weaker men, it is false to say that he was less an artist than they. His art was of a different kind, despising what they prized, and attempting what they did not dare, but not the less a conscious and thorough art. Though the drawing of character was not his main object, his characters are truer and deeper than those of poets who attempted nothing else. Though lyrical sweetness had little place in the gloom and terror of his Titanic stage, yet here too, when he chooses, he equals the masters of lyric song. So long as a single Homer was deemed the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey, we might well concede to him the first place, and say that Æschylus was the second poet of the Greeks. But by the light of nearer criticism, and with a closer insight into the structure of the epic poems, we must retract this judgment, and assert that no other poet among the Greeks, either in grandeur of conception, or splendour of execution, equals the untranslateable, unapproachable, inimitable Æschylus.[1]

Before passing on, let me direct attention to the very ingenious and suggestive, but little cited *Prolegomena* to Æschylus by R. Westphal (Leipzig, 1869), a very high authority on the musical side of Greek poetry. He shows the strict adherence to fixed forms in the poet, and even considers the *Prometheus*, from its remarkable variations in this respect, to be a much interpolated and deformed piece. It was Æschylus' habit to construct his piece with *four* choric songs, and one *commos* or lament, replaced by a processional hymn, if the plot did not admit of the *threnos*. Westphal examines carefully the structure

[1] Aischulos' bronze-throat eagle-bark at blood
Has somehow spoilt my taste for twitterings!
R. BROWNING, *Arist. Ap.* p. 94.

of these choral pieces, and starting from the taunt of Euripides in Aristoph. *Frogs*, 1281, argues that the old Terpandrian nome, expanding from a centre (ὀμφαλός) into pairs of parallel members, was the real model of the poet, so that the strophic form does not give us the key to the sense. Thus there is always an ἀρχά, ὀμφαλός, and σφραγίς; there may be two transition members (καταπροπά and μετακατατρυπά) joining them; there may be further a proem and epilogue. On this model Westphal analyses all the choral odes in the plays.[1]

The commic or processional odes, with which the plays usually conclude, are framed upon a totally different model, that of the aulodic *Threnos*, which was always amœbean, and is divided between actors and chorus, or between sections of the chorus. The effect seems here to have been chiefly musical, as the text has little meaning, and consists in responsive utterances of woe, each side taking its clue from the other. In the *Septem* and *Persæ* this musical performance was not given to the chief actor. The whole theory is most ingenious, and his rearrangement of the amœbean strains convincing; but why did Æschylus preserve the *strophic* form, if the *nomic* form was the real basis of his choral odes? This difficulty still remains unanswered. The application of this theory to Pindar's odes has been mentioned in its place.

§ 184. *Bibliographical.* Turning to the question of Æschylean literature, we find the whole criticism of our texts to depend on one MS. of the tenth century, the celebrated *Plut.* xxxii. 9, of the Laurentian library at Florence, which contains, with Sophocles and Apollonius Rhodius, the seven plays written out in a beautifully neat hand with very slight, somewhat slanting characters; it has numerous scholia, but is unfortunately mutilated through most of the *Agamemnon* and opening of the *Choephori*. From copies of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, at Florence, Venice, and Naples, these defects, and some gaps in the scholia, have been partially remedied. The scholia seem to be more Byzantine than Alexandrian, and it does not appear that, with the exception of the arguments prefixed by Aristophanes, much attention was paid

[1] E.g. *Agamemnon*, 105–8 προοίμιον; 109–59 ἀρχά; 110–84 ὀμφαλός; 185–254 σφραγίς; 255–8 ἐπίλογος.

to the poet by the great critics. Indeed, the same thing may be said of both Roman and French imitators. While they understood and copied Sophocles and Euripides, Æschylus was neglected as an uncouth and rude forerunner of the real drama. We must acknowledge this much merit in Schlegel, that he led dramatic criticism into a sounder and deeper course.

The *Prometheus*, *Persæ*, and *Septem*, which stand first in the MSS., were very much more read than the rest, and are far better preserved. The *editio princeps* of the text was that of Aldus (1518); that of Robortellus (Venice, 1552) first gave the scholia. The whole *Agamemnon* appears in Victorius', and in the ed. Steph. 1557. Good early critics were Dorat, Canter, Stanley. Porson turned his critical acumen to bear upon the text in the Glasgow edition of 1794, which was followed by the editions of Butler, of five plays by Blomfield, of Peile, and of Paley. In the present day the editions best worth studying are those of God. Hermann, W. Dindorf, and H. Weil for criticism, Merkel's careful ed. of the Florentine MS., that of Mr. Davies on the *Agamemnon*, *Choephori* and *Eumenides*, and those of Kock, Gilbert (and Enger, 1874), Kennedy (1878), on the *Agamemnon* [1]; Mr. Margoliouth's *Agamemnon* (Macmillan, 1884), and Mr. Verrall's (1890), the latter as revolutionary as regards the plot as the former is on the text; now Schneidewin and Hense (Berlin, 1883). Mr. A. Sidgwick has also supplied us with a handy edition (1881), the most serviceable for ordinary use. It is the result of long study spent on separate editions of the plays; we have also Mr. Prickard's edition of the *Persæ*. Wellauer and Linwood have composed Æschylean lexicons which are useful, but even the latter (1848) now somewhat antiquated. Wecklein's complete critical text of Æschylus (Berlin, 1885) is a repertory of all the best researches on the poet. The German translations are endless. Those of Voss, Droysen, and Donner may specially be named.[2]

[1] Cf. also Paley's *Supp.* and *Choeph.*, with scholia (Camb. 1888); cf. Kennedy's older and newer eds. (1878, 1882), which differ notably.

[2] Full information on all the German versions of the *Oresteia*, from Von Halem (1785) to Donner (1854), will be found in an article by Eichhoff in the *Neue Jahrbücher für Philologie*, vol. cxv.

The French have rather imitated than reproduced, if we except the versions of Du Theil and Brumoy. In English we have the respectable version of Potter, the *Agamemnons* of Prof. Blackie (1850), Symmons, those already mentioned above (p. 44), Mr. J. F. Davies', and very spirited versions of select passages by Lord Lytton in his *Rise and Fall of Athens.* I call special attention to the very able criticism accompanying these translations. Mrs. Browning has given us an admirable *Prometheus*; and lastly, Mr. Browning has turned his genius for reproducing Greek plays upon this masterpiece, and has given a version which will probably not permit the rest to maintain their well-earned fame, though it is in itself so difficult that the Greek original is often required for translating his English. I confess that even with this aid, which shows the extraordinary faithfulness of the work, I had preferred a more Anglicised version from his master hand.

The truest and deepest imitation of the spirit of Æschylus in modern times is not to be sought in the stiff formalism of Racine or Alfieri, but in the splendid *Atalanta in Calydon* of Mr. Swinburne, whose antitheism brings him to stand in an attitude between human freewill and effort on the one side, and ruthless tyranny of Providence on the other, not approached in poetry (so far as I know) from Æschylus' day down to our own. Unfortunately, the very poetical odes of his chorus are diffuse, and written with all that luxuriance of rich sound which in Mr. Swinburne often dilutes or hides the depth and clearness of his thought. The English reader must therefore by no means regard this part of the play as modelled upon Æschylus, nor as at all representing his poetry. It is in the plot, and in the nervous compressed *stichomuthia*, or dialogue in alternate lines, and in the gloomy darkness which broods over the action, that the modern poet has caught the spirit of his great predecessor. Since the *Samson Agonistes* of Milton, we have had no such reproduction of the Greek drama, and those who are not in sympathy with Mr. Swinburne's other poems should not fail to turn to this exceptional work, which he has never since equalled. The *Prometheus Unbound* of Shelley, as he himself tells us, is not intended to be an imitation of Æschylus, but as a wholly independent work.

CHAPTER XVI.

Sophocles.

§ 185. There is even less told us about the life of Sophocles than about that of Æschylus, and, indeed, there seems to have been little that was eventful to be told. He was too young to take part in the great struggle of the Persian war, and his campaign to Samos, in middle life, was evidently no serious warfare. He refused, we are told, to leave Athens, which he loved, at the invitation of foreign cities and princes, and thus avoided the adventures of travelling which were fatal to both his rivals; and though he took part in politics on the oligarchical side, as he was perhaps a *Probulus* when the four hundred were established, he seems never to have been a strong or leading politician. His gentleness, and beauty, and placid disposition seem to have saved him from most of the buffets and trials of the world; and he is, perhaps, the only distinguished Athenian now known who lived and died without a single enemy.

He was born in the deme Colonus, within half an hour's walk of Athens, in the scenery which he describes in his famous chorus of the second Œdipus, and which has hardly altered up to the present day, amid all the sad changes which have seamed and scarred the fair features of Attica. I know not, indeed, why he calls it the *white* (ἀργῆτα) Colonus, for it was then, as now, hidden in deep and continuous green. The dark ivy and the golden crocus, the white poplar and the grey olive, are still there. The silvery Cephissus still feeds the pleasant rills, with which the husbandman waters his thickly wooded cornfields; and in the deep shade the nightingales have not yet ceased their plaintive melody.

His father's name was Sophillus, and the scholiasts wrangle about the dignity of his position in life; though he seems to have been no more than a man of middle rank, making his

income by practising or directing a trade. Concerning his mother and brethren there is absolute silence. Born about 496–5 B.C., he was chosen, for his beauty and grace, to lead the solemn dance in honour of the victory at Salamis. He was educated by Lampros, a rival of Pindar and of Pratinas, as a scientific musician; and this special training in *music* enabled him, in spite of his weak speaking voice, to act with great success the parts of Thamyras and of Nausicaa, in the plays which he wrote concerning these personages. In 468 he came forward as a tragic poet, and at the age of 28, with his first piece, defeated the great Æschylus, who had been for a generation the master of the tragic stage. What made the victory more remarkable was the selection of Kimon and his victorious colleagues as judges, instead of the ordinary procedure by lot. From this date till his death, at the age of 90, the poet devoted all his energy to the production of those famous works of art, which gave him such a hold over the Athenian public, that he came to be considered the very ideal of a tragic poet, and was worshipped after his death as a hero, under the title *Dexion* (Δεξίων.) He is said to have won eighteen or twenty tragic victories, and though sometimes postponed to Philocles and others, was never placed third in all his life. The author of the *Poetic* and the Alexandrian critics follow the judgment of the Attic public, and most modern critics have agreed with them that the tragedies of Sophocles are the most perfect that the world has ever seen. It is, indeed, no unusual practice to exhibit the defects of both Æschylus and Euripides by comparison with their more successful rival.

The Athenian public were so delighted with his *Antigone* that they appointed him one of the ten generals, along with Pericles, for the subduing of Samos; as regards which Pericles is said to have told him that he knew how to compose well enough, but not how to command. It is conjectured that on this expedition he met and knew Herodotus, by whom several passages in his plays, and one in the fragments,[1] seem suggested.

[1] Fr. 380, about Palamedes' invention of games, like the Lydians' invention in Herod i. 94. This coincidence has not yet, I think, been noticed. So also the famous chorus in *O. C.* 1211, sq., seems copied

If the passage of the *Antigone* (which many critics declare spurious) be genuine, it was composed before the poet went to Samos; and the conjecture here breaks down. Yet I have personally no doubt that Herodotus, who lived much at Athens, suggested these passages; and I am not disposed to admit that any of them is spurious, though they may belong to second editions of their respective plays. He was (in 443 B.C.) one of the *Hellenotamiæ*, or administrators of the public treasury—a most responsible and important post. He sided with the oligarchy in 411, if he be the *Probulus* then mentioned. When Aristophanes brought out his *Frogs* in 405 B.C., the poet was but lately dead, and, amid the conflict of schools of poetry, is acknowledged the genial favourite of all;[1] the comic Phrynichus, in his *Muses*, of the same date, spoke of him in very similar terms. A splendid portrait statue of him, found a few years ago at Ostia, and now in the Lateran at Rome, is doubtless a copy of that set up in the theatre at Athens by Lycurgus, and represents him as worthy in dignity and beauty of all the praises bestowed upon him. The various anecdotes which bear upon his character, and which seem to be partly, at least, drawn from the high authority of the memoirs of the contemporary Ion of Chios,[2] all speak in the same tone, and describe him as of easy temper, and much given to the pleasures of love. He is even contrasted with Euripides in the more Greek complexion of his passion. Most of his German panegyrists are unable to refute the jibe of Aristophanes,[3] that in his old days he turned miser, and worked for money like a second Simonides, but are indignant at the report that he became attached, late in life, to a courtesan named Theoris, of Sikyon. He is, moreover, quoted in the first book of Plato's *Republic*, speaking of Eros as a fierce tyrant, from whose bonds he had escaped by advancing years. But this probably alludes to the passions formed in the palæstra, of which other dialogues of Plato tell us a great deal. He is

from Artabanus' speech, Herod vii. 46. The attack on Egyptian manners in the same play (vv. 337, sq.) is a still clearer case, perhaps also *O. T.* 981. Lastly, we have *Antig.* vv. 909, sq. Cf. vol. ii. p. 19.

[1] εὔκολος μὲν ἐνθάδ', εὔκολος δ' ἐκεῖ.

[2] Cf. fr. 1 of *Ion* in Müller's *FHG.*

[3] *Pax*, 698.

said to have had a second family by this Theoris. All the Alexandrian authorities believed that his legitimate son was Iophon, son of his wife Nikostrate, but that of Theoris was born Ariston, who was father of the younger Sophocles. But the testimony of inscriptions,[1] which speak of a Sophocles corresponding with the younger of that name, and even of an Iophon, son of (apparently this) Sophocles, makes it probable that the *Life* and scholiasts are wrong about the grandson. We have no more certain information about the more famous story of Iophon's attempt to take the old poet's property out of his hands by an action at law, and how he was defeated by the reading of the famous chorus in the *Œdipus at Colonus*, then just composed. Most critics now think that this play was not, like the *Philoctetes*, the product of Sophocles' old age, but of his mature life, though it seems not to have been brought out till after his death, probably by Iophon, with considerable interpolations. Aristophanes (in the *Frogs*) speaks of Iophon as a poet of uncertain promise, but still as the best of the *Epigoni*. Other stories, about the respect shown him by the besieging Spartans, when he died, and how his friends were allowed to bury him eleven stadia on the way to Dekeleia may be read in the *Life*. It seems odd he should not have been laid in his home at Colonus, which is quite close to Athens, but possibly, with this modification, the anecdote may be true. He was commonly called the Honey Bee, and was said, as almost every other great Greek poet, to have been peculiarly imbued with Homeric thoughts and style. This vague statement is not verified by his extant plays, though he is said in others to have adapted the Odyssey repeatedly. Indeed, we may suspect, with Mr. Paley, that the Homer alluded to by these old critics includes the Cyclic epics, from which he certainly borrowed almost all his plots.

But there are other and more definite things reported concerning his style, his method, and his influence on the history of the drama. These we shall best consider when we have given a sketch of the extant plays and fragments. Of the

[1] See Dindorf's *Poetæ Trag.* p. 12, note. The younger Iophon would naturally be called after his grandfather.

elegies, the pæans, the prose essay on the chorus,[1] the seventy tragedies, the eighteen satyric dramas, which the poet (after making due deductions) seems fairly to be credited with, there remain only seven tragedies, and of the 1,000 fragments, but few are of any length or importance. A great many of them are indeed only quoted (chiefly by Hesychius) for the sake of curious and rare words which the poet had employed—a remarkable feature in these fragments. Of the seven tragedies now extant only two can be dated, even approximately—the *Antigone*, which was brought out just before the expedition of Pericles to Samos (440 B.C.), and the *Philoctetes*, which may possibly be the last play he wrote, and which appeared in 409. Both these plays won the first prize, and if we cannot expect immaturity in the one, we cannot find decay in the other. But considering these, as we are bound, first and last, we are at liberty to arrange the rest in whatever order is most convenient for critical purposes.

§ 186. The *Antigone* was said to be Sophocles' thirty-second work, and must, from its date, have at all events been the work of his mature and ripe genius. It is, therefore, in every respect suitable to show us the contrasts with the old masterpieces, and the supposed improvements which mark the epoch of the perfect Greek drama. The play formed no member of a trilogy, but stood upon its own basis, nor are we at all justified, with some loose critics, in supplementing the character of the heroine from the other plays on the Theban legend (the two *Œdipuses*), plays written in after years, and without any intention of being viewed in connection with the *Antigone*. It is never to be forgotten that as soon as the tragic poets abandoned connected plays, they assumed the liberty of handling the same personage quite differently at different times, nor do they feel in the least bound by an earlier conception. This apparent inconsistency, which contrasts so strongly with the practice of modern dramatists, is due to the fact, that while the moderns have an unlimited field for the choice of subjects, and therefore naturally choose a new title to embody a new type, the Greeks were very limited in the

[1] This, which rests upon Suidas alone, is very doubtful.

legends which they treated, and must therefore constantly reproduce the same heroes and heroines. But they avoided the consequent monotony by the poetic license of varying the character to suit the special play. We must therefore study the characters in each play by themselves, and without reference to their recurrence in other works of the same poet.

The first point to be remarked in the play is the subordination of everything else to the character of Antigone. In Æschylus' conception—the deepest conception—of a tragedy, the actors were, so to speak, subordinated to the progress of a great moral conflict, which involves them in its mysterious course. They act with apparent liberty and force of character, but are really the exponents of great opposing agents, which they cannot stay or control. In the tragedy of Sophocles, where character-drawing (ἠθοποιΐα, as it was called) was the first object, the power of human will is the predominant feature, and the real conflict of moral and social forces is thrown into the background.

Æschylus, as has been already noted (p. 33) had blocked out the whole plot briefly at the end of his Theban trilogy, and indicated where a tragic conflict might be found. But when Sophocles takes up the subject, the firm determination of Antigone to perform the sacred duties of fraternal love is opposed to no principle of parallel importance, to no law which commands any respect, but simply to the timid submissiveness of her foil, Ismene, to the arbitrary decree of a vulgar and heartless tyrant, and to the cold and self-interested apathy of a mean and cowardly chorus. Antigone is accordingly sustained from the beginning by a clear consciousness that she is absolutely right, the whole sympathy of the spectator must go with her, and all the course of the play is merely interesting as bringing out her character in strong and constant relief. But as she consciously faces death *for an idea*, she may rather be enrolled among the noble army of martyrs, who suffer in the daylight of clear conviction, than among the more deeply tried who in doubt and darkness have striven to feel out a great mystery, and in their very failure have 'purified the terror and the pity' of awe-struck humanity. A martyr for a great and recognised truth is not the best central figure of a tragedy in the

highest and proper sense. The *Antigone* is therefore not a very great *tragedy*, though it is a most brilliant and beautiful dramatic poem. The very opening scene brings out the somewhat hard and determined character of the heroine, in contrast to her weaker sister. As the chorus hints,[1] she had inherited this fierce nature from her father. But the fatal effects of the ancestral curse on the house of Œdipus, though often alluded to, are no moving force in the drama. The chorus appears in the *parodos* unconscious of the plot, and sings a beautiful ode on the delivery of Thebes, relevant enough to the general subject, but not bearing on the real interest of the play; and this remark may be applied to all the following choral odes, which with much lyric beauty celebrate subjects akin to the action, but outside it. The decree against Polynices' burial is then formally announced by Creon, when one of the watchmen enters, a very striking and well-conceived character, whose vulgar selfishness and low cowardice seem meant as the opposite extreme in human nature to the heroine. The homely and somewhat comic vein in which he speaks may indeed be shocking to dignified French imitators of classic suffering, but affords an interesting parallel to the contrasts so affectingly introduced in the greatest English tragedies. The reader will not have forgotten the nurse Kilissa in Æschylus' *Choephori*. Then follows the brilliant narrative of the capture of Antigone, and her interrogation by Creon. She here shows no vestige of fear or of quailing, and even Ismene braves death, though harshly checked and even insulted by her more masculine sister. The chorus suggests that Creon's son was betrothed to the princess, yet does not press the point, but upon her sentence sings the woes of the Labdakidæ, and the horrors of an ancestral taint. The appearance of Hæmon is a point of deep interest, and has been treated by

v. 471 : δηλοῖ τὸ γέννημ' ὠμὸν ἐξ ὠμοῦ πατρὸς
τῆς παιδός· εἴκειν δ' οὐκ ἐπίσταται κακοῖς.

I quote these words to justify myself against the able criticism of Mr. Evelyn Abbott on the parallel argument concerning Antigone in my *Social Life in Greece*. I cannot but sympathise deeply with his enthusiastic reading of the character in the *Journal of Philology*, vol. viii. pp. 1, sq.

the poet in a very peculiar way. The young prince argues the policy of Creon to be a mistaken public policy, and cites the general murmuring of discontent against it, all the while concealing his own strong personal interest in Antigone. Creon and the chorus both see through the young man's mind, the one by repeatedly taunting him as Antigone's advocate, the other, upon his angry exit, singing a famous ode on the powers of Eros, which is not directly suggested by the preceding dialogue.[1]

It seems likely that to the Athenian public of that day any pleading of Hæmon's on the ground of love would be thought unseemly and undignified, until Euripides had taught them that even on the stage art must not ignore nature. Still more remarkable is the absence of any allusion to Hæmon in the long commos sung by Antigone and the chorus, as she passes across the stage, on the way to her tomb. For she complains bitterly of the loss of bridal song and nuptial bliss, as every dying Greek maiden did, thus exactly reversing the notions of modern delicacy. A modern maiden would have lamented the separation from her lover, but certainly not the loss of the dignity and the joys of the married state. The *commos* of Antigone has been criticised from another point of view, as unworthy of the brave and dauntless character of the heroine. It is thought unnatural that she who had deliberately chosen death for the sake of duty, should shrink and wail at its approach. But sound critics have justly

[1] *Ἔρως ἀνίκατε μάχαν,*
Ἔρως, ὃς ἐν τ' ἀνδράσι πίπτεις
ὃς ἐν μαλακαῖς παρειαῖς
νεάνιδος ἐννυχεύεις,
φοιτᾷς δ' ὑπερπόντιος ἔν τ' ἀγρονόμοις αὐλαῖς·
καί σ' οὔτ' ἀθανάτων φύξιμος οὐδεὶς
οὔθ' ἁμερίων ἐπ' ἀνθρώπων, ὁ δ' ἔχων μέμηνεν.
σὺ καὶ δικαίων ἀδίκους
φρένας παρασπᾷς ἐπὶ λώβᾳ·
σὺ καὶ τόδε νεῖκος ἀνδρῶν
ξύναιμον ἔχεις ταράξας·
νικᾷ δ' ἐναργὴς βλεφάρων ἵμερος εὐλέκτρου
νύμφας, τῶν μεγάλων οὐχὶ πάρεδρος
θεσμῶν. ἄμαχος γὰρ ἐμπαίζει θεὸς Ἀφροδίτα

vindicated this as a human feature, though a weakness, and therefore more interesting and affecting than its absence or contradiction. In my opinion there is even yet a lack of humanity in the character, and I should be sorry to see this very interesting passage condemned. But I confess that the counter revulsion from quailing and fear to a bold facing of death, such as Euripides has painted it in his Iphigenia, appears to me not only nobler but more natural. For it is impossible to escape the suggestion in the *Antigone* that her bold defiance of Creon was ostentatious, and that it breaks down in the face of the awful reality.[1] I would further call attention to the remarkably unsympathetic and cold attitude of the chorus, who far from being 'ideal spectators,' or even 'accomplices,' look on with respectful but heartless tears, and offer such cold comfort to Antigone, that her complete isolation affects the spectator with the deepest pity. Nowhere (I think) does the chorus declare for the laws of religion and humanity against the arbitrary voice of the tyrant. The entrance of Teiresias marks the commencement of the περιπέτεια, or catastrophe, and his character is conceived, as in the *Œdipus Rex*, to be that of a noble and gloomy prophet. But the poet does not fail to put sceptical sneers in the mouths of his opponents. As soon as Teiresias has passed off with his threatening prophecy, the chorus in alarm warn Creon of his danger, and the tyrant is made to change his mind and pass from obstinacy to craven cowardice, with a suddenness only to be excused because this character excites no interest, and must have wearied us had its changes been treated in detail. The catastrophe of the deaths of Antigone and Hæmon, which reminds us of the end of *Romeo and Juliet*, is followed by that of Eurydice, the wife of Creon. The lamentations of the tyrant, which the spectator views rather with satisfaction than with pity, conclude the play.

[1] Yet I am not sure—and this is a great heresy—that Sophocles thought of more than the immediate situation when he composed this commos. I will show other instances by and bye, where he seems to have sacrificed consistency of character distinctly for the sake of dwelling upon an affecting situation, and writing affecting poetry. This is a vice generally attributed to Euripides. I think we can show it to exist no less in Sophocles; cf. below, pp. 66, 68, 86.

This is the drama which has not only struck ancient critics as one of the greatest works of its great author,[1] but which has fascinated modern taste more than any other remnant of Greek tragedy. This latter effect is easily understood, for in the first place the conflicting interests are easily comprehended, and involve no mystery, and secondly, the whole play turns on strictly human interests and actions, and is absolutely devoid of any interference of the gods, which must be foreign to the modern stage. The conflict of liberty against despotism became in fact the dominant idea of the last century, and thus men turned with interest to the old Greek expression of the same conflict. But long before this, the subject was treated by Euripides in a lost tragedy, in which the love of Hæmon and Antigone was not handled with the coldness and reserve of the Periclean age.[2] Then came a celebrated paraphrase or imitation by the Roman Attius, which is said to have suggested some points even to Vergil. The treatment of the story in Seneca's *Thēbāis*, a tragedy of which most is preserved, and in Statius' epic poem of the same title, is quite independent of Sophocles. Polynices' wife, Argia, shares Antigone's heroism, and neither expresses the least fear of death shown by the greater and more natural Antigone of the Greek poet. These inferior works were unfortunately the models of most of the French imitators. There was, however, an old French translation by Baïf, in 1573. Garnier in 1580, Rotrou in 1638, and d'Assezan in 1686 brought out *Antigones* based upon Sophocles and all the Roman versions of the story, with features added not only from Euripides' *Phœnissæ*, but from the weak sentimentality of the French stage. No antique subject was more certain to attract Alfieri, with his monomaniac hate of tyranny and tyrants. But his Antigone (1783), though a bold attempt to reintroduce simplicity into his subject, is evidently based upon the French travesties of the play, and of course the relations of Hæmon

[1] Strangely enough, there was an opinion abroad in old times that it was spurious, being really the work of Iophon, and not of Sophocles. I can hardly fancy this opinion existing without some definite evidence. We only have it in a passage published in Cramer's *Anecdota*, and without reasons.

[2] Cf. Euripides, frag. 157 sq., and the remarks of Aristophanes (the grammarian) in his preface to Sophocles' *Antigone*.

and Antigone come into the foreground. His play is forcible, but monotonous, as he fails in all those delicate touches, and various contrasts of character, in which Sophocles, with all his simplicity, abounds. Marmontel's libretto for Zingarelli's opera (1790) seems to have excited little attention. A prose version of the legend by Ballanche (1814) is apparently very popular and highly esteemed in France.

The taste of the present century has fortunately reverted to the pure art of Sophocles, and in 1844 a peculiar attempt was made, with the aid of Mendelssohn's noble music, to reproduce the Greek *Antigone* in a form approaching the original performance. But, in my opinion, this revival is a complete failure, not only from the character of the music, which would have been to a modern audience intolerable, had it been Greek, but on account of the modern playing of the parts, in which a quantity of action was introduced quite foreign to the antique stage. Of the English versions that of Mr. Plumptre is not only the most recent, but the best.

§ 187. A certain general resemblance leads us to consider the *Electra* next in order. The relation of the heroine to her sister Chrysothemis is very similar to that of Antigone and Ismene. There is also the same hardness in both heroines, a hardness amounting to positive heartlessness in Electra, who, when she hears her brother within murdering his and her mother, actually calls out to him to strike her again (v. 1415). This revolting exclamation, and, indeed, the easy way in which matricide is regarded all through the play, contrasts strongly with the far deeper, more human, and more religious conception of Æschylus' *Choephori*, and reduces the *Electra* as a tragedy to a far lower level. In fact, here as elsewhere, Sophocles has sacrificed the tragedy for the sake of developing a leading character. He desires to fix the sympathy of the spectator on Electra and Orestes. He therefore treats the command of Apollo as an absolute justification of the crime, and puts out of sight the dread Eumenides, with their avenging horrors. This is distinctly the old epic view of the matter, more than once suggested in the Odyssey, in contrast to the conception of Stesichorus, and perhaps other lyric poets, with whom the notion of blood-guiltiness, and the necessity of purification for sin,

became of primary importance, and who served as a model for Æschylus. Thus here also Sophocles was truly Homeric, but may be held to have made a retrograde step in the deeper history of morals. There are, moreover, many Euripidean features in the play.[1] The angry wranglings of his characters, which occur often in Sophocles, are by most critics forgotten, when they come to censure his successor. There is also not a little inconsistency in the effusiveness of the heroine on recognising her brother, an effusiveness which amounts to folly, and her stern repression of words when Ægisthus desires to plead for his life. This inconsistency was admitted, I venture to think, on account of the seductive lyrical opportunity offered by the scene of recognition. The same weakness is still more obvious when a pathetic lament is uttered by Electra over the unreal ashes of her brother, which the spectator, who is aware of the truth, admires but cannot hear with any real pity. But the speech was too affecting to be omitted.[2]

[1] Wilamowitz has since (*Hermes*, xvii. 242, sq.) tried to prove this play an answer to Euripides' *Electra*, and therefore one of Sophocles' latest works. He adduces metrical reasons, as well as supposed allusions to Euripides, and corrections of the myth.

[2] vv. 1126–60: *ὦ φιλτάτου μνημεῖον ἀνθρώπων ἐμοὶ*
ψυχῆς Ὀρέστου λοιπόν, ὡς σ' ἀπ' ἐλπίδων
οὐχ ὧνπερ ἐξέπεμπον εἰσεδεξάμην.
νῦν μὲν γὰρ οὐδὲν ὄντα βαστάζω χεροῖν,
δόμων δέ σ', ὦ παῖ, λαμπρὸν ἐξέπεμψ' ἐγώ
ὡς ὤφελον πάροιθεν ἐκλιπεῖν βίον,
πρὶν ἐς ξένην σε γαῖαν ἐκπέμψαι χεροῖν
κλέψασα ταῖνδε κἀνασώσασθαι φόνου,
ὅπως θανὼν ἔκειso τῇ τόθ' ἡμέρᾳ,
τύμβου πατρῴου κοινὸν εἰληχὼς μέρος.
νῦν δ' ἐκτὸς οἴκων κἀπὶ γῆς ἄλλης φυγὰς
κακῶς ἀπώλου, σῆς κασιγνήτης δίχα·
κοὔτ' ἐν φίλαισι χερσὶν ἡ τάλαιν' ἐγὼ
λουτροῖς σ' ἐκόσμησ' οὔτε παμφλέκτου πυρὸς
ἀνειλόμην, ὡς εἰκός, ἄθλιον βάρος.
ἀλλ' ἐν ξέναισι χερσὶ κηδευθεὶς τάλας
σμικρὸς προσήκεις ὄγκος ἐν σμικρῷ κύτει.
οἴμοι τάλαινα τῆς ἐμῆς πάλαι τροφῆς
ἀνωφελήτου, τὴν ἐγὼ θάμ' ἀμφὶ σοὶ
πόνῳ γλυκεῖ παρέσχον. οὔτε γάρ ποτε

I cannot fancy Æschylus thus utilising an artificial situation. It is the victory of sentiment over greater and nobler interests, and in this Sophocles, and not Euripides, marks the rise of a new epoch—an epoch like that opened by Raffaelle and by Weber in other arts, where the master is still great, but is the author of a rapid and melancholy decay into sentimentalism. The attitude of the chorus differs notably from that of the *Antigone.* It is the confidant and helper of the king's children, and takes an active part in the progress of the play. But for this very reason, the choral odes, which are strictly to the point, are lyrically very inferior to the beautiful poems inserted in the *Antigone.* It is remarkable that while Æschylus never mentions Mycenæ, and lays the scene of his *Choephori* at Argos, Sophocles, more accurately, makes Mycenæ his scene, and in the opening even describes the relative positions of the two cities; but I am at a loss, though personally familiar with the country, to find the point of view from which the old pedagogue and Orestes approach it, and should not be surprised if this were one of the instances of geographical inaccuracy with which Strabo charges both Sophocles and Euripides.[1] I suppose the recent reassertion of Mycenæ, by the appearance of its citizens in the Persian war, must have made its name momentarily prominent in the youth of Sophocles,

μητρὸς σύ γ' ἦσθα μᾶλλον ἢ κἀμοῦ φίλος
οὔθ' οἱ κατ' οἶκον ἦσαν, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τροφός
ἐγὼ δ' ἀδελφὴ σοὶ προσηυδώμην ἀεί.
νῦν δ' ἐκλέλοιπε ταῦτ' ἐν ἡμέρᾳ μιᾷ
θανόντι σὺν σοί. πάντα γὰρ συναρπάσας
θύελλ' ὅπως βέβηκας. οἴχεται πατήρ·
τέθνηκ' ἐγώ σοι· φροῦδος αὐτὸς εἶ θανών
γελῶσι δ' ἐχθροί· μαίνεται δ' ὑφ' ἡδονῆς
μήτηρ ἀμήτωρ, ἧς ἐμοὶ σὺ πολλάκις
φήμας λάθρα προὔπεμπες ὡς φανούμενος
τιμωρὸς αὐτός. ἀλλὰ ταῦθ' ὁ δυστυχὴς
δαίμων ὁ σός τε κἀμὸς ἐξαφείλετο,
ὅς σ' ὧδέ μοι προὔπεμψεν ἀντὶ φιλτάτης
μορφῆς σποδόν τε καὶ σκιὰν ἀνωφελῆ.
οἴμοι μοι.

[1] Cf. on frag. 530.

and before Æschylus brought out his Orestean trilogy.[1] The scene of the drama must, therefore, have been determined by the local politics of the day, which would put forwardi Mycenæ, if Argos and Athens were at variance. But this is a mere conjecture. The critics have animadverted upon the anachronism of representing Orestes as killed at the Pythian games, but there is surely no sense in the objection. Almost all the games in Greece were ascribed to mythical, nay, even to divine founders, and to assign to any of them a late and historical origin would have offended Greek taste. About the beauty of the narrative there can be no question. It is remarkable that Sophocles reverses the order of the murders, and makes Clytemnestra suffer before Ægisthus, an arrangement which destroys the awful climax in the *Choephori*—indeed, when the mother has been sacrificed little interest remains about her paramour. The French critics are almost indignant at the idea of a king on the stage, who only comes in to die. But of course his death is necessary to the piece, and if Sophocles did not require him as a character, he shows true and great art in only introducing him when necessary. A perfect library has been written on the three *Electras* of the three Greek poets, generally with the object of detracting from Æschylus, and still more from Euripides, to extol Sophocles. The reader has already seen how false such an estimate is towards Æschylus. I shall not enter upon the *Electra* of Euripides till we have become acquainted with that poet in the course of the present history.

[1] All the critics follow Pausanias in assuming that Mycenæ remained independent up to 468 B.C., and that the *συνοικισμός* of this and other towns by Argos took place, through fear of Sparta, after the Persian wars. I cannot conceive this policy to have arisen so late, and believe the autonomy, and perhaps even the existence, of Mycenæ to have ceased at latest when Argos became great under Pheidon, about a century earlier. My views were published in the fifth number of *Hermathena*, and ultimately converted Dr. Schliemann, as I had predicted that no fifth century remains would be found in his excavations. He has translated my article in the French edition of his *Mycenæ*. The evidence he has produced points to a very old destruction of the city, perhaps even at the time of the Doric invasion, or else not later than Pheidon of Argos (circ. 660 B.C.)

Let us now pass to the imitations of the story, or the improvements attempted upon it, in subsequent times. There can be little doubt that there were several Roman versions. Cicero speaks of two, Suetonius alludes to them, and so evidently does Vergil, when using in a simile the 'Agamemnonius scenis agitatus Orestes.' But none of them have survived. The Orestes ridiculed by Juvenal may have been a mere fiction, but the choice of this title proves the popularity of the subject. In the 16th century, there was a translation by L. Baïf. But in 1708, Crebillon brought out his Electra, a play which introduced a series of love affairs between Orestes, Electra, and a son and daughter of Ægisthus, fabricated for the purpose. These novelties, together with storms and other adventures, so complicated and changed the play, that the author could fairly boast his own originality, and proclaim that he had taken nothing from Sophocles, whom he had never read. Passing by the now unknown work of Longepierre in 1719, we come to Voltaire's *Oreste* (1750), which is said to owe it a good many thoughts. Some of Crebillon's inventions are also adopted, but the main novelty is the excitement produced by the dangers which Orestes encounters in attaining his vengeance. For greater detail upon this and succeeding efforts, the reader should consult the history of French Literature in connection with the drama of Sophocles in M. Patin's admirable sketch.[1] He has forgotten to mention how closely the *Athalie* in Racine's celebrated play has been copied from Sophocles' Clytemnestra. The very device of a disturbing dream is employed to rouse Athalie's fears, and Joas stands to her in a similar relation to that of Orestes and Clytemnestra. The famous *Orestes* of Alfieri was of course based on Crebillon and Voltaire; indeed, we know that the poet's very defective education did not then permit him to read a Greek play in the original. As was his habit, he simplifies the plot, and gets rid of all superfluous characters; but the great strain he keeps up, and the monotony of his speakers, make it a tedious play to read. He is noted as having been the first to paint the quarrels and the remorse of the adulterous pair, and with his usual hatred of tyrants, he makes Ægisthus weep with terror

[1] *Sophocle*, pp. 366, sq.

when he finds he must die. There are several later versions, up to the *Orestie* of Alexandre Dumas.

§ 188. We may take up the *Trachiniæ* next, because its heroine—the only other extant heroine in Sophocles—stands in marked and pleasant contrast to those we have just discussed. As to the date of the play, it is agreed that it comes either very early or very late in the poet's career. The differences from the other plays, and supposed inferiority, are the grounds which have led to this opinion. Some have even declared it spurious, and the work of Iophon, or some other weaker hand. It is impossible to decide the dispute about its age, though its genuineness must certainly be asserted. On the whole, I rather incline to place it as the earliest extant work of Sophocles. There seems a certain hesitation in the author, who desires to make Deianira the protagonist, and yet chooses a myth of which Heracles is necessarily the central figure. Thus there are two distinct catastrophes—that of the heroine, which is first in interest, but is treated as a mere incident; and that of the hero, who is absent during all the action, but whose death forms the solemn conclusion of the play. It almost seems to me as if the poet were feeling his way to making the character of a woman the prominent feature of the play, and yet afraid to do so without weaving in another catastrophe, afraid also to entitle his play (like his Antigone and Electra) *Deianira*. It is the only extant play of Sophocles which takes its name from the chorus, and when we reflect that at least one half of Æschylus' plays are so named, while less than one-third of Sophocles'—and mostly satirical plays—follow this rule, we may draw another slight argument in favour of its early date, before the poet had abandoned, perhaps, the Æschylean fashion of calling his plays after their most important feature—the chorus. Again, as the *Philoctetes*, which shows no sign of weakness or failure, appeared in 409, and the poet did not survive the year 405, it seems very strange that so rapid a decadence should take place in these years, in which no tradition mentions any play but the *Œdipus at Colonus*. Internal evidence from style has been freely employed by the advocates of both opinions, but is in any case, by itself, of little worth. The character of

Deianira can only be compared with that of Tecmessa, a second-rate character in the *Ajax*, and differs completely from the poet's so-called heroines. But there is the deepest pathos in his drawing of a feeble, patient wife, ever widowed afresh for weary months, and now too exiled from her home and seeking in vain for tidings of her husband. His enforced absence (to atone for a homicide), his careful disposition of his affairs before he departed, and the vague voice of old oracles, all conspire to fill her heart with sorrow and despondency. The aged nurse suggests the sending out of Hyllus to obtain news, and after a short dialogue, in which he repeats the vague reports of his father's return to Eubœa, and his mother cites with fear the threatening oracles about this very place, the chorus of Trachinian maidens enters, and in a very beautiful ode to Helios, prays for tidings of the wandering hero. Deianira's weariness of life saddens her first address to the chorus, whose virgin days of security she envies, while she reflects on the cares of married life.[1]

Then comes a self-appointed messenger, who has hurried in advance of Lichas, and tells her of Heracles' victory, and the momentary delay of the herald, who presently enters with the spoils and slaves from Œchalia, and gives his account to Deianira. But she is chiefly struck by the beauty of a fair captive, concerning whose history and parentage she inquires, both from Lichas, who answers evasively, and from the girl herself, who preserves absolute silence. Nothing can exceed the tenderness and grace of this passage.[2] It contrasts strongly with

[1] vv. 140–50 : *πεπυσμένη μέν, ὡς σάφ' εἰκάσαι, πάρει*
πάθημα τοὐμόν· ὡς δ' ἐγὼ θυμοφθορῶ
μήτ' ἐκμάθοις παθοῦσα, νῦν δ' ἄπειρος εἶ.
τὸ γὰρ νεάζον ἐν τοιοῖσδε βόσκεται
χώροισιν αὐτοῦ, καί νιν οὐ θάλπος θεοῦ,
οὐδ' ὕμβρος, οὐδὲ πνευμάτων οὐδὲν κλονεῖ,
ἀλλ ἡδοναῖς ἄμοχθον ἐξαίρει βίον
ἐς τοῦθ', ἕως τις ἀντὶ παρθένου γυνὴ
κληθῇ, λάβῃ τ' ἐν νυκτὶ φροντίδων μέρος.

This sentiment reappears in frag. 517 of the poet, and also in Euripides.

[2] vv. 294–334.

the imperious harshness of Clytemnestra to the captive Cassandra, and may possibly have been composed with this intention. But the first messenger, who has heard the gossip of the town, and is eager to make himself important, comes forward again, as soon as Lichas has entered the palace, and with that love of telling bad news which infects the lower classes, informs the queen of the real truth about Iole. The scene in which Deianira extracts the confirmation of the report from the unwilling Lichas, when he reappears, is one of the finest in the tragedy. The largeness of heart with which the wife treats her husband's passion for another woman is far more splendid than the heroism of harder women on matters that cannot touch them so deeply.[1] We must remember that we are reading of Greek heroic times and manners, when such license was freely accorded to princes, and when the attachment to Iole, though a great hardship to the wife, would never have been regarded as a breach of good morals. When, therefore, some critics have sought the tragic justice of the play in Heracles' punishment for conjugal faithlessness, they have merely talked irrelevant nonsense. There is no finer conclusion of a fine scene than the chorus which follows, and which describes the desperate conflict of Heracles for the possession of this very Deianira, who is now slighted and forgotten. Then follows the hasty resolve of the wife to recover her husband by the potent charm of Nessus' garment, her fear and forebodings when she finds, after it is sent, that the wool with which she had laid on the unguent had been consumed when heated by the sun. She anticipates the whole catastrophe, and is now as clear sighted as she was formerly dull of inference. Then comes the terrible news by Hyllus, and his fierce accusation of his mother, who rushes in the silence of desperate resolve from the stage. After an interrupting chorus, her death-scene is affectingly described, so affectingly as almost to rival the death of Alcestis in Euripides.

[1] Elle ne s'irrite ni contre sa rivale ni contre l'homme qui la trahit : sa douleur est celle d'une épouse, et non pas d'une amante, et cette nuance, qu'on a peine à exprimer, est indiquée par le poète avec une exquise délicatesse.—Patin, *Sophocle*, p. 73.

Here the main interest in the piece ends for moderns; and I may observe, before passing on, that it is hardly creditable to the critics that they have not better appreciated so noble and natural a character. Deianira is a woman made to suffer and to endure, who submits to a hard fate with patience and sweetness, but whose love is strong, and will not waver with the rudest shocks. When she sees a growing beauty brought into the home in which years and anxieties have caused her own charms to decay, she has recourse to a remedy ordinary in those days, and approved by the maidens who befriend her. And yet this device of the gentle, uncomplaining wife lets loose a terrific agency which robs all Greece of its greatest benefactor, and the human race of its proudest hero. The oracle must indeed be fulfilled; Heracles must die, but with what tragic irony! The wretched worker of the catastrophe wanders for a while through the house, amazed, aimless, heart-broken, bursting into tears at every familiar face and object, then with sudden resolve she bares her side, and strikes the sword into her heart!

But among the ancients, the official catastrophe, the lyrical wailing of Heracles, his wrestling with agony, and final victory, his calm review of his life—all this was far more celebrated and striking. Such lyrical dialogues, when the excited actor spoke in turn with the chorus, were highly prized on the Greek stage, and were a leading feature in most tragedies. Cicero[1] gives us a version of the agony of Heracles, and there are many modern French versions. Seneca and Ovid have reproduced the story, but have altogether missed the delicacies of Sophocles' treatment. Among French imitators by far the best was Fénelon, who has given a very elegant prose version in his *Télémaque*. All the rest, for want I suppose of both taste and knowledge of Greek, followed Seneca's travesty.

§ 189. The *Œdipus Tyrannus*, which serves as a sort of canon in the *Poetic* of Aristotle, has been placed by the scholiasts, and by most modern critics, at the very summit of Greek tragic art, and certainly dates from the best period of Sophocles' literary life. But when some exercise their ingenuity in suggesting

[1] *Tusc.* ii. 8–9.

that the opening scene was painted from the horrors of the plague at Athens, and that by Œdipus the poet means to convey the failure of Pericles, and his melancholy death, they seem to have actually found the one impossible date for the play. The Lacedæmonians, in opening the war, had demanded from Athens the exile of Pericles, as blood-guilty through his ancestors in the massacre of the Kylonians, and had affected to make the refusal their *casus belli*. To bring out the *Œdipus*, when this demand, and the plague which shortly after ensued, were still fresh in men's minds, would not only have been a profound disloyalty to the Athenian cause, and a justification of Sparta, but a direct personal attack on the memory of Pericles. We know that Sophocles, of all Athenians, was most free from personal animosities, and we have also reason to think he was a friend of Pericles. This period, therefore, of the poet's life is the only one at which the *Œdipus* cannot have been brought out.

It may perhaps rather be referred to an earlier period, when sceptical opinions, and especially a contempt of oracles, came into fashion with the rising generation during the supremacy of Athens. The moral lesson conveyed is distinctly the importance of oracles and prophecies, which interpret to men the secret and inexplicable ways of Providence, and the awful, nay, to us disproportionate, vengeance which ensues upon their neglect. This apparent injustice is even vindicated as being the necessary course of the world appointed by its ruler, Zeus —in fact, by an appeal to religious, as distinguished from moral, laws.

The progress of the play is so well known that I will only notice its perfections and defects from a critical point of view. Nothing can be nobler and more natural than the opening dialogue of Œdipus and the priest, and in this, and the short scene when Creon appears with the answer of the oracle, the character of Œdipus, as an able, benevolent, but somewhat self-conscious man, is laid clearly before us. The old objection, why the murder of Laius had never been before investigated, may be coupled with another, why the plague had been so long delayed, seeing that the cause of it existed since Œdipus had come to Thebes. These difficulties are, however,

not objections to the play, but to the supposed antecedents of the play, though they are real objections. Sophocles would probably have answered them by saying that he sought a dramatic situation in which to develop the character of his hero, and that he despised such inquiries into antecedent probabilities. But unnatural assumptions cannot enter a work of art with impunity, and nature will avenge herself upon the artist, however great, as we shall see in the sequel of this very play. The choral hymn to Apollo, as the healer, which follows, is a good specimen of a dactylic *pæan*. Indeed, if we except the second *Œdipus*, the choruses of this play are much grander than is usual with Sophocles; and this is attributable to the character of the chorus, which here, if anywhere, is the ideal spectator, though not without some touches of vulgar complaisance.[1] But the principal character maintains an importance so much higher than in Sophocles' other plays, that the chorus assumes the purer function of observing the action, rather than that of encouraging or deprecating the hero's sentiments.

Passing by the imprecation scene, which has greatly benefited by Ribbeck's transposition of a few lines,[2] we come to the unwilling appearance of Teiresias, the impatience of Œdipus, and a consequent angry wrangle, in which the outspokenness of the prophet seems to me a great flaw in a play so much admired for the gradual development of the plot. Teiresias tells him so explicitly that he is the murderer of Laius, and is the husband of his mother, that a man who knew his Corinthian parentage was doubtful, that an oracle had predicted to him these very crimes, and that he had committed a homicide, could not but hit upon the truth. In fact he does so presently at a far less obvious suggestion of Iocasta's. The excuse for this defect is, I suppose, that Œdipus was in a rage when Teiresias discloses the facts, and that his rage makes him perfectly blind. But this seems quite too artificial an answer to the objection, though it has been urged as a subtle psychological point, that the same man who cannot perceive the plainest indications in the heat of dispute,

[1] Cf. Patin, *Sophocle*, p. 183.

[2] vv. 252–72 before v. 246; cf. Bernhardy, *LG.* iii. p. 355.

when he calms down, fastens on a trivial detail in friendly conversation, and starting from it, unravels for himself the whole mystery. The spectator is hurried on by the angry violence of Œdipus, who turns accuser instead of defendant, and roundly charges both Teiresias and Creon with being the real murderers of Laius, and accomplices in seeking to oust from the kingdom its rightful lord. But surely here the antecedent improbabilities assert themselves with irrefragable force. If the murder of Laius and the present events were indeed twenty years apart, the charge of Œdipus becomes ridiculous. The ambitious claimants for the throne murder Laius, and then rest silent for twenty years, when they vamp up a charge of the murder against his long-established successor! The matter will not bear the light of common sense, unless we conceive the murder followed closely by the accession of Œdipus, the plague, and the threatening oracle. But here the legend which gives time for the birth of four children seems to interpose an impassable barrier. The important tragic point to be noted in this dispute is that the violence of Œdipus, and especially his sneers at the venerable and respected soothsayer, are meant to palliate our sense of horror at the extremity of his punishment. The same may be said of Iocasta, whose feeble and shallow scepticism is with great skill represented by the poet as failing in the hour of terror and of need. Her account of the death of Laius, intended to soothe Œdipus, is so framed as to stir up his deepest mind with agitation, and that, too, by means of an apparently trifling detail. Even though the plain speaking of Teiresias had more than prepared us, this passage is of the greatest dramatic beauty. Indeed, these double confidences of the husband and wife form a scene which has perhaps not been equalled of its kind. The result is now plain before Œdipus' mind, yet he and Iocasta cling to the faint hopes arising from false details of the murder. It is very remarkable that the chorus, here rising above the special situation, sings a solemn ode [1] upon the insolence and folly of scepticism, and the decay of belief in the old tenets of religion. At its close Iocasta appears, bearing suppliant offerings to the god

[1] vv. 860–910.

whose oracles she has just despised, but to whom she turns in dismay at the mental agony of her husband, for which she can find no remedy.

The appearance of the messenger announcing the death of Polybus comes too late in the play, and the sudden return of Œdipus to confidence on this point is strange. He had long ago doubted his alleged origin, and the previous course of the play had so confirmed these doubts, that his easy acceptance of the solution is not natural, and is a flaw in the work. At an earlier period, and just after the warnings of Teiresias, we may fancy such a delay in the catastrophe better placed. But the intention of the poet is here to approach the second crime of Œdipus, his incestuous marriage, and he approaches it with the somewhat ridiculous fears of Œdipus that he may unwittingly marry the aged Merope, whom he knows perfectly well. This leads to the final explanation of his birth, and presently of the details of his father's murder, which the Corinthian messenger, the aged shepherd, and the king discover in a dialogue of awful and breathless interest. I will only notice from the end of the play that the character of Creon is that of a calm and just ruler, far different from his figure in the *Antigone*, and also that in his lamentations Œdipus lays great and natural stress on the indelible stain which adheres to his daughters, and which will make their marriage impossible—a consideration never mentioned, I think, in the *Antigone*. This proves, if it be necessary to prove it, the complete independence of these plays, which critics are always citing in connection, when they discuss the characters of Sophocles, and wish to explain the unresolved harshness of his morality. The concluding scene with his infant daughters is very affecting, but thoroughly Euripidean, and may be intended to introduce the softer element of pity where terror too much predominates.

Indeed, the whole play is a terrible exhibition of the iron course of Fate, which ensnares even great and good men in its adamantine chains, and ruins the highest human prosperity with calm omnipotence. There can be no crime urged against Œdipus and his parents but the neglect of oracles, or an

attempt to evade them, and it is evidently this scepticism or carelessness which brings upon them consequences too horrible to bear. I do not think that the haughtiness of Œdipus—a feature which the Greeks did not consider inconsistent with an ideal character—has any direct relation to the catastrophe, and the homicide was evidently regarded not as an act of violence, but of fair retaliation, until the person of the victim throws a horrible complexion over the act, and makes it a hideous crime. After all, Œdipus is a noble man mocked by an awful destiny; he suffers without adequate evil desert; and the lesson of the play is not that of confidence in the final result of a great moral struggle, but rather of awe and despair at the possible cruelties of an arbitrary and irresponsible Fate.

It may have been this grave objection, it may have been its orthodoxy, or it may have been the defects of plot above noticed, which caused its defeat by a play of Philocles, or brought out by Philocles, the nephew of Æschylus, at the same time. Subsequent criticism has reversed this decision. Not only is the very name of Philocles' play forgotten, but the scholiasts and other critics express their wonder at the bad taste of the Athenian public, and exhaust themselves in praise of the *Œdipus Tyrannus*. Seneca spoilt it in a rhetorical version. Among the moderns, both Corneille (1659) and Voltaire composed plays on this subject, not to speak of inferior attempts. Corneille added amorous and poetical intrigues, and borrowed rather from Seneca than from Sophocles. Voltaire degraded it into a formal attack on the justice and wisdom of the gods—in fact, a vehicle for the scepticism which he preached. Many faults of economy in his play, which dissatisfied him as an early and crude production, have been noticed by his own *Lettres*. The *Œdipus* of Dryden and Lee, given in 1679, is one of the few adaptations of the Greek drama upon the English stage; Lacroix's translation (1858) has just been reproduced in Paris. Dryden's play does not avoid any of the faults of the French stage—pompousness, needless complication, irrelevant love affairs, false rhetoric—and is, moreover, said to have added some of those to be found in his own country.

§ 190. A very different picture is presented to us by the

Œdipus at Colonus, wherein the poet, probably in later years, seems to have softened and purified the figure of the deeply injured hero by a noble and dignified end. We know that the play was not exhibited till four years after Sophocles' death, and tradition speaks of it as the last composed by the old man; but later critics seem more disposed to place its composition in the best period of his life.[1] I hardly think their arguments, based on its purity of metre and strength of diction, will weigh against the current tradition, backed up by the strong feeling of every reader from Cicero to our day, that its mildness and sadness, nay even its weariness of life, speak the long experience and sober resignation of an old man near the grave. The choral odes are, however, far more brilliant and prominent than those of the *Philoctetes*, whose late date is undoubted, and indeed the chorus holds a sort of Æschylean position in the play. The lyrical writing, especially in the choral odes on Colonus, and on the miseries of human life, may safely be pronounced the most perfect we possess of the poet's remains. Nevertheless, the moral attitude of the chorus in the action is low and selfish. Their attempt to break faith with Œdipus, their vulgar obtrusiveness about his past history, and the rapid change in their estimate of him, when they find he will be useful to them—all these features mark the vulgar public which ordinarily appears in the Greek tragic chorus. The play may be composed with some reference to the earlier *Œdipus*, at least with the intention of softening the cruel treatment of Œdipus, which is there portrayed. Though worn out with age and suffering, there is a splendid dignity about him, a consciousness of innocence, an oft-expressed conviction that he did all his so-called crimes unwittingly, and without moral guilt, and that he is justified by the important mission assigned him by the gods—that of pro-

[1] There have been endless discussions as to the date, and efforts to deduce it from the political temper of the play, and its very friendly allusions to Thebes. But according as this or that line is declared spurious, or this or that passage interpolated, the theories vary, and the doctors differ. The main result of the controversy is to show that no result is attainable.

tecting for ever the land which affords him a hallowed resting-place. He even approaches with assurance and without fear the dread Eumenides, whom others will scarcely name, and whose grove men hurry by with averted face. This spiritual greatness separates the dying Œdipus widely from King Lear, with whom he is often compared. But in his violent and painful execration of his ungrateful but repentant son—a jarring chord in the sweet harmony of the play—he reminds us of the angry old man in Shakespeare, though still more of his vehement and haughty self in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*. But Creon is here changed, and represented in his low and insolent type, as in the *Antigone*. This heroine, also, is not consistently drawn, and does not here manifest the strong features which Sophocles had given her in his early play. These points show how little the Athenian public cared to compare the plays of different years, and how little they attached a fixed type of character to mythic names. It was possibly on account of these liberties that the tragic poets avoided as a rule the Iliad and Odyssey, for in a play derived from them any marked deviation might, perhaps, have offended a public really familiar with their texts.

The episode of Polynices, though it delays the main action of the play, is singularly striking from the contrast it affords to the position of Œdipus. Both father and son are approaching their fate, but the father, an innocent offender, and purified by long suffering, shines out in the majesty of a glorious sunset after a stormy day ; while the son, who violated his filial duties through selfishness and hardness of heart, is promptly punished by exile ; but even when apparently repentant, and seeking forgiveness for his offence, the leaven of ambition and revenge has so poisoned his heart, that when stricken by his father's awful curse, he rushes upon his doom, partly in despair, partly in contumacy, partly from vanity and a fear of ridicule :

> 'His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
> And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.'

It is this combined insincerity and desperation in Polynices which alone can justify the violence of Œdipus' curse, and ever

so it is a painful prelude to his solemn translation to the nether world.

Nothing at first sight can appear to modern notions more monotonous than the way in which Œdipus fixes himself to the single spot which he will not leave, while all the other characters pass in succession before him. But nothing could be more pathetic or striking to the Greek mind than these divers efforts to subdue or persuade the inflexible old man, whom the divine curse has hardened in his wrath. The changing scenes give endless variety to the monotony of the situation, or rather of the main figure, whose very monotony is his greatness, because it expresses the endurance of his misfortunes and of his hate.[1] In the finest and truest English reproduction of Greek tragedy—the *Samson Agonistes* of Milton—Samson, who has great points of resemblance with Œdipus, occupies a similar fixed position, while the various actors pass before him. The episode of Dalila takes the place of the scene with Polynices, and brings out the angry element in Samson. There are, however, many other Greek plays, and many Æschylean and Euripidean features, imitated in the *Samson*, though all these materials are fused into harmony with a great poet's highest art. The *commos* of the sisters after his departure is the essentially Greek feature of the play, which a modern writer would omit, but which is formed closely upon the model of the end of Æschylus' *Seven against Thebes*. But on the whole, for vigour, for variety, and for poetic beauty, no play of Sophocles exceeds this *Œdipus*, and I am even disposed to agree with those who rank it the first of his dramas. As, however, each new critic makes this assertion about a different play, it is idle to attempt a decision.

The essentially antique nature of the tragedy, its special glorification of Theseus, of Athens, of Colonus, made it less fit than others, as M. Patin observes, for modern imitation. Nevertheless, in 1778, long after the other *chefs d'œuvre* of the Greek drama had been imitated or travestied on the French stage, Ducis brought out his *Œdipe chez Admète*, a sort of com-

[1] Cf. Villemain, *Litt. du xviii^me siècle*, iii. p. 312.

bination of the *Œdipus Coloneus* with Euripides' *Alcestis*, which seems as much imitated from *King Lear* as from *Œdipus*, and misses the perfections of both. An abridged and altered version appeared in 1797 under the exact title of the Greek play. There was, moreover, an opera on the same subject, with music by Sacchini, brought out in 1787. An imitation by Chenier, which is not much praised by the critics, and one by the Italian Niccolini, who translated some of Æschylus' plays, are the most important modern attempts in this special field. In all the French imitations the Christianity of the writers was so shocked by the relentless cursing of Polynices by Œdipus, that they reject this feature, and introduce a scene of forgiveness, which the gods, however, will not ratify. The worship of old Greek poetry in the eighteenth century was as inaccurate as the worship of Greek architecture. In both the results were attempted without any real knowledge of the principles involved, or of the spirit which produced every detail in strict harmony with the original design, and for some definite purpose beyond mere ornament.

§ 191. In variety and richness the play just considered contrasts strongly with the *Ajax*, which stands perhaps more remote than any of Sophocles' works from modern notions.[1] If a modern dramatist were told to compose a play upon such a subject—the madness of a hero from disappointed ambition, the carnage of flocks of sheep in mistake for his rivals and judges, his return to sanity, remorse and suicide, and a quarrel about his funeral—he would, I suppose, despair of the materials ; and yet Sophocles has composed one of his greatest character plays upon it. There is no finer psychological picture than the awakening of Ajax from his rage, his deep despair, his firm resolve to endure life no longer, his harsh treatment of Tecmessa, and yet his deep love for her and his child. Even his suicide is most exceptionally put upon the stage, for the purpose, I think, of the most splendid monologue which Greek tragedy affords us. He is for one day, we are told, under the anger of Athene, and if he can escape it, he will be

[1] The interesting parallel of the *Hercules Furens* of Euripides will come under discussion in the chapter on that poet.

safe, and this inspires the spectator with a peculiar tragic pity, when he sees a great life lost, which might so easily have been saved. But the action of Athene is not otherwise of importance in the play. She appears not at the end (as usual), but only at the opening, and in those hard and cruel features which are familiar to us in Homer.[1] Thus in this play also, religion and morals are dissociated, no doubt unconsciously, by the tragic poet, who sought to be a moral teacher of his people. This momentary introduction of gods at the opening and close of tragedies shows plainly the process of humanization which was completed by Euripides, and which made the gods a mere piece of stage machinery, tolerated by tradition, but only to be called in when the web of human passion required prompt and clear explication. But in old Greek plays they furthermore performed the important tragic service of justifying the cruel side, the iron destiny, of the drama. They were the main agents *in purifying the terror of the spectator*, which had else been akin to despair at the miseries entailed by necessity upon the human race.

As regards the haughty, unyielding character of Ajax, I cannot agree with the critics that the poet meant to regard his pride as justly punished, and meant to show that brute force must succumb to a heroism tempered by wisdom and forethought. This would be to assume that the Ajax of the play was the hero of the Iliad, which is not the case. Sophocles' Ajax is not the least wanting in refinement, or in sensitiveness, nay, his appeal to all the calm beauty of nature around him, in contrast to his own misery, his undisguised lamentations and despair, show a mind which steels itself with effort to a high resolve, and which does not possess the brute courage of insensibility. Moreover, he consistently considers himself unjustly treated, and would never acquiesce in the fairness either of the decision of the Atridæ or of the persecution of Athene. And in this conviction he draws even the modern spectator with him, far more the Greek public, which did not

[1] I am bound to say that M. Patin, an excellent critic, speaks of Athene's language as 'grave and sublime,' and regards her as a lofty exponent of moral laws. Let the reader of the play judge between us.

reprove self-assertion except as dangerous on account of the jealousy of the gods. The inferiority of Odysseus in personal courage is brought out pointedly in the very first scene, but at the same time his prudence and his favour with the gods. His appearance at the end of the play is calm and dignified, but having obtained a complete victory over his rival, we feel that his generosity, though just what it ought to be, is cheap, and consists merely in the absence of vindictiveness. The whole of the wrangling scene between the Atridæ and Teucer concerning the burial of Ajax, is very inferior to the earlier part of the play, is called 'rather comic' by the scholiast, and is certainly open to all the criticism brought against the wrangling scenes in Euripides. Some critics even think it the addition of an inferior hand to an unfinished play of Sophocles. But this is mere random effort to save the uniform greatness of a poet, who was known by the ancients to be unequal, and often to sink to an ordinary level. The Atridæ are drawn as vulgar tyrants, and without any redeeming feature. It was of course fashionable, in democratic Athens, to make every absolute ruler a villain, so much so that respectable actors would not play such ungrateful parts. The Tecmessa of the play is a patient, loving woman, almost as tragic as Andromache, who attracts the reader from the outset, and seems to me far more interesting, and more natural, than the poet's fierce and wrangling heroines. The choral odes are not very striking, if we except a beautiful hyporcheme to Pan.[1] The chorus is throughout the confidant of Tecmessa, and by their conversations the action is artfully disclosed; they are also the affectionate followers of Ajax, though they do not forget that their personal safety depends upon him. The praise of Salamis, and the glory of a hero from whom the proudest Athenians claimed descent, were collateral features likely to recommend the play to an Athenian audience.

The story of the suicide of Ajax, though alluded to in the Odyssey, when Odysseus encounters the shade of the hero in the nether world,[2] was borrowed by Sophocles from the *Little Iliad* of Lesches. It had already afforded Æs-

[1] vv. 692, sq. [2] λ, 541–64.

chylus the subject of a trilogy, in which the middle piece described the suicide in very different terms, laying special stress on the supposed invulnerability except in a single spot, which his evil fate discloses to him. Sophocles, too, composed a *Teukros* and an *Eurysakes*, but, as was his custom, without mutual connection. No subject was more attractive to the Greeks than this dispute of Ajax and Odysseus. Besides the tragedies, there were celebrated pictures of it by Timanthes and Parrhasius, and rhetorical versions of it, such as that alluded to in the tragedy of the rhetor Theodectes, in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and the countless imitations of Greek and Roman followers. Ennius, Pacuvius, and Attius appear to have *contaminated* Æschylus with Sophocles in their versions. A fine fragment of Pacuvius' play is cited by Cicero. Even the Emperor Augustus attempted an *Ajax*, but told a courtly inquirer 'that his Ajax has fallen upon the sponge.' In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*[2] there is an elegant version, and both Horace and Juvenal allude to it as the best known of subjects, both for moral and scholastic purposes.[3] There was a parody of the rhetorical exercises in the *Menippea* of Varro. We may judge from these incomplete details, that of all the subjects handled upon the Attic stage, none was more widely popular among the Romans. The modern version of Sivry (1762) is so ridiculous as to excite the amusement of even French critics. The reader will find a sketch of it at the close of M. Patin's admirable chapter, which I have here mainly followed.

§ 192. We close our list with the *Philoctetes*, in which German critics, since the ascertainment of its date (409 B.C.), have found marks of decaying power, which were formerly unknown, and which would doubtless be again ignored if our information were found incorrect. The *Philoctetes* is, like the *Ajax* and the *Antigone*, essentially a drama of character; the interest of the plot is nothing as compared to the study of the characters of Philoctetes and Neoptolemus. The whole piece is Euripidean in construction. There is indeed no proper prologue, but the

[1] *De Orat.* ii. 46.

[2] Lib. xii.

[3] Cf. *Sat.* ii. 3, 187, sq.; *Od.* i. 7, 21; ii. 4. Juvenal, *Sat.* xiv. 283.

dialogue of Odysseus and Neoptolemus, in which the former explains the object of their mission, answers the purpose. He tells how the Greeks on their way to Troy had been obliged, at his advice, to leave on this island of Lemnos, where the scene is laid, the hero Philoctetes, who had been bitten by a viper in the foot on the neighbouring isle of Chrysa, and whose cries and execrations, as well as the disgusting nature of his wound, made him intolerable to his friends. But now the seer Helenus has foretold that Troy cannot fall without him and his famous arrows of Heracles, and so Odysseus has undertaken to bring him back. For this purpose he associates with him the youthful Neoptolemus, who had no share in the abandonment of Philoctetes, and to whom he suggests a fictitious account of a quarrel with the Atreidæ about Achilles' arms, which had sent him home to Scyros in disgust, as a suitable means of entrapping Philoctetes on board, and carrying him back to Troy. Neoptolemus protests strongly against lying, but is easily—I think too easily—seduced by the prospect of the glorious consequences of his deceit. Accordingly, he undertakes his part, and, upon Odysseus retiring, is presently hailed with delight by Philoctetes, whose den or cave he had at the opening of the play already found, with manifest tokens of the hero's misery and his loathsome disease. A long series of mutual confidences between the heroes takes place, Neoptolemus in particular telling his father's friend all the doleful tidings of the great heroes who had fallen before Troy. But at last he bids him farewell, and is about to leave for his vessel, when Philoctetes addresses him with a very touching appeal not to leave him on this desolate and desert island, but to take him away to his home.

This celebrated speech, in Sophocles' best style, is one of the great beauties of the play, but is not, I think, naturally introduced. It was no part of Neoptolemus' scheme to seem hard-hearted, or to treat Philoctetes as anything but an old guest-friend, nor can we see how his assumed heartlessness, which is with difficulty overcome by the chorus, is in any way calculated to increase the confidence of his victim. As they are delaying their departure, a pretended merchant comes

to tell Neoptolemus that the Greeks have sent Phœnix and the Tyndaridæ to fetch him back, and then throws in by accident that, according to the oracle, Diomede and Odysseus were also coming for Philoctetes. This urges the latter to depart; but while returning to his den to gather some leaves which he used as anodynes, he is overtaken by a paroxysm of his disease, which rends him with such anguish that he surrenders his bow and arrows to Neoptolemus, saying that *of him* he will take no oath for their safe keeping, and sinks into deep sleep. This episode seems to have been imitated from the *Philoctetes* of Æschylus. The chorus at once suggest that they should decamp with the weapons. To this Neoptolemus will hardly deign a reply, and presently Philoctetes revives refreshed, and again master of himself. Then Neoptolemus breaks to him the news that he must go to Troy, and refuses to give him back his bow. But he is so shaken by the powerful appeal of Philoctetes that he is about to yield, when he is stopped by the opportune advent of Odysseus, who immediately assumes a tone of command, insists on carrying off Philoctetes by force, or if not, threatens to carry his arms to Troy, and wield them himself, or place them in the hands of Teucer. The prayers, the lamentations, the execrations of Philoctetes are passionate beyond the utterance of any other Greek hero; but he is not for one moment to be shaken in his resolve, that neither by force nor persuasion will he return to Troy. At last the others leave him, the chorus being ordered to wait for a few moments, as the lonely man supplicates to have human company, and despairs at another return to solitude. Then follows the great scene where Neoptolemus comes back, followed anxiously by Odysseus, who exhausts arguments and threats to dissuade him from his resolve. He has been conquered by Philoctetes' iron constancy, and determines to give him back his arms. He then beseeches him, on the ground of gratitude, to change his purpose, and come to Troy; but Philoctetes, though far more sorely tried by kindness than by fraud or force, is still absolutely firm. Thus he finally conquers Neoptolemus, all the policy of Odysseus is set at naught, and the miserable suppliant in rags and tears, whose lamentations have occupied the stage for

many scenes, is actually leaving the island victorious, and on the way to his home, when this conclusion, which would violate all mythic history, is reversed by the divine interposition of Heracles, who directs him to return to Troy, and aid in the destruction of the city.

A more manifest *character* play cannot be conceived. The hero is in rags and in misery, his lamentations have offended ancient philosophers, as teaching unmanliness, and occupied modern critics, as requiring justification on æsthetic grounds. But the constancy and inflexible sternness of an unimpressionable, blunt nature is no interesting psychological fact, nor do we come to admire Philoctetes' heroism, till we are made fully to feel the horror of his condition, and the despair which filled his mind. The character of Neoptolemus has been greatly and perhaps unduly praised. His spasmodic chivalry is after all that of a youthful enthusiast, who spoils a great policy, and endangers the life of a far greater hero. For it seems to me that Odysseus is clearly intended to be the great man in the play. An Athenian audience did not censure his duplicity as we do, but thought it more than justified by the important ends he had in view. No doubt many of them regarded Neoptolemus as an obstinate young fool, whose misplaced generosity would have foiled a great national cause, had the gods not miraculously interfered. I will only repeat that this play contains most of the features objected to by the critics in Euripides, who even speak as if the latter had invented the knave-Odysseus, a conception probably dating from the comedies of Epicharmus, and perhaps as old as the Cyclic poems.

The story of Philoctetes is alluded to by Homer in the Catalogue of the Iliad and by Pindar in his first Pythian ode, but was taken, like many other tragedies, from the *Little Iliad* by Sophocles, who seems however to have added the all-important part of Neoptolemus. The subject had already been handled both by Æschylus and by Euripides, the *Philoctetes* even of the latter preceding that of Sophocles by more than twenty years, for it is ridiculed in the *Acharnians* of Aristophanes. But both these poets had represented the island of

Lemnos as inhabited, and the chorus was composed of the natives, whereas Sophocles, far more poetically, though unhistorically, makes it a savage desert. Both, again, seem to have represented the hero vanquished by having his arms purloined, whereas Sophocles makes him superior even to this fierce compulsion. In Æschylus Odysseus was so aged as not to be recognised by Philoctetes; in Euripides, Athene had disguised him. These and other details are given by Dion Chrysostom, who not only compares the three works, but gives an abstract of the opening scenes of Euripides' play.[1] It appears manifest that in this case, at all events, Sophocles had far surpassed both his rivals. There were also versions by Philocles, Antiphon, and Theodectes, and a play of Attius, founded apparently on that of Æschylus, and of which a good many fragments remain. Cicero cites it, and Ovid touches the story in his *Metamorphoses*. Quintus Calaber not only gives us a full account of Philoctetes at Lemnos, probably according to the version of Euripides, but brings him to Troy, and thus to the period handled in another play of Sophocles. In modern days, Fénelon has an elegant prose paraphrase in his *Télémaque*, remarkable for its simplicity and faithfulness, when we consider the ridiculous travesty of Chateaubriand (1754), who attempts endless improvements on Sophocles.[2] He gives Philoctetes a daughter Sophia, with a governess, in order that Neoptolemus may fall in love with Sophia! The version of La Harpe (1783) is less ridiculous, but not more faithful. The Greek play itself has been more than once performed in French seminaries, owing to the interest excited by Fénelon's paraphrase.

§ 193. We need not delay in this history over the *Fragments*, which are only of interest to the very special student of Sophocles.[3] In no case can we reconstruct the plan of any lost drama from them, even with the help of the fragments of Attius and Pacuvius, who imitated him, though loosely. The myths he used, and the possible conjectures as to their treatment, have been classified and expanded, with endless learn-

[1] These interesting passages from Dion's orations are cited in full in Dindorf's edition of the fragments of Euripides' play.

[2] Cf. Nauck's *Fragg. Tragg. Græc.* (1890).

[3] Cf. Campbell's *Sophocles*, ch. xv.

ing, by Welcker, in whose great work the curious student may see how small is the result of all his combinations. As I remarked above (p. 59), a great many of the fragments are mere citations of γλῶσσαι, or curious words, which the poet used, and which form a strange and exceptional vocabulary.[1] A few passages have been preserved, for their beauty and philosophic depth, by Stobæus; others are cited by the scholiast on Euripides as parallel passages. The finest is probably the following:

Ὦ παῖδες, ἦ τοι Κύπρις οὐ Κύπρις μόνον,
ἀλλ' ἐστὶ πολλῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπώνυμος.
ἔστιν μὲν Ἅιδης, ἔστι δ' ἄφθιτος βία,
ἔστιν δὲ λύσσα μαινάς, ἔστι δ' ἵμερος
ἄκρατος, ἔστ' οἰμωγμός. ἐν κείνῃ τὸ πᾶν,
σπουδαῖον, ἡσυχαῖον, ἐς βίαν ἄγον.
ἐντήκεται γὰρ πνευμόνων, ὅσοις ἔνι
ψυχή. τίς οὐχὶ τῆσδε τῆς θεοῦ βορά;
εἰσέρχεται μὲν ἰχθύων πλωτῷ γένει,
ἔνεστι δ' ἐν χέρσου τετρασκελεῖ γονῇ·
νωμᾷ δ' ἐν οἰωνοῖσι τοὐκείνης πτερόν,
ἐν θηρσὶν, ἐν βροτοῖσιν, ἐν θεοῖς ἄνω.
τίν' οὐ παλαίουσ' ἐς τρὶς ἐκβάλλει θεῶν;
εἴ μοι θέμις, θέμις δὲ τἀληθῆ λέγειν,
Διὸς τυραννεῖ πνευμόνων· ἄνευ δορός,
ἄνευ σιδήρου πάντα τοι συντέμνεται
Κύπρις τὰ θνητῶν καὶ θεῶν βουλεύματα.

But there are fine thoughts and rich poetic expressions to be found scattered everywhere through them.

§ 194. The technical improvements made by Sophocles in his tragedies were not many or important. He reduced the chorus, it is said, from fifteen to twelve. He added a third actor, and in the *Œdipus at Colonus* a fourth may possibly have been employed. Above all, he abandoned the practice of connecting his dramas in tetralogies, and introduced the competing in single tragedies with his rivals. As they, however, continued to write in tetralogies, it is a riddle which none of our authorities

[1] We are accordingly not surprised to hear (Schol. in *Elect.* 87, on γῆς ἰσόμοιρ' ἀήρ) that he was parodied by the comic poet Pherecrates. This is, perhaps, the only hint we have of any criticism upon the Attic darling in his own day.

have thought fit to solve for us, how a fair competition could be arranged on such terms.[1] He is also said to have added *scenography*, or artistic decoration of the stage, with some attempt at landscape painting—an improvement sure to come with the lapse of time, and marked accidentally as to date by Sophocles. But these outward changes, in themselves slight, are the mark of far deeper innovations in the tone and temper of Greek tragedy. Sophocles is not the last of an old school; he is not the pupil of Æschylus: he is the head of a new school; he is the master of Euripides. We still possess his own judgments as regards both these poets, and his relation to them. Plutarch reports him to have said[2]: 'that having passed without serious effort through the grandiloquence of Æschylus, and then through the harshness and artificiality of his own (earlier) style, he had at last adopted his third kind of style, which was most suited to painting character, and (therefore) the best.' Whatever reading we adopt, the sense as regards Sophocles seems certainly to be that in early years, and before he had seriously settled down to write, he had got rid of any dominant influence from Æschylus. We have indeed no traces of Æschylean style or of Æschylean thinking in any of the plays or fragments; there is ground for separating the second *Œdipus* and the *Philoctetes* from the rest, and regarding them as the representatives of the milder and smoother tone of his ripest years. But who can deny that this

[1] We should be disposed to question the truth of the statement, which rests upon Suidas alone, and refer it merely to the disconnecting of plays in subject, which were yet performed successively, were not all the didascaliæ silent concerning any trilogy or tetralogy of Sophocles, while they frequently mention them in Euripides, and speak of the practice as still subsisting. The satyric dramas of Sophocles, which can hardly have been acted by themselves, seem, however, to prove that Sophocles brought out several plays together, though he is always reported to have conquered with *one*. We have not sufficient evidence to solve this puzzle.

[2] Here is the text of this much disputed passage: *ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ Σ. ἔλεγε, τὸν Αἰσχύλου διαπεπαιχὼς ὄγκον, εἶτα τὸ πικρὸν καὶ κατάτεχνον τῆς αὐτοῦ κατασκευῆς, τρίτον ἤδη τὸ τῆς λέξεως μεταβάλλειν [μεταλαβεῖν] εἶδος, ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἠθικώτατον καὶ βέλτιστον.* The word *διαπεπαιχώς* troubles the critics, who suggest *διαπεπλακώς*, *διαπεπλιχώς*, and *διαπεφευγώς*.

change of style was most probably caused by the rivalry of Euripides? For there is in the earlier plays a great deal of that affected ingenuity of diction, which Thucydides describes (in the mouth of Cleon) as the fashion of those days at Athens. Prose writing had sprung up, political speeches were becoming frequent, and the historian paints with curious felicity the respective efforts of the speakers and the audience in that too highly tempered generation—the one to astonish by some new and unexpected point; the other to outrun the speaker, and anticipate the surprise. Thus Sophocles, like the speakers in Thucydides, displays his subtlety to his hearers, and often when his expression seems at first sight easy, a further reflection discloses unobserved difficulties and new depths of meaning. In this I would compare him to his greatest Roman imitator, Vergil, who, under an apparent smoothness of style, hides great difficulties, and often new and unsuspected meanings.[1] But the easy and transparent writing of Euripides must have impressed his generous rival, and hence we may reckon this to be one of the points in which Sophocles improved by contact with his great successor in art. Nor was the influence limited to mere style. The scholiast at the close of the *Orestes*, in commenting on the melodramatic[2] endings of the *Alcestis* and *Orestes*, notes that the Tyro of Sophocles ended with a happy recognition scene.

§ 195. The contrast between the poets is said (in Aristotle's *Poetic*) to have been expressed by Sophocles in the famous words, 'that he had painted men as they ought to be, Euripides as they were.' After many years' study of both poets, and after a careful reading of all the expositions of this passage, and proofs of it, offered by the critics, I am unable to change my deliberate opinion that, if Sophocles intended to say this, it is not true. There is no kind of heroism in Sophocles to which we

[1] This is the description of Vergil's style which I have often heard from the lips of the late Dr. James Henry, who knew more than all the rest of the world put together about Vergil. He used to say that the obvious meaning was very frequently the wrong meaning in Vergil, and could be proved so.

[2] He calls them *comic*, by which he of course means like the *new* comedy.

cannot find adequate parallels in Euripides; there are no human weaknesses or meannesses in Euripides which we cannot fairly parallel in the scanty remains of Sophocles, and which would not, in all probability, be amply paralleled had we larger means of comparison. The chorus, which in Æschylus was a stirring actor in the progress of the play, was not by Euripides, but by Sophocles first degraded to be a mere spectator of the action—sometimes an accomplice, sometimes a mere selfish, sometimes an irrelevant, observer. Rags and lamentations are not monopolised by Euripides, neither are dishonesty and meanness the apanage of his stage. The wrangling of heroes and heroines is as common in the model poet as in his debased successor. Thus we can hardly defend the statement even if we interpret it, as Welcker does, to mean this: that Sophocles represented men *as a tragic poet ought* to represent them, Euripides as they were. It is a far more probable and modest translation, yet even here we are not borne out by the facts. But there is in any case one point of real importance in the remark. It implies the essential truth that Sophocles, like Euripides, made the characters and passions of *men* his object, and did not dwell upon the Divine or supernatural element in the moral order of the world. As Socrates brought down philosophy, so Sophocles brought down tragic poetry from heaven to dwell upon earth. The gods are thrown into the background, and are there merely to account for moral difficulties, and justify cruelties which human reason cannot but resent. In his latest play (the *Philoctetes*), the *Deus ex machina* actually comes in to reverse the result, and undo all that has been so laboriously worked out by human passion and human resolve. There is here already a great gulf separating us from Æschylus—a difference in kind; we can pass over to Euripides easily, and by an ill-defined boundary.

§ 196. Nevertheless, ancient and modern critics have agreed to place Sophocles first among the Attic tragedians. Though an inferior poet to Æschylus, and an inferior philosopher to either, Sophocles may be regarded a more perfect artist. It is for this reason that he was so perpetually imitated by the

Romans and the French, while among our deeper poets both Æschylus and Euripides have maintained a greater influence. For as an artist, as a perfect exponent of that intensely Attic development which in architecture tempered Doric strength with Ionic sweetness, which in sculpture passed from archaic stiffness to majestic action, which in all the arts found the mean between antique repose and modern vividness, as the poet of Athens, in the heyday of Athens, Sophocles stands without an equal. His plots are more ethical than those of Euripides, his scepticism is more reverent or reticent, his religion more orthodox. He does not disturb his hearers with suggestions of modern doubts and difficulties. He is essentially εὔκολος, as Aristophanes calls him, without angles or contradictions. And thus he is wisely set aside by the comic critic in the great controversy between the old and the new, for he belonged to the new, and yet had not broken with the old. I will only add that his greatness has been enhanced by the preservation of only a few, and those his greatest, works. Had we eight or ten additional plays, of the quality of the *Trachiniæ*—for the poet was known to be unequal in power—the comparisons with Euripides, who has survived in his weakness as well as his strength, might possibly have been more just and a little less foolish.

§ 197. *Bibliographical.* The recension of the text of our extant plays depends altogether on the Medicean codex, already mentioned in connection with Æschylus. Venetian MSS. supplied the *Editio princeps* of Aldus (Venice, 1502), a beautiful little book, and not uncommon in good libraries. Three of the plays, the *Ajax*, *Electra*, and *Œdipus Tyrannus*, were much more studied than the rest, and exist in many MSS., which are, however, not so pure, and have been corrupted in the Byzantine age. From this inferior text came all the editions from Turnebus (1533) to Brunck (1786), who first recognised the superior value of the Parisinus A, but the Medicean L is preferred since Elmsley's day.[1] In the present century the three editions of G. Hermann (1817–48), those of Wunder, of G. Dindorf, of Schneidewin and Nauck, of Bergk, are best known. Wecklein's

[1] It has been photographed by the enterprise of the Hellenic Society.

school editions are the newest, as well as *Œdipus Col.* Bellerman (Teubner, 1883). We have besides English editions by Linwood, Blaydes, Campbell, and of some plays in the *Catena Classicorum* published at Cambridge. An elaborate and valuable prose translation, with Greek text and notes, by Professor R. C. Jebb, is now in process of publication. On the whole, the text is not so corrupt as that of the other dramatists, although, apart from the Byzantine corruptions, the German critics have noted many lines which they suppose due to early stage traditions, nay even some of them to the family of Sophocles. It is obvious that when we throw back interpolations to such an age, their discovery depends altogether on subjective taste, and need not detain us here. The reader will find these suspected lines printed at the foot of Dindorf's text in his *Poetæ scenici* and elsewhere.

There is a good deal of sound ancient learning preserved to us in the prefaces and scholia, first published by Lascaris at Rome (1518) without the text, then by Junta at Florence in 1544, and then several times before the edition of Stephanus in 1568. The best of the notes came from what are called the *ὑπομνηματισταί*, who certainly as early as the Alexandrian period wrote on the text, and collected the *Didascaliæ* as to the performances. Aristophanes is known to have paid attention to Sophocles. Aristarchus is also named, but Didymus seems the chief source of the extant scholia. Those on the *Œdipus at Colonus* are particularly full. There is a good edition of the scholia by Elmsley and Gaisford in 1826, and several special *lexicons* of Sophocles' language, of which the best are those of F. Ellendt, and of G. Dindorf: the latter was prosecuted by Ellendt's representatives, and the edition suppressed, so that copies of this most valuable book are now scarce. Of complete translations the most celebrated among the many German is that of Donner; other scholars, like Schöll and Böckh, have done single plays. The French, besides the imitations above cited under the separate plays, have the *Théâtre* of Brumoy, and Villemain mentions with praise a literal version of Sophocles by Malézieux. In English we have Potter (1788), and in our own day Dale, whose book is now very

rarely to be found; also Mr. Plumptre's version—a meritorious work—and recently Professor Campbell's complete volume, as well as Mr. Whitelaw's (1883), a work of rare excellence. Special studies on Sophocles, both generally and on particular plays, are endless in Germany. Welcker's is of course the most exhaustive; Klein's, inaccurate and capricious, but very suggestive; Bernhardy's, simply laudatory and full of empty wordiness in criticism, together with deep and accurate learning as to facts. Our great living poets, who are accomplished Grecians, have, so far as I know, said nothing of consequence on Sophocles.[1]

[1] Professor Campbell's monograph now supplies the English reader with a detailed and most enthusiastic estimate of the poet's genius and of his extant plays. It will be observed that none of the points in which I have suggested imperfections are adopted by Mr. Campbell, and that the poet is everywhere vindicated from any attempt (I will not say at adverse, but even) at depreciative criticism. Though I deeply respect this large-hearted enthusiasm, it does not appear to me the only way of stimulating the study of any writer; and hence I do not regret that the views set forth in the previous chapter were written and printed before I had the advantage of being influenced by the elaborate analysis of so competent a scholar. I will not attempt to criticise his work, which differs from mine mainly in this contrast of spirit, and no doubt in the greater elegance of its language, but will only add that there are many facts in the history of the poet and his works which may be learned from the present chapter even after the perusal of his more detailed work.

CHAPTER XVII.

EURIPIDES.

§ 198. EURIPIDES was born in the year of the battle of Salamis (480 B.C.)—nay, according to the legends, on the very day of the battle (20th of Boedromion)—and apparently on the island, whither his parents had fled, with other Athenians, for refuge. He is said to have afterwards had a fancy for this island, and to have composed his tragedies there in a retired spot, within view of the sea, from which he borrows so many striking metaphors. His father, Mnesarchus or Mnesarchides, is said to have formerly lived in Bœotia, but most probably as a foreigner, and afterwards in the Attic deme of Phlyïa, according to Suidas. Some of the *Lives* say he was a petty trader, but this is inconsistent with his son's apparent wealth and literary leisure, and would hardly have been passed over in silence by Aristophanes. The mother's name was Kleito, and she was perpetually ridiculed by the comic poets as an herb-seller. The story is most probably false, and rests upon some accidental coincidence of name, or some anecdote which gave contemporaries a sufficient handle for their joke, though it is lost to us. The youthful poet is said to have been trained with some success for athletic contests by his father, and perhaps to this we may ascribe the strong contempt and aversion with which he speaks of that profession. There were, moreover, pictures shown at Megara, which were ascribed to him, so that he evidently had the reputation of a man of varied culture. But he abandoned his earlier pursuits, whatever they may have been, for the study of philosophy under Anaxagoras, probably also Protagoras, and possibly Prodicus, and in mature life seems to have stood in close contact to Socrates. He was essentially a student, and such a collector of books that his library was famous, but he took no part in public

affairs.[1] But he began at the age of twenty-five to compete in tragedy (with his *Peliades*), and continued all his life a prolific and popular, though not a successful poet. He was known to have won the first prize only five times,[2] though he may have written ninety tragedies, and, even if we hold him always to have contended with tetralogies (or trilogies followed by a satyric or melodrama), must have contended over twenty times. He was twice married, and unfortunately: first to Chœrile, who was mother of his three sons, Mnesarchides, a merchant; Mnesilochus, an actor; and the younger Euripides, who wrote dramas, and brought out some of his father's posthumous works, such as the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and *Bacchæ*. The comic poets do not scruple to reflect upon the unfaithfulness of his wives, and deduce from it his alleged hatred of women. Late in life he removed to the court of Archelaus of Macedon, where he was received with great honour, and wrote some plays (especially the *Archelaus* and *Bacchæ*) on the local legends. He appears to have died there at the age of seventy-four, having been attacked and torn by sporting-dogs, which were set upon him maliciously. He was honoured with a pompous tomb in Macedonia, and a cenotaph at Athens, on which the historian Thucydides is said to have inscribed an epitaph.[3]

[1] His moral portrait cannot be better expressed than in the words in which he may possibly have meant to describe his own aspirations :—

ὄλβιος ὅστις τῆς ἱστορίας
ἔσχε μάθησιν
μήτε πολιτῶν ἐπὶ πημοσύνην
μητ' εἰς ἀδίκους πράξεις ὁρμῶν,
ἀλλ' ἀθανάτου καθορῶν φύσεως
κόσμον ἀγήρων, πῆ τε συνέστη
καὶ ὅπη καὶ ὅπως.
τοῖς δὲ τοιούτοις οὐδέποτ' αἰσχρῶν
ἔργων μελέτημα προσίζει (fr. 902).

[2] Cf. the learned and interesting note in Meineke's *Comic Fragments*, ii. p. 904, on the small number of victories gained by the greatest poets, and the frequent preferment of obscure names. It was not unfrequent, as he notes in the text, for great poets to be even refused a chorus by the archon, a slight of which both Sophocles and Cratinus had to complain.

[3] *μνῆμα μὲν Ἑλλὰς ἅπασ' Εὐριπίδου, ὀστέα δ' ἴσχει*
γῆ Μακεδών· τῇ γὰρ δέξατο τέρμα βίου.
πατρὶς δ' Ἑλλάδος Ἑλλάς, Ἀθῆναι. πλεῖστα δὲ Μούσας
τέρψας ἐκ πολλῶν καὶ τὸν ἔπαινον ἔχει.

The aged Sophocles is said to have shown deep sorrow at the death of his rival, in this contrasting strongly with Aristophanes, who chose the next performance for his bitterest and most unsparing onslaught upon him (in the *Frogs*). The poet is described, upon not the highest authority, to have been of gloomy and morose temper, hating conviviality and laughter. There is no Greek author whose portrait is so distinctive and familiar in museums of ancient art. The sitting statue in the Louvre, and two busts at Naples, probably copied from the statue set up by Lycurgus in the theatre at Athens, are the most striking. The face is that of an elderly and very thoughtful man, with noble features, and of great beauty, but not without an expression of patience and of sorrow such as beseems him who has been well called *der Prophet des Weltschmerzes*. As we should expect, the face is not essentially Greek, but of a type to be found among thoughtful men of our own day. His social position and comfortable means are proved not only by his possession of a valuable library, but by his holding one or two priestly offices, which were probably rich sinecures, and would in no case have been intrusted to a man of mean origin or low consideration.

As regards the possible ninety-two dramas written by the poet, the ancients seem to have known seventy-five, of which the names, now partly erased, were engraved on the pedestal of the extant sitting statue. We possess about one fifth of the number, viz. seventeen tragedies and one satyric drama, excluding the *Rhesus*, as of very doubtful authorship. This large legacy of time, if we compare the scanty remains of Æschylus and Sophocles, does not seem to comprehend any choice selection of his *chefs d'œuvre*, but a mere average collection, of which our estimate is probably lower than that we should have formed, had fewer plays, and the best, survived. The dates of some of them are fixed by the didascaliæ, and of others (partly at least) by the allusions in Aristophanes' plays. The usual *à priori* argument, which infers from laxity of metre or style either crudity or decadence of genius, fails signally in the case of Euripides, for his latest plays which are known are far stricter in form than others preserved from preceding years, such as the *Helena*.

§ 199. Innumerable attempts have been made to gather from his writings an estimate of his politics, of his social views, and of his religion. But although the ancients have led the way in this course, and have everywhere assumed that the philosophic utterances of the poet's characters were meant to convey his own sentiments, such an inference must be very dangerous in the case of a thoroughly dramatic poet, and especially a dramatic poet who paints upon his stage the violence of human passion. There is indeed an anecdote of little authority, but of great aptness, preserved, in which we are told that the audience cried out against the immorality of the praise of wealth above virtue, but that the poet himself came forward and bid them wait to see the punishment of the character who uttered it.[1] Thus, again, had the famous line, 'my tongue has sworn, but my heart is free,' which Cicero and others quote with reprobation from the *Hippolytus*, been preserved as a mere fragment, we could not have known that this very speaker actually loses his life rather than break his oath. It is therefore an inquiry of great interest, but of greater uncertainty, to reconstruct this poet's mind from the words of his characters, and with this caution I refer the reader to the special tracts of Lübker, Haupt, Goebel, and others, as well as to the fuller work of Hartung. A great many more books are also indicated in the exhaustive discussion of Bernhardy.[2] As a general rule, I should be disposed to lay down this axiom, that the poet's own views are likely to be found either (α) in the soliloquies of his characters, where they may be imagined turning to the audience, or (β) in the *first* strophe and antistrophe of his choruses, which usually express general sentiments, before passing into the special subject of the play in the second strophe. I have elsewhere[3] remarked on this feature in Euripides. But of course the actors may have had some conventional sign for expressing elsewhere the poet's thoughts, which made them clear to the audience, but which we have now irreparably lost.

As to his works I will here follow, with a few exceptions, the order critically determined by W. Dindorf, noting its uncer-

[1] Cf. Plutarch, cited on the passage of the *Ixion*.

[2] Vol. iii. § 119.

[3] *Social Greece*, p. 197.

tainties as we proceed. The vexed question not merely of the poet's merits, but of his own views of his mission, and the consequent intention of his writing, will be discussed when our survey has been completed.

§ 200. The *Alcestis* is the earliest play which has survived, if it was performed as the last play, along with the Κρῆσσαι, Ἀλκμαων ὁ διὰ Ψωφῖδος, and Τήλεφος, in Ol. 85, 2 (438 B.C.). But as the same prefatory note calls it his sixteenth work, there may be something wrong in the figures, for he probably composed more tragedies before that date. The poet obtained the second prize, Sophocles being placed first. The *Telephus* seems to have struck the fancy of the age, for its ragged hero, who suffered from an incurable and agonising wound, like Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, is often ridiculed by Aristophanes. But to us the *Alcestis* is a curious and almost unique example of a great novelty attempted by Euripides[1]—a novelty which Shakspeare has sanctioned by his genius—I mean the mixture of comic and vulgar elements with real tragic pathos, by way of contrast. The play before us is not indeed strictly a tragedy, but a melodrama, with a happy conclusion, and was noted as such by the old critics, who called the play *rather comic*, that is to say, like the *new* comedies in this respect. The intention of the poet seems to have been to calm the minds of the audience agitated by great sorrows, and to tone them by an afterpiece of a higher and more refined character than the satyric dramas, which were coarse and generally obscene. But while no great world-conflict is represented, while no mighty moral problem is held in solution, there are a series of deep and practical moral lessons conveyed by the exquisite character-painting of the play. The first scene is between Apollo, who is peculiarly attached to the house of Admetus, and Death, who has arrived to take away the mistress of the house, for she alone has consented to die for her husband. There is something comic in the very prologue, which describes how Admetus, 'having tested and gone through all his friends,

[1] For this purpose he seems to have adopted and glorified by his refined art a subject treated in a burlesque way, as a satyric drama, by his predecessor Phrynichus. This, at least, is the clever suggestion of Wilamowitz in his *Herakles*, i. 92.

his aged father and the mother who bore him,' can find no one else to volunteer to die for the mere purpose of saving his life. The short dialogue between Apollo and Death is, however, very striking and justly admired. Then enter the chorus in suspense, and expecting hourly the death of Alcestis, but they are more minutely informed in the matchless narrative of a waiting maid, who describes how Alcestis bade farewell to all her happiness, her home, her children, her servants, and calmly, though not without poignant regrets, faced death from pure self-denial for the sake of her husband. She is presently led in by him, and in a most affecting dialogue gives him her parting directions, prays him not to replace her in his affections by a second wife, and apparently dies upon the stage—a most exceptional thing in Greek drama—amid the tearful outcries of her infant son and her husband. There is no female character in either Æschylus or Sophocles which is so great and noble, and at the same time so purely tender and womanly.

The effect is heightened by the contrast of Admetus, whose selfishness would be quite grotesque were it not Greek. After going the round of all his friends in search of a substitute, he deeply resents the gross selfishness of his parents, whose advanced age made it ridiculous, in his opinion, that they should not sacrifice themselves for his comfort. He complains bitterly of his dreadful lot in losing so excellent a wife, but here again evidently on selfish grounds, and vows eternal hatred to and separation from his father, who comes with gifts for the dead, and defends himself against his son's attack by protesting his own equal love of life, and that it was no Greek fashion to sacrifice the parent for his child. This is the only feature of the play which modern critics have been able to reprehend, and they have done so with some unanimity, whether they regard the play as one of the worst of Euripides, like Schöll, or as one of the best, like Klein and Patin. It seems to me that they have totally missed Euripides' point, and the most profound in the play, by this criticism. The poet does not conceive the sacrifice of Alcestis, as the speaker in Plato's *Symposium* (179 B) does, to be a sacrifice of one lover for another—an aspect sure to predominate in all the modern versions. It is not for the love of

Admetus that she dies. She represents that peculiar female heroism, which makes affection the highest duty, but obeys the demands of affection in the form of family ties, as the dictates of the highest moral law. We see these, the heroines of common life, around us in all classes of society. But I venture to assert that in no case does this heroic devotion of self-sacrifice come out into such really splendid relief, as when it is made for selfish and worthless people. It is therefore a profound psychological point to represent Admetus a weak and selfish man, blessed, as worthless men often are, by special favours of fortune in wealth and domestic happiness, and very ready to perform the ordinary duties of good fellowship, such as hospitality, but wholly unequal to any real sacrifice. It is for such an one that Alcestis dies—in fact, she dies not for Admetus, but *for her husband* and children's sake, and would have done so had she been given in marriage to any other like person. This is the true meaning of those disagreeable but profoundly natural scenes, which shocked those advocates of rhodomontade in tragedy who make Admetus vie with his wife in heroism. If M. Patin holds that such sentiments, though natural, are concealed within the breast, and never confessed, he forgets that Euripides wrote in a vastly more outspoken society than ours.

This curious and very comic dialogue is, however, interrupted by the entrance of Heracles, who comes on his journey to visit his guest friend, and is received with the truest hospitality by Admetus, who conceals his misfortune, in order to make his friend at home. As M. Patin observes, the height of pathos already attained would be impossible to sustain, and therefore the tone of the play is most skilfully changed.[1] The rollicking and convivial turn of Heracles is in sharp discord with the

[1] The contrast of grief and of mirth, brought out by this scene, which greatly disgusted Voltaire, and is totally opposed to French notions of tragic dignity, has been by later French critics compared with the musicians' scene near the end of *Romeo and Juliet*. It is remarkable that Milton's preface to the *Samson Agonistes*, which adopts the tone of the French drama (I suppose quite independently), specially censures the introduction of low comic characters in tragedy, and sets up the great Greek tragedies as the proper models, apparently in opposition to Shakspeare's school.

profound grief of the household, and no one is more pained by it than the worthy hero himself, who with true practical energy sets about at once to rescue Alcestis from death, and so requite his friend for his kindness. The character of Heracles is not inferior in drawing to any of the rest, and every fair critic will be justly astonished at this profound and curious anticipation of many strong points in the modern drama. The chorus is throughout a sympathetic spectator of the action, and the choral odes are not only highly poetical and elegantly constructed, but all strictly to the point. Thus even in the ode which is supposed to express the poet's mind,[1] the learning alluded to by the chorus is that Thracian learning which was naturally accessible to Thessalians. The usual attacks on Euripides' lyrics have therefore no place here.

§ 201. There is a strange external resemblance between the concluding scene and that of the *Winter's Tale*, which has not escaped the commentators. No subject has proved more attractive than this beautiful legend, and yet no one has ever approached in excellence its treatment by Euripides. There is an old Indian parallel in the Mahâbhârata, where Sâvitri, like Alcestis, rescues from the power of Yama, the Lord of the nether world, her husband's life. Euripides' play was parodied by Antiphanes in a comedy brought out in the 106th Olympiad. There were two Latin versions, one by Attius, and another of doubtful authorship. Buchanan produced a Latin translation in 1543, which was acted by the pupils of the Collège de Bordeaux. It is not worth while specifying the series of travesties or modifications which occupied the French stage from 1600 to the end of the last century. Racine, it may be observed, turns aside in the Preface to his *Iphigénie* to defend it against the shallow criticism of his day. Gluck's famous music has perpetuated through Europe a very poor Italian libretto by Calzabigi in 1776. But in 1798 Alfieri, who had abandoned writing, was so struck with the play, which he then learnt to know in the original, that he not only translated it, but wrote an *Alcestis* of his own, which was published after his death. As usual, he has

[1] vv. 962, sq. : ἔγω διὰ Μούσας
καὶ μετάρσιος ἦξα κ.τ.λ.

made all the characters great stage heroes at the sacrifice not only of nature but of all real interest. Like the French imitators, he makes Admetus, and even Pheres, heroes, and creates a romantic ground of natural love and respect for the sacrifice of Alcestis, and for a competition between husband and wife, which completely spoils Euripides' deep and subtle plan. Translations and moderately faithful imitations were produced on the Paris stage in 1844 and 1847 ; others have been since published in France. Among English poets Milton has alluded to the legend in his 23rd sonnet,

> Methought I saw my late espoused saint
> Brought to me, like Alcestis, from the grave ;

and recently Mr. Wm. Morris has given a beautiful and original version, not at all Euripidean, in the first volume of his *Earthly Paradise.* There is a good translation by Banks (1849). By far the best translation is Mr. Browning's, in his *Balaustion's Adventure*, but it is much to be regretted that he did not render the choral odes into lyric verse. No one has more thoroughly appreciated the mean features of Admetus and Pheres, and their dramatic propriety. A tolerably faithful transcript, adapted for the lyrical stage by Frank Murray (from Potter's version), was set to music by Henry Gadsby, on the model of Mendelssohn's *Antigone*, which seems likely to inspire a good many imitations. There are excellent special editions by Monk and G. Hermann, as well as a recension by G. Dindorf.

§ 202. The *Medea* came out in 431 B.C. along with the poet's *Philoctetes*, *Dictys*, and the satyric *Reapers* (the last was early lost). It was based upon a play of Neophron's, and only obtained the third prize, Euphorion being first, and Sophocles second. It may accordingly be regarded as a failure in its day—an opinion apparently confirmed by the faults (viz. Ægeus and the winged chariot) selected from it as specimens in Aristotle's *Poetic.* There is considerable evidence of there being a second edition of the play, and many of the variants, or so-called interpolations, seem to arise from both versions being preserved and confused. Nevertheless there was no play of Euripides more praised and imitated by both Romans and

moderns. It is too well known to demand any close analysis here. The whole interest turns upon the delineation of the furious passion of Medea, and her devices to punish those who have offended her. The other characters, with the exception of the two aged and faithful servants, who admirably introduce the action, are either mean or colourless. Iason is a sort of Æneas, who endeavours to justify his desertion of his wife by specious falsehoods, and is not even, like the hero of Virgil, incited by the voice of the gods. His grief for his children is considered by some critics to atone for these grave defects. The rest are not worth mentioning, if we except the chorus of Corinthian women, which in this play justifies the censure of the critics, inasmuch as it coolly admits the confidences of Medea and hears fearful plots against the king and the princess of the land, without offering any resistance. It remonstrates but feebly even with her proposed murder of her children. The most celebrated chorus, which is a beautiful eulogy upon Athens, is merely suggested by the accident that Ægeus, its king, is about to harbour a sorceress and a wholesale murderess, even of her own family. Yet the passage, though quite irrelevant, is very famous.[1] The whole episode of Ægeus, who is introduced in order that the omnipotent sorceress, with her winged chariot, may not be cast out without a refuge, has been justly censured in the *Poetic* and elsewhere as a means not required, and as an otiose excrescence to the play, not without offensive details.[2] Nevertheless the vehement and commanding figure of the heroine has fascinated the great majority of critics, who, like every public, seem to miss finer points, and appreciate only the strong lines, and the prominent features of violent and unnatural passion.

M. Patin[3] draws a most interesting comparison with the *Tra-*

[1] vv. 824–45.

[2] If Medea, as some critics suppose, and as the chorus appears to assume (v. 1385), really offers herself in marriage to the childless Ægeus in this scene, I can hardly conceive Aristophanes passing over such a feature. According to the legend, she did live with him, and bore him a son called Medus. She seems to have appeared as his wife in Euripides' tragedy of Ægeus, in which she endeavours to poison Theseus.

[3] *Euripide*, i. p. 118.

chiniæ of Sophocles, which certainly bears some relation of conscious contrast to the *Medea*, but unfortunately we do not know which of the two plays was the earlier, and therefore which of the poets meant to criticise or improve upon the other. I venture to suppose that Sophocles desired to paint a far more natural and womanly picture of the sufferings of a deserted wife, who, without the power and wickedness of Medea, still destroys her deceiver, and brings ruin on herself, in spite of her patience and long-suffering. The coincidence of the two plays, the foreign residence of both heroines, the poisoned robe, the pretended contentment of both to attain their ends, is very striking. But the *Trachiniæ*, in my opinion the finer play, has made no mark in the world compared to the *Medea*, whose fierce fury has always been strangely admired.

The Greek critics even went so far as to censure what we should call the only great and affecting feature of the play—the irresolution and tears of the murderess,[1] when she has resolved to sacrifice her innocent children for the mere purpose of torturing her faithless husband. This criticism is apparently quoted in the Greek argument as the opinion of Dicæarchus and of Aristotle. Surely it may be affirmed, that if this feature caused the failure of the piece, we may indeed thank Euripides for having violated his audience's notions of consistency. The scene of irresolution and of alternation between jealous fury and human pity must always have been, as it now is, a capital occasion for a great display of genius in the actor or actress of the part, and this is doubtless the real cause of the permanent hold the piece has taken upon the world. I may also call attention to the great speech of Medea to Iason,[2] which argues indeed the very strongest case, but is nevertheless, especially at its conclusion, an admirable piece of rhetoric.

§ 203. We actually hear of six Greek *Medeas*, besides the early play of Neophron,[3] not to speak of the comic parodies. Ennius

[1] vv. 1021, sq. [2] vv. 465, sq.

[3] The text of the ὑπόθεσις to our *Medea*, which mentions this play, being corrupt, some critics have thought that the play of Neophron, from which Stobæus cites the monologue of Medea, was an imitation by a poet of the date of Alexander. I do not think the author of the argument can possibly have meant this, however the words are taken.

imitated the play of Euripides,[1] and both Cicero and Brutus are said to have been reading it or citing it in their last moments—no mean distinction for any tragedy. The opening lines are very often cited in an elegant version by Phædrus. Horace too alludes to it, and Ovid's earliest work was a *Medea*, which was acted on the Roman stage with applause, when the author, years after, was in exile. It is praised by Tacitus and Quintilian, and does not seem to have been a mere translation from Euripides. There remains to us, unfortunately, a Medea among the works of Seneca, who could not refrain from handling a subject so congenial to Roman tastes. But in this play the magic powers of the sorceress are the great feature, the age having turned from an effete polytheism to the gloomy horrors of magic and witchcraft. The fury of the murderess is exaggerated even beyond the picture of Euripides, and the whole play glitters with the false tinsel of artificial rhetoric. Buchanan gave a Latin version of the play, and Dolce an Italian, but Pérouse followed Seneca in his French play (1553), as did Corneille (1635), and Longepierre (1694). These poor imitations dilated on the amours of Iason, and represented Creon and his daughter in a sort of *auto da fé* on the stage; but Voltaire, in criticising them and Seneca's *Medea*, thinks fit to include the Greek play, which, as M. Patin observes, he seems not to have read. There was an English version by Glover in 1761, which humanises and christianises both Iason and Medea, and makes her crime the result of a delirious moment. Grillparzer's trilogy (the *Golden Fleece*) in its last play likewise softens the terrible sorceress, and drives her to the crime by the heartlessness of her children, who will not return to her from the amiable Creusa, when the latter desires to surrender them. The same features mark the *Medeas* of Niccolini, of Lucas, brought out in Paris in 1855, and of Ernest Legouvé,

[1] Cicero speaks of it as a literal translation from the Greek, but this is not verified by the fragments, which both in this and the other Ennian imitations cannot be found in our Greek originals. This variation from the models is too persistent to be accounted for by first editions, or by emended copies of the Greek plays used by Ennius, and must be taken as conclusive evidence that his versions were free renderings, paraphrasing the sense, and changing the metres, as we can show from extant fragments.

which in its Italian dress has afforded Mde. Ristori one of her greatest tragic triumphs, and which is still performed in Paris. But the play is no longer the savage and painful play of Euripides, and is, I confess, to me not inferior. The opera offers us Hoffmann's elegant version, set to music by Cherubini, and I might add the *Norma* of Bellini, where the main situation is copied from the Medea, though compassion prevails. The best editions are Kirchhoff's (1852) and Prinz' (1879) for criticism, those of Wecklein (1879) and A. W. Verrall (1881) for exegesis also, the last excellent.

Klinger's modern reproduction is praised by the Germans. The beautiful epic version of Mr. Morris, in the last book of his *Life and Death of Iason*, handles the myth (as is his wont) very freely, and dwells chiefly on the gradual estrangement of Iason through the love of Glauce, and the gradual relapse of Medea from the peaceful and happy wife to the furious sorceress.

§ 204. The *Hippolytus* (στεφανίας, or crowned, to distinguish it from the earlier καλυπτόμενος, veiled, of which the explanation is now lost) appeared three years after the *Medea*, in 428 B.C., and is our earliest example of a *romantic* subject in the Greek drama.[1] We are told that it obtained the first place against Iophon and Ion's competition, but we are not told whether or what other plays accompanied it, nor of the plays it defeated. The earlier version of the play was not only read and admired, but possibly copied in the play of Seneca; yet it failed at Athens, chiefly, it is thought, because of the boldness with which Phædra told her love in person to her stepson, and then in person maligned him to his father. In Seneca she uses incantations to the moon, and justifies her guilt by Theseus' infidelities. It is only upon his death that she confesses her guilt and dies. This may have been the plan remodelled in the play before us, and it is a literary fact of no small interest to know that Euripides certainly confessed his earlier failure and strove to improve upon it, with success, while at the same time he allowed the earlier form to be circulated. For it implies both a real desire to please the Athenian audience, and also a certain contempt for their censure, in which the smaller reading public of the day probably supported him.

[1] We have lost Æschylus' *Myrmidons*, perhaps an earlier example.

The delineation of the passion of Phædra is the great feature of the play, and it is indeed drawn with a master hand. But in one point[1] the modern reader feels shocked or dissatisfied, in her sudden determination, not adequately motived in the play, of involving Hippolytus in her ruin by a bare falsehood, and it is peculiarly Greek that this odious crime should not be held to prevent her dying with honour and good fame (εὐκλέης). In our day we should be more disposed to pardon unchastity than this deliberate and irremediable lying, nor would any modern poet paint it in a woman of Phædra's otherwise good and noble character.

All the advances to Hippolytus, and the inducements to crime, which Phædra at first honestly and nobly resists, are suggested by her nurse, a feeble and immoral old woman, who perhaps talks too well, but plays a very natural part. The character of Hippolytus, which is admirably sustained through the play, is cold and harsh, and what we might call offensively holy. It was a character with which no Greek public could feel much sympathy, as asceticism was disliked, and even censured on principle. There is indeed no commonplace more insisted upon all through the tragedies than that the delights of moderate love (as compared with the agonies of extreme passion) are to be enjoyed as the best and most real pleasure in this mortal life. It is, therefore, from this point of view that the poet, while he rewards Hippolytus' virtue with heroic honours after death, makes him a capital failure in life. The hatred of Aphrodite, who is drawn in the worst and most repulsive colours, seems to express the revenge of nature upon those who violate her decrees. Probably the spite of Aphrodite, as well as the weakness of Artemis, the patron goddess of the hero, is also intended to lower the conception of these deities in the public mind. It is a *reductio ad absurdum* of Divine Providence, when the most awful misfortunes of men are ascribed to the malice of hostile and the impotence of friendly deities. Some good critics have indeed defended Artemis, and called her a noble character in this play; but what shall we say of a deity who, when impotent to save her favourite, threatens[2]

[1] *Aristoph. Apology*, p. 26. [2] v. 1420.

that she will be avenged by slaying with her arrows some favourite of Aphrodite? This is verily to make mankind the sport of malignant gods. Euripides cannot have given them these miserable parts, without intending to satirise the popular creed, and so to open the way for higher and purer religious conceptions. The chorus is a weak, and sometimes irrelevant spectator of the action, a necessary consequence, indeed, of its being present during the whole of the action, and, therefore, not fairly to be censured. One very elegant chorus on the power of Eros[1] may be compared with the parallel ode in Sophocles' *Antigone.* There is a chorus of attendants (what was called a παραχορήγημα) which accompanies Hippolytus at the opening, and which is distinct from the proper chorus—a rare device in Greek tragedy. Nothing will show more clearly the sort of criticism to which Euripides has been subjected, in ancient and modern times, than the general outcry against a celebrated line uttered by Hippolytus: 'My tongue has sworn, but my mind has taken no oath' (ἡ γλῶσσ' ὀμώμοχ', ἡ δὲ φρὴν ἀνώμοτος). He exclaims this in his fury, when the old nurse adjures him by his oath not to betray her wretched mistress. It seems indeed hard that a dramatic poet should be judged by the excited utterances of his characters, but it is worse than hard, it is shamefully unjust, that the critics should not have read on fifty lines, where the same character Hippolytus, on calmer consideration,[2] declares that, *were he not bound by the sanctity of his oath,* he would certainly inform Theseus. And he dies simply because he will not violate this very oath, stolen from him when off his guard. I doubt whether any criticism, ancient or modern, contains among its myriad injustices, whether of negligence, ignorance, or deliberate malice, a more flagrantly absurd accusation. And yet Aristophanes, who leads the way in this sort of falsehood, is still extolled by some as the greatest and deepest exponent of the faults of Euripides.

Æschylus and Sophocles, as might be expected, did not touch this subject, but Agathon appears to have treated it.[3]

[1] vv. 525–64; translated for me by Mr. Browning in my monograph on Euripides, p. 116.

[2] v. 657.

[3] Aristoph. *Thesmoph.* 153.

There was an *Hippolytus* by Lycophron, and though the older Roman tragedians have left us no trace of a version, the allusions of Virgil in the Æneid,[1] and the perpetual recurrence of the subject in Ovid,[2] show how well it was known in the golden age of Roman literature.

The *Hippolytus* of Seneca, from which the scene of Phædra's personal declaration to Hippolytus was adopted by Racine in his famous play, is still praised by French critics. It was highly esteemed, and even preferred to the Greek play, in the Renaissance. It was acted in Latin at Rome in 1483, and freely rehandled by Garnier, in a French version, in 1573. The next celebrated French version was that of Gilbert, Queen Christina's French minister in 1646. But his very title, *Hippolyte ou le Garçon insensible*, sounds strange, and the play is said nevertheless to have admitted a great deal of gallantry in the hero. In 1677 Racine produced his famous *Phèdre*, of which the absolute and comparative merits have been discussed in a library of criticism. A hostile clique got up an opposition version by Pradon, and for a moment defeated and disgusted the poet, but the very pains taken by Schlegel, and even by French critics, to sustain Euripides against him, shows the real importance of the piece. For a long time, in the days of Voltaire and La Harpe, and of the revolt against antiquity, Euripides was utterly scouted in comparison. But now-a-days, when the wigs and the powder, the etiquette and the artifice, of the French court of the seventeenth century can hardly be tolerated as the decoration for a Greek tragedy, it is rare to find the real merits of Racine admitted, in the face of such tasteless and vulgar anachronism. Yet for all that, Racine's *Phèdre* is a great play, and it is well worth while to read the poet's short and most interesting preface, in which he gives the reasons for his deviations. He grounds the whole merit of his tragedy, as Aristophanes makes Æschylus and Euripides argue, not on its poetical features, but on its moral lessons. He has spoilt Hippolytus by giving him a passion for the princess *Aricie*, whom Theseus, for state reasons, had forbidden to marry. But this

[1] vii. 761.

[2] *Fasti*, iii. 266, vi. 733; *Metam.* xv. 492; *Epist. Her.* iv.

additional cause of Hippolytus' rejection of Phædra's suit adds the fury of jealousy to her madness, and is the main cause of her false charge against him, thus giving a motive where there is hardly a sufficient one in Euripides. The passage in which she shrinks from the death she is seeking, at the thought of appearing before her father Minos, the judge of the dead, is very finely conceived; on the whole, however, she exhibits too much of her passion in personal pleading on the stage, and so falls far behind Euripides' Phædra in delicacy.

There was an English Phædra by Edmund Smith in 1707, based on both Racine's and Pradon's, and like them full of court intrigues, captains of the household, prime ministers, and the like. There were operas on it attempted by Rameau (1733), and by Lemoine (1786), neither of which is now known. The Greek play was put on the German stage faithfully in 1851, but was found inferior to Racine's for such a performance. There are special editions by Musgrave, Valckenaer, Monk, and lastly by Berthold.[1] We know from the fragments of lost plays, and from the criticisms of Aristophanes, that Euripides chose the painful subject of a great criminal passion for several plays, the *Phrixus*, *Sthenobœa* (*Bellerophon*), and certainly the *Phœnix*, built upon the narrative of the aged hero in the ninth book of the Iliad. If we could trust Aristophanes, we might suppose that he was the first to venture on such a subject, but the allusions of the critics to Neophron's *Medea*, and the traces of similar subjects in the fragments of Sophocles, make it uncertain whether he was the originator, as he certainly was the greatest master, in this very modern department of tragedy.

§ 205. The *Andromache* need not occupy us long, being one of the worst constructed, and least interesting, plays of Euripides. The date is uncertain, as it was not brought out at Athens, perhaps not till after the poet's death, and is only to be fixed doubtfully by the bitter allusions to Sparta, with which it teems. It has indeed quite the air of a political pamphlet under the guise of a tragedy. It must,

[1] I can recommend a very faithful poetical version by Mr. M. P. Fitzgerald (London, 1867), in a volume before cited, and entitled *The Crowned Hippolytus*. Another by Miss Robinson has since appeared.

therefore, have been composed during the Peloponnesian war, possibly about 419 B.C.[1] The character of Andromache (now the slave and concubine of Neoptolemus), who opens the play as a suppliant telling her tale and mourning her woes *in elegiacs* (a metre never used elsewhere in our extant tragedies), is well conceived, and the scene in which her child, whom she had hidden, is brought before her by Menelaus, and threatened with instant death if she will not leave the altar, is full of true Euripidean pathos. The laments of mother and child, as they are led away to execution, are in the same strain, but are interrupted by the *surprise* of Peleus appearing just in time—a rare expedient in Greek tragedy. On the other hand, the characters of the jealous wife Hermione, and her father Menelaus, are violent, mean, and treacherous beyond endurance. They represent the vulgarest tyrants, and are rather fit for Alfieri's stage. All this is intended as a direct censure on Sparta, a feeling in which the poet hardly varied, as Bergk justly observes, though it is seldom so unpleasantly obtruded upon us as in this play.[2] When Andromache and her child are saved, after a long and angry altercation between Peleus and Menelaus, the play is properly concluded, but is awkwardly expanded by a sort of afterpiece, in which Hermione rushes in, beside herself with fear at what she has dared in the absence of her husband. This emotional and absurd panic opens the way for the appearance of Orestes, with whom she at once arranges a *mariage de convenance* of the most prosaic kind, and flies. Then follows the elaborate narrative of the murder of her former husband Neoptolemus at Delphi, owing to the plots of Orestes. The lamen-

[1] The choral metres, which are chiefly dactylico-trochaic, instead of the glyconics afterwards in favour, and which Dindorf considers a surer internal mark than general anti-Spartan allusions, point to an earlier date, and agree with the schol. on v. 445, which conjectures the play to have been composed at the opening of the Peloponnesian War. On the other hand, the allusion to this play at the end of the *Orestes* (vv. 1653, sq.) seems as if its memory were yet fresh, and suggests a later date.

[2] The *Helena* is an exception (below, p. 129). When Menelaus asserts (vv. 374 and 585) that he will kill Neoptolemus' slaves, because friends should have all their property in common, this seems like a parody on the habits, or supposed habits, of the club life led by the Spartans at home.

tations of Peleus, and the divine interposition, and settlement of the future, by Thetis, conclude the play. Though justly called a second-rate play by the scholiasts, it was well enough known to be quoted by Clitus [1] on the undue share of glory obtained by the generals of soldiers who bore the heat and burden of the day, and thus it cost him his life at the hands of the infuriated Alexander. The *Andromache* of Ennius, of which we have a considerable fragment, seems to embrace the time of the capture of Troy, and not the period of this play; but the 5th book of Vergil's Æneid is evidently composed with a clear recollection of it.[2] The famous *Andromaque* of Racine only borrows the main facts from the story as found in Euripides and Vergil, and expands it by introducing a motive which does not exist in the Greek play, that of the passion of love. He moreover felt bound to soften and alter what Euripides had frankly put forward, not only as the usage of heroic times, but even of his own day—the enforced concubinage of female captives, however noble, and the very slight social stain which such a misfortune entailed. On this I have elsewhere commented.[3] The ode on the advantages of noble birth [4] strikes me as peculiarly Pindaric in tone and diction—more so than any other of Euripides' choral songs. The tirade [5] against the dangers of admitting gossiping female visitors to one's house seems just like what Aristophanes would recommend, and may be a serious advice intended by the poet.

§ 206. The *Heracleidæ*, a play less studied than it deserves, owes some of this neglect to its bad preservation. It dates somewhere in Ol. 88–90, and celebrates the honourable conduct of Athens in protecting the suppliant children of Heracles, and her victory over the insolent Argive king Eurystheus, who invades Attica to recover the fugitives. The play was obviously intended as a political document, directed against the Argive party in Athens during the Peloponnesian War. It is certain that at this agitated time the tragic stage, which should

[1] vv. 693, sq.

[2] The contrasts between the conception of Vergil and that of Euripides have been admirably pointed out by Patin, *Euripide*, i. p. 291.

[3] *Social Greece*, p. 119. [4] vv. 764, sq. [5] vv. 930, sq.

have been devoted to joys and griefs above mean earthly things, was degraded, as its modern analogue the pulpit has often been, to be a political platform, but a platform on which one side only can have its say. But together with this main idea, Euripides gives us a great many beautiful and affecting situations, and it may be said that for tragic interest none of his plays exceed the first part, ending, unfortunately, with a huge gap after the 629th line. Many critics have censured it in ignorance of this capital fact, and also of some lesser mutilations at the end, which is now, as we have it, clearly unfinished, and therefore unsatisfactory.[1]

The play opens with the altercation between the violent and brutal Argive herald, Kopreus, who is very like the herald in Æschylus' *Supplices*, and the faithful Iolaos, who in extreme age and decrepitude endeavours to guard the children of his old comrade in arms. It is remarkable how Greek tragedians seem consistently to ascribe this impudence and bullying to heralds, so unlike those of Homer. The chorus interferes, and presently Demophon appears, and dismisses the insolent herald, not without being seriously tempted to do him violence. The poet evidently had before him the other version of the legend, that this herald was killed by the Athenians. But when the Athenian king has undertaken the risk of protecting the fugitives, the prophets tell him that a noble virgin must be sacrificed to ensure his victory. This news gives rise to a pathetic scene of despair in Iolaos, who has been driven from city to city, and sees no end to the persecution. But the old man's idle offer of his own life is interrupted by the entrance of Macaria, one of the Heracleidæ, who when she hears of the oracle, calmly offers herself, despising even the chance of the lot among her sisters. Nothing can be finer than the drawing of this noble girl, one of Euripides' greatest heroines. But unfortunately the play breaks off before the narrative of her sacrifice, and there is doubtless also lost a *kommos* over her by Alcmena and the

[1] These lacunæ are obvious from the fact that more than one ancient citation from the play is not in our texts. Kirchhoff was (I believe) the first to lay stress on this, and to seek the exact places where the gaps occur. The name Macaria does not occur in the text.

chorus. The interest of the spectator is then transferred to the approaching battle, and the warlike fire of the decrepid Iolaos, who insists on going into the ranks; and as the putting on of armour would, I suppose, have been impossible to an actor on the Greek stage, the messenger, a servant of Hyllus, discreetly offers to carry it till he has reached the field. The manifestly comic drawing of Iolaos in this scene appears to me a satire on some effete Athenian general, who, like our Crimean generals, undertook active service when no longer fit for it. But by a miracle, which is presently narrated, he recovers his youth, and, with Hyllus, defeats and captures Eurystheus. The mutilated concluding scene is again a discussion of a matter of present interest—the fate of prisoners taken in battle. Alcmena, with the ferocity which Euripides generally depicts in old women, demands his instant death. The chorus insist that by the laws of Hellenic warfare an adversary not killed in battle cannot be afterwards slain without impiety. Eurystheus seems to facilitate his own death by prophesying that his grave will serve Athens; in this, very like the later Œdipus at Colonus of Sophocles—a play with which the present has many features in common. The chorus appears to yield; the real settlement of the dispute is lost.

The imitations of this play are few. Dauchet's (1720) and Marmontel's (1752) are said to contain all the vices of the French tragedy in no ordinary degree. The only special edition quoted is that of Elmsley. To many ordinary students of Greek literature the very name of Macaria is unknown.

§ 207. I take up the *Supplices* next, of which the date, also uncertain (most probably 420 B.C., shortly after the battle of Delium), is not far removed from that of the *Heracleidæ*, and of which the plan is very similar, though the politics are quite different. For as in the former play hostility to Argos, and its wanton invasion of Attica, were prominent, so here alliance and eternal friendship with Argos are most solemnly inculcated. If it be true, as all critics agree, that these plays were brought on the stage within three or four years of one another, during the shifting interests and alliances of the Peloponnesian War, it will prove how completely Euripides regarded them as tem-

porary political advices, varying with the situation, and in which the inconsistencies were not of more importance than would be the inconsistencies in a volume of political speeches. I think, moreover, that we may clearly perceive in the discussions on monarchy, democracy, and general statecraft, which lead away the characters from their proper business, a growing tendency in tragedy to become a written record, and to appeal to a reading public, instead of the listening crowd in the theatre. Euripides, in the long and interesting debate between the Theban herald and Theseus, is so conscious of this, that he makes Theseus comment on the volubility of the herald in matters not concerning him, and wonder at his own patience in replying to him. It is thus quite plain that what are called rhetorical redundancies in this and other Euripidean plays are deliberately admitted by the poet as subservient to an important purpose—that of the political education of the people from his point of view.

The author of the argument, of which only a fragment remains, regards the play as an encomium of Athens. But this direct or indirect laudation of Athens occurs so perpetually all through Greek tragedy, that it seems a mistake to make *that* the main object of the play in which it differs only in degree from so many others. I think the wearisome recurrence of this feature, and the favour with which we know it was received, bespeak a very vulgar vanity on the part of the Attic public, and a great deficiency in that elegance and chastity of taste which they and their modern critics perpetually arrogate as their private property.

This play is among the best of Euripides. After a short prologue from Æthra—which is really an indirect prayer to Demeter at Eleusis—the chorus enters with a truly Æschylean parodos, as indeed, all through the play, the chorus takes a prominent part in the action. It consists of the seven mothers of the slain chiefs before Thebes, together with their seven attendants. At the end of the play there is, besides, a chorus of the orphans. The long dialogue between Theseus and Adrastus, who accompanies the suppliants, is full of beauty, and also of proverbial wisdom, on which account it has been also

considerably interpolated. Theseus is, as usual, represented as a constitutional monarch, who practically directs a democracy —probably on the model afforded by Pericles. But when he determines to help the suppliants and to send a herald to demand the burying of the slain, he is anticipated by the Theban herald, who comes to threaten Theseus and to warn him not to take these steps. The long discussion between them, ending, as usual, in an agitated *stretto* of stichomuthia,[1] is the most interesting exponent of the poet's political views in all his extant works. The two divisions of seven in the chorus sing an amœbean strain of anxious suspense, till in a few moments a messenger comes in, and (in violation of the unity of time) narrates at length Theseus' victory. Then come in the bodies of the slain chiefs with Theseus, and there follows a great lamentation scene, in which Adrastus speaks the *éloge* of each. Presently Evadne, the wife of Capaneus, and sister of Hippomedon, followed upon the stage by her father Iphis, from whom she has escaped in the madness of her grief, enters upon a high cliff over the stage, and casts herself into the pyre. The laments of Iphis are written with peculiar grace. The continued wailing of the two choruses, children and parents of the seven chiefs, are interrupted by Adrastus' promise of eternal gratitude. Lastly, Athene comes in *ex machina* in a perfectly otiose and superfluous manner, to enforce the details of the treaty between Athens and Argos.

The subject had been already treated in Æschylus's *Eleusinians*. The celebrity of the present play may be inferred from the dream of Thrasyllus, on the night before Arginusæ, that he and his six colleagues were victorious in playing the *Phœnissæ* against the hostile leader's *Supplices*, in the theatre of Athens, but that all his colleagues were dead. Elmsley's and G. Hermann's are the best editions, Elmsley's completing Markland's labours.

§ 208. The *Hecuba* was brought out before the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, where it is alluded to (in Ol. 89, 1). From a

[1] M. Patin (ii. p. 195) notices this just representation of nature by the Greek tragic poets, for discussions, at first cool, are apt to become violent, and compares it to the parallel feature in the modern opera.

further allusion in the play itself to the Deliac festival, restored in Ol. 88, 3. it seems tolerably certain that it must have appeared in Ol. 88, 4 (425 B.C.), and may therefore have been earlier than the plays last mentioned. But it belongs to the same period of the poet's style, and differs considerably in this respect from the *Troades*, which treats almost the same subject, but was brought out eight or nine years later. I will therefore not discuss them in conjunction, as some critics have done, but follow in preference the order of time. The *Hecuba* has always been a favourite play, and has not only been frequently imitated, but edited ever since Erasmus' time for school use. It is by no means so replete with political allusions as the *Supplices*, and is on the whole a better tragedy, though not so interesting to read. It treats of the climax of Hecuba's misfortunes, the sacrifice of Polyxena at the grave of Achilles,[1] and the murder of Polydorus, her youngest son, by his Thracian host, Polymestor. The chorus of Trojan captives sings odes of great beauty, especially that on the fall of Ilium,[2] but does not enter into the action of the play. The pleading of Hecuba with Odysseus, who comes to take Polyxena, is full of pathos; and so is the noble conduct of the maiden, who is a heroine of the same type as Macaria, but varied with that peculiar art of Euripides which never condescends to repeat itself. Macaria has the highest motive for her sacrifice—the salvation of her brothers and sisters. Polyxena is sacrificed to an enemy, and by enemies, and is therefore obliged to face death without any reward save the escape from the miseries and disgrace of slavery. Yet though she dwells upon these very strongly, she seems to regret nothing so much as the griefs of her wretched and despairing mother.

The narrative of her death (which in Macaria's case is unfortunately lost) forms a beautiful conclusion to the former half of the play, which is divided, like many of Euripides', between two interests more or less loosely connected. In the present play

[1] It is to be noted that the scene being laid in Thrace, and the tomb of Achilles being in the Troad, the so-called unity of place is here violated, as often elsewhere in Greek tragedy.

[2] vv. 905, sq.: σὺ μέν, ὦ πατρὶς Ἰλιάς, κ.τ.λ.

the nexus, though merely accidental, is most artfully devised, for the fellow slave, who goes to fetch water for Polyxena's funeral rites, finds the body of Polydorus tossing on the shore. This brings out the fierce element in the heart-broken mother. She debates, in an aside not common on the Greek stage,[1] whether she will plead her case of vengeance to Agamemnon, and then she does so with great art, if not with dignity. Upon his acquiescence, she carries out her plot vigorously, murders Polymestor's children, and blinds the king himself, whose wild lamentations, with Hecuba's justification by Agamemnon, and the Thracian's gloomy prophecies, conclude the play. The change of the heart-broken Hecuba, when there is nothing more to plead for, from despair to savage fury, is finely conceived, and agrees with the cruelty which Euripides is apt to attribute to old women in other plays. M. Patin compares her to the Margaret in Shakspeare's *Richard III.* Nevertheless Hecuba's lamentation for her children is conceived in quite a different spirit from that of the barbarous Thracian, who is like a wild beast robbed of its whelps, as the poet more than once reminds us.

It may fairly be doubted whether Sophocles' Polyxena was superior, or even equal to Euripides' heroine. Ennius selected the *Hecuba* for a translation, which was admired by Cicero and Horace. Vergil and Ovid recur to the same original in some of their finest writing. The earliest modern versions were by Erasmus into Latin, Lazare Baïf into French, and Dolce into Italian. In *Hamlet* the sorrows of Hecuba are alluded to as proverbial, but probably in reference to Seneca's play, which will be considered when we come to the *Troades*. *Contaminations* of the two plays were common in France all through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. M. Patin selects for special censure those of Pradon (1679), and Chateaubrun (1755). Porson and G. Hermann have spent critical labour on the recension and illustration of this play; the scholia upon it are unusually full. There was an anonymous English version called 'Hecuba, a tragedy,' catalogued as by Rich. West, Lord

[1] This feature recurs in the famous dialogue between Ion and Creusa (*Ion*, 424, sq.), and elsewhere in that play, and may belong to the later style of Euripides.

Chancellor of Ireland, published in London in 1726.[1] Though the author, who does not name himself, says nothing about his handling of the play, and speaks of it as a translation, he has made notable changes; in fact, it is rather a French than a Greek tragedy. The chorus and second messenger's speech are omitted, and both Polymestor and Hecuba have attendants, with whom they converse. The plot is considerably changed. There is now a good edition of the play by Wecklein (1877).

§ 209. The *Raging Heracles* (Ἡρακλῆς μαινόμενος), which is among the plays preserved to us by the Florentine MS. called C, is one of the most precious remains of Euripides, and is full of the deepest tragic pathos. It seems to have been brought out about Ol. 90, a year or two later than the *Hecuba*, and is counted one of his best plays in metre and diction by the critics. Here, again, as in the *Hecuba*, two apparently distinct actions are brought together really by an unity of interest, but technically by a new prologue of Iris, who explains the sequel of the drama. Nothing can be more suited to excite our pity and terror than the plot, unconventional as it is. The prior part of the play, which is constructed very like that of the *Andromache* and the *Heracleidæ*, turns upon the persecution of the father, wife, and children of the absent Heracles, by Lycos, tyrant of Thebes. With a brutal frankness then often appearing in Athenian politics, but which it was fashionable to ascribe to tyrants, he insolently insists upon their death, and proposes to drive them from their asylum in the temple of Zeus by surrounding them with fire. The aged Amphitryon is for excuses and delays, in the hope of some chance relief, and shows far more desire for life than the youthful Megara, who faces the prospect of death with that boldness and simplicity often found in Euripides' heroines. Her character is drawn with great beauty, as is also the attitude of the chorus of old men, who fire up in great indignation at Lycos, but feel unable to resist him. When the woeful procession of the family of

[1] It was brought out at Drury Lane Theatre; but, as the author complains in his preface, 'a rout of young Vandals in the galleries intimidated the young actresses, disturbed the audience, and prevented all attention.'

Heracles, who have obtained the single favour of attiring themselves within for their death, reappears on the stage, and Megara has taken sad farewell of her sons, Heracles suddenly appears; and there follows a splendid scene of explanation, and then of vengeance, the tyrant being slain within, in the hearing of the chorus, just as in the parallel scene of the *Agamemnon*. The chorus sing a hymn of thanksgiving; and so this part of the drama concludes.

But at the end of the ode they break out into horror at the sight of the terrible image of Lytta, or Madness, whom Iris brings down upon the palace, and explains that now Heracles is no longer protected by Fate, as his labours are over, and that he is therefore open to Here's vengeance.[1] There is no adequate motive alleged for this hatred, but to a Greek audience it was so familiar as to be reasonably assumed by the poet. The dreadful catastrophe follows, and takes place during an agitated and broken strain of the chorus, who see the palace shaking, and hear the noise, but learn the details from a messenger in a most thrilling speech. The devoted wife and affectionate children, whom Heracles has just saved from instant death, have been massacred by the hero himself in his frenzy; and he was on the point of slaying his father, when Athena appeared in armour, and struck him down into a swoon. The awakening of Heracles, the scene of explanation between him and Amphitryon which follows, the despair of the hero, who is scarcely saved from suicide by the sympathy of Theseus, and who at last departs with him for Athens—all this is worked out in the poet's greatest and most pathetic style. M. Patin specially notices the profound pyschology in painting the method of Heracles' madness, so unlike the vague rambling often put upon the stage, and compares with this scene the parallel one in the *Orestes*. The awakening of the hero may be intended to rival the corresponding scene in Sophocles' *Ajax*, to which the play shows many striking resemblances. Indeed, the resolve of Heracles to face life, after his pathetic review of his ever-

[1] The student should notice the trochaic tetrameters here, which become more frequent in Euripides' *late* plays, so affording an internal test where there is no date.

increasing troubles, is far nobler and more profoundly tragic than Ajax' resolve to fly from disgrace by a voluntary death.

The choral odes are of great, though not of equal, merit, especially the famous complaint against age, and praise of youth,[1] so like Shakspeare's *Crabbed Age and Youth;* indeed, the whole play is well worthy of greater study than it usually receives. The sceptical outbreaks against Zeus and other gods are here particularly bold, but are tempered by the poet's splendid utterance, that all their crimes are but 'the inventions of idle singers.' The praise of archery[2] seems to imply a feeling that light-armed troops were coming into fashion, and that their usefulness was now recognised. We know that Plutarch was fond of this play, and Cicero refers to the ode on old age in his tract *De Senectute.* We have a *Hercules Furens* among the plays of Seneca, exhibiting all the faithless and inartistic copying of great models which we find in the other Latin tragedies of this school. The *Herakles* of Von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf has now superseded all earlier editions. We can cite the admirable translation in Mr. Browning's *Aristophanes' Apology*, as giving English readers a thoroughly faithful idea of this splendid play. The choral odes are, moreover, done justice to, and translated into adequate metre—in this an improvement on the *Alcestis*, to which I have already referred.

§ 210. The *Ion* seems to date from the same period. The mention of the obscure promontory of Rhion, where a great Athenian victory was gained in 429, and the stress laid on the architectural wonders at Delphi, where the Athenians, according to Pausanias, built a *stoa* in honour of the victory, seem to fix it not earlier than 425. But the prominence of monodies in the play rather points to a more recent date, when Euripides was about to pass into his later style. The play is no tragedy, but a melodrama with an ingenious plot full of surprises, and was certainly one of the earliest examples of the kind of plan adopted by the genteel (or new) comedy of the next century. Were there not great religious and patriotic interests at stake, which make the play serious throughout, it might more fairly be called a comedy than the *Alcestis* or *Orestes.* Even the most violent detractors of Euripides are obliged to acknowledge the perfec-

[1] vv. 637, sq. [2] vv. 190, sq.

tion of this play, which is frequently called the best he has left us. But surely excellence of plot in a Greek play is not so high a quality as great depth of passion and sentiment. The *Ion*, however, is not failing in these, the peculiar province of the older tragedy, which has but little plot.

Passing by Hermes' prologue, which is tedious and dull, and is in my opinion altogether spurious, though defended by good critics, we come to the proper opening scene, one of the most beautiful of the Greek stage, in which Ion, the minister of Apollo's temple at Delphi, performs his morning duties about the temple, and drives away the birds which are hovering round the holy precincts.[1] There is no character in all Greek tragedy like this Ion, who reminds one strongly of the charming boys drawn by Plato in such dialogues as *Charmides* and *Lysis*. In purity and freshness he has been compared to Giotto's choristers, and has afforded Racine his masterpiece of imitation in the Joas of the *Athalie*. But I would liken him still more to the child Samuel, whose ministrations are painted with so exquisite a grace in the Old Testament. For Euripides represents him to us at the moment when his childlike innocence, and absence of all care, are to be rudely dissipated by sudden contact with the stormy passions and sorrows of the world. The chorus (of Creusa's retinue) come in to wonder at the temple and its sculptures ; and presently Creusa herself enters to inquire of the god, cloaking her case under the guise of a friend's distress. Then follows a scene of mutual confidences between the unwitting son and mother, which is full of tragic interest.

I will not pursue further the various steps by which Ion is declared first a son of Xuthus, then hated by Creusa as a step-child, her consequent attempt to murder him, and at last her recognition of him by the clothes and ornaments with which she had exposed him. The agitated monologue of Creusa, when confessing her early shame, is in fine contrast to the innocent

[1] In support of my belief in the spuriousness of the prologue, which only makes the whole splendid dialogue of Ion and Creusa idle repetition, I may mention that the *Andromeda* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*, both without prologues, opened with the actor's attention fixed on the heavens, as in the monody of Ion.

freshness of the monologue of Ion. The refusal of the boy to follow his new father to Athens is in thorough keeping with his character, but expressed with such political insight as shows the poet plainly speaking through the character. As I noted two prologues in the *Heracles*, so here there are two resolutions of the plot—as it were, by two *dii ex machina*—one by the Delphic priestess, the other by Athena, who appears at the end to remove all doubt. With very good taste Apollo, who could hardly appear with dignity, and Xuthus, who has been deceived, are kept out of sight. But in spite of much sceptical questioning and complaint, the chorus insists at the end that the gods' ways are not our ways, and that their seeming injustices are made good in due time. This and the glorifying of the mythic ancestors of the Athenians are the lessons conveyed in the spirit of the play. We can hardly call Creusa one of Euripides' heroines, for she is altogether a victim of circumstances, but still she powerfully attracts our sympathy in spite of her weak and sudden outburst of vindictiveness. The situation of a distracted mother seeking her son's death unwittingly was again used by Euripides, apparently with great success, in the *Cresphontes*, from which one beautiful choral fragment remains.

The chorus in this play is more than elsewhere the accomplice, and even the guilty accomplice, of the chief actress, and its other action is merely that of curious observers, if we except one most appropriate ode,[1] in which Euripides draws a fairy picture of Pan playing to the goddesses, who dance on the grassy top of the Acropolis, while he sits in his grotto beneath. The grotto is there still,[2] and so are the ruined temples, but no imagination can restore the grace and the holiness of the scene, now a wreck of stones and dust, of pollution and neglect.

There have been fewer imitations of this play than might be expected. It was translated into German by Wieland, and about the same time (1803) brought on the stage at Weimar by A. W.

[1] vv. 452, sq.

[2] This play decides a question which has divided archæologists, whether the grottoes of Apollo and of Pan, on the north-western slope of the Acropolis, were identical or not. A comparison of vv. 502–4 with v. 938 shows that they were.

Schlegel, but unfortunately in a very vulgar and degraded version, which gave Xuthus a principal part and produced Apollo on the stage, and which so displeased the Weimar students, that old Goethe, in imitation of whose *Iphigenia* the play was written, and who had taken great pains about its representation, was obliged to stand up and command silence in the pit. There was an English imitation by W. Whitehead in 1754. The *Ion* of Talfourd has only the general conception of Ion in common with the Greek play, from which it is in no sense imitated. As to commentaries, after Hermann's recension (1827) we have three most scholarly editions by C. Badham (1851, 1853, and 1861), of which the second is the fullest and best. Mr. Verrall has also given us an edition (1890) with an excellent metrical translation, and, as usual, a brilliant Preface.

§ 211. The *Troades* came out in 415 B.C. as the third play with the *Alexander* and *Palamedes:* it was followed by the *Sisyphus* as the satyrical piece. It was defeated by a tetralogy of Xenokles—the *Œdipus*, *Lycaon*, *Bacchæ*, and *Athamas*. Treating of the same subject as the *Hecuba*, it somewhat varies the incidents and the characters, the death of Astyanax supplanting that of Polyxena, and both Cassandra and Andromache appearing. There is, however, far less plot than in the *Hecuba*, and we miss even the satisfaction of revenge. It is indeed more absolutely devoid of interest than any play of Euripides, for it is simply 'a voice in Ramah, and lamentation—Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not.' It is the prophet's roll 'which was written within and without with mourning and lamentation and woe.' Nevertheless the wild and poetic fervour of Cassandra reminds us of the great passage in the *Agamemnon*. The litigious scene in which Hecuba and Helen argue before Menelaus, and the constant appearances of Talthybius, are not agreeable diversions. Above all, the ruthless murder of the infant Astyanax is too brutal to be fairly tolerable in any tragedy. As regards the loose connection of the scenes, Patin very properly[1] shows how, in what may be called Euripides' *episodic* pieces, he reverts to the trilogistic idea of Æschylus, but crowds together the loosely connected plays

[1] i. 333.

of the trilogy into the loosely connected scenes of a single play. This sort of tragedy, which is in effect very like the old lyrical pieces, such as the *Supplices* and *Persæ*, was put on the stage in contrast to the tragedies of intrigue, the one being intended to affect the heart, the other to excite the imagination of the spectator. The main sign of Euripides' later style is the prevalence of monodies, in which he excels, in spite of all Aristophanes' ridicule, and which are the most splendid features in both the *Ion* and in this play.

The many imitations have so naturally *contaminated* the *Troades* with the *Hecuba*, that it is not easy to treat them separately. Several passages in Vergil's Æneid, such as the appeal of Juno to Æolus, and the awful picture of the fall of Troy, are plainly adopted from the *Troades*. The *Troades* of Seneca is considered by good critics as the finest of that collection of Latin plays, and, in spite of its faults of tinsel, of false rhetoric, and of overdone sentiment, has real dramatic merit. The deaths of Polyxena and of Astyanax are both wrought in, thus copying features from each of Euripides' tragedies. But there is a very splendid tragic scene added on the attempts of Andromache to deceive Ulysses, and hide her child. Her violent fury and her threats are, however, foreign to the conception of both Homer, Vergil, and Euripides. Thus again, Seneca's Talthybius is led into sceptical doubts at the sight of the Trojan misfortunes, and a whole chorus is devoted to the denial of any future life—a grave and inartistic anachronism. There is a French *Troades* by Garnier (1578), built as much on Seneca as on Euripides, one by Sallebray (1640), and numerous obscure imitations towards the end of the last century. I cannot but think that the epics of Homer and Vergil have been the real reason of the great popularity of these subjects upon the stage. I do not suppose that either of Euripides' plays would have sufficed to lead the fashion.

§ 212. The *Helena*, which comes to us, like some other plays, through the Florentine codex C alone, and in a very corrupt and much corrected state, has been placed very low among the plays of Euripides. It seems to have come out with the *Andromeda*, in 412 B.C. (Ol. 91, 4), and was certainly ridiculed

with it by Aristophanes in his *Thesmophoriazusæ*, not without reason. The play is a very curious one, and to be placed on a par with the *Electra* (which distinctly[1] alludes to it) on account of its very free handling of the celebrated legend of the rape of Helen. The version which kept the heroine in Egypt, and denied that she had ever been in Troy, was first given by Stesichorus, and was repeated by the Egyptian priests to Herodotus, whose history did not appear till about this time. Stesichorus, moreover, invented or found the notion of a phantom Helen at Troy. The palinode of Stesichorus (cf. Part I. p. 223) was very celebrated, and is repeatedly alluded to by Plato. Nevertheless, it seems very bold to transfer to the stage the fancy of a few literary men, or in any case to contradict the greatest and the best established of all the popular myths. It is evident that this innovation did not prosper. Isocrates, in his *Encomium*, takes no notice of it, and no modern has attempted to reproduce it except the German Wieland. Apart from this novelty, there is throughout a friendly and even respectful handling of Sparta and the Spartans, which contradicts the general tone of the poet's mind, and stands, I think, alone among his extant plays. Again, though there is much scepticism expressed, especially of prophecies, as was his wont at this period, the noblest character is a prophetess, who possesses an unerring knowledge of the future. Menelaus, too, who is elsewhere a cowardly and mean bully, is here a ragged and distressed, but yet bold and adventurous hero, with no trace of his usual stage attributes. And, lastly, Helen is a faithful and persecuted wife, though in the *Troades*, which shortly preceded, and the *Orestes*, which followed, this play, she appears in the most odious colours, and in accordance with the received myth. All these anomalies make the *Helena* a problem hard to understand, and still harder when we compare it with the masterly *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which is laid on exactly the same plan, and is yet so infinitely greater, and better executed. The choral odes are quite in the poet's later style, full of those repetitions of words which Aristophanes derides.[2] The ode on the sorrows of

[1] v. 1271.

[2] Mr. Browning has not failed to reproduce this Euripidean feature with

Demeter is absolutely irrelevant, though gracefully composed.

Nevertheless, there is at least one scene, that of the recognition of Menelaus and the real Helen, witnessed by an old and faithful servant, which is of the highest merit in beauty and pathos, and we wonder how the poet should have chosen that mythical couple, whose conjugal relations in all his other tragedies were most painful, to exemplify the purest and most enduring domestic affection. This recognition scene should take its place in Greek literature with the matchless scene in the Odyssey, for the love of husband and wife was rarely idealised by the Greeks, and these grand exceptions are worthy of especial note. I suppose that by this bold contradiction not only of the current view of Helen, but of his own treatment of her and Menelaus in other plays, the poet meant to teach that the myths were only convenient vehicles for depicting human character and passion, and had no other value. Since Hermann's recension, the most important special edition is that of Badham,[1] who has done much for the text.

§ 213. We may choose next in order the *Iphigenia among the Tauri*, a play of unknown date, but evidently a late production of the poet's, to judge from the metres, the prevalence of monodies, and the irrelevant choruses. It is very like in plot to the *Helena*. In fact, the main elements are the same in both plays. Iphigenia, like Helen, is carried off by a special interposition of the gods to a barbarous land, where she is held in honour, but pines to return to her home. Both plays turn on the mutual recognition of the heroines and their deliverers, the husband and the brother, and then upon the dangers of the escape, the deceiving of the barbarian king in attaining it, and the superior seamanship and courage of the Greek sailors. But in this second play, Euripides has not contradicted any received myth, or distorted any well-known mythical type, and has, moreover, woven in the mutual friendship of Orestes and Pylades, and

great art and admirable effect in his version of the *Heracles*. We might adduce examples from a totally different school, the lyrics of Uhland and Platen, and how beautiful they are!

[1] Along with the *Iph. Taur.* in 1851.

made Iphigenia a heroine not only of situation, but of character. In both plays, though he has not scrupled to make barbarians talk good Greek, he has avoided the objections to a barbarian chorus, by giving the heroine a following of Greek attendants, who are naturally her accomplices. They even interfere actively in the *Helena* by literally laying hold of the enraged king, and striving to turn away his vengeance from his priestess sister; in the *Iphigenia*, by the more questionable expedient (unique, I think, in the extant tragedies) of telling the anxious messenger a deliberate falsehood to delay the king's knowledge of the prisoners' and the priestess' escape.[1]

The prologue, spoken by Iphigenia herself, explains how she had been snatched from under the knife of Calchas and carried by Artemis to the Tauric Chersonese, where, as her priestess, she was obliged to *prepare* for sacrifice (Euripides has here artistically softened the fierce legend) such luckless strangers as were cast upon the coast. Doubtless early Greek discoverers and adventurous merchantmen often met this fate at the hands of the wild Scythians, and it added to the excitement which enveloped the commerce of the early Greeks—'cette race,' says Dumas, 'qui a fait du commerce une poésie.' The first ode of the chorus[2] embodies this feeling with great spirit. But Iphigenia has been agitated by a dream, which portends to her the death of Orestes, upon whom she had long fixed her vague and undefined hopes of restoration to her home. The dream is admirably conceived, but it seems to me that the absolute certainty which it breeds in her mind, and her consequent sacrifice of libations, is somewhat of a flaw in the action of the play. At no epoch have men been forthwith persuaded by mere dreams without any other evidence. In the next scene Orestes and Pylades appear, who have been directed by Apollo, in spite of the acquittal before the Areopagus, to complete the recovery of Orestes by carrying off the image of the Tauric goddess to Attica—a detail which gives the story a local interest to

[1] It is remarkable that Iphigenia addresses them individually (vv. 1067, sq.)—a device not elsewhere used in Greek tragedy, so far as I can remember. Cf. Patin, iv. 109, on the point.

[2] vv. 392, sq.

the audience. The long responsive monodies of Iphigenia and the chorus over their funeral libations are interrupted by the fine narrative of a shepherd, who tells of the discovery of the friends, the madness of Orestes, the devotion of Pylades, and the difficult capture of the heroic young men. The soliloquy of Iphigenia when she hears the news is peculiarly beautiful.[1] After the above-mentioned most appropriate chorus, they are led in bound, and there ensues between Iphigenia and Orestes the finest dialogue left us by any Greek tragic poet. At its close she proposes to save Orestes and send him with a letter to Argos, but she is stayed by his devotion, for he will not escape at the cost of his friend's life. The contest between Orestes and Pylades, as to which should sacrifice himself for the other, has afforded all the imitators great scope for a dramatic scene, but was evidently not prominent to Euripides, who treats it with some reserve and coldness. The recognition by means of the letter of which Iphigenia tells the contents has been praised ever since Aristotle, and the ensuing scene may be compared with the rejoicings of brother and sister in Sophocles' *Electra*, which it closely resembles. The devices to overreach king Thoas, the attempted flight and danger of the three friends, and the interposition of Athene conclude a play second to none of Euripides' in depth of feeling and ingenuity of construction. The last ode on the establishment of Apollo's worship at Delphi is perfectly irrelevant, but very Pindaric in style and feeling, and is, like all the odes of the play, full of lyric beauty.

Aristotle mentions a play on the same subject by Polyidos, in which Orestes was actually led to the altar, and recognised by his passionate comparison of his own and his sister's fate.

[1] vv 344–53: *ὦ καρδία τάλαινα, πρὶν μὲν ἐς ξένους*
γαληνὸς ἦσθα καὶ φιλοικτίρμων ἀεί,
ἐς θοὐμόφυλον ἀναμετρουμένη δάκρυ,
Ἕλληνας ἄνδρας ἡνίκ' ἐς χέρας λάβοις.
νῦν δ' ἐξ ὀνείρων οἷσιν ἠγριώμεθα,
δοκοῦσ' Ὀρέστην μηκέθ' ἥλιον βλέπειν,
δύσνουν με λήψεσθ', οἵτινές ποθ' ἥκετε.
καὶ τοῦτ' ἄρ' ἦν ἀληθές, ἡσθόμην, φίλαι,
οἱ δυστυχεῖς γὰρ τοῖσιν εὐτυχεστέροις
αὐτοὶ καλῶς πράξαντες οὐ φρονοῦσιν εὖ.

Sophocles had composed an *Aletes*, and an *Erigone*, both based on the adventures of the characters upon their return to Greece. Euripides was imitated perhaps by Ennius, certainly by Pacuvius in his famous *Dulorestes*, in which, according to Cicero, the mutual contest of the friends to encounter death for each other excited storms of applause. One of the earliest Italian dramatists, Ruccellai, composed a Tauric Iphigenia about 1520. There was another by Martello, about two centuries later. The French dramatists insisted, as usual, on improving on Euripides, especially by introducing a love affair. The Scythian king filled the gap, and appeared on the stage, as the French say, *en soupirant*. Even in Racine's sketch, which is preserved, and which gives a short abstract of the matter for the scenes of a first act, the king's son is enamoured of the heroine, and would evidently have been made the means of saving Orestes and Pylades from their impending death. This element was exaggerated, and the splendours of a French court and of foreign diplomacy added to the *Oreste* of Le Clerc and Boyer, and to the *Oreste et Pylade* of Lagrange-Chancel, the supposed successor of Racine. Guimond de la Touche's play (1757) is said to be more simple, and pleased everybody at the time except—Voltaire, Grimm, and Diderot! But with the aid of Gluck's music, the opera of 1778 laid permanent hold of public taste.[1]

There yet remains the very famous *Iphigenia* of Goethe for our consideration. This excellent play has been extolled far beyond its merits by the contemporaries of its great author, but is now generally allowed, even in Germany, to be a somewhat unfortunate mixture of Greek scenery and characters with modern romantic sentiment. It therefore gives no idea whatever of a Greek play, and of this its unwary reader should be carefully reminded. Apart from the absence of chorus, and the introduction of a sort of confidant of the king, Arkas, who does nothing but give stupid and unheeded advice, the character of Thoas is drawn as no barbarian king should have been drawn—a leading character, and so noble that Iphigenia cannot bring herself to deceive him, a scruple which an Athenian audience

[1] Gluck brought out both the *Iph. Aul.* and *Taur.* Cf. Patin, iii. p. 6, and iv. p. 127, who gives 1774 and 1778 as the years of their appearance.

would have derided. Equally would they have derided Orestes' proposal, of which Thoas approves, to prove his identity by single combat, and still more the argument which Iphigenia prefers to all outward marks—the strong yearning of her heart to the stranger. The whole diction and tone of the play is, moreover, full of idealistic dreaming, and conscious analysis of motive, which the Greeks, who painted the results more accurately, never paraded upon the stage. The celebrity of this so-called imitation will afford an excuse for so much criticism.

§ 214. The *Electra* must have appeared during the closing years of the Peloponnesian War, and was fresh in men's memory when, as Plutarch tells us,[1] during the deliberations about the fate of conquered Athens, a Phocian actor sung the opening monody of Electra, and moved all to pity by the picture of a whilome princess reduced to rags and to misery. The incident is said to have had a distinct influence in saving the city from destruction. This testimony to the merit of at least one scene in the play is hardly admitted by the majority of critics, who have made the *Electra* a source of perpetual censure and perpetual amusement, and have generally set it down as the weakest extant production of Euripides, and a wretched attempt to treat with originality a subject exhausted by his greater predecessors. I need not go into detail as regards these objections, which have been set forth with great assurance and with an air of high superiority by A. W. Schlegel, who nevertheless, as I have already stated (above, p. 126), himself signally failed in his endeavours to improve upon the *Ion* of the despised Euripides.

Turning to the play itself, the first remark to be made is that it was clearly meant as a critique on certain defects in the earlier *Electras*. Apart from its intention as a drama, it is a *feuilleton spirituel*, as M. Patin calls it, and so far takes its place with the literary criticism common in the Middle Comedy. Euripides attacks[2] the three various signs of recognition which satisfied the simpler Electra of Æschylus, viz. a likeness of colour and texture in the hair, an identity in the size of the foot, shown by deep footprints, and the design

[1] *Lys.* c. 15. [2] vv. 524, sq.

of a garment which must have been long since worn out. The new Electra ridicules all these tokens, and passing by without comment the family ring used by Sophocles, is content with a scar on the forehead of the unknown brother, which has not escaped similar criticism, but which, we must remind the triumphant objectors, is not discovered by the young princess, but by an aged servitor, who had known Orestes as a child, and was merely directed by this mark to tax his memory of the face. As soon as the recognition is completed, the poet plainly criticises the long and dramatically absurd scene of Electra's rejoicing in Sophocles, by cutting short these ebullitions and proceeding at once to the plot against the royal murderers.[1] He implies a censure of both his predecessors' economy by setting aside as impossible and hopeless what they had admitted without hesitation—an attack on the reigning tyrants in their own palace—and makes the success of the attempt turn on the absence of both from their fortress and their guards. This alters the plan of his play; he represents Ægisthus as slain at a sacrifice to which he had invited the strangers, and Clytemnestra as enticed to visit Electra's peasant home under pretence of a family sacrifice. But these are only external points.

The really important ethical criticism of his predecessors is his approval of Æschylus, and condemnation of Sophocles, in painting the hesitation of Orestes when he sees his mother approaching, and the outburst of dread and of remorse in both brother and sister when the deed is done—a pointed contrast to the happy piety of the pair in Sophocles (above, p. 65), where the voice of Apollo's oracle sets at rest every scruple of filial duty or of natural conscience. In other respects Euripides' Electra is nearer to the conception of Sophocles: she is harder and fiercer than her brother, and is brought in acting at the matricide, instead of being more delicately removed from the action, as in the play of Æschylus. But he surely intended it as a further, and a sound, criticism when he represents Ægisthus unable to bear with this sharp-tongued Irreconcileable, and the mother as a sort of weak defender of her child, submitting

[1] Wilamowitz (*Hermes*, xvii. 214, sq.) argues the opposite view, and thinks Sophocles' play a criticism on Euripides. This view I cannot accept.

to the ignoble compromise of marrying her to a peasant. He has moreover attributed a certain gentle contrition to Clytemnestra,[1] which makes her an amiable contrast to Electra, and excites some sympathy in spite of her crimes, so that we come to look upon her as we do upon the queen in *Hamlet*, erring, and even defending her errors with criminal sophistry, but not reprobate. This point gives peculiar bitterness to the remorse of the murderers, at least in the spectator's mind.

If we continue our study of the play, and observe its general temper, it strikes us as of all the extant tragedies the most openly democratic in tone. In many other of his plays, Euripides has represented trusty slaves of noble character and self-devotion, and reiterated the sentiment that slavery is an accident, and that there is nobility in men of low degree. But these instances are almost all in the retinue of princes. In the present play Euripides not only puts peasants on the tragic stage, but makes them the noblest and most intelligent of his characters. Electra's husband is the moral hero of the play, as Orestes testifies in a remarkable aside;[2] the aged farmer from the Spartan frontier is the moving spirit in the devising of the plot. Not only are these excellent people in every respect equal to their tragic parts, but the obscurity of their life secures them from the misfortunes and miseries to which great houses are almost hereditarily exposed. Orestes and Electra are the playthings of oracles and family curses, and of an ambitious position, which forces them into exile and into crime. When the catastrophe is over, the poor people who have helped them return to their simple and uneventful life, only altered by the gratitude of their princes. If Euripides was indeed ever influenced by what the Germans call the Ochlocracy, it was in this drama, where he vindicates the dignity of the lower classes, and exhibits the dangers and responsibilities of greatness. The grace and nature of the bucolic scenes at the opening show a remarkable idyllic power in the poet, unlike anything we possess before Theocritus, and we may well wonder at the curious want of taste in the critics who have ridiculed this part of the play—

[1] vv. 1102–10. [2] vv. 367, sq.

> Triumphant play, wherein our poet first
> Dared bring the grandeur of the Tragic Two
> Down to the level of our common life,
> Close to the beating of our common heart.[1]

The choral odes are slight and unimportant ; the fawning flattery shown to Clytemnestra, whose danger they know, and have prepared, exhibits a degradation very unusual in any but the later plays of Sophocles or Euripides, when the chorus was waning rapidly in importance. I cannot but think that this play was rather intended for a reading public than for the stage. Hence, though it never made its mark as a tragedy, it is among the most characteristic and instructive pieces left us in early criticism.

§ 215. The *Orestes*, brought out in 409 B.C. (in the archonship of Diokles, Ol. 92, 4), is agreed on all hands to exhibit most strongly both the merits and defects of the author. In the looseness and carelessness of the metre, in the crowding of incidents at the end of the play, in the low tone of its morality—they are all base, says the scholiast, except Pylades, and yet even he advises a cold-blooded murder for revenge's sake—there is no play of Euripides so disagreeable. On the other hand, for dramatic effect, as the same scholiast observes, there is none more striking ; but this applies only to the opening scenes. The subject is the same as that of Æschylus' *Eumenides*, but instead of visible Furies in visible pursuit, the consequences of remorse, the horrors of a distraught imagination, and the suffering of disease, are put upon the stage, and the purely human affection of a sister seeks to relieve the woes which the gods can hardly heal in Æschylus. Yet all through the play there are satirical and even comic elements, which have led to the reasonable conjecture that it was meant, like the *Alcestis*, to supply the place of a satyric drama.

Thus, after Electra's prologue, of which Socrates is said to have peculiarly admired the first three lines, Helen, who has just arrived from sea, proposes to her to bring funeral offerings to the tomb of Clytemnestra, under pretence of her own unpopularity and Hermione's youth. This ab-

[1] R. Browning, *Aristoph. Apol.* p. 357.

surdly tactless and evidently selfish request is politely but venomously declined by Electra, who comments upon the niggard offering of Helen's hair.[1] The arrival of the chorus, whom Electra strives with intense anxiety to quiet, for fear of disturbing Orestes, leads to his awakening, and to the famous scene, which has excited the wonder of all its readers, and which I will not profane by a dry abridgment.[2] The arrival of Menelaus leads to a dialogue which shows him both cowardly and selfish ; but in the speech of old Tyndareus, who comes in to urge the death of Orestes, and to dissuade Menelaus from interfering, there are most wise and politic reflections on the majesty of the law, and the necessity of submitting men's passions to its calm decrees. Granting, he argues, that Clytemnestra did murder his father—a most shocking crime, which he will not palliate—Orestes should have brought an action against her, and ejected her formally from his palace.[3] but not have propagated bloody violence from generation to generation.[4] This very enlightened argument, one which was familiar to the Athenian democracy of the day, but has not since asserted itself until now, and even now only partially through Europe, is surely the most advanced and modern feature in the literature of the Periclean age. The character of Pylades, who supports the tottering Orestes to the public assembly, where his fate is to be decided, their touching affection, and the sarcastic description of the meeting and of the speakers, in which critics have found portraits of the demagogue Cleophon and of

[1] vv. 126-31: *ὦ φύσις, ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὡς μέγ' εἶ κακόν,*
σωτήριόν τε τοῖς καλῶς κεκτημένοις.
εἴδετε παρ' ἄκρας ὡς ἀπέθρισεν τρίχας,
σώζουσα κάλλος ; ἔστι δ' ἡ πάλαι γυνή.
θεοί σε μισήσειαν, ὥς μ' ἀπώλεσας
καὶ τόνδε πᾶσάν θ' Ἑλλάδ'. ὦ τάλαιν' ἐγώ.

[2] vv. 211-313.

[3] vv. 496-502.

[4] 523-25: *ἀμυνῶ δ', ὅσονπερ δυνατός εἰμι, τῷ νόμῳ,*
τὸ θηριῶδες τοῦτο καὶ μιαιφόνον
παύων, ὃ καὶ γῆν καὶ πόλεις ὄλλυσ' ἀεί

Socrates[1]—all this is still on a high level, and worthy of its great author. But when Orestes and Electra turn, at the advice of Pylades, from pathetic laments to revenge, and invoke the aid of Agamemnon to murder Helen and Electra, our sympathies are estranged, and no interest remains except in the very comic appearance of the Phrygian slave, and his remarkable monody. The reconciliation and betrothal of the deadly enemies at the end is plainly a parody on such *dénouements*. There are, as usual, many sceptical allusions throughout the play, and one remarkable assertion of physical philosophy.[2]

Though the quotations and indirect imitations of the *Orestes*, as well as translations from the great scene, have been frequent in all ages, the defects of the whole as a play have naturally prevented any direct reproduction on the modern stage. The famous lines upon the blessed comfort of sleep to the anxious and the distressed, may be paralleled in many conscious imitations, yet in none of them more closely than in two passages of Shakspeare.

The ravings of Orestes have suggested to Goethe his wild wanderings at the moment when his sister declares herself; but anyone who will compare the elaborate and far-fetched images of Goethe's, with the infinite verity and nature of Euripides' scene, will see how far the great imitator here falls behind his model. Above all, Goethe misses the truth of making the moment of waking a moment of calm and sanity, and cures Orestes suddenly, upon the prayer of his sister and a manly personal appeal from Pylades. So much nearer were the Greeks to nature!

The actors have tampered a good deal with the text, as may be seen from the many lines rejected by later critics, but our text is exceptionally noted in the MSS. as corrected by a collation of divers copies. The second *argument*, which discusses why Electra should sit at Orestes' feet, and not his head, is a curious specimen of Alexandrian or rather Byzantine pedantry. There are special recensions by Hermann and Porson.

§ 216. The *Phœnissæ* seem to have appeared, according to a

[1] vv. 866–959. [2] vv. 982, sq.

very corrupt and doubtfully emended prefatory note in a Venetian MS., along with the *Œnomaus* and *Chrysippus*,[1] of which a few fragments remain. It gained the second prize in the archonship of an unknown Nausicrates,[2] probably during Ol. 93. It is really a tragedy on the woes of the house of Labdacus, but is called after its chorus, which is composed of Phœnician maidens on their way to Delphi, and stopped on their passage through Thebes by the invasion of the Seven Chiefs under Adrastus. There would indeed be some difficulty in naming the play otherwise, for it is an *episodic* one, consisting of a series of pictures, all connected with Œdipus' family, but without one central figure among the nine characters—an unusual number —who successively appear. The name Thebaïs, given to it by modern imitators, suggests an epos and not a drama. Perhaps Iocasta is the most prominent figure, but yet her death is, so to speak, only subsidiary to the sacrifice of Menœkeus, and the mutual slaughter of the brothers. All the scenes of the play, though loosely connected, are full of pathos and beauty, and hence no piece of Euripides has been more frequently copied and quoted. The conception of the two brothers is very interesting. Polynices, the exile and assailant, is the softer character, and relents in his hate at the moment of his death. Eteocles, on the contrary, is made, with real art, to die in silence; for he is a hard and cruel tyrant, and defends his case by a mere appeal to possession of the throne, and the determination to hold by force so great a prize. Antigone is introduced near the opening only for the sake of the celebrated scene on the wall, when her old nursery slave[3] tells her the various chiefs, as in the scene

[1] According to Meineke (*Com. Frag.* ii. 904, note) the schol. on *Ran.* 44 would imply that it came out as the middle play with the *Hypsipyle* and *Antiope*, and won the first prize. But the scholiast may be referring to these plays as separate specimens of Euripides' excellence, and he only calls them καλά, which implies general approbation, but not necessarily the first place.

[2] Dindorf suggests that he was a suffectus, or *locum tenens*, the proper archon having died or resigned.

[3] παιδαγωγός. Schiller, in his version of the passage, is seduced by French influences, I suppose, into calling him the *Hofmeister*.

between Helen and Priam in the Iliad.[1] She again appears at the close, with the features given her by Sophocles in his *Antigone* and *Œdipus Coloneus* combined. Perhaps the most brilliant part of the play is the dialogue between the brothers, and Iocasta's efforts to reconcile them, followed by the narrative of their death-struggle. The speech of Eteocles,[2] asserting that as he holds the tyranny he will keep it by force in spite of all opposition, is a peculiarly characteristic passage, and may be compared with the advice given to Solon by his friends (Part I. p. 196). If the choruses, which are very elegant, do not help the action of the play, and are rather calm contemplations of the mythical history of Thebes, Euripides might defend himself by pleading that he had accordingly assigned them to a body of foreign maidens, who could feel but a general interest in the action. It is not unlikely that the crowding of incident was intended as a direct contrast to Æschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, which, with all its unity of purpose and martial fire, is very barren in action. The long description of the Seven Chiefs in that play is distinctly criticised as undramatic by Euripides.[3] There are, indeed, all through the play, reminiscences of both Æschylus and Sophocles.

There were parodies of the play, called *Phœnissæ*, by Aristophanes and Strattis. There was also a tragedy of Attius, and an Atellan farce of Novius, known under the same title, the former a free translation of Euripides. Apart from Statius' *Thebais*, there is a *Thebaid* by Seneca, and then all manner of old French versions, uniting the supposed perfections of both these, which they could read, with those of Euripides, whom they only knew and appreciated imperfectly. Exceptionally enough, there is an English version almost as old as any of them, the *Iocasta* of George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmersh (1566), a motley and incongruous piece, built on the basis of the *Phœnissæ*. It professes to be an independent translation of Euripides, but I was surprised to

[1] This idea has been borrowed from Homer very frequently indeed. M. Patin cites parallel passages from Statius, from Tasso, from Walter Scott (in *Ivanhoe*), and from Firdusi.

[2] vv. 500, sq. [3] vv. 751–2.

find it really to be a literal translation of Dolce's Italian version, without any trace of an appeal to the original. Thus the παιδαγωγός is called the *Bailo*, a regular Venetian title. Its chief literary interest lies in the loose paraphrase of Eteocles' speech, above noticed, which appears to have suggested directly to Shakspeare the speech of Hotspur in the first part of *Henry IV.* (i. 3):

> By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap
> To pluck bright Honour from the pale-faced moon,
> Or dive into the bottom of the deep
> Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
> And pluck up drowned Honour by the locks;
> So he, that doth redeem her hence, might wear
> Without corival all her dignities.[1]

There is the translation of Dolce (Italian) called *Iocasta*, and *Antigones* of Garnier (1580) and Rotrou (1638). Then comes the early play of Racine, for which he apologises, the *Thebaide, ou les Frères ennemis.* He rather adds to than alters incidents in Euripides. But as to characters, he makes Eteocles the favourite with the people, he misses the finer points of Polynices, and makes Creon a wily villain promoting the strife for his own ends. The love of Hæmon and Antigone is of course brought in; but at the end, upon the death of Hæmon, old Creon suddenly comes out with a passionate proposal to Antigone, and on her suicide slays himself. He is in fact the successful villain of the piece, whose golden fruit turns to ashes at the moment of victory. Alfieri in 1783 rehandled the well-worn subject in his *Polinice*, to whom he restored the interest lent him by Euripides, but made Eteocles the horrible and hypocritical villain of the piece. The almost successful reconciliation is broken off by Eteocles' attempt (at

[1] So far as I know, this is the only direct contact with, or rather direct obligation to, the Greek tragedy in Shakespeare. Here are the lines which correspond in Euripides—the likeness is but slight, yet it is real:

> ἄστρων ἂν ἔλθοιμ' αἰθέρος πρὸς ἀντολὰς
> καὶ γῆς ἔνερθε, δυνατὸς ὢν δρᾶσαι τάδε,
> τὴν θεῶν μεγίστην ὥστ' ἔχειν τυραννίδα κ.τ.λ.

the instigation of Creon) to poison Polynices, whom he afterwards treacherously stabs, when coming to seek pardon for having defeated and mortally wounded him. This version was done into French by Ernest Legouvé in 1799. Schiller has not only given an excellent and literal version of part of the play, but has taken a great deal from its incidents in his *Braut von Messina;* there is a translation in Halevy's *Grèce tragique.* Its popularity gave rise to many interpolations by actors, and the general reputation of the play has produced a large body of scholia. The best special editions are by Valckenaer, Porson, Hermann, Wecklein (1881, re-ed. of Klotz), and Geel (Leiden, 1846), with a critical appendix by Cobet.

§ 217. After Euripides' death, the younger Euripides brought out at Athens from his father's literary remains a tetralogy containing the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Alcmæon* (ὁ διὰ Κορίνθου), *Bacchæ*,[1] and a forgotten satirical play. With this tetralogy he gained the first prize—a clear proof how little effect upon the Athenian audience had been produced by Aristophanes' *Frogs*, which chose the moment of the great master's death to insult and ridicule him. It is not impossible that a recoil in the public from such ungenerous enmity may have contributed to the success of the posthumous dramas. But we might well indeed wonder if the two plays which are extant had failed to obtain the highest honours. Unfortunately, the *Iphigenia* was left incomplete by the master, and required a good deal of vamping and arranging for stage purposes. Hence critics have in the first instance attributed some of its unevennesses to the subsequent hand. But other larger interpolations followed, some by old and well-practised poets, who understood Attic diction, others by mere poetasters, who have defaced this great monument of the poet's genius with otiose choral odes and trivial dialogue. Such seems to be the history of the text, which has afforded insoluble problems to higher criticism. I suspect that, as usual, the German critics have been too trenchant, and that on the evidence of their subjective taste they have rejected, as early interpolation, a good deal that comes, perhaps unrevised, from the real Euripides. But allowing all their objections, and

[1] We learn this from the schol. on Aristophanes' *Ran.* v. 67.

even discounting all that W. Dindorf, for example, has enclosed in brackets, there remains a complete series of scenes, finished in composition, exquisite in pathos, sustained in power, which not only show us clearly the conception of the master, but his execution, and compel us to place this tragedy among the greatest of all his plays. It is evident that, like Sophocles, whose *Philoctetes* was produced in advanced age, Euripides preserved his powers to the last, and was even then perfecting his art, so that his violent death, at the age of seventy-four, may literally be deplored as an untimely end.

The prologue, at least in substance, of the play, comes in, not at the opening, but after a very beautiful and dramatic scene between the agitated Agamemnon and an old retainer, who through the night has watched the king writing missives, destroying them again, and evidently racked by perplexity or despair. With a passing touch the poet describes the stillness of the calm night and the starlit sky; and though his approximation of Sirius[1] to the Pleiades may be astronomically untenable, he seems to have caught with great truth the character of a long spell of east wind, which is wont to blow in southern Europe, as with us, at the opening of the shipping season, and, having lasted all day, to lull into a calm. Hence the objection brought against this scene, that the fleet at Aulis was detained by contrary *winds*, loses its point. For calm nights were of no service to early Greek mariners, who always landed in the evening, and might thus be wind-bound in a spell of east wind with the stillest night.

This dialogue in anapæsts is to us a far more dramatic opening than the prologue, and even when it comes, as an explanation from Agamemnon, it interrupts the action tamely enough. But here already there are marks of interpolation, and it seems as if a prologue was clumsily adapted to fill up a gap in the dialogue.[2] With anxious detail the

[1] It only means a bright planet, according to Weil, who gives evidence.

[2] This plan of blending the prologue with the opening dialogue appears in the *Knights* and *Wasps* of Aristophanes, but not elsewhere in tragedy. But in the frags. of the *Andromeda*, preserved in the scholia on Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusæ* (v. 1038), we have the opening lines—a lyric

old man is at last despatched by Agamemnon to countermand the arrival of Clytemnestra, and of Iphigenia, who had been sent for under the pretence of a proposed marriage of the princess with Achilles, but really to be sacrificed to Artemis, and obtain favourable weather for the fleet. This deceit is discovered by the old man, when he asks in wonder how Achilles will tolerate the postponement of his marriage, which had been announced in the camp. On his departure, the chorus of maidens from Aulis begin an ode descriptive of the splendours of the Greek fleet and army, which seems considerably interpolated, though the main idea is doubtless that intended by Euripides. The next scene opens with an angry altercation between Menelaus and the old man, who has been intercepted by the former, and his missive opened and read. The old man protests against such dishonourable conduct, and upon Agamemnon coming out, the dispute passes into the hands of the two brothers. Menelaus upbraids Agamemnon's weakness, and his breaking of his word; Agamemnon retorts with pressing his claims as a father and a king. The dispute descends, as always with Euripides, into wrangling, and the imputing of low motives; in the midst of it Agamemnon is terror-stricken by the news that his wife and daughter with the little Orestes have reached the camp, and have been received with acclamation by the army. His despair melts the ambitious heart of Menelaus, who gives way, and beseeches his brother not to sacrifice Iphigenia. But now Agamemnon in his turn remains firm, chiefly, however, from cowardice, and a feeling that as his daughter has really arrived, her fate is now beyond his control.[1]

The chorus, in an ode of which the genuine part is very beautiful, deprecate violent and unlawful love, with its dread consequences. Then follows the greeting of Agamemnon by

monody of the heroine, and a night scene. This proves those critics to be wrong who insist upon Euripides having always opened his plays with a prologue. I believe the *Ion* to be another example, where the dialogue of Ion and Creusa replaced the prologue—the existing one being wholly spurious.

[1] Cf. the parallel of Polynices in Sophocles, above, p. 80.

his innocent daughter, and his ill-concealed despair—a scene which none of the imitators has dared to modify; and Clytemnestra begins asking motherly practical questions about her future son-in-law. But when Agamemnon proposes that she shall return home, and leave him to arrange the wedding, she stoutly refuses, and asserts her right to the control of domestic affairs. This adds to the perplexity of the wretched king, who leaves the stage defeated in his schemes of petty deceit. Presently Achilles enters, and is hailed by Clytemnestra, to his great surprise, as her future son-in-law. This somewhat comic situation is redeemed by the perfect manners, and the graceful courtesy of Achilles, whose character in this play approaches nearest of all the Greek tragic characters to that of a modern gentleman. But the scene becomes tragic enough when the old retainer stops Achilles, who is leaving to seek Agamemnon, and discloses to him and to Clytemnestra the horrible design. Achilles responds calmly and nobly to Clytemnestra's appeal for help, and promises to protect her daughter with the sword, should she be unable to persuade her husband to relent. He deprecrates with great courtesy Clytemnestra's proposal to bring Iphigenia in person from the tents to join her in personal supplications. After a choral ode on the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, Agamemnon returns, and is met by Clytemnestra, who has left her daughter in wild tears and lamentation[1] on hearing of her proposed fate, and compels him to confess his whole policy. She then attacks him in a bitter and powerful speech, which is meant to contrast strongly with that of Iphigenia. This innocent and simple pleading of an affectionate child for life at the hands of her father, with her despair at the approach of death, and her appeal to her infant brother to join in her tears, is the finest passage in Euripides, and of its kind perhaps the finest passage in all Greek tragedy. Upon Agamemnon's craven flight, she bursts out into a lyrical monody, which is interrupted by an approaching crowd and tumult, and the actual entrance of Achilles in arms, who tells

[1] v. 1101 : *πολλὰς ἰεῖσα μεταβολὰς ὀδυρμάτων.*

Clytemnestra that the whole camp are in arms against him, that his own soldiers have deserted him and are led on by Odysseus, but that he will do battle for her to the death. This rapid dialogue in trochaic metre is followed by the second great speech of Iphigenia (in the same metre) in which, with sudden resolve, she declares that her death is for the public good, and that her clinging to life will but entail misery upon her friends; she therefore devotes herself to the deity, and resignedly braves the fate from which she had but lately shrunk in terror. Achilles is struck with admiration, and speaks out his regrets that the pretended marriage was no reality, but he bows to her decision, perhaps because it would have been impious to defraud the gods of a voluntary victim; yet he proposes to bring his arms to the altar, in case she should change her mind at the last. The affecting adieus of the princess to her mother and her little brother, and her enthusiastic hymn as she leaves them for her sacrifice, conclude the genuine part of the play. A messenger's narrative of her death was doubtless intended by the poet, but he did not live to complete the work. It appears from two verses cited by Ælian, in which Artemis announces that she will substitute a horned hind for Iphigenia, that the piece really ended with this consolation, from the goddess *ex machina*. But to modern readers the epilogue is no greater loss than the prologue, if such there was. The real drama is complete, and requires not the dull interpolations with which our MSS. conclude.

There were *Iphigenias* by both Æschylus and Sophocles, which were soon obscured by the present play. Both Nævius and Ennius composed well-known tragedies upon its model. Erasmus translated it into Latin in 1524; T. Sibillet into French in 1549. Dolce gave an Italian version in 1560. There are obscure French versions by Rotrou (1640), and by Leclerc and Coras (1675), the latter in opposition to the great imitation of Racine in 1674. Racine's remarkable play, written by a man who combined a real knowledge of Euripides with poetic talent of his own, is a curious specimen of the effects of French court manners in spoiling the simplicity of a great masterpiece. In order to prevent the sacrifice of so virtuous a person as Iphi-

genia, Racine takes from an obscure tradition an illegitimate daughter of Helen (by Theseus), whom he makes the rival of Iphigenia in the love of Achilles, and a main actor in the play. He substitutes Ulysses for Menelaus, and inserts many features from the first book of the Iliad into the disputes between Agamemnon and the angry lover. As Racine himself honestly confesses, the passages directly borrowed from Homer and Euripides were those which struck even his Paris audience. The character of Agamemnon is, however, spoilt by giving him that absolute control over his family and subjects, which only priestcraft could endanger, and the French Iphigenia, with her court manners, and her studied politeness, is a sorry copy of the equally pure and noble, but infinitely more natural Greek maiden. A comparison of her speech to her father, when pleading for her life, in both plays, will be a perfect index to the contrast.[1]

An English version of Racine's play, called 'Achilles, or Iph. in Aulis,' was brought out at Drury Lane in 1700, and the author in his preface to the print boasts that it was well received, though another Iphigenia failed at Lincoln's Inn Fields about the same time. This rare play is bound up with West's *Hecuba* in the Bodleian. The famous opera of Gluck (1774) is based on Racine, and there was another operatic revival of the play in Dublin in the year 1846, when Miss Helen Faucit appeared as the heroine. The version (by J. W. Calcraft) was based on Potter's translation, and the choruses were set to music, after the model of Mendelssohn, by R. M. Levey. I fancy this revival was limited to Dublin. Schiller translated Euripides'

[1] Qui ne sent la différence des deux morceaux? C'est, chez Racine, une princesse qui détourne d'elle-même sa douleur, et la reporte sur les objets de son affection [sc. sa mère et son amant]; qui, soigneuse de sa dignité, demande la vie sans paraître craindre la mort. C'est, chez Euripide, une jeune fille, surprise tout à coup, au milieu de l'heureuse sécurité de son âge, par un terrible arrêt, qui repousse avec désespoir le glaive levé sur sa tête, qui caresse, qui supplie, qui cherche et poursuit la nature jusqu'au fond des entrailles d'un père, &c. (Patin, *Études*, iii. p. 35.) But I quite differ with him when he thinks that the elegant verses of Racine are in any degree approaching in excellence to the passionate prayer in Euripides.

play (1790), and there is an English poetical version by Cartwright, about 1867 (with the *Medea* and *Iph. Taur.*).

The translation of Schiller, which ends with the departure of Iphigenia, is very good indeed. It is divided into acts and scenes, and might be played with the omission of the choruses. He has appended not only notes, comparing his own version of certain passages with that of Brumoy, but a general estimate of the play, in which he has been too severe in discovering defects, though he highly appreciates the salient beauties of the piece. Thus he thinks the weak and vacillating Agamemnon a failure, whereas this seems to me one of the most striking and natural, as well as Homeric, of personages. He also protests against the dark threat of Clytemnestra, which may not be very noble or appropriate to the fond mother of the stage, but is certainly very Greek and very human.

The special editions of note are Monk's, Markland's (with additions of Elmsley's, Leipzig, 1822), then G. Hermann's, and Vater's (1845), now Weil's (among his *Sept Tragédies*). A great number of critical monographs are cited by Bernhardy, of which those of Vitz (Torgau, 1862–3) and H. Hennig (Berlin, 1870) are good, and discuss fully the many difficulties of the play.

§ 218. The *Bacchæ*, which was composed for the court of Archelaus, is a brilliant piece of a totally different character, and shows that the old connection of plays in trilogies had been completely abandoned. Instead of dealing with the deeper phases of ordinary human nature, the poet passes into the field of the marvellous and the supernatural, and builds his drama on the introduction of a new faith, and the awful punishment of the sceptical Pentheus, who, with his family, jeers at the worship of Dionysus, and endeavours to put it down by force. His mother Agave, and her sisters, are driven mad into the mountains, where they celebrate the wild orgies of Bacchus with many attendant miracles. Pentheus, who at first attempts to imprison the god, and then to put down the Bacchanals by force of arms, is deprived of his senses, is made ridiculous by being dressed in female costume, and led out by the god to the wilds of Cithæron, where he is torn in pieces by

Agave and the other princesses. The lament of Agave, when she comes in with the bleeding head, and is taught by old Cadmus of her fearful delusion, has been lost; but we know its general tenor from the rhetor Apsines and from an imitation in the religious drama called *Christus Patiens* (ascribed to Gregory Nazianzen). While the wild acts of the new Mænads, whom the god has compelled to rush from Thebes into the mountains, are told in two splendid narratives of messengers, the chorus, consisting of Asiatic attendants on the god, show by contrast in their splendid hymns what joys and hopes a faithful submission will ensure. These lyric pieces are very prominent in the play, which, though sometimes called *Pentheus*, is more rightly called after its most important chorus, and is among the best left us by Euripides. It is of course undramatic that Pentheus, who proceeds so violently against all the other Mænads, should leave this chorus to sing its dithyrambs in peace, but ordinary probabilities must often be violated for such a personage as the chorus of a Greek tragedy.

The general tenor of the play, which may contain the maturest reflections of the poet on human life, is that of acquiescence in the received faith, and of warning against sceptical doubts and questionings. And yet it is remarkable that the struggle is about a new and strange faith, and that the old men in the play, Cadmus and Teiresias, are the only Thebans ready to embrace the novel and violent worship, which ill suits their decrepitude. We may imagine that among the half-educated Macedonian youth, with whom literature was coming into fashion, the poet met a good deal of that insolent secondhand scepticism, which is so offensive to a deep and serious thinker, and he may have desired to show that he was not, as they doubtless hailed him, an apostle of this random arrogance. It is also remarkable how nearly this play, at the very end of the development of Greek tragedy, approaches those lyrical *cantatas* with which Æschylus began. The chorus is here reinstated in its full dignity. The subject of Bacchic worship naturally occupied a prominent place in the theatre consecrated to that very worship, and it seems that every Greek dramatist, from Thespis and Phrynichus down to the ignoble herd of later tragedians known

to us through Suidas, wrote plays upon the subject. Sophocles alone may be an exception.

But the play of Euripides always stood prominent among all its rivals. It was being recited at the Parthian court when the head of Crassus was brought in, and carried by the Agave on the stage. It was imitated by Theocritus in Doric hexameters,[1] apparently as part of a hymn to Dionysus. It was produced upon the Roman stage by Attius. It is quoted by every rhetorician, by every Latin poet of note.[2] It has even suggested, with its incarnate god, his persecution, and his vengeance, a Christian imitation. But in modern days, its fate was different. The marvels and miracles with which it abounds, and the prominent vindictiveness of its deity, made it unfit for the modern stage. In the last century A. W. Schlegel and Goethe alone, so far as I know, appreciated it. In our own time, the play has again taken the high place it held in classical days, and is reckoned one of the best of its author. There are special recensions by Elmsley and G. Hermann, and commentaries by Schöne, Weil, Tyrrell, Sandys, and Wecklein, besides school editions, and special tracts in Germany. The text of one of the two remaining MSS., the Florentine C, breaks off at v. 752, so that for the rest we depend altogether on the Palatine (287) in the Vatican. There are blank pages left in the codex C by the scribe, who went on to other plays and never finished the transcription.

§ 219. I have kept for the last of the tragedies the *Rhesus*, which, were it accepted as Euripides', should have come first, as all those, since Crates, who defend it as genuine make it an early work of the youthful poet, and place its date about the time when the ambitious designs of Athens were directed towards Thrace, and resulted in the founding of Amphipolis. This would place the drama about 440 B.C. But though so great a critic as Lachmann thought it even the work of an earlier contemporary of Æschylus, and though some of the Alexandrian critics recognised in it the traces of Sophocles' hand, the weight of modern opinion, since Valckenaer's discussion, leans to its being a later production, written at the close of the Attic period, and about the time of Menander. For there is

[1] Idyll xxvi. [2] Cf. for a list, Patin, iv. 239.

undoubtedly a waste and ineptness of economy—the introduction of two almost idle characters, Æneas and Paris, the appearance of Athena *ex machina* in the middle of the play, and the still stranger *threnos* of the mother of Rhesus, also *ex machina*—there are also scholasticisms of various kinds, both in thought and diction, which seem to indicate the work of a weaker poet copying better models. On the other hand, the Alexandrian critics received it as genuine, and have left us very full and valuable comments on the earlier part, as well as extracts (in one of their prefaces) of two prologues, one of which was ascribed to the actors, but neither of which appears in our text. It is moreover, certain that Euripides wrote a *Rhesus*, but if, as one of the prefaces tells us, it was called γνήσιος, this must have been meant to distinguish it from another as νόθος (as in the case of the Αἰτναῖαι γνήσιοι, and νόθαι, in the catalogue of Æschylus' remains); and it is more than probable that the play we possess is the spurious one, and not from the hand of Euripides. For, besides the faults above mentioned, and the many peculiarities of a diction which seems rather eclectic than original, it wants the two most prominent features of his extant plays, pathos and sententious wisdom.

Nevertheless, its merits have been by many unduly depreciated. It is a bold and striking picture of war and camp life, producing an impression not unlike Schiller's *Wallenstein's Lager*. Choral odes are dispensed with as inappropriate to a night-watch, and there is at least one exquisite epic passage on the approach of Dawn.[1] The bragging of both Hector

[1] vv. 527–36:

τίνος ἀ φυλακά ; τίς ἀμείβει
τὰν ἐμάν ; πρῶτα
δύεται σημεῖα καὶ ἑπτάποροι
Πλειάδες αἰθέριαι · μέσα δ' αἰετὸς οὐρανοῦ ποτᾶται.
ἔγρεσθε, τί μέλλετε ; κοιτᾶν
ἔγρετε πρὸς φυλακάν.
οὐ λεύσσετε μηνάδος αἴγλαν ;
ἀὼς δὴ πέλας ἀὼς
γίγνεται, καί τις προδρόμων ὅδε γ' ἐστὶν ἀστήρ.

vv. 546–55 : καὶ μὴν ἀΐω, Σιμόεντος
ἠμένα κοίτας

and Rhesus estranges the reader's sympathy, so that the death of the latter excites but little pity; the whole interest lies in the changing scenes and fortunes of an anxious night amid 'excursions and alarums.' The scholia to this play were first fully published in the Glasgow edition of 1821 (with the *Troades*), and then with critical and explanatory notes in the edition of Vater (1837). There are numerous monographs upon its age, style, and authorship, in which the large divergence of opinion on the same facts affords an admirable specimen of the complete subjectivity of most of the so-called higher criticism.

§ 220. There remains, however, another genuine play of Euripides—the *Cyclops*—which must be separated from the tragedies, as being the only extant specimen of a *satyric drama.* I have above (page 8) discussed the general features of this sort of play, which is carefully distinguished by the critics from all species of comedy, even from parody, of which I think there are distinct traces in the *Cyclops.* As Plato saw clearly,[1] the talents for the pathetic and for the humorous are closely allied, and we should wonder how it was that no tragic poet among the Greeks ever wrote comedy, did we not find that scope for comic powers was provided in this 'sportive tragedy.' It is indeed strange how the sombre and staid genius of Euripides condescends to gross license in this field; and no doubt if we had a specimen from Æschylus or Pratinas—the acknowledged masters of it—we should find that here, as elsewhere, the Greeks preserved their supremacy in literature. There is great grace and even beauty in the extant play, though we can hardly imagine Euripides' taste as lying in that direction. Silenus (who speaks the prologue) and his

> φοινίας ὑμνεῖ πολυχορδοτάτᾳ
> γήρυϊ παιδολέτωρ μελοποιὸν ἀηδονὶς μέριμναν·
> ἤδη δὲ νέμουσι κατ' Ἴδαν
> ποίμνια· νυκτιβρόμου
> σύριγγος ἰὰν κατακούω·
> θέλγει δ' ὄμματος ἕδραν
> ὕπνος· ἄδιστος γὰρ ἕβα βλεφάροις πρὸς ἀοῦς.

[1] *Symposium*, sub fin.

satyrs are in search for Dionysus, who (according to the Homeric hymn) has been carried into the western seas by pirates. But they are thrown on the coast of Sicily, and made slaves by Polyphemus, who for dramatic reasons cannot devour them as he does other visitors. The opening chorus is very graceful and pastoral, reminding us strongly of scenes in Theocritus. As it is little read I shall quote it.[1] Odysseus then

[1] vv 41–81 :

πᾶ δή μοι γενναίων μὲν πατέρων,
γενναίων δ' ἐκ τοκάδων,
πᾶ δή μοι νίσσει σκοπέλους ;
οὐ τᾷδ' ὑπήνεμος αὔρα
καὶ ποιηρὰ βοτάνα,
δινᾶέν θ' ὕδωρ ποταμῶν.
ἐν πίστραις κεῖται πέλας ἀν-
τρων, οὗ σοι βλαχαὶ τεκέων.
ψύττ', οὐ τάδ' οἶν οὐ τάδε νεμεῖ,
οὐδ' αὖ κλιτὺν δροσεράν ;
ὠή, ῥίψω πέτρον τάχα σου,
ὕπαγ' ὦ ὕπαγ' ὦ κεράστα
μηλοβότα στασίωρον
Κύκλωπος ἀγροβότα.
σπαργῶντάς μοι τοὺς μαστοὺς χάλασον
δέξαι θηλαῖσι σπορᾶς,
ἃς λείπεις ἀρνῶν θαλάμοις.
ποθοῦσί σ' ἀμερόκοιτοι
βλαχαὶ σμικρῶν τεκέων.
εἰς αὐλάν ποτ', ἀμφιθαλεῖς
ποιηροὺς λιποῦσα νομάς,
Αἰτναίων εἴσει σκοπέλων ;
οὐ τάδε Βρόμιος, οὐ τάδε χοροὶ
Βάκχαι τε θυρσοφόροι,
οὐ τυμπάνων ἀλαλαγμοὶ
κρήναισι παρ' ὑδροχύτοις,
οὐκ οἴνου χλωραὶ σταγόνες,
οὐ Νύσα μετὰ Νυμφᾶν.
Ἴακχον Ἴακχον ᾠδὰν
μέλπω πρὸς τὰν Ἀφροδίταν
ἂν θηρεύων πετόμαν
Βάκχαις σὺν λευκόποσιν.
ὦ φίλος ὦ φίλε Βακχεῖε,
ποῖ οἰοπολεῖς
ξανθὰν χαίταν σείων ;

appears, and his adventure with the Cyclops occupies the rest of the plot, in which the Odyssey is followed as closely as was possible, consistently with the addition of a chorus of satyrs, and the necessity for Odysseus' free egress from the cave to narrate the cannibal feast of the Cyclops. The satyrs are represented as a most sympathetic but cowardly chorus, desirous to help Odysseus and escape with him, but far more desirous to drink his wine than to incur any danger in aiding him to blind the Cyclops. The scene in which Silenus acts as cupbearer to Polyphemus, and keeps helping himself, is really comic, and the frank cynicism of Polyphemus' brutal philosophy[1] is expressed in an admirable speech. Odysseus' impassioned exclamation, when he hears it, is in the highest tragic vein, nor does the hero anywhere condescend to respond to the wicked jokes of the satyrs. The whole work is a light and pleasant afterpiece, but seems to me to have required much more acting than the tragedies ; and I suppose the costume worn by Odysseus to have been far less pompous, and his figure less stuffed out than in tragedy ; so that this would be possible. With this condition, it must have been an effective piece, and was possibly preserved as being better than the seven others known from the same author. There are few editions, and no imitations of this play. A recension by Hermann, a German version by Schöll, and a few good monographs, such as the chapter in Patin's *Études*, are all that can be cited as of special import. Shelley has fortunately left us a translation (with a few omissions), which is invaluable for such English readers as cannot compass the somewhat difficult original. The play takes its place, of course, in the complete editions and translations, with the tragedies.

§ 221. A full review of the 1,100 extant *Fragments* would be

> ἐγὼ δ' ὁ σὸς πρόσπολος
> θητεύω Κύκλωπι
> τῷ μονοδέρκτᾳ,
> δοῦλος ἀλαίνων σὺν τᾷδε
> τράγου χλαίνᾳ μελέᾳ
> σᾶς χωρὶς φιλίας.

[1] vv. 316, sq.

here impossible. Some of them are sufficient to give us an idea of the plot of famous plays now lost, but most of them are only selected for philosophic depth or beauty of expression. I have referred above (p. 89) to the analysis of the *Philoctetes* given by Dion Chrysostom. There are also a good many titles cited by the Aristophanic scholiasts in explanation of the parodies of Euripides with which the comedies abounded. It may safely be asserted, that had we no other evidence of the poet's work than these fragments, we should probably have reversed the judgment of the old critics, and placed him first among the tragedians. For in grace of style and aptness of proverbial philosophy he has no rival but Menander, with whom indeed, as with the new comedy generally, his points of contact are many. But in simplicity and purity of diction he far exceeds Æschylus and Sophocles. Thus there is hardly a single curious or out-of-the-way word quoted by the lexicographers from his poetry; but rather innumerable moral sayings and pathetic reflections on human life (in Stobæus), many deep physical speculations by the Christian Apologists[1] and their adversaries; many striking points by the rhetoricians. Apart from the spurious *Danae*, of which the opening is preserved in the Palatine MS., there is a large fragment of the *Phaethon*, from which one of the choruses is very beautiful.[2] Goethe attempted a restoration of the play. A fragment of Euripides has since been published by H. Weil for the *Société pour l'encouragement des études grecques*, and is an interesting speech of forty-four lines, possibly from the *Temenidæ*. There are lesser fragments in Æschylean style on the same papyrus. Blass also prints (*Rhein. Mus.* xxxv. p. 291) a new fragment of forty-five lines from the *Melanippe* (ἡ δεσμῶτις). But both these interesting discoveries are eclipsed by the fragments which Mr. Petrie brought home among his papyri from the Fayoum, and which I identified as passages from the conclusion of the famous *Antiope*. They illustrate the plot, as given us by Hyginus (cf. Nauck, *Fragg. Trag.*, 2nd ed., p. 411), and add other valuable information concerning the play. The MS. is cer-

[1] Cf. frags. 596, 639, 836, 935.

[2] vv. 25-36.

tainly not younger than 230 B.C., and probably much older, so that it is of unique value palæographically, as well as classically. I have given the full text in *Hermathena* No. XVII. A facsimile will be published by the Royal Irish Academy. Meanwhile I give the reader the speech of Hermes (the *deus ex machina*) and the reply of the conquered Lykos.

Hermes.] ΟΤΑΝ ΔΕ ΘΑΠΤΗΙΣ ΑΛΟΧΟΝ ΕΙΣ ΠΥΡΑΝ ΤΙΘΕΙΣ
ΣΑΡΚΩΝ ΑΘΡΟΙΣΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΤΑΛΑΙΠΩΡΟΥ ΦΤΣΙΝ
ΟΣΤΕΑ ΠΥΡΩΣΑΣ ΑΡΕΟΣ ΕΙΣ ΚΡΗΝΗΝ ΒΑΛΕΙΝ
ΩΣ ΑΝ ΤΟ ΔΙΡΚΗΣ ΟΝΟΜ ΕΠΩΝΥΜΟΝ ΛΑΒΗΙ
ΚΡΗΝΗΣ [ΑΠΟ]ΡΡΟΥΣ ΟΣ ΔΙΕΙΣΙΝ ΑΣΤΕΩΣ
ΠΕΔΙΑ Τ[Α ΘΗΒ]ΗΣ ΥΔΑΣΙΝ ΕΞΑΡΔΩΝ ΑΕΙ.
ΥΜΕΙΣ Δ[ΕΠΕΙ]ΔΑΝ ΟΣΙΟΣ ΗΙ ΚΑΔΜΟΥ ΠΟΛΙΣ
ΧΩΡΕΙΤΕ [ ]Σ ΑΣΤΥ ΔΕ ΙΣΜΗΝΟΥ ΠΑΡΑ
ΕΠΤΑΣ[ΤΟΜ]ΟΝ ΠΥΛΑΙΣΙ[Ν] ΕΞΑΡΤΥΤΕ
ΣΥ ΜΕΝ[ ]ΤΟΓΝΕΤΜ . . ΠΟΛΕΜΙΩΝ ΛΑΒΩΝ
ΙΗΘ ΩΣ[ΠΡΙΝ ΕΧΕ]ΠΟΝΟΝ, ΣΥ[. .]Ν Δ ΑΜΦΙΟΝΑ
ΛΥΡΑΝ Κ[ΕΛΕΥ]Ω Δ[ΙΑ] ΧΕΡΩΝ ΩΠΛΙΣΜΕΝΟΝ
ΜΕΛΠΕΙΝ ΘΕΟΥ[Σ ΩΙ]ΔΑΙΣΙΝ ΕΨΟΝΤΑΙ ΔΕ ΣΟΙ
ΠΕΤΡΑΙ ΤΕ[ΡΕ]ΜΝΑΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΙ ΚΗΔΟΥΜΕΝΑΙ
ΔΕΜ . . . .]ΜΗΤΡΟΣ ΕΙ[. . .]ΟΥΣΑ ΕΔΩΛΙΑ
. . ΤΕ[. . . . . .]Ν ΤΕΚΤΟΝΩΝ ΘΗΣΕΙ ΧΕΡΙ
ΙΕΥΣ ΤΗΝΔΕ ΤΙΜΗΝ ΣΥΝ Δ ΕΓΩ ΔΙΔΩΜΙ ΣΟΙ
ΟΥΠΕΡ ΤΟΔ ΕΥΡΗΜ ΕΣΧΕΣ ΑΜΦΙΩΝ ΑΝΑΞ
ΛΕΤΚΩ ΔΕ ΠΩΛΩ ΤΩ ΔΙΟΣ ΚΕΚΛΗΜΕΝΟΙ
ΤΙΜΑΣ ΜΕΓΙΣΤΑΣ ΕΞΕΤ ΕΓ ΚΑΔΜΟΥ ΠΟΛΕΙ.
ΚΑΙ ΛΕΚΤΡΑ Ο ΜΕΝ ΘΗΒΑΙΑ [ΛΗΨ]ΕΤΑΙ ΓΑΜΩΝ
ΟΔ ΕΚ ΦΡΥΓΩΝ ΚΑΛΛΙΣΤΟΝ [ΕΥ]ΝΑΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ
ΤΗΝ ΤΑΝΤΑΛΟΥ ΠΑΙΔ ΑΛΛ [ΟΣ]ΟΝ ΤΑΧΙΣΤΑ ΧΡΗ
ΣΠΕΤΔΕΙΝ ΘΕΟΥ ΠΕΜΨΑΝΤΟΣ ΟΙΑ ΒΟΥΛΕΤΑΙ.
Lyk.] Ω ΠΟΛΛ ΑΕΛΠΤΑ ΖΕΥΣ ΤΙΘΕΙΣ ΚΑΘ ΗΜΕΡΑΝ
ΕΔΕΙΞ[ΕΝ ΕΙΣ ΦΩΣ] ΤΑΣΔ ΑΒΟΥΛΙΑΣ ΕΜΑΣ
ΕΣ ΣΦΩ[ΠΑΤΡΟΣ] ΔΟΚΟΥΝΤΑΣ ΟΥΚ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΔΙΟΣ
ΠΑΡΕΣΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΙΗΤ ΗΥΡΕ ΜΗΝΥΤΗΣ ΧΡΟΝΟΣ
ΨΕΥΔΕΙΣ ΜΕΝ ΗΜΑΣ ΣΦΩΙΝ ΔΕ ΜΗΤΕΡ ΕΥΤΥΧΕΙΝ.
ΙΥΕ ΝΥΝ ΚΡΑΤΥΝΕΤ ΑΝΤ ΕΜΟΥ ΤΗΣΔΕ ΧΘΟΝΟΣ
ΛΑΒΟΝΤΕ ΚΑΔΜΟΥ ΣΚΗΠΤΡΑ ΤΗΓ ΓΑΡ ΑΞΙΑΝ
ΣΦΩΙΝ ΠΡΟΣΤΙΘΗΣΙΝ ΖΕΥΣ ΕΓΩ ΤΕ ΣΥΝ ΔΙΙ
ΕΡΜΗ[Ι ΔΕ ΠΕΙΘΩΝ ΑΡΕ]ΟΣ ΕΙΣ ΚΡΗΝΗΝ [Β]ΑΛΩ
ΓΥΝΑΙΚΑ ΘΑΨΑΣ ΤΗΣ[Δ . . . . . Ι]Ν ΟΥΣΑ ΓΗΣ
ΝΑΣΜΟΙΣΙ ΤΕΓΓΗΙ ΠΕΔΙΑ ΘΗΒΑΙΑΣ ΧΘΟΝΟΣ
ΔΙΡΚΗ ΠΡΟΣ ΑΝ[ΔΡ]ΩΝ ΥΣΤΕΡΩΝ ΚΕΚΛΗΜΕΝΗ,
ΛΥΩ ΔΕ ΝΕΙΚΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΑ ΠΡΙΝ ΠΕΠΡΑΓΜΕΝΑ.

The *Erechtheus* is now remarkable for having given Mr. Swinburne not only the plot of his like-named tragedy, but one of the finest of the speeches—that of Praxithea—to which he has acknowledged his obligations. It seems that this play brought out prominently, not the self-sacrifice of the daughter, but the patriotic devotion of the mother. The daughter is not even specially named in our fragments. Mr. Swinburne has made her a second heroine in his version, but somewhat cold and statuesque, neither acting on her own responsibility, and as the eldest of the house, like Macaria, nor, on the other hand, showing the simple innocence and instinctive horror of death which we find in Iphigenia. His choruses are, moreover, far too long and exuberant for a really Greek play, however splendid they may be in themselves. I note these points not by way of criticism, which I should not venture, but to indicate to any English reader, that he must look to actual translations to obtain an accurate notion of the course of a Greek play. There are, besides the great speech of Praxithea, two important fragments from Euripides' play—one the farewell advice of a father to his son, very similar to that of Polonius to Laertes in *Hamlet;* the other an ode which longs for peace, and which is paralleled by the famous strophe from the *Cresphontes*, which has been so well rendered by Mr. Browning (*Aristophanes' Apology*, p. 179). It is to be noticed that most of the philosophical fragments are quoted as the poet's own sentiments, and this is specially mentioned by rhetoricians and scholiasts,[1] some of whom even call his choruses *parabases*, or open addresses to the audience, and others, such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus, insist that the person of the poet and that of his characters are throughout blended and confused.[2] The letters attributed to Euripides, and first published by Aldus in his collection (ed. 1499), were apparently composed by some Roman sophist, and have no value, even in preserving facts then current about the poet's life, which might since have been lost. They have been critically sifted by Bentley.

[1] Cf. the frags. of the *Danae.*

[2] Cf. the passage cited on the *Melanippe* (ἡ σοφή) in Dindorf's frags.

§ 222. The external changes introduced into tragedy by Euripides were not very great. He seems to have adhered to Sophocles' example in contending with separate plays, though he represented tetralogies together—that is to say, we have no clear evidence that there was any connection in subject between the plays which were produced together, as, for example, the *Bacchæ* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*. But he adopted a distinct method, which Sophocles imitated in his *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*—of curtailing the opening and close of his plays, in order to expand more fully the affecting or striking scenes in the body of the play. This was attained, first by the *prologue*, often spoken by a god, or other personage not prominent in the real play, who set forth the general scope and plot of the piece, and told the audience what they might expect—a matter of great necessity in such a play as the *Helena*, or *Iphigenia in Tauris*, where either the legend, or the handling of the legend, was strange, and not familiar to the public. Secondly, the *deus ex machina*, who appeared at the end, cut the knot, or reconciled the conflict of the actors. There is evidence that the prologues were much tampered with by the actors, and some are even altogether spurious. In written copies of the plays these prologues may have originally served as *arguments*, but for stage purposes, their recital by some indifferent actor was (I fancy) intended to fill up the time while the Athenian audience were bustling in and taking their seats. The appearance of a god at the end was likewise a sign that the play was over, for it was always plain what he would say, and the last words of the chorus were even the same in several of the plays, being evidently not heard in the noise of the general rising of the crowd.

It was the fashion of the scholiasts to follow Aristophanes in censuring the poet for introducing certain novelties in music and in metres. But we cannot now appreciate even the points urged as to the latter, nor do I think that the modern critics who follow the same line of censure have at all proved their case by argument. I would rather point to at least one very interesting metrical novelty whereby the poet admirably expressed the contrast of calmness and excitement in a dialogue.

This was the interchange of iambics with resolved dochmiacs, which we find in several fine scenes, such as that of Admetus with his wife (*Alc.* 243, sq.), of Phædra, with the chorus (*Hipp.* 571, sq.), and of Amphitryon with Theseus (*Herc. Fur.* 1178, sq.). The modern reader can here easily feel the appropriateness of a remarkable innovation.

§ 223. As to the general complexion of his plays, the critics note that the chorus declines in importance, that it does not interfere in the action of the play, except as a confidant or accomplice, and that its odes are often irrelevant, or personal expressions of the poet's feelings. These statements are to be qualified in two directions : in the first place, we find the decay of importance and occasional irrelevance of the chorus manifestly in Sophocles, so that he must either have begun, or countenanced by his practice, the change. Secondly, it is false that Euripides did not introduce an active chorus, and one of great importance, in his plays, for we have before us the *Supplices*, the *Troades*, and the *Bacchæ*, rightly called after the most important *rôle*. It is furthermore asserted that he invented the tragedies of intrigue or of plot, where curiosity as regards the result replaces strong emotions as regards the characters and sentiments expressed. This again is only true with limitations. For there are three different interests which may predominate in a tragedy, and accordingly we may classify them as tragedies of *character*, like the *Medea*, as tragedies of *plot*, like the *Ion*, and as tragedies of *situation*, like the *Troades*, in which there is a mere series of affecting tableaux, or episodes. But evidently all elements must co-exist, and the fact that Euripides does complicate his plot, and excite an intellectual interest in the solving of it, does not prevent these very plays from being most thoroughly plays of character also. There is no finer character-drawing than that of Ion and the Tauric Iphigenia, and yet these characters take part in subtle and interesting plots. It is therefore distinctly to be understood that the prominence of plot in some of Euripides' plays does not exclude either character-drawing, or the dwelling upon affecting situations—this latter a very usual feature in the poet, and one in which he may be

said to have reverted to the simple successions of scenes in the earliest tragedy.

§ 224. But there is this important point in Euripides' character-drawing, that except in the *Medea*, he does not concentrate the whole interest on a single person, but divides it, so that many of his strongest and most beautiful creations appear only during part of a play. Thus Hippolytus and Phædra are each splendidly drawn, but of equal importance in their play ; so are Alcestis and Heracles, Ion and Creusa, Iphigenia, Agamemnon and Achilles. This subdivision of interest makes his plays far more attractive and various, but it naturally fails in impressing upon the world great single figures, such as Ajax, Antigone, or, in our present poet, Medea. Again, it is very remarkable that Euripides seems to have disliked, or to have been unable, to draw strong or splendid male characters. Almost all his kings and heroes are either colourless, or weak and vacillating, or positively mean and wicked. This may be the misfortune of our extant selection of plays, for the Odysseus of his *Philoctetes* seems to have been an ideal Periclean Athenian. But in the plays we have, the most attractive men are Ion and Hippolytus, in both of whom the characteristics of virgin youth, freshness, and purity are the leading features—a type not elsewhere met in extant tragedies, but very prominent in the dialogues of Plato. On the other hand, no other poet has treated female passion, and female self-sacrifice, with such remarkable power and variety.[1] We have remaining two types of passion in Phædra and in Medea—one of the passion of Love, the other of the passion of Revenge, and we know that in other

[1] Mr. Hutton, in his delightful *Life of Scott*, contrasts (p. 107) the genius of Scott, who failed in drawing heroines, with that of Goethe, who was unsuccessful with his men, but unmatched in his drawing of female character. Some such natural contrast seems to have existed between Sophocles and Euripides, and is indeed implied in the scandalous anecdotes about them, which intimate that Sophocles was too purely an Athenian to share Euripides' love of women. Sophocles had an opportunity of drawing the purity and freshness of youth, which was so interesting to the Greeks, in his Neoptolemus (*Philoctetes*). Yet this character appears to me very inferior to either Ion or Hippolytus.

plays he made erring women his leading characters. But when these characters are assumed mischievously by Aristophanes, stupidly by the old scholiasts, servilely by modern critics, to afford evidence that the poet hated women, and loved to traduce them upon his stage, we wonder how all his splendid heroines have been forgotten, and his declarations of the blessings of home, of the comforts of a good wife, of the surpassing love of a mother, passed by in silence. His fragments abound with these things, just as they do with railings against women, both doubtless spoken in character. But it is indeed strange criticism to adopt the one as evidence of the poet's mind, and to reject the other.

There are, moreover, in the extant plays, four heroines who face death with splendid calmness and courage—Alcestis, Macaria, Iphigenia, Polyxena—and all with subtle differences of situation, which show how deeply he studied this phase of human greatness. Alcestis is a happy wife and mother, in the heyday of prosperity, and she gives up her life from a sense of duty for an amiable but worthless husband. Macaria, in exile and in affliction, seizes the offer to resign her life, and scorns even the chance of the lot, to secure for her helpless brothers and sisters the happiness which she has been denied. And so the rest, but I pass them by rather than treat them with unjust brevity.[1] Enough has been here said to show that, instead of being a bitter libeller of the sex, he was rather a philosophic promoter of the rights of woman, a painter of her power both for good and evil, and that he strove along with Socrates, and probably the advanced party at Athens, to raise both the importance and the social condition of the despised sex.

§ 225. He seems to have similarly advocated the virtues and the merit of slaves, who act important parts in his plays, and speak not only with dignity, but at times with philosophic depth. Yet while he thus endeavoured to raise the neglected elements of society, he may fairly be accused of having lowered the gods and heroes, both in character and diction, to the level

[1] I must refer the reader to the chapter of my monograph on Euripides for a fuller discussion of this interesting question.

of ordinary men. He evidently did not believe in the traditional splendour of these people; he ascribed to them the weakness and the meanness of ordinary human nature; he even made them speak with the litigious rhetoric of Attic society. When in grief and misery, they fill the theatre with long monodies of wail and lamentation, not louder or more intense than those of the Philoctetes of Sophocles, but without the man's iron resolve. Again, in calmer moments he makes them reflect with the weariness of world-sickness, often in the tone of advanced scepticism, sometimes in that of resignation; he also makes his chorus turn aside from the immediate subject to speculate on the system of the world, and the hopes and disappointments of mankind. When we note these large and deep features in his tragedies, when we see the physical philosophy of Anaxagoras, the metaphysic of Heracleitus, the scepticism of Protagoras produced upon his stage, when we see him abandoning strictness of plot, and even propriety of character, to insist upon these meditations of the study, we fancy him a philosopher like Plato, who desired to teach the current views, and the current conflicts of thought, under the guise of dramatic dialogue, and who accordingly fears not to preach all the inconsistencies of human opinion in the mouths of opposing characters. A picture of every sort of speculation, of every sort of generalization from experience, can be gathered from his plays, and we obtain from them a wonderful image of that great seething chaos of hope and despair, of faith and doubt, of duty and passion, of impatience and of resignation, which is the philosophy of every active and thoughtful society. We can imagine the silent and solitary recluse despising his public, writing not for the many of his own day, but for the many of future generations, and careless how often the critics might censure him for violating dramatic dignity, and the judges postpone him to inferior rivals. And he may well have smiled at his five victories as the reward for his great and earnest work.

§ 226. But this natural estimate is contradicted by the perpetual notes of the scholiasts, who assert that Euripides was altogether a stage poet, and sacrificed everything to momentary

effect. They speak of his plays as immoral, as ill-constructed, but as of great dramatic brilliancy. I confess I am slow to attach any weight to the critics who censure the tears of Medea and Iphigenia as blunders in character-drawing.[1] But there are independent signs that what they say has a real foundation, and that Euripides was too thoroughly the child of his age to soar above the opinions of a public which he may often, and in deeper moments, have despised. Thus we hear of his re-casting his *Hippolytus*, so as to meet objections; we find him indulging in long monodies which can hardly have been intended for more than an immediate musical effect; above all, we find him writing patriotic plays, with extreme travesties of the enemy of the day, and with fulsome praises of Athens, which are far below the level of the 'philosopher of the stage.' We find him also adopting a combination of two *successive* plots, so as to gather into one the pathetic scenes of separate stories, at the expense of dramatic unity. These things show that if he really adopted the stage as a means of conveying the newer light, it became to him an end, which he strove to perfect in his own way, and without surrendering his philosophy.

He felt himself, as Aristophanes tells us, in direct opposition to Æschylus, whom he criticises more than once. There are not wanting cases where he seeks to correct Sophocles also, but nothing is more remarkable than the small number of allusions or collisions between rivals on the same stage, and often in the same subjects. Yet they could not but profit by the conflict. It seems to me, however, that as Euripides was the poet of the younger generation, and of the changing state, he acted more strongly on Sophocles than Sophocles did in return, and though we may see in the *Bacchæ* much of the religious resignation of Sophocles, we see in the *Philoctetes* a great deal of the economy and of the stage practice of Euripides.

The next generation, while leaving the older poet all his glories, declared decidedly for Euripides; the poets of society embraced him as their forerunner and their model; philosophers,

[1] Cf. the argument to the *Medea*, and Aristotle's *Poetic*, cap. xv.

orators, moralists—all united in extolling him to the skies. Thus the poet who was charged with writing for the vulgar, with pandering to the lowest tastes of the day, with abandoning the ideal and the eternal for the passions and interests of the moment—this is the very man who became essentially the poet, not of his own, but of later ages. He was doubtless, as I have already said, an inferior artist to Sophocles ; he was certainly a greater genius, and a far more suggestive thinker.[1]

§ 227. The old critics paid much attention to this author, but are unfortunately not often cited. Dicæarchus is the earliest mentioned, especially in the *Arguments*, then Aristophanes of Byzantium, and his pupil Callistratus, as well as other Alexandrians, and Crates, but Aristarchus is only mentioned once in a note on the *Rhesus*. Didymus is the most important, and most cited, and a commentary by Dionysius, added to his notes. The present collection of scholia, though it must have then existed, was unknown to Suidas. They were first edited on the seven popular plays, by Arsenius (Venice, 1534), and often since. Those on the *Rhesus* and *Troades* were first given from the Vatican MS. (909), in the Glasgow edition of 1821. This copy also supplies fuller notes on other plays, all of which have been carefully edited by W. Dindorf in his *Scholia Græca in Eurip.* (Oxon. 1863), with a good preface. There are only full notes on nine plays, viz. *Hecuba*, *Orestes*, *Phœnissæ*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Alcestis*, *Andromache*, *Troades*, and *Rhesus*. On the rest there is hardly anything, about a dozen notes each on the *Ion*, *Helena*, *Hercules Furens* and *Electra* ; on the others even less. The history of the influence of his plays on the Roman and modern drama is very curious, but I must refer the reader for this and other details to my larger monograph on the poet.[2]

§ 228. *Bibliographical.* I proceed to notice the principal MSS. and editions. The extant MSS. have been carefully classified by Elmsley (Pref. to *Medea* and *Bacch.*), by Dindorf,

[1] An immense number of monographs on special points in the poet's diction, economy, style, and temper are enumerated by Bernhardy and by Nicolai, *LG.* I. i. pp. 201–2.

[2] *Euripides*, in Mr. Green's series of classical writers (Macmillan, 1879).

and by Kirchhoff in the preface to his *Medea*. None of them contains all the plays. The older selection contains the nine plays of the Vatican MS. just mentioned, but of these the first five are in a Venice MS., which is the oldest and best, and six in a Paris MS. (A, 2712). We accordingly have these plays better preserved, and with scholia. The rest are extant in two fourteenth century MSS., the Laurentian C (plut. 32, 2, at Florence), which contains all the plays but the *Troades* and a portion of the *Bacchæ*, and the Palatine (287), in the Vatican Library, which contains seven of the latter section, except the end of *Heracleidæ*. Thus there are three plays, the *Hercules Furens*, the *Helena*, and the *Electra*, which depend upon the Florentine C alone, which has only been of late collated once (by de Furia) for the edition of Matthiæ. An examination of this codex on the *Helena* and *Hercules Furens* proved to me that a good deal of help might still be derived from another and more careful collation. The same result appears from the recent collation of the *Electra* by Heyse.[1] More recent copies need not here be mentioned. Most critics are now agreed that all these texts are full of interpolations, arising from repetitions, school reading, and from additions to the choral odes by grammarians. As to editions, four plays (*Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Alcestis*, *Andromache*) were first edited by J. Lascaris, in capitals, at Florence, about 1496—a rare and undated book. The proper *princeps* edition is that of Aldus (1503), containing eighteen plays, the *Electra* not appearing till 1545 (Victorius, Rome). This edition is based upon good MSS., and its value is much greater than those which succeeded it, which I therefore pass over till we come to the studies of Valckenaer, whose *Diatribe* on the fragments marks an epoch. I have already noted all the good special editions of each play under its heading. Of late critical editions we may mention that of Matthiæ (1829–39), of Fix, in Didot's series (1843), of A. Kirchhoff (1868), of Nauck (Teubner), of H. Weil (*Sept Tragédies*, Paris, 2nd edit., 1880), and of Mr. Paley, who has given us a text and commentary in three volumes (1860). Besides the versions

[1] Cf. *Hermes*, vii. 252, sq.

of single plays already mentioned, there are translations of the whole works into German by Bothe, Donner, Hartung, Fritze, and Kock, into French by Prévost and Brumoy, into Italian by Carmelli (Padua, 1743), into English by Potter (reproduced in Valpy's classics, 1821), and by Woodhull (1782, four volumes). Carmelli and Woodhull not only give all the plays, with many good notes, but all the fragments then collected by Barnes and Musgrave, with an index of names and even of moral sentiments. There is also an edition of four select tragedies produced anonymously in 1780. There are unfinished lexicons to Euripides by Faehse and Matthiæ, and a full index in Beck's ed. The fragments known up to 1891 are now best studied in Nauck's fine collection, *Fragg. Tragg. Græc.*, 2nd edit., Teubner, 1890.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LESSER AND THE LATER TRAGIC POETS.

§ 229. NOTHING is more remarkable than the deep shade thrown over all the other Greek tragic poets by the splendour of the great Triad which has so long occupied us. It may perhaps not excite wonder that their contemporaries should be forgotten, but we are surprised that of their successors none should have stood the test of time, or reached us even through the medium of criticism. Nevertheless, of the vast herd of latter tragedians two only, and two of the earliest—Ion and Agathon—can be called living figures in a history of Greek literature. And these, as it happens, encountered the living splendour of Sophocles and Euripides. Moreover, our scanty information seems to have omitted some of the most popular of the later playwrights, for of the 700 tragedies which are attributed to them in the notes of Suidas and elsewhere, we can only find fifteen victorious pieces. Who then won the prizes? or was the taste of the Athenian ochlocracy so conservative, that they persisted in reserving all the honours for reproductions of the old masterpieces? If this were so, how comes it that the writing of new and unsuccessful tragedies became so dominant a fashion? And yet even the *Poetic* of Aristotle, which treats mainly of the laws of tragic poetry, hardly mentions any of them, and then almost always by way of censure. This much is therefore certain, that while comedy was making new developments, and affording a field for real genius and for real art, tragedy, though for a time maintaining its importance and even its popularity, had attained its zenith, and its later annals are but a history of decay. Of the older poets, who were contemporary with Sophocles and Euripides, we

hear in Suidas of *Aristarchus of Tegea*, the author of 100 plays, and only twice a victor, from whom Ennius seems to have borrowed his *Achilles;* also of *Achæus of Eretria*, who contended with Euripides in Ol. 83, who only won once, though the author of forty-four. The scholia to the *Medea* of Euripides cite *Neophron* or Neophon as the author of the poet's model, and quote from him two good fragments, which, when supplemented by the soliloquy of his Priam from Stobæus, seem to indicate some talent. But these scanty hints, and the notice of Suidas that he first brought on the stage tutor-slaves and the torturing of domestics—whatever that may mean—are all that remains to us of his 120 dramas.

§ 230. But we hear a great deal more of *Ion of Chios*, who was in many respects a remarkable figure. As he told of his having when a youth met Kimon in society at Athens, his birth must fall about Ol. 74; his death is alluded to by Aristophanes[1] as recent, I suppose, and therefore shortly before Ol. 89, 3. Though in character as well as in birth a pure Ionian, he seems to have lived much at Athens, and from a drinking song quoted in Athenæus appears also well acquainted with Spartan traditions and cults. But these could have been learned from Kimon's aristocratical society at Athens, as they always affected Spartan style, in the same manner that foreign nobles of sundry nations mimic Englishmen. Ion seems to have met Æschylus, and possibly Sophocles, at the opening of his career, and to have been a much-travelled and social person, of large experience, agreeable manners, and ample fortune. Perhaps he is the earliest example of a literary dilettante, who employed his leisure in essays of various sorts of writing. He composed elegies,[2] melic poems, both dithyrambs and hymns, especially a *hymn to Opportunity* (ὕμνος Καιροῦ), epigrams, tragedies, and prose works in Ionic dialect—the latter either on the antiquities of Chios, or in the form of *memoirs* (called also ἐπιδημίαι and συνεκδημητικοί). These latter, which must have been a novel form in literature, are often cited by

[1] *Pax*, 835, with a good scholion.

[2] Cf. above, Part I., p. 213.

Plutarch and Athenæus as valuable historical sources, and were discussed in a special work on Ion by Baton of Sinope.

We are here, however, concerned with his tragedies, of which the number is variously stated from twelve to forty. Perhaps the lesser number refers to trilogies. He first contended in Ol. 82, was unsuccessful against Euripides in 87, 4, but when afterwards victorious, sent the Athenians a present of Chian wine. We have ten titles, some of them very curious, e.g. the *Great Drama* (Μέγα δρᾶμα). His satyrical play, the *Omphale*, was very popular. None of the fragments are sufficient to give an idea of the plot, but their style is good, and the expression easy and elegant.

Achæus of Eretria flourished between Ol. 74 and 83, but only gained a single prize out of forty-four dramas. He is once praised as second only to Æschylus in satyrical drama. Athenæus speaks of him as smooth in style, but at times dark and enigmatical. His scanty fragments afford us no means of correcting this judgment.

§ 231. We may pass next to a poet whose figure comes before us with peculiar clearness in the pictures of Plato and Aristophanes. Whether their portraits are faithful is not easy to say, but it is not likely that they were far from the truth, especially as they are not inconsistent, though very dissimilar in many respects.

In the opening of the *Thesmophoriazusæ* AGATHON (son of Tisamenus) is appealed to as an effeminate and luxurious man whose soft and sensuous poetry was the natural outcome of his nature. A specimen—of course a parody—is given of an alternate hymn between the poet and his chorus, which is not without grace and beauty. But this satirical picture is much modified by the hearty friendliness of the allusion in the *Frogs*, where Dionysus, in reply to Heracles, who asks about Agathon next after Sophocles, says 'he is gone and has left me, a good poet and a deep regret to his friends. *H.* Whither has the poor fellow gone? *D.* To the feast of the blessed.' The hospitable and social side of the man is not less prominent in Plato's *Symposium*, the scene of which is laid in his house, where he acts the part of a most gentlemanly and aristocratic host,

and makes a remarkable speech on the nature of Love, which may possibly be drawn from his writings, but of this no evidence remains to us. There is indeed a corrupt passage in Dionysius, which makes him, with Likymnius, a pupil of Gorgias, and this hint has prompted Blass[1] to analyse with care his speech in the *Symposium*, and his language in the parody of Aristophanes, to detect Gorgian features. There seems to be strong evidence in the speech, which is evidently a dramatic imitation of a peculiar style, that Agathon did borrow its complexion from his friend Gorgias. There is the same attention to a fixed and obvious scheme, the same love of playing upon words, and seeking alliterations. As these features recur in the odes ascribed to him by Aristophanes, it is probable that his style was really formed from the oratory of the great Sicilian.

Though he is proved by these and many other allusions and anecdotes to have been a prominent figure in Attic society, we have very few facts transmitted about his life. Born about Ol. 83, he first gained a prize in Ol. 90, 4, and is mentioned as having praised Antiphon's great defence of himself to the orator, who felt consoled in his condemnation by the approval of one competent judge among the ignorant public. He left Athens before the end of the 93rd Ol. for the Macedonian court, where the good living and absence of sharp criticism probably suited his easy-going and perhaps indolent genius; and there he died in the prime of life, before 405 B.C.[2] There remain to us the titles of only six of his tragedies, *Telephus*, a play on *Achilles*—in which alone, says the *Poetic* of Aristotle, he failed—*Alcmæon*, *Aerope*, *the Mysians*, and lastly *the Flower* (ἄνθος), so strange a title that some critics consider it a false reading for some proper name—Bergk says ἀνθεύς. But as we are told[3] that both the character and the plot were in this play invented, the curious title is not improbable; and we have here an original attempt at a tragedy departing from the received myths, consequently from all religious basis, and a notable change in the history of the drama. We learn from

[1] *Attische Beredtsamkeit*, i. 76.

[2] Cf. Kock's and Fritsche's Comm. on *Frogs*; perhaps not till 400

[3] *Poet.* 9. Cf. Nauck, *FTG.* 2nd ed. pp. 763–9.

the *Poetic* also, to me a suspicious source, that he was the originator of the habit of composing choral odes loosely or not at all connected with a plot—an innovation commonly attributed to Euripides. The few extant fragments, as well as the speech in Plato, point to great neatness of style, and an epigrammatic turn, which the Attic writers called κομψότης or rhetorical finish. This quality makes him a favourite source of quotation with Aristotle. We find, therefore, in Agathon an independent and talented artist, working on the same lines, and in the same direction, as Euripides, but without his industry or philosophic seriousness.

§ 232. The case of CRITIAS is more difficult to decide. One play, the *Sisyphus*, often ascribed to Euripides, seems to have been composed by Critias, but the frank atheism expressed in the extant fragment makes us think he did not mean it for public performance. Another, the *Peirithous*, is doubtfully ascribed to him by Athenæus, but elsewhere called Euripidean. Thus the tragedy of Critias seems to have been distinctly intended to convey sceptical views in theology and in natural philosophy, outdoing the more artistic and reticent character of Euripides's teaching.[1]

During the same period the families of the great tragic poets were either reproducing, or composing, with some success. Two sons of Æschylus were tragic poets, one of whom, Euphorion, succeeded four times with unpublished plays of his father, and defeated Euripides in Ol. 87, 4. He also composed original plays. Iophon, son of Sophocles, is spoken of as gaining victories, and also as a bad poet. But the grandson, the younger Sophocles, who produced the *Œdipus Coloneus*, was of more repute, and often declared victor. The younger Euripides, nephew of the great poet, is not prominent. There appear also among the descendants of Æschylus his nephew Philocles, an ugly and mean-looking man, who defeated Sophocles' *Œdipus Rex;* and then a series of grandsons and nephews—Morsimus, Melanthius, Astydamas, and a younger Philocles. These men are chiefly known by the ridicule of the comic poets, which has immortalised a host of obscurities.

[1] His prose works are noticed in Vol. II. § 385.

The famous passage in the *Frogs*[1] gives us Aristophanes' judgment on this herd of tragic poetasters, whose names are not worth enumeration here. I will only observe that the German critics have adopted far too literally the scorn and ridicule of Aristophanes, who was often an unfair critic, and probably gave rein to private spite and party feeling in many of his judgments. If we had only his ridicule of Agathon in the *Thesmophoriazusæ* preserved, and had lost the *Frogs* and Plato's *Symposium*, I have no doubt Agathon would occupy a very different place in the judgment of learned philologists. Of the lesser poets Meletus has gained notoriety by his attack on Socrates; Critias by his political activity, and his elegies, of which no mean fragments have been preserved; there was also Dionysius of Syracuse, whose vanity and anxiety to succeed in literature were of old much ridiculed. His poems were recited with great pomp at Olympia (98, 1), and received with jeering and laughter. He really studied, and had his works revised and criticised by Philoxenus and the tragic poet Antiphon; it is probably an Attic joke that he died of joy at a victory gained in the Athenian Lenæa (Ol. 103, 1).

[1] vv. 89, sq. : HP. οὔκουν ἕτερ' ἔστ' ἐνταῦθα μειρακύλλια
τραγῳδίας ποιοῦντα πλεῖν ἢ μύριας,
Εὐριπίδου πλεῖν ἢ σταδίῳ λαλίστερα;
ΔΙ. ἐπιφυλλίδες ταῦτ' ἐστὶ καὶ στωμύλματα,
χελιδόνων μουσεῖα, λωβηταὶ τέχνης,
ἃ φροῦδα θᾶττον, ἢν μόνον χορὸν λάβῃ,
ἅπαξ προσουρήσαντα τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ.
γόνιμον δὲ ποιητὴν ἂν οὐχ εὕροις ἔτι
ζητῶν ἄν, ὅστις ῥῆμα γενναῖον λάκοι.
HP. πῶς γόνιμον;
ΔΙ. ὡδὶ γόνιμον, ὅστις φθέγξεταί
τοιουτονί τι παρακεκινδυνευμένον,
αἰθέρα Διὸς δωμάτιον, ἢ χρόνου πόδα,
ἢ φρένα μὲν οὐκ ἐθέλουσαν ὀμόσαι καθ' ἱερῶν,
γλῶτταν δ' ἐπιορκήσασαν ἰδίᾳ τῇς φρενός.
HP. σὲ δὲ ταῦτ' ἀρέσκει; ΔΙ. μᾶλλα πλεῖν ἢ μαίνομαι.
HP. ἦ μὴν κόβαλά γ' ἐστίν, ὡς καὶ σοὶ δοκεῖ.
ΔΙ. μὴ τὸν ἐμὸν οἴκει νοῦν· ἔχεις γὰρ οἰκίαν.
HP. καὶ μὴν ἀτεχνῶς γε παμπόνηρα φαίνεται.
ΔΙ. δεικνεῖν με δίδασκε.

The later notices of tragedy are not clear enough for any short survey. I must refer the reader to the careful discussion in Welcker's third volume, and the long summary in Bernhardy. The school of Isocrates produced one man, Theodectes, rather a rhetorician than a tragic poet, who was honoured with the friendship of Alexander and Aristotle. Then follows the head of the *ἀναγνωστικοί*, Chæremon, who wrote for a reading public, and altogether in that rhetorical style which infected all later tragedy in Greece, in Rome, and in the French renaissance. The Alexandrian tragedians, the best seven of whom were called the Pleias, and who were thought in their day very wonderful people, do not concern us in a survey of Greek classical literature.

We have now, after thirty years, a new and excellent edition of all the *Fragg. Tragicorum Græcorum* by the veteran critic Nauck (Teubner, 1890).

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ORIGIN OF COMEDY—THE DORIC SCHOOL, EPICHARMUS, SOPHRON—THEOCRITUS AND HIS SCHOOL.

§ 233. 'COMEDY did not attract attention from the beginning, because it was not a serious pursuit. Thus the archon did not assign a chorus to the comic poets till late, for they were (at first) volunteers (ἐθελονται, apparently a technical term). But it was not until it had attained some fixity of form that its poets are recorded as such. It is forgotten who fixed its characters (masks) or style, or number of actors, or such other details.' This is the statement in Aristotle's *Poetic*, from which all historians of ancient comedy now start. While tragedy, being distinctly associated with religion, soon came under state protection, comedy, which was indeed a part of the Dionysiac feast, but a mere relaxation of revelry, was allowed to take care of itself, and to develop as best it could. But in most cases it was found that the political and social license of democracy was favourable to its claims, and its political capabilities raised it to great glory in the old Attic school of Aristophanes. This side of comedy gave rise to part of the claim justly made by the Dorians, that they had originated both tragedy and comedy —a claim the more reasonable, as it is clear that the Dorians were the originators, and the Ionians the perfecters, of many forms of literature. 'Wherefore (says Aristotle) the Dorians lay claim to both tragedy and comedy, to comedy the people of Megara, both those of this (Nisæan) Megara because of their democracy, and those of Sicily (on account of Epicharmus). And they cite the terms used as evidence. For the outlying villages which the Athenians call δῆμοι they call κώμαι, as comedians were so called not from joining in the κῶμος

(procession of revellers), but on account of their wandering through the villages, because they were held in no repute in the city.' This derivation of κωμῳδία is probably the right one, and does not conflict with the term τρυγῳδία, the song of the lees, or of the vintage feast, at which time such diversions have been common with all southern nations. Another passage in the *Poetic* which speaks of comedy being originally impromptu, and being derived from the phallic processions, still common in most Greek towns, is not so accurate, and only means that these phallic processions were carried on both at the season, and in the frame of mind which suited the old rude comedy. The phallic feasts of the Egyptians, described by Herodotus,[1] show this combination of the worship of nature, and of satirical and comic personalities. But there is no evidence that these processions, even when they gave rise to special hymns, of which we have traces, ever advanced to any dramatic form. Of course this account of the origin of comedy, which is evidently historical, disposes of the remark in the *Poetic*, that what is called Homer's *Margites* was the first model of comedy, as the Iliad was of tragedy. This poem was probably the earliest attempt at drawing a genuine character from a ridiculous point of view; but I am not sure that the Thersites of the Iliad could not have served the purpose just as well.

It results from the obscure origin of comedy among village people, that it should develop itself variously, according as the same seed fell upon various ground, both as to circumstances and as to the special genius of the men who raised it into literature. But there is one great division which we may separate at once, and relegate to after discussion—I mean the Attic comedy, which, though apparently imported from Megara, and long dormant, in due time developed into a great and fruitful branch of Greek poetry, with a definite progress and a well-determined history. The other branch, to which we now turn, is rightly called the Doric, because we find it among no other Greeks than Dorians, and almost everywhere among them, but differing so widely in form, tone and temper, accord-

[1] ii. 58.

ing to its age and home, that there is perhaps no name of wider and more various acceptation. But, in the first instance, the reader should be warned against taking the Spartans of history as representatives of the Dorian type. Whatever they may have been before the Ephors reduced them to a camp of ignorant and narrow-minded soldiers, under what is called the Lycurgean discipline — this much is certain, that all other Dorians—Megarians, Argives, Italiots, Sikeliots, Rhodians—differed widely from the Spartan type. We might as well take the Roman type as representative of those lively volatile Italic people, out of which they rose by a peculiar history, and peculiar social and political conditions.

§ 234. (*a*) The Spartans had a sort of comedy, in which players, who were called δεικηλικταί, acted in pantomime certain comic parts, apparently of both special adventures (such as those of a thief) and of characters (such as that of a foreign physician). Δείκηλον is said to be synonymous with μίμημα. Apparently those who represented women were called βρυαλλικταί. These actors were, as might be expected, held in contempt by the Spartans, and were always either perioeci or helots. Thus a reply of Agesilaus, given by Plutarch, expresses the contempt which grave persons of the Periclean type would feel for a 'play-actor.' (*b*) The efforts of the Megarians are more important,[1] though hardly less obscure, inasmuch as through Susarion they led the way to Attic, and through their Sicilian colony to the highest Sicilian, comedy. The violent political conflicts in which the citizens were engaged seem to have excited their natural taste for lampoon and libel, and in the democratic period which followed the expulsion of Theagenes (about 600 B.C.) they developed a rude and abusive comedy, which is only known to us through the contemptuous allusions of the old Attic comedians. It was probably never written down, so that only stray verses survived.[2] *Susarion* wandered into Attica

[1] The phallic pomps celebrated at Sikyon and the neighbouring Doric towns of Achaia can hardly be identified with even the widest acceptation of Doric comedy.

[2] Strangely enough, the extravagance of their stage appliances (purple

about Ol. 50, and was said to have performed in Attic villages. The lines against women cited as his are not genuine. *Tolynus* is called the inventor of the metrical forms, but is probably, as Meineke has suggested,[1] confused with the celebrated Tellen, an early flute-player, whose epitaph in the Anthology says he was πρῶτον γνόντα γελοιομελεῖν. Of *Myllus* we know only the proverb 'Myllus hears everything,' which seems as if he had represented the daily failings of his townsmen upon the stage. *Mæson* was the most celebrated, but was perhaps a Sicilian Megarian, and was popular at the court of the Peisistratidæ. Character masks were called *Mæsons*, and on one of the Hermæ at Athens was inscribed his saying, ἀντ' εὐεργεσίης Ἀγαμέμνονα δῆσαν Ἀχαιοί.

§ 235. (*c*) We pass to the more important Sicilian branch of Doric comedy. The earliest of whom we hear anything is *Aristoxenus* of Selinus, placed by Eusebius about Ol. 29, who is spoken of as 'the originator of those who recited iambics according to the ancient fashion.'[2] The word ἰαμβίζειν was early used (like γεφυρίζειν) for lampooning, and we may be certain that among the rich and prosperous Sicilians there was ample time and occasion to encourage this sort of amusement. Cicero and Quintilian speak of the Sicilians as particularly quick and lively people, always ready with a witty answer even in untoward circumstances, much as the Irish would be described by an English stranger now-a-days. But I think the Germans are wrong in inferring that this Roman description applies to the Sicilians as compared with other Greeks, and not merely to the contrast Cicero felt to the stupid Roman boors, who, like the English rustic, combined political sense with social ignorance and dullness. But the Sicilian smartness at repartee, and their love of gossip and amusement, arose not merely from the lively Greek temperament, but from this combined with material wealth and political education.

hangings) is cited by Aristotle (*Nic. Eth.* iv. 2, § 20) as an example of wastefulness. But this was in the fourth century B.C.

[1] *Hist. Com.* p. 38.

[2] Hephæstion adds a specimen of his anapæsts, which has been already quoted above (§ 117).

The splendour of the Syracusan court under Gelon and Hieron developed, among other literary forms, that of a distinct and real comedy, in which three masters distinguished themselves —all in the earlier part of the fifth century B.C. These were Epicharmus, Phormos and Deinolochos. Concerning the preparations for this comedy, the obscure forerunners of these men, and concerning the details of their performances, we are totally in the dark.

Of the latter two we only know that *Phormos* (perhaps a local form for Phormis [1]) was contemporary with Epicharmus, and came from the district of Mænalon in Arcadia; that he was intimate in Gelon's palace and the instructor of his children; that he was, moreover, so renowned in war under Gelon and Hieron as to justify his dedicating certain offerings at Olympia, which Pausanias describes; and that he was the author of six comedies on mythological subjects—*Admetus*, *Alkinoos*, the *Fall of Ilion*, *Perseus*, &c., of which not a single fragment has survived. He also improved the stage dresses and hangings.

Deinolochos, who is placed in the seventy-third Ol. and called a pupil or rival of Epicharmus, composed fourteen dramas in the Doric dialect, which are only cited about a dozen times by grammarians for peculiar forms. The titles known are the *Amazons*, *Telephus*, *Medea*, *Althea*, and the *Comic Tragedy*. So far as we can see, these two men developed that peculiar form of comedy for which Epicharmus also was famous, that of the travesty of gods and heroes. This mythological farce of the Sicilians is thought by the Germans to have differed from the satyrical dramas of the Attic tragedians in that the gods and heroes were here themselves ridiculed, whereas in our extant satyrical drama, the *Cyclops*, the hero Odysseus retains his dignity, but is brought into the society of Silenus and his lazy and wanton followers. It seems to me, however, that there is evi-

[1] This is Lobeck's notion. But the curious variation in the name and the single mention of Phormis, the general or warrior, by Pausanias, have led Lorenz, I think justly, to doubt the identity of the warrior with the comedian, and assume the latter to have been Phormos. Cf. his *Epicharmos*, p. 85, note.

dence of a close relation between the two branches, as will presently appear.

§ 236. EPICHARMUS was a much greater man, and accordingly somewhat more of his work and influence has survived. On his life we have only a short and dry article by Diogenes Laertius, who classes him among the philosophers, without mentioning his comedies, and a jumbled notice in Suidas, which seems altogether untrustworthy when it contradicts the statements of Diogenes. According to this latter, Epicharmus was the son of Elithales of Kos, and came, when three months old, with his father to the Sicilian Megara. If he was a follower of Pythagoras during his life, he must have visited Magna Græcia. But he afterwards removed to Syracuse, which claims the chief honour in being the scene of his works. Diogenes' account of his writings is very curious and unsatisfactory. 'He left memoirs (*ὑπομνήματα*), in which he *φυσιολογεῖ*, *γνωμολογεῖ*, *ἰατρολογεῖ*—discusses nature, utters moral gnomes, and gives medical receipts.' This implies that the compiler had access only to a selection of notable passages from his works, and did not know his comedies. He adds that he marked them as his own by anagrams, which looks as if the writings were spurious, and we know that false Epicharmian writings were extant; also that he died aged ninety years. Yet the main substance of this notice seems to be true. The poet was born about Ol. 60, and must have visited Magna Græcia before the break-up of the Pythagoreans in Ol. 68. Whether he really entered the Pythagorean order we do not know. On his return to Sicilian Megara, he set himself to giving a more literary form to the rude farces which already existed among the Megarians. About Ol. 73 he appears of great fame at the court of Gelon, and more especially of Hieron in Syracuse, where he met the greatest literary men of the day, and died at a great age.

§ 237. The notice that he added letters to the alphabet arises either from some later letters being first adopted in his works, or from his intimacy with Simonides at Syracuse. It is not impossible, as Simonides did adopt some additions, that he persuaded Epicharmus to spread their use in copies of his very

popular plays. There are two or three anecdotes preserved of his intercourse with Hieron. The best epigram upon him is not that quoted by Diogenes, but one remaining to us among the poems of Theocritus, which seems genuine. We must imagine the court of Hieron, notwithstanding his occasional cruelty and suspicion, as the most brilliant and cultivated centre in the Hellenic world. It is likely that Epicharmus here met not only Simonides, but also Bacchylides, Pindar, and Æschylus.[1] We must add to this list an acquaintance with Theognis, who resided at the Sicilian Megara during the poet's earlier years Being thus in contact with the greatest literary men of the age, he was not less familiar with early Greek philosophy. Pythagoras we have already mentioned. There are remaining distinct allusions, perhaps polemical, to the opinions of both Xenophanes and Heracleitus. Nay more, so profound were the speculative allusions in his comedies, that they seem to have been gathered, and to have obtained great importance at an early date, so much so that his latest biographer holds him to have composed a didactic poem περὶ φύσεως, on nature. This notion is, however, in itself improbable. The obscure notices of his medical, and even veterinary, treatises rest on equally untrustworthy grounds. But his comedies were very widely known and quoted ; and in them he was said to put forth his views in dramatic form, perhaps for safety's sake, as may have been the case with Euripides. Plato knew them well, and cites them as Heraclitic in tone, and the work of the chief of comic writers.[2] The younger Dionysius wrote about them. The most important work upon him was the critical essay of Apollodorus, in ten books. Ennius compiled a poem called *Epicharmus* from his philosophical utterances, of which a few lines on physical speculations survive, which were perhaps put into the poet's mouth.[3]

[1] He is even said to have ridiculed the latter (Schol. Æsch. *Eumen.* 626) for his constant use of the word τιμαλφούμενος.

[2] *Theæt.* 152 D.

[3] The statement of Horace, (Dicitur) Plautus ad exemplar Siculi properare Epicharmi (*Epp.* ii. 1, 58), has given rise to great discussion. He mentions this as only the theory of the critics who liked old Latin poetry, and compared it with great Greek models. But 'properare' is a curious word, and seems only to apply to the easy flow of the dialogue. There

§ 238. We have still the names and some fragments of the thirty-five comedies acknowledged as genuine.[1] Our fragments do not tell us much about the plots of these plays; but it is more than probable that there was not much plot, as is the case even with the old Attic comedy, and that the whole interest lay in a clever dialogue, and the working out of single comic scenes, in which either celebrated myths were travestied, or philosophical notions aired and parodied. There is also reason to think that rhetorical subtleties, such as antitheses, and other devices which led to the system of Korax and Tisias, were also ridiculed, and that accordingly the first beginnings of Greek eloquence are here to be detected.[2] Lorenz, in his monograph, compares with a good deal of point the simpler pieces of Molière, such as the *Mariage forcé*. The love of eating and drinking, so prominent in Sicily, suggested to him his travesty called the *Marriage of Hebe* (with Heracles), in which the feast seems to have occupied most of the play, and in which the gluttony of the gods was portrayed.[3] On account of the numerous dishes cited, we have it quoted, some forty times, by Athenæus, in its two editions. Athenæus has also preserved to

is no evidence of any plot of Plautus being borrowed from Epicharmus. The prologue of the *Menæchmi* only asserts Sicilian scenery and manners in the play, and is, moreover, probably spurious. The Romans copied the new Attic comedy in these plays, their Atellanæ or farces were taken from Italic or Sikelic sources.

[1] They may be divided into three classes—mythological travesties, such as the Ἄμυκος, Βούσιρις, Ἅβας γάμος, brought out afterwards in a new edition as Μοῦσαι, Ὀδυσσεὺς αὐτόμολος, Ὀδυσσεὺς ναυαγός, &c.; character plays, such as Ἐλπίς ἢ πλοῦτος, Θεαροί, Ἐπινίκιος; and lastly, dialectical plays, based on the love of dispute and argument among Sicilians, which seems to have been quite as remarkable as it was at Athens. This class is represented by his Γᾶ καὶ θάλασσα, the contest of sea and land (as to advantage), and the Λόγος καὶ λογίνα. [2] Cf. Blass, *Att. Ber.* i. p. 17.

[3] A fragment of ten lines from the Ὀδυσσ. αὐτ. has been restored by Gomperz from the Rainer papyri; cf. *Revue des Et. grecques*, ii. p. 210. I have found another in the Petrie papyri, which I here append, as it is as yet unpublished. It is headed Επιχαρμον.

] τίς δυστυχῶν βίον τ' ἔχων
] τε κἀγαθὸν ψυχᾷ διδῳ,
] τι φάσω μακάριον
Μον· χρησοντων καλῶν . . .

us his picture of the *parasite*, a character first invented for the stage by him, from the 'Ελπίς, a character comedy.[1] A great many of the other fragments are likewise upon dishes and eating.

By far the most important philosophical passages remaining to us are, however, preserved from another curious and accidental source. Diogenes, who says nothing of Epicharmus' comedies in his short official notice of the poet, quotes in his life of Plato a Sicilian rhetor, Alkimos, who wrote a book to show that all Plato's doctrines were borrowed from Epicharmus. In support of this theory, which owes its existence to the Pythagorean and Eleatic elements in Plato's teaching, which the Sicilian poet brought on his stage, several dialectical, metaphysical, and rhetorical arguments are quoted.[2] The discussion of their deeper import, however, belongs rather to the history of philosophy than of literature. The narrative form, which seems predominant in his plays, has misled Lorenz and others to ascribe these passages to a poem *περὶ φύσεως*.

§ 239. As there never was but one Greek theatre at Syracuse —that of which the magnificent remains still strike the traveller of to-day—we must conceive these comedies performed in it, probably with a chorus like that of modern plays, and not a

[1] Συνδειπνέω τῷ λῶντι, καλέσαι δεῖ μόνον,
καὶ τῷ γα μηδὲ λῶντι κωὐδὲν δεῖ καλεῖν.
τηνεῖ δὲ χαρίεις τ' εἰμὶ καὶ ποιέω πολύν
γέλωτα καὶ τὸν ἱστιῶντ' ἐπαινέω.
καἄ κά τις ἀντίον τι λῇ τήνῳ λέγειν,
τήνῳ κυδάζομαι τε καπ' ἂν ἠχθόμαν.
κἤπειτα πολλὰ καταφαγών, πόλλ' ἐμπιών,
ἄπειμι. λύχνον δ' οὐχ ὁ παῖς μοι συμφέρει·
ἔρπω δ' ὀλισθράζων τε καὶ κατὰ σκότος
ἐρῆμος· ὅκκα δ' ἐντύχω τοῖς περιπόλοις,
τοῦθ' οἷον ἀγαθὸν ἐπιλέγω τοῖς θεοῖς, ὅτι
οὐ λῶντι πλεῖον ἀλλὰ μαστιγῶν τί με.
ἐπεὶ δέ χ' εἴκω οἰκάδις καταφθαρείς,
ἄστρωτος εὕδω καὶ τὰ μὲν πρῶτ' οὐ κοῶ,
ἂς κά μ' ἄκρατος οἶνος ἀμφέπῃ φρενάς.

[2] Diog. L. iii. 12, 9. sq.

constant element as in tragedy. The dialect of the fragments is a refined and literary Doric;[1] the metres, of which the trochaic tetrameter was called the Epicharmian metre from his frequent use of it, are simple and correct. We still have anapæsts and iambics combined with the trochees. There were many lines so celebrated as to be quoted all through Greek literature.[2]

If we consider the great celebrity of Epicharmus' plays which were brought out at the most brilliant centre of Greek literature, at the town which took up the literary splendour ruined at Miletus, and only dawning at Athens, we need not be surprised that he exercised a strong influence on the Attic drama. But this is not felt in Attic comedy so much as in the Attic satyric drama, where the titles of the plays constantly suggest Epicharmian models, and even in the later tragedy, where we find many heroes endowed with low qualities, and perpetually appearing on the stage in a sorry garb and still sorrier character. Thus the serio-comic features in the Heracles of Euripides' *Alcestis*, and especially his voracity; the meanness of Menelaus, and knavery of Odysseus in many other plays, appear to me to have been suggested by the great popularity of the travesties of the Sicilian comedian. It is not impossible that the introduction of philosophy upon the stage may also have been borrowed from him by Euripides, who seems to me to have more points of contact with Epicharmus than have yet been observed.[3]

§ 240. We pass to the Syracusan SOPHRON, son of Agathocles and Damnasyllis, who lived about the middle of the

[1] Yet both Epicharmus and Sophron are cited by the scholiasts as writing in the old and harsh Doric dialect, in contrast to Theocritus, who writes the softer and more elegant new Doric.

[2] As, for example:

Νόος ὁρῇ καὶ νόος ἀκούει · τἄλλα κωφὰ καὶ τυφλά,

and

Νᾶφε καὶ μέμναο' ἀπιστεῖν · ἄρθρα ταῦτα τᾶν φρενῶν.

[3] The best monographs on Epicharmus are by Grysar (*de Dor. Comœd.* sub fin.), Welcker (*Kl. Schrift.* i.), Bernhardy (in *Ersch und Gruber's Encyclop.*), Holm, *Gesch. Sic.* i. 231, sq., and lastly, A. O. F. Lorenz's *Epicharmos*, which has a complete collection of the fragments in the appendix.

fifth century B.C., and composed *Mimes*, or mimic dialogues, probably in rythmical prose, both with male and female characters. His son *Xenarchus* followed his example in the time of the elder Dionysius, who employed him to lampoon the people of Rhegium. The dialect was a somewhat broader and more vernacular Doric than Epicharmus', but the dramatic force and truth of Sophron's writing made him justly celebrated. Not only did Plato study him carefully in order to give life to his dialogues, but two of the best of Theocritus' poems, the second and fifteenth idylls, are stated to have been directly copied from the Ἀκέστριαι and Ἰσθμιάζουσαι—the former clumsily (ἀπειροκαλῶς) copied, says the scholiast, in spite of its acknowledged excellence.[1] Botzon argues that the title of the Isthmian mime was Ταὶ θάμεναι τὰ Ἴσθμια, and, what is more important, points out that, to judge from Theocritus' imitation, it was probably an account of the ceremonies of the Lament for Melicertes, which were closely analogous to the Adonis cult and were a more natural scene for women's conversation than the Isthmian games, to which married women were not admitted. As to the *Akestriæ*, he prefers to translate it *the Stitchers*, and imagines it to have been a dialogue among girls, corresponding to the French grisettes, in which their love affairs were discussed. From Theocritus' imitation, I think this view wrong, and that it means the *Curing Women*, those old half quacks half witches, who are common in every superstitious society. But the scantiness of our fragments leaves room for nothing but conjectures.

As to the controversy whether the mimes were in prose or in verse, I fancy them like Walt Whitman's so-called poems,[2] which, if they survive, may yet give rise to a similar discussion. The mimes of Sophron were evidently very coarse also—another parallel—and were full of proverbs, and full of humour, often using *patois*, which is very rare in Greek literature. But Sophron's neglect of form did not imply a revolu-

[1] In his careful program (Lyck, 1856).

[2] Botzon quotes a scholiast on a Hymn of Gregory Naz., which was imitated, as to style, from Sophron: *οὗτος γὰρ μόνος τῶν ποιητῶν ὑθμοῖς τισι καὶ κώλοις ἐχρήσατο ποιητικῆς ἀναλογίας καταφρονήσας.*

tionary creed, it was rather a carefully concealed submission to the laws of art. We have no hint whatever as to the performance of these mimes, but their early date and style seem foreign to a reading public, and we may imagine them brought out in private society after the manner of the Syracusan juggler's performance at the end of Xenophon's *Symposium*, where the marriage of Dionysus and Ariadne was pantomimed in a very suggestive way. Plutarch's mention of an attempt at Rome to perform Plato's dialogues dramatically seems to point in the same direction. We hear that the Latin satirist Persius also copied Sophron, apparently with little success in elegance or dramatic power. There can, however, be no doubt of the remarkable genius of the man, who was only in part a successor to Epicharmus—in his proverbial features, and in the portraiture of ordinary life. But Epicharmus' philosophic earnestness found no Syracusan successor.

The extant titles of these mimes suggest the life and pursuits of the lower classes; viz. The Tunny Fishes, the Νυμφοπόνος or Bride-dresser, παιδικὰ ποιφύξεις, Ὠλιεὺς τὰν ἀγροιώταν, the Fisher and the Husbandman (in what relation the loss of the verb leaves us in doubt); The Women who say they draw down the Goddess (moon?). Also a *Prometheus* and a *Nuntius* are named. The few remaining fragments are collected by Bloomfield, *Classical Journal*, vol. iv., and by Botzon in a Program (separately printed as a tract, Marienburg, 1867).[1]

§ 241. The comedy of the Italiots, which found its chief seat in the luxurious and laughter-loving Tarentum, does not come within the range of classical Greek literature: its chief representative, Rhinthon, belongs to the Ptolemaïc age, and his work only survives in the imitation of his *Amphitryo*, a comic tragedy, or parody of tragedy, by Plautus. The whole subject of the varied comic performances, which were of old popular in Magna Græcia, and gave rise to various subdivisions, *Hilarodia*,

[1] Botzon's collection comprises some 150 words and phrases, almost all cited for their dialect by Athenæus, or by grammarians and lexicographers. They give us no idea of Sophron's literary skill, but show his local colour, and his strongly proverbial tone.

a parody of tragedy, *Magodia*, a parody of comedy, *Autalogia* and *Kinadologia*, moralising and indecent satires, *Phlyakographia*, *Hilarotragœdia*, and the rest, together with lists of names of authors and pieces—all these belong to the curiosities of Greek literature, and still more to the prolegomena of Roman comedy and satire, and have accordingly been fully handled by O. Jahn in the introduction to his Persius. It is said that many painted vases of Magna Græcia represent scenes from their various farces. This whole class of indecent, scurrilous, or merely amusing comic performances naturally came into favour at the courts of Alexander and his successors, also among the later tyrants, whose intellectual calibre may be estimated by their recreations. The gastronomical turn of this and other Greek comedy was developed by Hegemon of Thasos, who was popular at Athens by his parody of epical grandeur well delivered on this homely subject. This line was adopted by Archestratus of Gela, whose ἡδυπάθεια Ennius translated. Crates and Matron are mentioned later. But the most remarkable and serious of all the parodists seems to have been Timon of Phlius, a serious and bitter sceptic of the school of Pyrrho, who lived about 280 B.C. Of his various works the most celebrated were the Σίλλοι, in three books, one narrative, the rest in dialogue, in which he introduced Xenophanes, and ridiculed the dogmatists in epic fashion. This man's fragments are given by Mullach (*FPG.* i. 82), and discussed in a Latin monograph by Curt Wachsmuth. The indecencies of Sotades, and other later parodists, were in the Ionic dialect, and therefore do not come under the head of Doric comedy; they are, in any case, not worth discussing.

§ 242. But from another side, the mimic poetry of the Sicilians made a great mark in Greek literature. There can be no doubt that the *bucolic* vein was early and strongly developed among Sicilian shepherds. The use of the shepherd's pipe and of responsive song was early developed in the country, and from the oldest time in some peculiar relation to the shepherd life in the mountains of Arcadia—worshipping the same god, Pan, honouring the same traditions, and pursuing the same habits. It even appears to me that in the great days of Gelon

and Hieron there was a considerable emigration from Arcadia to Sicily—the Alpheus flowing into Arethusa—for we know that their mercenary armies were recruited from Arcadia, and doubtless the veterans were better rewarded with upland pastures in rich Sicily than by returning to their harsh and wintry home. But the Arcadian music found itself already at home in a country where the legends of the shepherd Daphnis were older than Stesichorus, and had been raised by him into classical literature. According to various authorities, Daphnis was the son of Hermes and a nymph, and brought up in a grove of laurels. Being an accomplished singer, and taught by Pan to play on the pipe, he became the companion of Artemis in her hunting, and delighted her with his music. His tragic end, which is connected with his love for a nymph, and his faithlessness, was variously told, and these versions were the favourite subject of pastoral lays, which were attached to the worship of Artemis throughout Sicily, and celebrated in musical contests at her feasts in Syracuse, where shepherds, called *βουκολιασταί*, sang alternately in what was called Priapean verse, of which the scholiasts have preserved a specimen.[1] Other shepherds, such as the Komatas and Menalkas of Theocritus, and the Diomus of Epicharmus, were also similarly celebrated. Indeed, there are slight but distinct traces that the pastoral element was not absent from the comedies of Epi-

[1] *Δέξαι τὰν ἀγαθὰν τύχαν*
Δέξαι τὰν ὑγίειαν
Ἄν φέρομεν παρὰ τᾶς θεοῦ
Ἄν ἐκαλέσσατο τήνα.

There are the most interesting modern parallels in Sicily quoted in Holm's chapter (*Geschichte Sicilien's*, vol. ii. pp. 306–7) on this subject. Contests in improvisation, carried on in question and answer, or in statement and counter statement, preserving the metre, are still common in Sicily, where the competitors are obliged to lay aside their knives when they commence, so great is their excitement. Both the satiric and the erotic tone in the old bucolics survives, as we might expect; but it is indeed surprising to learn that the religious side—of old the worship of Artemis, and the laments for Daphnis, her favourite—is still there, and trustworthy observers were present in churches during the Feasts of St. John Baptist, the *inventio crucis* (May 3), and of other saints, when the day was spent in alternate improvising on the lives of the saints and on the sufferings of our Lord.

charmus.[1] The satyric drama of Athens, as we know from the only extant specimen, the *Cyclops*, was very pastoral in its scenes, and there is nothing more *Theocritean*, as people would say, than the first chorus of satyrs in that play. What is even more important, the comic poet Eupolis, who may have borrowed more than is suspected from Epicharmus, brought out an Αἶγες, of which the scanty fragments indicate the same pastoral tone. We may be certain that Sophron did not omit this side of common life in his Mimes, though it can hardly have been prominent, as the scholiasts do not cite examples in the arguments to Theocritus' poems.[2]

§ 243. But it seems to me highly improbable that THEOCRITUS, a poet of so strictly imitative an age, and of so very imitative a genius, should have developed a remarkable originality in this single direction, and I therefore do not hesitate to class him as an imitator of the Sicilian mimic poetry. Two direct imitations of Sophron (not strictly bucolic poems) have just been noticed, and I have already spoken of Theocritus' epic and lyric efforts in connection with the Homeric Hymns, the later epics, and the poems of Alcæus and Sappho.

But his real fame rests upon his pastoral poems, in which he introduced shepherds, herdsmen, and fishermen in familiar discourse, and in the dialect of Sicily, but refined by the highest literary skill. These bucolic poems have throughout a mimic or *dramatic* character, as the scholiasts observe; the poet's person is concealed under those of his speakers, or he is himself (as in the 7th Id.) merely one speaker among several. They have also a common feature in the *pastoral* scenery in which they are laid. It is well known that earlier Greek poetry was a poetry of cities and of men, and very seldom approached what we call the picturesque. In the rare exceptions

[1] He was figuratively called the son of Χίμαρος and Σηκίς, and we even have a fragment in which he says ποιμενικόν τι μέλος αὐλεῖσθαι. Lorenz, fragg. B 130.

[2] Unfortunately, our scholia on Theocritus are such poor stuff, in spite of their fullness, that we cannot depend upon this argument, and Sophron may have treated many of Theocritus' subjects without being mentioned by these late authorities.

(such as the Homeric Hymn to Pan, and some of Euripides' lyrics) we find the sounds of nature more prominent than the sights, and this feature survives in all the pictures of Theocritus. But the growth of large cities on such sites as that of Alexandria, and the consequent wear and weariness of modern city life, gave a peculiar charm to the *loca pastorum deserta, atque otia dia*. Hence the growth of a literary taste for the pursuits and pleasures of the country. Thirdly, the great majority of bucolic poems have an *erotic* vein. It seems hard indeed to know what other subjects could engross the mind of Sicilian shepherds, whose day was idled away in attending on grazing herds and flocks. But a good deal of harmless banter, and some satirical touches, relieve the generally sad tone of the Sicilian muse, which loves to dwell on the misfortunes and griefs of love.

§ 244. We know but little of Theocritus' life. He is called the son of Praxagoras and Philinna, and also (owing to his apparently calling himself Simichidas) the son of Simichus, concerning whom the learned have much puzzled themselves. Whether his native land was Kos or Syracuse is uncertain. He lived much in Sicily, but was also educated by Asklepiades of Samos and Philetas, apparently at Kos, and was very intimate with the physician Nikias of Miletus, and the poet Aratus of Soli. He spent, moreover, some time at Alexandria, and at the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus, where he wrote his fourteenth, fifteenth, and seventeenth idylls, about the year 259 B.C. His poem in praise of Hieron II. seems to date earlier, when he lived in Syracuse, about 265 B.C. We may therefore consider the poet to have flourished about 270–50 B.C.; and accordingly he belonged to that learned epoch, when Alexandria led Greek literature, and when the greatest men of the day spent their lives in imitating or in criticising the older masters. Only two of the poets of that age have attained to a permanent fame. Callimachus, Philetas, and others highly prized in their day decayed with Roman culture. Apollonius Rhodius and Theocritus have survived, and are now the two Alexandrian poets of importance. But Apollonius' models were so great that his talents

are necessarily eclipsed by them; Theocritus, among the various styles he attempted, struck upon a fresh vein, which had not before attained to world-wide fame. His models being either early lost or altogether obscure, he is to us of like importance with those earlier masters, who enriched the worn-out ways of literature by a new form, sought in the true source of all living song—the voice of the people. Hence it is to this part of his work, his bucolic and mimic poems, that he owes all his reputation. His imitations of epic hymns and Æolic love-songs, though excellent in their way, are only, like the poem of Apollonius, the copies of greater originals.

§ 245. It is, I think, the most reasonable among the many conflicting views as to the date of the various poems, to assume that the epic attempts of Theocritus were his earliest, and were written before he had found out the true bent of his genius. The brilliant Alexandrian school of literature was only in its infancy; many poets were each contributing what they could to give a new impulse to Greek literature; and there can be no doubt that the tendency of the day was towards reviving the epic form. But epic poetry and epic hymns without faith in the myths of the heroic age were not likely to prosper. Thus in the elegant Hymn to the Dioscuri which Theocritus has left us, the concluding adventure describes the Twins as engaged in a most unjust dispute, and slaying Lynceus, who represents the cause of fairness and honesty. Not even Pindar would have done this, not to say the tragic poets, who had trained the Greek public to a moral handling of the old legends. But all such deeper views were foreign to Theocritus. He found the facts of the myth before him, and he tells them with the simplicity not of faith, but of moral indifference. After attempting another epic piece on Heracles and the Nemean lion in Ionic dialect, he adopted the Doric style more natural to him, in which he composed the *Infant Heracles*, and the short fragment on Pentheus, which properly belongs to a hymn to Dionysus, and is modelled on Euripides' *Bacchæ*. The 13th Idyll on the rape of Hylas may be connected with the same epoch of the poet's work, but shows very distinctly the erotic vein prominent all through his later life. We may regard it,

therefore, a transition to such poems as the 12th Idyll, and perhaps even to the 19th and 30th, though these latter may belong to a later and maturer time. It is fairly conjectured that while Theocritus was making these various essays in poetry, many of which, such as the Προιτίδαι, Ἐλπίδες, Ἡρωίναι, ἴαμβοι, &c., mentioned by Suidas, are now lost, he was hoping to attain the favour of Ptolemy, but the competition was too great, and he apparently returned to Syracuse, where he addressed Hieron about the year 269 in a bold petition for the favour and support he had elsewhere sought in vain. The tone of this Idyll (16), as well as of the 17th, composed a few years after, when he returned with new renown to Alexandria, is somewhat low and servile. The bidding for royal favour, which we can hardly excuse in Pindar and Simonides, is still more unpleasant in a later and more conscious age. But there is an impatient and self-asserting tone in the earlier poem which makes way for downright adulation in the later. The object of both was the same—an introduction to favour at court, but the former from an unsuccessful, the latter from an accepted suitor.

We may fairly assume that he turned his attention at Syracuse to the mimes of Sophron, and the bucolic poetry of the people, and returned to Alexandria the discoverer of a new style, which at once distinguished him from his rivals, and brought him his well-deserved rewards. His bucolic poems were composed in mature life, and probably at Alexandria, where their pastoral tone was very delightful to the inhabitants of a crowded capital situate in the midst of bleak and scorching sandhills. One of these, the 7th, may be regarded as in some sense introductory to the rest. It celebrates a pleasant day spent with friends at a harvest feast, and a bucolic contest carried on by the way. It is remarkable that, though the scene is a real scene in Kos, which can still be indentified, most of the names are fictitious shepherd names; the poet himself being called Simichidas, his friend Asklepiades Lykidas, another Sikelidas. These men, who were men of learning and culture, are presented under the guise of shepherds, living their life and attired in their garb. So completely arti-

ficial is this poem that we are tempted to believe in a club or society of poets at Kos, like the Italian Arcadia of the seventeenth century, and that bucolic poetry had already found a literary development when Theocritus in his youth sojourned at Kos. The speakers make hardly any effort to conceal their real character under the pastoral mask, and Theocritus mentions with reverence his masters Philetas and Sikelidas, though he by and bye professes to have learnt from the Muses as he fed his flocks upon the mountains.

The other bucolic poems are simpler in structure, and more dramatic in form—the poet concealing himself behind his characters. They comprise amœbean strains, or contests of shepherds before an umpire, and monologues of unhappy lovers, such as Polyphemus. The names Daphnis, Thyrsis, Komatas, &c., are used as stock names, nor are the critics at all justified in rejecting as spurious poems where the Daphnis does not agree with previous types. The metre generally used is the bucolic hexameter, which is a mere literary form of the Priapean verses already quoted, thus :—

ἁδὺ μὲν ἁ μόσχος γαρύεται, ἁδὺ δὲ χἁ βῶς
ἁδὺ δὲ χἁ σύριγξ, χὠ βούκολος, ἁδὺ δὲ κἠγών.

The cæsura after the fourth foot, and the beginning again with the same word immediately after it, show how closely Theocritus followed the popular taste. In the refrains, too, which are constant and prominent in his poems, we find a feature which, though as old as Æschylus and Euripides, was particularly frequent in the Sicilian folk songs. The poetic contest of the eighth poem is (exceptionally) in elegiacs.

§ 246. There are, properly speaking, but ten bucolic poems in the collection, in which I include the *Reaper's Dialogue* and the *Lament of Polyphemus*. These appear to have been edited by Artemidorus shortly after the poet's death, before 200 B.C., and contained the first eleven poems of our collection (omitting the second), the ninth being placed last, as is evident from a sort of postscript to that poem, appended by the editor of the collection. The very striking mimic poems (ii. and xv.), which were imitated from Sophron, and the erotic poems, were afterwards added. Finally, his youthful efforts in the epic style, and

several spurious pieces,[1] were appended to the collection as his fame became assured. The fifteenth is a scene from common life in Alexandria, which describes two women and their maids going to the laying out of Adonis, in which their dialogue is of the greatest vivacity and dramatic power. Some flattery of Ptolemy and his queen, however adroitly brought in, rather jars upon us in so excellent a mimic piece. The second, which represents a maiden preparing magic charms, and confessing to the moon the story of her love and her desertion, is a splendid painting of passion, which has attracted critics of all ages. Racine thought he had found nothing greater in Greek literature.

§ 247. These and the bucolic poems, with their homeliness, their picturesqueness, and their outspoken realism, are the masterpieces of the collection. The shepherds of Theocritus are not pure and innocent beings, living in a garden of Eden, or an imaginary Arcadia, free from sin and care. They are men of like passions as we are, gross and mean enough for ordinary life. But though artificially painted by a literary townsman, they are real shepherds, living in a real country, varying in culture and refinement—the Italiot characters are the ruder —but all speaking human sentiments without philosophy and artifice. Nay, even the strong contrast of town and country life, which must have been ever present to the poet, is never

[1] The question of the genuineness of each individual poem in our collection is exceedingly difficult, seeing that Theocritus certainly composed in various styles, and that in an artificial and learned age any great unity or harmony of thought is not to be assumed in the works of such an author. I therefore incline to the side of the conservative critics, who reject only a few of the later idylls, and some of the epigrams. But the decision in almost all cases is one of subjective fancy, and therefore in no way conclusive. Thus the *Fishermen* (xviii.) is commonly rejected because it contains a moral lesson at the end, and because love plays no part in it (cf. Fritzsche, *in loc.*), as if the brilliant 15th did not contradict such a notion. For my part, seeing that Sophron wrote a *θυννοθήρας*, and another mime concerning a fisherman and a cowherd, I accept it as one of the most certainly genuine of the collection. There is, so far as I know, no objection to the language or to the allusions. The playing of the fish, which greatly puzzles the Germans, is described with great truth, and shows the poet to have had practical knowledge of the Sicilian tunny fishing.

expressed in words, but with truly artistic feeling left to be inferred by the educated reader. There is neither allegory nor apologue intruded; the political or moral eclogue of Vergil and his school is a false imitation of these pictures, which from their simplicity, their variety, and their novelty, soon came to be designated by a special name—little pictures, or *idylls*. The term was probably unknown to Theocritus himself, and we are not accurately informed of the circumstances of its choice. But under it both erotic poems concerning beautiful youths—some of them in lyric metre—occasional poems, such as the *Spindle* and the *Epithalamium* of [1] Helen, epic pieces, and bucolic mimes, are now included. They are the latest original production in Greek poetry, though, as I have already observed, their originality may have been overrated, owing to the carelessness of older, and the ignorance of later critics. Still it were unjust, upon these problematical grounds, to deny Theocritus the noble position he deserves among the great and matchless masters of Greek poetry, though to him the Muse came last, 'as to one born out of due season.' [2]

[1] This nuptial song is peculiarly interesting, as perhaps containing the only direct allusion to Hebrew literature which is to be found in classical Greek poetry. The comparison of Helen (v. 30) to a Thessalian horse in a chariot, the mention of 4 times 60 maidens, whom she excels, and the immediately following verses, in which she is compared to the Dawn, possibly to the moon (the text is corrupt, and variously restored), and to the spring (vv. 23–8), have too striking a resemblance to the *Song of Solomon* (i. 9; vi. 8–10) to escape the myriad commentators on Theocritus. It is therefore suggested that he became acquainted with at least part of the LXX version at Alexandria. The strained and Oriental features in these comparisons are best explained by this hypothesis, which is fairly borne out by the facts, and is of great interest in literary history. If adopted, it should be made an argument against Meineke's emendation of the passage, which gets rid of the night and the moon altogether.

[2] For the benefit of younger students I here quote a characteristic passage. Idyll xi. vv. 19–29:

Ὦ λευκὰ Γαλάτεια, τί τὸν φιλέοντ' ἀποβάλλῃ;
λευκοτέρα πακτᾶς ποτιδῆν, ἁπαλωτέρα ἀρνός,
μόσχω γαυροτέρα, φιαρωτέρα ὄμφακος ὠμᾶς.
φοιτῇς δ' αὖθ' οὕτως, ὅκκα γλυκὺς ὕπνος ἔχῃ με,
οἴχῃ δ' εὐθὺς ἰοῖσα, ὅκα γλυκὺς ὕπνος ἀνῇ με.
φεύγεις δ' ὥσπερ ὄϊς πολιὸν λυκον ἀθρήσασα.

The critics in his own and the next generation paid little attention to a new master, and not even a master of epic learning, like Apollonius Rhodius. Hence we only hear of *ὑπομνήματα* by Asklepiades, Nikanor, Amaranthus, and Theon; later came Munatus and Eratosthenes. But none of them, as Bernhardy remarks, seems to have been a formal commentator, and this accounts for the poverty of our knowledge as to special allusions, and as to the models used by the poet. In Byzantine days Moschopoulos and Triclinius made the additional collation of scholia which was not edited by Calliergi in his *princeps* of the scholia (Rome, 1516), but by Warton and by Adert (Zurich, 1843). Then come the fuller editions of Gaisford (Ox. 1820, *Poetæ Minores*, &c.) and of Dübner (Paris, 1849). The best and fullest is now acknowledged to be Ahrens', in the second volume of his *Bucolici Græci* (Leipzig, 1859). They are very inferior to most of our scholia, especially to those on Apollonius, though Theocritus comes from the same age and of the same school.

§ 248. *Bibliographical.* There is a perfect host of MSS., of which the oldest and best are the Ambros. 222 at Milan, and the Vatican 912, both of the thirteenth century. The earliest edition is of the first eighteen idylls, probably at Milan, about 1481; then comes that of twenty-four idylls (with Hesiod, Theognis &c.) by Aldus (1495), of which there are corrected copies, with some faulty sheets cancelled. The first complete edition with scholia was Calliergi's. Since that time the poet (either singly, or more often with the *Bucolici Græci*) has been constantly and ably edited. I mention as the most remarkable editors Stephens (an Oxford edition in 1676), Heinsius (1604), Reiske, Warton, Gaisford, Jacobs (1824), Wüstemann (1830), Meineke (1856), an excellent critical edition; Briggs (Camb. 1821), Wordsworth (iterum ed. 1877), Ameis (Didot, 1846), Ahrens (1855–9), Ziegler (ed. iii. 1877), with an independent collation of Italian MSS., and the two editions of Fritzsche

ἠράσθην μὲν ἔγωγα τεοῦς, κόρα, ἀνίκα πρᾶτον
ἦνθες ἐμᾷ σὺν ματρί, θέλοισ' ὐακίνθινα φύλλα
ἐξ ὄρεος δρέψασθαι· ἐγὼ δ' ὀδὸν ἀγεμόνευον.
παύσασθαι δ' ἐσιδὼν τὺ καὶ ὕστερον οὐδ' ἔτι πὼ νῦν
ἐκ τήνω δύναμαι· τὶν δ' οὐ μέλει, οὐ μὰ Δί', οὐδέν.

(with German notes, Leipzig, 1857, and more full and critical, 1865–9, in two vols., with a third on MSS. scholia, &c., promised, but not yet published). For English readers there is, in addition to Bishop Wordsworth's Latin Commentary, a handy but too brief edition by Mr. Paley, and Mr. Kynaston's. Young scholars want help in the dialect, which is at first very puzzling, and for this I recommend Fritzsche's earlier edition, which has a good glossary of forms, and also excellent botanical notes on the very prominent *Flora* of the bucolics—neither of which is repeated, but only referred to, in his larger edition. This latter is, moreover, weighed down with ponderous learning, and on many hard passages revokes the reading or rendering of his former edition. Nevertheless, for the bibliography of Theocritus, and for summaries of various opinions, it is the most recent and the fullest. I specially refer to it, as monographs, or partial editions, are too numerous and special for mention here. Rumpel's *Lexicon Theocriteum* (1879) is the newest and best analysis of the vocabulary of the poet. There are French translations by Didot, German by Voss (1808), Hartung (with notes, 1858), and especially by the poet Rückert (1867). In English we have first Thos. Creech (Oxon, 1684), a rimed version in the style of that day; then Banks' prose version (Bohn, 1853).[1] In our own day J. H. Chapman (London, 1866) has produced a good and careful translation of all Theocritus, with Bion and Moschus, with many good notes on the imitations of early English poets. But this scholarly work is not equal to C. S. Calverly's (Cambridge, 1869), which is one of the best English versions of any Greek author. If Mr. Calverly had not made his book a drawing-room volume, it would doubtless have been a far closer version of the original. The *Eclogues* of Vergil, and the pastorals of Sannazaro and his school, of the German Gesner, and of the Spaniards, prove the lasting effect of Theocritus on the literature of the world, nor is there any classical poet to whom our Laureate owes so much.

§ 249. A word may be here added concerning *Bion* and *Moschus*, whose remains are preserved with the MSS. of Theocritus, and printed after his idylls in most of our editions. These

[1] Mr. A. Lang's prose version is also excellent

poets are somewhat later than Theocritus in age; Bion was born near Smyrna, but lived in Sicily, and died of poison before Moschus, whose longest poem is an exaggerated lament over his friend and perhaps master; Moschus himself is set down in Suidas as an acquaintance of Aristarchus. More we cannot determine. We find the term *βούκολος* and *βουκολιασδῆν* used by Moschus technically for poets and poetry, in a sense far removed from their original simplicity in Theocritus. The remains of both poets are, perhaps, best in their epic vein, and concerning this side I have spoken above. The *Lament on Adonis* of Bion, and the *Lament on Bion* of Moschus, are both elaborate, and with refrains in bucolic form, but artificial and exaggerated. Their erotic fragments remind one of the false anacreontic fragments, which Thos. Moore has made so familiar to us. The urchin Eros with his rosy wings, his mischievous temper, and his waywardness, is manifestly the Alexandrian, not the old Greek god. Hermann and Ziegler have critically edited the fragmentary and corrupt remains of these poets, and there have not been wanting modern imitations, such as the well-known—

> Suns that set, and moons that wane,
> Rise and are restored again;
> Stars that orient day subdues,
> Night at her return renews, &c.[1]

The history of the rise in modern literature of an ideal Arcadia—the home of piping shepherds and coy shepherdesses, where rustic simplicity and plenty satisfied the ambition of untutored hearts, and where ambition and its crimes were unknown—is a very curious one, and has, I think, been first traced in the chapter on Arcadia in my *Rambles and Studies in Greece*. Neither Theocritus nor his early imitators laid the scene of their poems in Arcadia; this imaginary frame was first adopted by Sannazaro.

[1] Here is the original:—

> Αἰαῖ ταὶ μαλάχαι μὲν ἐπὰν κατὰ κᾶπον ὄλωνται,
> ἠδὲ τὰ χλωρὰ σέλινα τὸ τ' εὐθαλὲς οὖλον ἄνηθον,
> ὕστερον αὖ ζώοντι καὶ εἰς ἔτος ἄλλο φύοντι·
> ἄμμες δ' οἱ μεγάλοι καὶ καρτεροί, οἱ σοφοὶ ἄνδρες,
> ὁππότε πρᾶτα θάνωμες, ἀνάκοοι ἐν χθονὶ κοίλᾳ
> εὕδομες εὖ μάλα μακρὸν ἀτέρμονα νήγρετον ὕπνον.

CHAPTER XX.

THE OLD ATTIC COMEDY UP TO ARISTOPHANES.

§ 250. We have now disposed of the older Doric comedy, with its later Siciliot and Italiot offshoots. It was certainly more primitive than its Attic sister ; it was also spread over a greater surface and a longer period of the Hellenic world, but perhaps for this very reason was loose and varying in form, and did not attain to any fixed type, or any splendid tradition. The very opposite was the case with Attic comedy. Starting from an equally obscure origin, it attained in democratic Athens such a strict and formal development, it answered such great political and artistic purposes, that no remnant of Greek literature has attained a more lasting and universal fame.

All the old grammarians and writers about comedy associate it directly with the Athenian democracy, which alone, they think, would tolerate its outspoken and personal character. This, indeed, is so distinctive a feature, that it comes out in the traditions of its first origin. We constantly find the story repeated that the country people in Attica, when injured by their town neighbours, used to come in at night, and sing personal lampoons at the doors of their aggressors, so as to bring the crime home to them, and excite public censure against them—that this practice was found so useful that it was formally legalised, and that the accusers disguised themselves with wine lees for fear of consequences to themselves. These accounts prove at least how indissolubly personal censure was associated with old Attic comedy. It is a further confirmation of this remark, that though Susarion was said to have introduced comedy from Megara very early, it was not tolerated under the personal government of the Pisistratidæ, and only

revived when democracy had made its outspokenness—its παρρησία—secure. Other obscure names, such as Euetes and Euexenides, are alluded to as of the same date, and altogether it seems likely that as the old Attic comedy faded out with the greatness of the Athenian democracy at the end of the fourth century, so it originated with its origin just before the Persian Wars. But until the climax under the direction of Pericles, it seems barely to have existed, and as an obscure appendage of the Dionysiac revelry. There were no written texts, no fixed plots, no artistic finish. Licentious jokes and personal jibes were its only features, so that the first great organiser (Cratinus) is said to have abandoned its ἰαμβικὴ ἰδέα, or likeness to the satire of Archilochus both in form and style, and its extant master (Aristophanes) boasts that he has risen above the vulgar obscenities of the old Megarian farce. Still both elements are manifest enough in the comedies of Aristophanes, though ennobled by political censure and social grace; so that we may fairly hold the whole type to be adequately represented in the eleven extant plays.

But the numerous fragments give us no definite idea of either plot or literary execution. This is, indeed, a most remarkable feature in the old Attic comedy. Were we reduced to judge Aristophanes from the fragments of his lost plays, we should have no notion whatever of his greatness, and for this reason critics are to be blamed, who have extolled him at the expense of his rivals, who are known to us only in this utterly inadequate way. It is nevertheless probable, from the evidence of the ancients who had all the documents complete, that he was indeed the greatest of Attic comedians. We will therefore discuss the general scope and character of old Attic comedy in connection with this typical genius, as soon as we have given a rapid sketch of his lesser known predecessors and rivals.

§ 251. We are told that at first the comedians were distinctly licensed by the law to make personal attacks—a statement repeated by Cicero [1] and Themistius, but which may have arisen from the supposition that there must be a law to permit, as well as a law to restrain, libel of individuals. For this latter law was

[1] *De Rep.* iv. 10.

certainly enacted under the Archonship of Morychides (85, 1), and lasted three years, when it was repealed. A similar restraint seems to have been imposed again in Ol. 91, 1,[1] and there can be little doubt that the oligarchs of 411 B.C. silenced political comedy, if not by law, at least by terror. It flashed up again at the close of the Peloponnesian War, as we know from Aristophanes' *Frogs*, to succumb finally to the thirty tyrants, and the impoverished and timid times which followed, when the Athenians had no wealth to adorn, or spirits to enjoy, the comic chorus—the real pith and backbone of the old political comedy. Thus the period of its greatness is confined to an ordinary human life, some sixty years, reaching from Ol. 80 to Ol. 96. Towards the close of this epoch constant attempts were made, by such men as the dithyrambist Kinesias, and the demagogue Agyrrhios, to curtail the public outlay upon comedy, and hence impair its dignity. These facts as to the history of the relation of the state to comedy are chiefly attested by the excellent scholia on Aristophanes, from which they have been gathered and illustrated with infinite learning by Meineke. We may infer the relative expenses of bringing out a tragedy and a comedy by the fact that in the year 410 B.C. a tragic chorus cost 3,000 drachmæ, whereas in 402 B.C. a comic chorus cost only 1,600. This latter was, however, in the poorest days of Athens, and after many attacks had been made on the outlay for what had become a mere idle amusement; so that these facts (quoted by Klein from Boeckh) are not so conclusive as might appear.

§ 252. Passing by Myllus, who has been already mentioned (p. 178), and who is probably not a member of the Attic branch, we come to CHIONIDES (Χιωνίδης is the form preferred by Meineke to Χιονίδης), whose date is placed too early in Suidas, and who probably composed his plays about Ol. 80. Three titles, the *Heroes*, the *Persians* or *Assyrians*, and the spurious *Beggars*

[1] This second decree (of Syracosius) is justly inferred by Droysen to have had special reference to those then charged with profanation of the mysteries, and to have restrained comic satire, as likely to prejudice the courts against them. As the old comedy always treated the events of the day, such a provision would deprive it of its main interest. Cf. Meineke, *FCG.* ii. p. 949.

(πτωχοί), are named. Aristotle speaks of him, along with Magnes, as much later than Epicharmus. We know nothing of him save a very few fragments, which tell us only the fact that he was acknowledged the earliest of the proper Attic comedians. The name of MAGNES, which comes next in the list, is more important, and he is mentioned in the celebrated parabasis of Aristophanes' *Knights*[1] as having once been very popular, but in his old age failing to please, and neglected by a once friendly public. He was therefore dead, and had died in old age, when this play was brought out, Ol. 88, 4. We may consequently place his activity about Ol. 80. He came from the Icarian deme, like Thespis, and won many victories. The nine titles of his plays which survive are suspected, and perhaps retouched or modified by other hands. We hear of a *Birds* and a *Frogs* among them, and it appears from Aristophanes' allusion that the chorus (as in Aristophanes himself) imitated the sounds of both. There is also a Γαλεομυομαχία cited as his, which seems a strange title for an Attic comedy, but not stranger than Cratinus' parody of the Odyssey.

There is hardly so much known of ECPHANTIDES, nicknamed Καπνίας by his rivals, by way of comic contrast to his real name. We hear that he had a definite chorus assigned to him, and that he attacked a certain Androcles, also attacked by Cratinus. These facts show us that his age was about that of Magnes. We hear of only one title of his plays, the *Satyrs*, a subject treated by other comic poets, but we have unfortunately no data for a comparison with the standing scenery of the properly satyric dramas, which seem so near and yet so separate from comedy.

§ 253. We now come to CRATINUS, the real originator—the Æschylus—of political comedy. This was the opinion of the sensible grammarian quoted in Meineke.[2] 'Those,' he says, 'who first in Attica devised the general idea of comedy (Susarion and his school) brought in their characters without method (ἀτάκτως), and placed no object before them but to excite laughter. But when Cratinus took it up, he first

[1] vv. 520, sq. [2] i. p. 540.

established a limit of three in the characters of comedy, thus correcting the irregularity ; and, moreover, he added a serious moral object to the mere amusement in comedy, by reviling evil doers, and chastising them with his comedy, as it were with a public scourge. Nevertheless, even he shows traces of earliness, and even slightly of want of method.' This invaluable notice is supported both by the fragments of Cratinus, and by the observations upon him in various scholia. He is called the son of Callimedes, and if he was really 'taxiarch of the tribe Œneis,'[1] must have been a man of some means. This is corroborated by his policy, which was distinctly conservative and aristocratic, and opposed to that of Pericles. As he is said to have lived ninety-seven years, and brought out his last play in Ol. 89, 1, his birth may be placed about 520 B.C. ; but there is some evidence that his genius was late in development, for we do not know that he won any victory earlier than his *Archilochi* in Ol. 82, 4 (452 B.C.), if not later. Aristophanes says[2] he died of grief at the loss of a jar of wine, when the Lacedæmodians invaded Attica. But both fact and date are invented, for we know of no invasion which will harmonize with our other information. When Aristophanes had ridiculed him in the *Knights*[3] as a broken-down old man, who had once been the popular poet, so that every society rang with songs from his plays, the aged Cratinus is said to have given a practical reply by composing his famous *Wineflask* (Πυτίνη), which gained the victory over his detractor's *Clouds*, as well as over an obscurer play of Ameipsias, the *Connos*, which took the second prize. Shortly after this he died. He composed but little, as only twenty-one plays are attributed to him, nine of which won the first prize; but the impetuous flow of his verse, and the alleged looseness of his plots towards their close, rather

[1] In an excellent note on the total absence of humour, or the appreciation of it, in many German authors, Grote (viii. 456) observes that this statement, preserved by Suidas (*sub. voc.* Ἐπειοῦ δειλότερος), is plainly a joke *à propos* of the poet's over-fondness for wine. Nevertheless he was probably a taxiarch, or the joke was tame, as Dr. Kock suggests to me.

[2] *Pax*, v. 700.

[3] v. 528.

point to idleness and over-conviviality (as he admitted in the Πυτίνη) than to slowness of production, as the cause of so scanty a record of his life's work. Furthermore, it has long since been observed that the writers of the old comedy were far less prolific than their tragic contemporaries, who doubtless wrote a trilogy of their somewhat conventional plays on well-known plots in less time than the comic poets took to elaborate their more imaginative dramas. The titles of all Cratinus' plays survive, and some 270 fragments are quoted from 17 of them, besides 180 citations of uncertain place in his works. Yet it is melancholy how little all this material, on which Meineke gives us 200 pages, tells us of his genius. The plot of only one, the Πυτίνη, is even approximately known, in which the aged poet represented himself as lawfully wedded to *Comedy*, but given to neglecting her for her rival *Inebriety*, so that Comedy brings an action for desertion against him, and discusses with his friends her sad case.

The attacks on Pericles (in the Θρᾶτται and Χείρωνες), and the praise of Kimon (in the Ἀρχίλοχοι), are very prominent, and so are scurrilous attacks on various poets and rivals, among whom he twits Aristophanes with over-subtlety and pedantry. It is also to be noticed that he at times treated of mythical subjects and of literary criticism, as in his Νέμεσις (birth of Helen), Σερίφιοι, and in his Ἀρχίλοχοι, in which Homer and Hesiod, as well as later poets, were brought in; his Ὀδυσσῆς was a travesty of the Odyssey, which is noted as not having even a parabasis or choric songs, though fr. 15 shows his chorus to have been of Ithacan sailors. Many of his fragments also paint the happiness of a long past golden age, either mythically under Cronos, or ideally in the old Attic times—a subject on which Athenæus has collected many interesting quotations.[1]

The general impression produced by the rags and tatters of this great poet is very similar to that which we form on fuller grounds of Aristophanes. There is the same terse rigour, the same unsparing virulence, the same Attic grace and purity, nor need we at all wonder that he was held worthy by the Athenians of a higher place than his great rival on more than one

[1] vi. p. 267.

occasion. But we may reserve any remarks upon the moral and political intent of his plays, until we come to discuss the deep and serious aim attributed to the old comedy by grammarians and modern critics.

§ 254. CRATES was a younger contemporary of Cratinus, and is said to have been at first his actor. He is noticed by Aristotle (in the *Poetic*) as having adopted the style of Epicharmus and Phormis, and abstained from personal satire, while confining himself to the portraiture of types. He composed between Ol. 82, 4 and 88, 4. Aristophanes notices his career in the passage from the *Knights*, already so often quoted. Fourteen titles of his plays are cited, of which only eight are thought certain by Meineke. The fragments of the Θηρία, in which the golden age was painted with animated and docile furniture instead of slaves, and without animal food (the chorus of beasts protested against it), are interesting. The stray lines quoted by Stobæus have a curiously gentle and moderate tone about them.

PHERECRATES comes next, and of his life we know nothing but that he too had been an actor, and was victorious as a comic poet in Ol. 85, 3. Of the plays ascribed to him, thirteen titles seem genuine. He also, though his extant fragments contain personal attacks on Alcibiades, Melanthius the tragic poet, and others, is said by an anonymous author on comedy to have imitated Crates in avoiding personal abuse, and to have been remarkable for the invention of new plots; in fact, to have been of the Middle Comedy, as it is called. More than 200 fragments remain, some of those quoted by Athenæus being very elegant, and showing the refined Atticism of the poet. He spoke much of social vices, of gluttony and drunkenness, and of luxury, and named more than one play after a *hetæra*. The *Cheiron*, if it be his, and other plays, contained great complaints about innovations in music, on which a remarkable fragment remains. The *Wild-men* (ἄγριοι), brought out in Ol. 89, 4, painted, according to Kock, the desire of certain Athenians to escape from their city, like the two men in the *Birds*, and settle among savage men. He also originated the idea of a play with scenes in Hades (Κραπάταλοι),

in which Æschylus appeared—an idea so splendidly appropriated in Aristophanes' *Frogs*. His Κοριαννώ (on manners of hetæræ), Κραπάταλοι, and Μεταλλῆς afford us many characteristic and humorous fragments.

TELECLEIDES and HERMIPPUS are both cited by Plutarch for their attacks on Pericles, the former (*fr. incert.* 4) complains of the absolute favour shown him by the Athenians ; the latter charges him with lust and cowardice. They painted, like all their compeers, pictures of the golden age, but chiefly from a gourmand point of view, the lines from Teleclides' *Amphictyons* being particularly good. He praises Nikias, and mentions Mnesilochus and Socrates as helping Euripides in his plays ; Hermippus alludes to Cleon, so that both poets must have lived to see the so-called ochlocracy. The iambics of Hermippus have been noticed (Part I., p. 217). Even in him there are traces of mythological plays, and in his Φορμοφόροι remarkable hexameter passages which smack of parody—one of them on the various produce of the Mediterranean coasts (fr. 1), the other on the comparative merit of various wines (fr. 2).

§ 255. There are many other contemporaries of Aristophanes, who were even at times successful against him, but who need not be here fully enumerated. *Philonides*, who undertook the performances of Aristophanes' *Daitaleis* and *Frogs*, was himself the author of a play called Κόθορνοι, the buskins, in which he lampooned Theramenes. *Ameipsias* defeated Aristophanes' *Clouds* and *Birds* with his *Connos* and *Revellers*. Nine of his comedies are named. *Archippus* was the author of an Ἰχθῦς or *Fishmarket* comedy, and of an *Amphitryo*, which Plautus may have imitated. *Phrynichus*, the son of Eunomides, is often confounded with the son of Polyphradmon, the tragic writer, also with a certain military man, and perhaps with a dancer—the name being apparently very common. This comic poet enjoyed a high reputation. Of the ten comedies attributed to him the *Revellers* contained allusions to the affair of the Hermæ, his *Monotropos* (Ol. 91, 2) was on a misanthrope, of the type of Timon ; his *Muses* stood second to Aristophanes' *Frogs* (Ol. 93, 2) and contained a celebrated eulogium on Sophocles.

I will here add *Plato*, the latest poet who seems to be truly of the old comedy, though often classed with the middle on account of his date,[1] for he flourished from Ol. 88 to Ol. 97 at least, when the political aspects of comedy had disappeared. Nevertheless no poet is more prominent in his attacks upon all the demagogues, beginning with Cleon, and writing distinct plays upon Cleophon and Hyperbolus. He is said to have attacked even Peisander and Antiphon, the leaders of the aristocratic reaction in 411 B.C., but this seems to me more than doubtful. He was, for a comic writer, rather prolific, twenty-eight plays being ascribed to him. The reader who desires to know all that can be said about them may wade through the laborious volumes of Meineke, and there are doubtless many hints concerning the politics, the literature and the social life of the period to be drawn from the scanty remnants left to us. But as literature, these scraps are only valuable in showing us the development of that pure Attic diction, which reached its perfection about this time.

§ 256. But before we proceed to discuss the general points concerning the position of comedy, as Aristophanes found it, we must expand this dry enumeration by adding yet one name, but a name of greater importance than any which we have yet mentioned in this field—I mean that of Aristophanes' fellow poet and rival, EUPOLIS. This man, the son of Sosipolis, was born at Athens Ol. 83, 3 (449 B.C.), and wrote his first play at the age of seventeen, a most unusual precociousness, of which Antiphanes and Menander are also examples. A scholiast on Aristophanes[2] says there was a law against any poet bringing out a comedy before the age of thirty, but this I suppose means that the state would not undergo the expense of a chorus for a young and untried candidate, and hence the comic poets generally brought out their early plays under other people's names, and also began as actors for elder poets. Eupolis is said to have been drowned in one

[1] The fact that some of his plays, like the *Phaon*, had the character of the middle comedy, is an argument of no value, as there is hardly a single poet of the old comedy of whom such a statement would not be true.

[2] *Nub.* 526.

of the battles in the Hellespont,[1] probably Kynossema (410 B.C.), and with the connivance or assistance of Alcibiades, who hated him for his political satire. This fact has even been expanded into a story that Alcibiades when sailing to Sicily had him drowned,[2] with a joke retorting the term (*βάπται*) under which the poet had ridiculed some profligate young aristocrats of his set. Of his life we know nothing more except some anecdotes about his faithful dog, and his faithless slave, Ephialtes, who was charged with stealing his comedies. The attempts of Platonius and others to characterise Eupolis as a poet are hopelessly vague, either from the confusion of the writers or the corruption of the texts. They compare and contrast him with Cratinus and Aristophanes, but not in accordance with either the extant fragments or any intelligible theory. That he was brilliant in his wit, and refined in his style, is plain from the fact that he co-operated with Aristophanes in his *Knights*, of which the last parabasis, beginning from v. 1290, is recorded by the scholiast to have been his composition. He afterwards may have quarrelled with Aristophanes, for they satirised one another freely. In style and in genius he stood nearest to his great rival, and his comedies seem to have possessed most, if not all, of the features which make the Aristophanic comedy so peculiar in literature. He was witty, coarse, unsparing, inventive both in diction and in scenic effects, and appears to have pursued the same relentless opposition policy against the democratic party and their aristocratic leaders.

At least fourteen of the titles ascribed to him appear to be genuine. His *Goats* had a chorus of goats, and does not seem to have been so political as his other plays. The fragments have a rustic and bucolic complexion. The *Autolycus* was a satire on a youth of great beauty and accomplishments, the favourite of the rich Callias, and also known to us from Xenophon's *Symposium*. This play came out in Ol. 89, 4, under the management of Demostratus. Callias himself and his Sophist friends were treated in the *Flatterers* (Ol. 89, 3), in which he

[1] It is said that in consequence the Athenians made a law that poets should be exempt from military service.

[2] Cf. Cicero *Ad Att.* vi. 1 in refutation of the story.

figured like the *Timon* of Shakspeare, at the opening of the play. The Βάπται ridiculed the worship of Cotytto for its ribaldry and obscenity, probably in Ol. 91, 1, before the Sicilian expedition. There is no clear evidence that Alcibiades was lampooned in this play, as is usually asserted. We must deeply regret the loss of the Δῆμοι (about Ol. 91, 4), in which Nikias and Myronides were represented as questioning the great old politicians, who had come back from the dead, and lamenting the condition of the state. Solon, Miltiades, Aristeides, Kimon, and others appeared, and so did Pericles,[1] who asked many questions concerning his son and the prospects of Athens. The youth and inexperience of the newer generals were especially censured. A parallel play was the Πόλεις, in which the personified tributary cities formed the chorus. His Μαρικᾶς (Ol. 89, 4) attacked Hyperbolus, and the play was charged by Aristophanes[2] with plagiarism from his *Knights*. The Προσπάλτιοι seems to have attacked the litigiousness of the people of that deme. In the *Taxiarchs* the celebrated admiral Phormio played a leading part, and seems to have undertaken the military training of Dionysus, who objects greatly to any hardships. In the *Golden Age* he exhibited, and may have ridiculed, pictures of a return to a primitive state of innocence and peace.[3]

[1] The description of Pericles' eloquence is happily preserved to us.

α. Κράτιστος οὗτος ἐγένετ' ἀνθρώπων λέγειν,
ὁπότε παρέλθοι δ', ὥσπερ ἀγαθοὶ δρομῆς
ἐκ δέκα ποδῶν ᾖρει λέγων τοὺς ῥήτορας.
β. Ταχὺν λέγεις μέν, πρὸς δέ γ' αὐτοῦ τῷ τάχει
πειθώ τις ἐπεκάθιζεν ἐπὶ τοῖς χείλεσιν·
οὕτως ἐκήλει, καὶ μόνος τῶν ῥητόρων
τὸ κέντρον ἐγκατέλειπε τοῖς ἀκροωμένοις

[2] *Nub.* vv. 553-5.

[3] The other titles are Ἀστράτευτοι, Νουμηνίαι, Φίλοι. I add a remarkable fragment:

Ἀλλ' ἀκούετ', ὦ θεαταί, πολλὰ καὶ ξυνίετε
ῥήματ'· εὐθὺ γὰρ πρὸς ὑμᾶς πρῶτον ἀπολογήσομαι,
ὅ τι μαθόντες τοὺς ξένους μὲν λέγετε ποιητὰς σοφούς,
ἢν δέ τις τῶν ἐνθάδ' αὐτοῦ μηδὲ ἓν χεῖρον φρονῶν,
ἐπιτιθῆται τῇ ποιήσει, πάνυ δοκεῖ κακῶς φρονεῖν,
μαίνεταί τε καὶ παραρρεῖ τῶν φρενῶν τῷ σῷ λόγῳ,
Ἀλλ' ἐμοὶ πείθεσθε πάντως μεταβαλόντες τοὺς τρόπους
μὴ φθονεῖθ', ὅταν τις ἡμῶν μουσικῇ χαίρῃ νέων.

§ 257. A few words of summary may here be useful on the general condition to which comedy had attained when Aristophanes arose. The long, or rather crowded, series of poets up to Eupolis had brought it out of the rude and extemporaneous amusement of amateurs on a holiday into the stricter form of a drama imitated in its general outline from the externals of tragedy. There was the same sort of application to the archon for a chorus, which was carefully trained, and had indeed a more arduous task than the tragic chorus. For its larger number (twenty-four) enabled the poet to use sections of it for different purposes, so that some of them took part in the play itself, while the rest remained more or less interested spectators, as in tragedy. The plots, if such they can be called, were also far looser and admitted of all manner of changes, according to the exuberance of the poet's fancy. Nevertheless the actors seem to have been limited to three (as in tragedy), and the licenses, as in all true art, were controlled by imperceptible yet strict laws. The dialect was gradually determined between the stilted grandeur of the tragic stage and the common language of Attic society, so as to become, in the hands of Aristophanes and his contemporaries, the most perfect diction in all Greek literature. For there is no Greek which can compare for vigour, for grace, and for fullness with the language of the old Attic comedy.

It will be seen in the foregoing list that the comic writers were not at all so prolific as their tragic brethren, and Antiphanes, in an extant fragment, shows us ample reasons for it. In tragedy the plots were given beforehand by the myths, and allowed a very moderate amount of originality in the poet, whose whole attention was directed to the sentiments and diction of given characters. The title and the prologue told the whole plot.

But in comedy—that is to say, in the purely old Attic comedy—everything was due to the invention of the poet.

Indeed, as we have already seen, even in the Sicilian plays of Epicharmus, mythological travesty and parody were jocular variations upon a given theme.

It is, however, a great mistake to think that the non-poli-

tical forms did not exist in the fourth century at Athens. All the notable comic playwrights composed plays in this style, so much so that I believe the origin of the Epicharmian and the Attic comedy not to have been very different, and that what is called the *Old Comedy* was really an accidental and temporary[1] outburst of political writing in the feverish climax of the Athenian democracy. As soon as these special conditions passed away or even halted for a moment, comedy returned to its older and tamer function of criticising general types in society, literary work, and crude superstitions. Thus the Middle Comedy was no new development, but a survival of the older and more general type, which came again into the foreground when no longer obscured by a brilliant innovation. The so-called Old Comedy was then really nothing but the political period of Attic comedy, which was indicated not only in the plots, which were political burlesques, but in the famous interludes (*parabases*), in which the chorus turned and came forward to address the house in the person of the poet, with personal advice, complaint, sarcasm, or solemn warning It is not unusual for one of the characters to lay aside his part, and assume the poet's voice, thus occupying the place of the parabasis. This was said to have been a fashion in Euripides' plays also, in which, for example, Melanippe was supposed to be a mouthpiece of his views. The nearest approach we have to a parabasis nowadays is the *topical song* in our pantomimes, which is always composed on current events, and has verses added from week to week, according as new points of public interest crop up.

This so-called *parabasis*, and the choral songs, are the really distinctive feature of the earlier Attic plays, and whenever one was composed without it, or on a mythological instead of a political subject, we are told by the critics that it *approaches the character of the Middle Comedy*—in reality it merely conforms to the general type. By most modern authorities the *parabasis* is held to be the original nucleus from which the Attic comedy developed. If the above remarks be well grounded, this view is incorrect, and the older, now abandoned, theory is true, that

[1] Even this is doubtful. The New Comedy often made political attacks on living statesmen ; cf. below, p. 258, and 249 on the Middle Comedy.

originally the volunteer actors assembled for the performance of some rude masque or farce, and that they gradually came to abuse this disguise for the purpose of making personal attacks with impunity. The very title *parabasis* seems to me a strong argument for this account of the matter. The analogy of tragedy has been pushed too far by modern critics. There the chorus was indeed the nucleus, and the actors, at first one, then two, then three, were added slowly and sparingly. The origin of comedy was different. Apparently any member of the twenty-four persons performing might come forward as an actor; they did so irregularly, and what Cratinus did was not to increase, but to limit the number to three, and give them the acting parts all through, reserving his chorus for the parabasis and choral odes. The separate odes require little notice here, as they were not frequent; they generally consist of hymns to the gods or hymenæal songs based upon the tragic models as to metre and diction. But the parabasis, which interrupted the course of the play with a most interesting intermezzo, was far more characteristic. In its complete form, as we find it in Aristophanes' *Birds*, it opens with an introductory κομμάτιον, then the proper *parabasis* or address to the audience by the coryphæus, generally in anapæstic tetrameters, and called ἀνάπαιστοι; and then the πνῖγος, or μακρόν, from its demands upon the voice. Then comes a short lyrical hymn (in the *Birds*, sixteen lines), followed by an appendix to the parabasis called *epirrhema*, with an antistrophe and an *antepirrhema*. But in most plays this elaborate form is not observed, and there are addresses from the actors, and scattered odes which supply its place.[1]

§ 258. There are some other facts disclosed by the notices on earlier playwrights, as well as on Aristophanes, which are of the highest interest, as showing the natural analogies between the growth of the drama in this and in other ages and nations. We hear in numerous cases that the authors began as players

[1] I note here the divisions in the *parabasis* of the *Birds*: κομμάτιον, vv. 677–84; parabasis, 685–736; melic ode, 737–52; epirrhema, 753–68; antistrophe of ode, 769–84; antepirrhema, 785–800. There are besides three short personal songs of satirical character for the chorus—viz. 1101, sq., 1470, sq., and 1553, sq. The *Wasps* has also a complete parabasis.

for older poets, and gradually advanced to independent efforts. There is a passage in Aristophanes (*Knights*, 541, sq.) which possibly points to a similar progress in his case. The parallels of Molière and of Shakspeare will at once occur to the reader. It was on the stage itself that these writers learned what suited their public, and what effects were practically attainable. So also the early Attic acting-authors, whose great object was to provide the public every year with an entertainment bearing on the events of the day, must have worked very fast, and one of them speaks of it as something extraordinary, that he had spent two years at one of his plays. We find that Aristophanes, when he started in his career, produced a play every year, and we know from the number assigned to him, and from the didascaliæ, that he must sometimes have composed even faster. It was probably owing to this pressure that we hear so often of comic poets bringing out altered editions not only of their own, but of other poets' plays—a practice common in Shakspeare's day.[1] We also hear constantly of two poets producing a play together, and this is especially attested in the case of Aristophanes' *Knights*, of which Eupolis wrote a part. This joint authorship often led to mutual recriminations, and after-charges of plagiarism, and doubtless often to disputed authorship. The latter difficulty was increased by another Elizabethan habit—that of consigning a play (doubtless for some pecuniary consideration) to another person, who applied in his own name for the chorus, discharged the duties of the performance, and was proclaimed the victor, if the play was successful. There must necessarily have been some money value for this substitution, as it was adopted not only by young and timid, but by experienced authors, who nevertheless, in the very play thus disowned, referred to their own acknowledged works in such a way as to disclose their present secret. Accordingly the nominal author must merely (I fancy) have been paid, in such cases, for the labour of training the chorus and actors. Of course in many other cases real help

[1] Cf. Prof. Dowden's excellent *Primer on Shakspere*, pp. 10–13, for a summary of points to which I am here giving the old Greek parallels.

was given privately by one poet to another, and to this we also have allusions.[1]

§ 259. It remains for us to say a word on the political and moral aspects of comedy at this epoch. The Alexandrian monarchists, followed by the mediæval and modern antidemocrats, have been loud in the praises of the Attic comedy as a censor of morals, as a scourge of political dishonesty, as in fact fulfilling an office similar to that of the public press of our day in pamphlets and leading articles. The comic poets themselves boast their serious intention amid laughter and buffoonery; they claim to be public advisers and benefactors. But their evidence is surely no better than that of a daily journal which professes to attack on purely moral grounds, and for the public good, whereas all its complaints are strictly limited to the opposite party in politics. It is very remarkable, and shows some closer bond among the comic poets than has been suspected by the moderns (in spite of its frequent assertion in the Greek tracts on these writers), that not a single comedy, so far as we know, took the radical side, and ridiculed old-fashioned ignorance, or stupid toryism. On the contrary, the whole body of the comic writers knew no higher ideal than to return to the golden age of Miltiades, if not of Saturn. They knew no higher happiness in this age than the absence of new ideas and the presence of material comforts. They revile every radical leader, especially if of low birth, and do not spare the aristocrats, like Alcibiades and Callias, who adopted either radical opinions or courted novelties in education and in philosophy. I will not say that there were not ribald jokes about Kimon, when he was long dead, or occasional praise of Pericles, in comparison with low orators of his party. But the main fact is certain ; the whole political aim of the old Attic comedy was to support conservatism against radicalism, and not even the transcendent genius and noble personality of Pericles could save him from the most ribald

[1] e.g. the parabasis of the *Knights*, where Aristophanes speaks of himself as *ἐπικουρῶν κρύβδην ἑτέροις ποιηταῖς*, cannot refer to Philonides and Callistratus, but to this sort of partial and really secret assistance given to well-known dramatists, perhaps on account of the sudden and hurried requirements of political comedy.

attacks, and the grossest libels, at the hands of these so-called guardians of morals and censors of vice. It was so with all the noblest advocates of reform in all directions—with Protagoras, with Socrates, with Euripides. They were all equally the butt of comic scorn and the victims of comic falsehoods. Probably the comic poets were persuaded of the mischievousness of these men and their ideas; but they were persuaded as party men, not as calm judges of right and wrong; and I have no doubt they were as easily persuaded of the innocence of the greatest miscreants in their own party. If these things be so, there will obviously be great caution required in using them as historical evidence. They are, in fact, never to be believed without independent corroboration.

But though their political merits have been greatly overrated, they stand pre-eminent in another, and that the original object of comedy. The volunteer chorus had originally met for the purpose of amusement, for the interchange of wit and the promotion of laughter, and in this the perfected Attic comedy seems still unapproachable. We have indeed only stray flashes from the lost poets, but it is evident from the attribution of Aristophanes' plays to Archippus, from the frequent success of other poets over him, from his anxious and jealous rivalry, that we have in him a playwright not 'primus longo intervallo,' but 'primus inter pares,' and that the lost comedies sparkled all over with gems of wit like his inimitable farces. So necessary an element was this moving of laughter, that none of them were ashamed to make use of obscenity, provided it was ridiculous, and we must suppose that this element was as much looked forward to and relished by the audience as the inuendos of the modern French drama. Literary satire and parody were only beginning to be popular, because the busy Athenian public were only now beginning to be a reading public—all their time having been hitherto spent in active politics or commerce. But the spread of books was beginning; literary discussion was made popular by the sophists, and the field of literary travesty lay open whenever politics became too serious to tolerate the satire of public men, or became too trivial to keep up the interest in such censure.

Such seems to have been the general condition of Attic comedy when Aristophanes arose.[1]

[1] The reader will find the various documents on which our knowledge of the history depends—extracts from Platonius, from various anonymous scholiasts from Tzetzes—in the appendices to vols. i. and ii. of Meineke's *Fragmenta Comicorum*, and summaries of the modern tracts on the subject in Bernhardy's and Nicolai's histories. I still quote from Meineke throughout the following chapters, but Th. Kock's newer and better collection is now complete. Here and there I have made corrections according to his excellent suggestions, and to some criticisms which he has kindly communicated to me.

CHAPTER XXI.

Aristophanes.

§ 260. The dates neither of the birth nor the death of Aristophanes are accurately known, but as he was a young man when his first play came out, we may conjecture him to have been born 450–46 B.C. He is explicitly called *τὸν δῆμον Κυδαθηναιεὺς Παιανιέως φυλῆς*, but his father, Philippus, had property in Ægina, to which the poet alludes when he speaks (in the *Acharnians*) of this island being claimed in order to secure him; and the fact that he was persecuted by Cleon on a *γραφὴ ξενίας*, for being a foreigner assuming civic rights, has thrown some doubt even on the origin of his father, who is said by some to have been a Rhodian or a Greek of Naucratis in Egypt. We know nothing of the poet's private life or education. If Plato's fancy picture in the *Symposium* could be trusted, he was a man of aristocratic breeding and culture, living in the best society at Athens. But the fact that Agathon his host, and Socrates the chief speaker on the occasion, were the constant butt of the poet's severest satire makes one doubt that this wonderful Symposium has even historical verisimilitude. We know from an allusion of Eupolis that he was bald before his time, and that he had once been a joint worker with that poet. He also speaks himself of secretly helping other poets, and of his reluctance to demand a chorus in his own name. We know that the last play he composed was the *Plutus*, in 388 B.C., and the biographers tell us he died soon after, leaving three sons, Philip, Nicostratus, and Araros, the last of whom he commended to the public by letting him bring out this play. Araros came out as an original poet about 375 B.C., but this affords no certain evidence that his father was then dead.

Our authorities on the life of Aristophanes are two Greek *Lives* —one by Thomas Magister, the other fuller one anonymous. and besides the notice by Suidas. These are supplemented by the poet's own confessions in the parabases of the *Acharnians*, *Knights*, and *Wasps*. We have the titles of forty-three plays, and thirty are said to have been read by John Chrysostom, but Suidas only knows the eleven we have now remaining. Aristophanes' life is so closely bound up with his works, that it will be necessary to enter at once upon his remains, and treat them as far as possible chronologically.

§ 261. His first play, the *Epulones* (Δαιταλῆς), came out in Ol. 88, 1 (427 B.C.), and was not only well received, but obtained lasting reputation. He seems in this play to have opened his career by a politico-social criticism, by contrasting the old simple conservative education with that of the sophist teachers, which was then becoming fashionable. In the following year appeared his *Babylonians*, in which he turned his satire against the magistracies, both those elected by ballot and by vote, as well as also against Cleon—and this at the great Dionysia, when crowds of embassies which had come with tribute from the subject cities were in the theatre. For this he was accused and prosecuted by Cleon, and he alludes to it in his next year's play, the *Acharnians*,[1] the first of those now extant, which was produced (Ol. 88, 3) at the *Lenæa*, or at the country Dionysia, where no strangers were present.

§ 262. The play attained the first prize, but was brought out under the name of Callistratus, who had been the producer of both the earlier plays. In the *Acharnians* the poet already stands before us in his full strength, his graceful and refined diction, his coarse and pungent wit, his contempt of plots, his mastery of character and of dialogue. It is a bold attempt to support the aristocratical peace party against the intrigues and intimidations of the democratic war party, who according to the poet concealed selfish ends and personal aggrandisement under the cloak of patriotism. The leading character, Dicæopolis, around whom all the scenes are grouped, is the honest country farmer, who is weary of serving in discomfort on

[1] vv. 377, 502, 630, sq.

garrison duty, and paying high for the fare afforded him without stint by his farm. He comes to the agora determined to howl down anyone who proposes any subject for debate save that of peace. The idleness and delays of the assembly, the humbug of embassies to the great king, and of strange ambassadors, are paraded on the stage, and at last Dicæopolis in disgust determines to make a private peace with the Lacedæmonians. The solemn and yet licentious celebration of peace with his family is then performed. But the chorus of Acharnians, the violent war party, whose lands have been laid waste, and who will not hear of peace, attacks him, and it is only by securing one of their coal-baskets as hostage that he escapes their rage. He then proposes to defend his cause, and the cause of his peace, with his head upon the block, and for this purpose goes to beseech Euripides to lend him a miserable and suppliant garb from some of his tragedies, wherewith to move the pity of his audience. The scene in which he appeals to the student poet, and gradually reviews all the heroes of misery in his tragedies, is one of great power, full of wit and parody, and intended as a vigorous satire of the new school rhetoric, with which the plays abound. When he has succeeded in partly persuading his judges, the malcontent section go off for Lamachus, the swashbuckler-general, who lives by wars and expeditions, and there is a good deal of hard hitting in exposing the intrigues of place-hunters and the neglect of honest citizens. Then follow the proceedings at Dicæopolis' free market, in his country-seat, whither a starving Megarian brings his daughters for sale—a scene of no little pathos, mingled with some obscenity. There comes a Bœotian with various luxuries, which Dicæopolis receives in exchange for a troublesome sycophant, who turns up to protest against any market with enemies. The play concludes with a humorous responsive dialogue between Lamachus, who laments the hardships of campaigning, and is presently led in wounded, and Dicæopolis, who celebrates the pleasures and plenty of peace, and is led in mellow with wine, and exuberant with license.

This famous piece, which is an excellent specimen of the poet's work, and even touches on the principal subjects which

occupy all his life, is in no sense a comedy with a plot, or an attempt to portray nature or society. It is rather an extravagant political farce, in which the poet gives rein to his imagination, strings together loosely connected scenes, and introduces the impossible and the imaginary wherever it suits his purpose. Nevertheless, there is always a political or social object kept in view, nor are the faults and failings of any class spared. We are not surprised that it was placed first even against the competition of Cratinus and Eupolis. The text is pure and not difficult, and the Greek scholia are particularly good. It has been specially edited, among others, by Elmsley, Mitchell, Blaydes, W. C. Green, and W. Ribbeck (Leipzig, 1864). I will speak of translations separately.

§ 263. The *Knights* (Ἱππῆς) appeared the very next year (424). We know in fact seven plays produced by the poet in seven successive years, the last four of which are extant, and each of them may fairly be called a masterpiece. But this extraordinary rate of production, which in a poorer epoch would have been well-nigh impossible, was not by any means a very rapid rate of composing for an Attic poet, who seems to have thrown off piece after piece with the same rapidity that Molière produced his immortal plays. Nor were the comic poets at all so prolific as their tragic brethren, who could produce four plays every year. Possibly the assistance of Callistratus in working up the stage representation aided the poet materially, by leaving him free for composition. The *Knights* were produced in the poet's own name, but he was assisted by Eupolis, to whom the scholiasts attribute part of the second parabasis.[1] The play is more serious and bitter than the *Acharnians*, and critical scholars think they perceive in it greater finish of style and richness of diction. Nevertheless, even the greater strictness of plot, which must be admitted, does not atone for the monotony of the dialogue in which Cleon is out-Cleoned by his rival the sausage-seller. The play personifies the Athenian demos as an easy-going, dull-witted old man, with Nikias, Demosthenes, and Cleon among his slaves, among whom the latter has attained a tyrannical ascendancy by alternately bully-

[1] vv. 1290 sq. ; cf. above, p. 208.

ing his fellows and flattering his master. By the advice of oracles, which play a great part all through the play, and which imply an earnest faith in religion among the Athenian people of that day, the former two persuade an old sausage-seller (Agoracritus) to undertake the task of supplanting Cleon. He is assisted by the chorus of Knights, who are determined enemies of Cleon, and who come in to defend their friends, and attack the demagogue, in their famous parabasis. The greater part of the remainder is occupied with the brazen attempts of both demagogues to out-bully one another, and to devise bribes and promises to gain Demos' favour. At last Agoracritus prevails and retires with Demos, whom he presently reproduces, apparently by *eccyclema*, sitting crowned, and in his right mind, heartily ashamed of his former follies. Agoracritus, who in this scene appears as changed in character as his master, advises him most sincerely concerning his politics and his duties to the subjects. The ideal of Aristophanes is the usual one of bigoted conservatives—a return to the good old days at Athens, to those of Marathon, and to the policy of Aristeides. Such dreams are hardly less foolish than those of socialists and communists as to the future of human society. The parabasis of the *Knights* is the most precious document we have on the history of the comic drama, and I therefore quote it without apology.[1]

[1] vv. 507–550:

εἰ μέν τις ἀνὴρ τῶν ἀρχαίων κωμῳδοδιδάσκαλος ἡμᾶς
ἠνάγκαζεν λέξοντας ἔπη πρὸς τὸ θέατρον παραβῆναι,
οὐκ ἂν φαύλως ἔτυχεν τούτου· νῦν δ' ἄξιός ἐσθ' ὁ ποιητὴς
ὅτι τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν μισεῖ, τολμᾷ τε λέγειν τὰ δίκαια,
καὶ γενναίως πρὸς τὸν Τυφῶ χωρεῖ καὶ τὴν ἐριώλην.
ἃ δὲ θαυμάζειν ὑμῶν φησιν πολλοὺς αὐτῷ προσιόντας,
καὶ βασανίζειν, ὡς οὐχὶ πάλαι χορὸν αἰτοίη καθ' ἑαυτόν,
ἡμᾶς ὑμῖν ἐκέλευε φράσαι περὶ τούτου. φησὶ γὰρ ἀνὴρ
οὐχ ὑπ' ἀνοίας τοῦτο πεπονθὼς διατρίβειν, ἀλλὰ νομίζων
κωμῳδοδιδασκαλίαν εἶναι χαλεπώτατον ἔργον ἁπάντων·
πολλῶν γὰρ δὴ πειρασάντων αὐτὴν ὀλίγοις χαρίσασθαι·
ὑμᾶς τε πάλαι διαγιγνώσκων ἐπετείους τὴν φύσιν ὄντας,
καὶ τοὺς προτέρους τῶν ποιητῶν ἅμα τῷ γήρᾳ προδιδόντας·
τοῦτο μὲν εἰδὼς ἅπαθε Μάγνης ἅμα ταῖς πολιαῖς κατιούσαις,
ὃς πλεῖστα χορῶν τῶν ἀντιπάλων νίκης ἔστησε τροπαῖα·

The newest special editions are by Velsen (1869); Born, with a German version; W. Ribbeck (1867); Th. Kock (in Haupt and Sauppe's series); and by Mr. Green in the Cambridge *Catena*.

§ 264. In the very next year (Ol. 89, 1, or 423 B.C.) Philonides brought out for the now famous poet his *Clouds*—an arrangement, as I have already suggested, merely intended to save him the labour of the stage practising. The play is certainly far superior to the *Knights*, yet nevertheless was defeated not only by the brilliant *Wine-flask* of old Cratinus, but by the *Connus* of Ameipsias, a little known poet. The extant play is a second edition, modified, we know not how much, from the unsuccessful original. One of the Greek arguments (No. vi.) mentions as altered the parabasis, in which the poet lectures

πάσας δ' ὑμῖν φωνὰς ἰεὶς καὶ ψάλλων καὶ πτερυγίζων
καὶ λυδίζων καὶ ψηνίζων καὶ βαπτόμενος βατραχείοις
οὐκ ἐξήρκεσεν, ἀλλὰ τελευτῶν ἐπὶ γήρως, οὐ γὰρ ἐφ' ἥβης,
ἐξεβλήθη πρεσβύτης ὤν, ὅτι τοῦ σκώπτειν ἀπελείφθη.
εἶτα Κρατίνου μεμνημένος, ὃς πολλῷ ῥεύσας ποτ' ἐπαίνῳ
διὰ τῶν ἀφελῶν πεδίων ἔρρει, καὶ τῆς στάσεως παρασύρων
ἐφόρει τὰς δρῦς καὶ τὰς πλατάνους καὶ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς προθελύμνους·
ᾄσαι δ' οὐκ ἦν ἐν ξυμποσίῳ πλὴν Δωροῖ συκοπέδιλε,
καί, τέκτονες εὐπαλάμων ὕμνων· οὕτως ἥνθησεν ἐκεῖνος.
νυνὶ δ' ὑμεῖς αὐτὸν ὁρῶντες παραληροῦντ' οὐκ ἐλεεῖτε,
ἐκπίπτουσῶν τῶν ἡλέκτρων, καὶ τοῦ τόνου οὐκ ἔτ' ἐνόντος,
τῶν θ' ἁρμονιῶν διαχασκουσῶν· ἀλλὰ γέρων ὢν περιέρρει,
ὥσπερ Κοννᾶς, στέφανον μὲν ἔχων αὖον, δίψῃ δ' ἀπολωλώς,
ὃν χρῆν διὰ τὰς προτέρας νίκας πίνειν ἐν τῷ πρυτανείῳ
καὶ μὴ ληρεῖν, ἀλλὰ θεᾶσθαι λιπαρὸν παρὰ τῷ Διονύσῳ.
οἵας δὲ Κράτης ὀργὰς ὑμῶν ἠνέσχετο καὶ στυφελιγμούς·
ὃς ἀπὸ σμικρᾶς δαπάνης ὑμᾶς ἀριστίζων ἀπέπεμπεν,
ἀπὸ κραμβοτάτου στόματος μάττων ἀστειοτάτας ἐπινοίας·
χοὗτος μέντοι μόνος ἀντήρκει, τοτὲ μὲν πίπτων, τοτὲ δ' οὐχί.
ταῦτ' ὀρρωδῶν διέτριβεν ἀεί, καὶ πρὸς τούτοισιν ἔφασκεν
ἐρέτην χρῆναι πρῶτα γενέσθαι, πρὶν πηδαλίοις ἐπιχειρεῖν,
κᾆτ' ἐντεῦθεν πρῳρατεῦσαι καὶ τοὺς ἀνέμους διαρῆσαι,
κᾆτα κυβερνᾶν αὐτὸν ἑαυτῷ. τούτων οὖν οὕνεκα πάντων,
ὅτι σωφρονικῶς κουκ ἀνοήτως ἐσπηδήσας ἐφλυάρει,
αἵρεσθ' αὐτῷ πολὺ τὸ ῥόθιον, παραπέμψατ' ἐφ' ἑνδεκα κώπαις
θόρυβον χρηστὸν ληναΐτην,
ἵν' ὁ ποιητὴς ἀπίῃ χαίρων,
κατὰ νοῦν πράξας,
φαιδρὸς λάμποντι μετώπῳ.

the audience on their want of taste in refusing him the prize, the dialogue of the two λόγοι, and the conclusion of the piece. But the work, as we have it, seems imperfectly recast, and was not again brought on the stage by the poet. If so, it is a curious evidence for the existence of a reading public apart from the theatrical audience at Athens.

The play opens with a night-scene, in which the principal actor, Strepsiades (Turn-coat), tells of his miseries, his expensive Alcmæonid wife, and his spendthrift son Pheidippides, whose very name is a compromise between country saving and city luxury. Even the slaves have become insolent in these war times, and the old gentleman cannot sleep with thinking of his debts and his son's extravagant habits. The only safety he can devise is to send his son to the Phrontistery (Thinking-shop) of Socrates, who assumes the character in this play of the vulgar sophist, and will train any young man to win his cause, however unjust, by subtle rhetoric. But when the fashionable horsy young man refuses, the old gentleman presents himself instead at the door of the Phrontistery, and finds the sage swinging in a basket aloft observing the sun and æther. A solemn disciple informs the astonished Strepsiades of various wonders in the school, and groups of pale students are seen wrapped in mysterious meditations. Socrates, who poses as a physical philosopher and a freethinker, promises to transform Strepsiades into an accomplished sophist. He calls down his new divinities, the *Clouds*, who rule the world under *Vortex* (Δῖνος, Mr. Browning's *Whirligig*), the supplanter of Zeus. The choral odes of these Clouds are extremely beautiful, and reveal a lyric power in Aristophanes which is not found in the earlier plays. But with the license of comedy they not only pass into the poet's person in the parabasis, they even at the end assume the character of the 'lying spirits' in the Old Testament, and declare that they are meant to mislead into condign punishment such as profanely disbelieve in the national faith.

Accordingly on their entrance they join Socrates in emancipating Strepsiades from the religion of his fathers. But in other respects he is found an inept and stupid pupil. The

parabasis is again of the utmost independent value, owing to its personal character, and the sketch which Aristophanes gives of his aims in writing comedy.[1] It is delivered while Socrates and his pupil are within at their lessons. When they return to the stage, Strepsiades is put through a long exercise in grammatical points, but breaks down through want of memory and quickness, and is advised by the Clouds to bring his son to the Phrontistery instead. The son objects, but is ultimately persuaded, though reluctantly, to enter the school. Here a choral ode is missing, after which follows the famous dialogue of the Just and Unjust arguments, in which the poet paints with enthusiasm the old education, and the splendour of old Attic life in purity and in beauty.[2] But the unjust advocate of the new, immoral, intellectual education wins the battle, and obtains the control of the pupil in consequence. Strepsiades at once assumes airs of great impertinence to his creditors, trusting to his son's future subtleties; but the first result is a quarrel between father and son as to an after-dinner song, when the son beats his father and threatens his mother with his newly acquired sophistry. This suddenly opens the old Turncoat's eyes; he deplores his folly, and is severely reprimanded by the now serious and orthodox Clouds for his blindness and immorality. He ends the play by taking vengeance on Socrates, and setting the Phrontistery on fire. Such is the general outline of this remarkable piece. But it is also full of minor traits of great interest, and these are the special features which make both the dialogue and the odes as interesting as anything now extant of Greek comedy.

§ 265. Some of the questions raised about the *Clouds* are not easily answered. But I think the scholiasts, as well as their modern followers, have expressed far too much surprise at its failure. We do not know how far the original piece was inferior to the extant recension, and must merely note this possibility as an element in the problem. But if we consider that Aristophanes had been declared victor for at least two preceding years, we can in the first place imagine a widespread jealousy of the new favourite, and an idea that Attic comedy

[1] Cf. especially vv. 518-62. [2] Cf. vv. 961, sq., 1000, sq., &c.

would suffer if all the first prizes were adjudged to one poet. Added to this feeling, and to the love of variety common to every public, and very prominent in the Athenians, there was this remarkable coincidence, that old Cratinus, the greatest master of his day, who had retired into private life, suddenly flashed out in his old vigour this year with the famous *Wine-flask*, a play not only of great general excellence, but full of personal confessions, and perhaps regrets, which must have keenly excited the sympathy of a somewhat capricious, but easily repentant public. It is likely that the enthusiasm excited by the Πυτίνη would have given it the victory over any play opposed to it. It is more difficult to say why the *Connus* of Ameipsias was also preferred, as we know very little of either the poet or the piece ; but one fact is very significant. Socrates and a chorus of Thinkers (φροντισταί) appeared in it, and there is a fragment extant which describes the sage as dressed in poor and ragged dress, but nevertheless above condescending to meanness and flattery.[1] If, then, Socrates was a leading character in the play, which was called after a celebrated *Citharœdus*, who was his master, Aristophanes was defeated on his own subject by Ameipsias. This makes it less likely that any injustice was done by the judges. For while granting all the formal excellence of the play, there can be no doubt that the drawing of Socrates in the *Clouds* is completely unhistorical. The caricature is, indeed, so broad that we must acquit the poet of any hostile intention, and assume that he merely chose this well-known name to hang upon it all the eccentricities and immoralities which he desired to reprehend in the new school of rhetoric and of education. Plato's *Symposium*, which introduces the philosopher and the poet as boon companions, corroborates this view. The physical speculations of Socrates were an early and unimportant part of his thinking; he was no mountebank, no swindler, no rhetorician in the sense of the other sophists. Yet all these qualities are ascribed to him in the *Clouds*. It is, indeed, true that the poet saw with deeper insight than his public that the Socratic teaching was in real substance negative and sceptical, and might easily be

[1] Meineke, ii. p. 703.

distorted into vicious word-splitting and idle chicanery. But the Athenian public, on the other hand, felt rightly that the personality of the man was honest and noble, and it is not impossible that his bravery at the battle of Delium, not a year earlier, helped to disgust them with the caricature, and reject the clever but deeply unjust caricature of Aristophanes. It is also likely that a very large part of the audience took no interest in the physical speculations of Anaxagoras and Euripides, and were somewhat bored by the prominence given to barren subtleties. To such people the ridicule of Cleon and his dishonesty would come home at once, for every Athenian was more or less a politician; accordingly the *Knights* would command far more public interest than the *Clouds* at Athens, as the *Happy Land*, which ridiculed Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet, would command it in England, far more than any unjust caricature of Mr. Darwin and his philosophy. There are many special editions and translations of this play. I may specify those of F. A. Wolf (1811), Welcker (1810), Teuffel (ed. 3, Leipzig, 1868), Bothe, and Green. The best is that of Th. Kock (2nd ed., in Haupt and Sauppe's series). It is discussed in all the histories of Greek *Sophistic*, in connection with Socrates.

§ 266. We pass to the comedy of the following year, the *Wasps* (*Hornets?*). There is some confusion in the Greek argument of the play, which states that it was brought out by Philonides, and obtained second prize, but that the first prize was obtained by the *Rehearsal* (*προάγων*), also brought out by Philonides, and also written by Aristophanes.[1] This producing

[1] Mr. Rogers, in his careful and shrewd preface to his edition, proposes to emend the corrupt scholium differently, and reads it to this effect: that the play came out in the second year of the 89th Ol., under Aristophanes' own name, and was first. The *προάγων* (which ridiculed Euripides) was brought out by Philonides, and was second, Leucon with the *Ambassadors* third. This correction seems to me more probable than the others proposed. Mr. Rogers' refutation of the usual view of the play, as a satire upon the Athenian jury system, is also perfectly sound. He shows some inconsistencies in the plot, which point to haste or change of mind in the composition. Thus the chorus on entering speak of their comrade as suddenly and unexpectedly absent, whereas the opening scene represents him as long confined and prohibited from attending the courts

of two plays by the same author in the same year seems very strange, in the face of the competition of many poets to obtain a chorus, and it is likely that the passage has been so corrupted that the real sense is lost. The play is not so brilliant as the *Clouds*, and is intended to ridicule the simplicity of the body of poorer Athenian citizens, who spent their life sitting in judgment upon all the affairs of the empire, and receiving their three obols daily by way of support. They imagined themselves the rulers of the empire, whereas they were really the tools of demagogues and of rhetoricians who pocketed the real profits. Though the principal characters are called Philo-cleon and Bdely-cleon, no living personage is introduced, and the play is remarkable as the earliest we have which deals wholly in imaginary characters. The old dicast, who has gone mad with love of sitting on juries, is confined by his sensible son with the aid of slaves ; and here we find, perhaps, the only case in which Aristophanes represents the younger generation as having more sense than the old. But he probably merely intends to intimate a very general Greek feeling, that old age, instead of being venerable and excessively wise, is really feeble and prejudiced. The Homeric attempt of the old man to escape, like Odysseus from the cave, is very comic. His friends, the chorus of Wasps, come to his aid, but are driven off by Bdelycleon, and compelled to listen passively to an argument between father and son, in which the former boasts all the nominal grandeur of the sovereign Athenian people sitting in judgment, while the latter shows the hollowness and vanity of their pretensions. Ultimately the old man is appeased by a mock trial of a dog for stealing cheese, which is got up for him at home. The attempt at humanising the old dicast, and bringing him back into the ways of society, is, however, too sudden. Though he shows much quickness of political repartee in the *skolia* which his son proposes, he is rude and unmannerly, and his behaviour to his associates shows the license of a sudden emancipation from the trammels of self-imposed political duties. The latter part of the play gives us much insight into the nature of social intercourse at Athens. The subject was imitated by Racine in his solitary comedy, *Les Plaideurs*, which is

a melancholy contrast to its original as to freshness and humour. There are excellent editions by Mitchell, Hirschig (with special collations first by Bekker, then Cobet, Leiden, 1847), Julius Richter, with Latin notes (Berlin, 1858), and by Mr. Rogers, with a metrical translation. Many of the political allusions have been fully discussed by Müller-Strübing in his *Aristophanes und die historische Kritik.*

§ 267. In the following year (Ol. 89, 3) Aristophanes brought out the first edition of the *Peace*, when Eupolis gained the first prize with his *Flatterers*, and Leucon the third with his *Clansmen*. The *Peace* seems to have been rehandled by the poet, but there are not in our text (though there are in the scholia) signs of a recension. The object of the play is to recommend the then expected peace of Nikias, as both Brasidas and Cleon had lately been killed, and thus the war party at both Athens and Sparta was sensibly weakened. It was acted at the great spring festival, when the deputies of the allies with their tribute were present, as appears from many allusions. The scene is partly laid in heaven, evidently on the upper story above the stage, whither Trygæos (the Vintager), an elderly citizen, flies up on a dung-beetle to bring down the goddess Peace, who has been immured by War, while the gods in disgust have gone away, leaving War to do as he chose. Hermes, an insolent but servile doorkeeper, is the only god who appears. Two slaves who are fattening Trygæos' beetle open the piece with a dialogue which passes into the prologue, as was often the case in Aristophanes' plays. When Peace is brought down again to earth, and upon the stage, the preparations for her marriage with Trygæos occupy the rest of the play, of which the action halts after the first 800 lines, but the dialogue is all through very witty and full of clever parodies. On the whole the play is more brilliant and imaginative than the *Wasps*, but too much flavoured with that obscenity, which, however comical, disfigures several of the poet's later works, and which he himself deprecates in earlier plays. Some passages in the Parabasis and elsewhere are copied from older productions, and yet we cannot but wonder at the fertility of the poet's treatment of the same subject which he had handled

in the *Acharnians*, with such completely different scenery and arrangement. It seems as if the phantastic element had become much more prominent in him about this period of his life. The best special editions of this, as of the last play, are by Julius Richter (Berlin, 1860) and Mr. Rogers.

§ 268. There is now, in our extant remains, a gap of seven years before the date of the next play, the *Birds*. This accident suggests to critics a distinction between the poet's earlier and later style, which is hardly warranted by the plays themselves. The *Peace* seems to me to possess all his later characteristics in full development, and is nevertheless brought out in close connection with his older, more serious, and more political plays. The temperate allusion to Cleon shortly after his death[1] is a curious contrast to the attack on Euripides in the *Frogs* under the same circumstances. Here there is a sort of *de-mortuis-nil-nisi-bonum* feeling implied. The *Birds* came out in the spring of 414 B.C., in the year following the sending out of the Sicilian expedition, the panic about the Hermæ, and the recall and banishment of Alcibiades. The law of Syracosius limiting the freedom of lampooning in comedy was doubtless connected with the public excitement of the time, when the jibe of a comedian might bring upon any man suspicion, prosecution, and exile. It is probably to these circumstances that we may ascribe the political vagueness of this piece, which is a general satire upon the vain hopes and wild expectations of young Athens, and ridicules their ideal empire in the western Mediterranean, which contrasted so strongly with the poet's conservative notions about old Attic purity, dignity, and simplicity. We may now declare that this retrograde ideal of the old party was not less impossible than the *Cloudcuckootown* of the advanced thinkers, and even in the Middle Comedy there were not wanting parodies of the ancient heroic simplicity analogous to this in the *Birds*. Nevertheless, to us the comedy is profoundly interesting as a piece of brilliant imagination, with less political rancour, and less obscenity than most of the author's work, and justly accounted one of the best, if not the best, of his extant plays.

[1] vv. 646, sq.

The play was brought out by Callistratus, and obtained second prize, Ameipsias being first with his *Revellers*, Phrynicush third with his *Monotropos*. It opens with a dialogue between two Athenian typical characters, *Persuader* (Πειθέταιρος) and *Hopeful* (Εὐελπίδης), who are disgusted with litigious Athens, and are wandering, conducted by a crow and jackdaw, and attended by two slaves, in search of the *avified* Tereus, now a hoopoe, who will show them a quiet city where they may live without law. This is told us, as usual, by one of the characters in the first dialogue. It is remarkable that these, like almost all Aristophanes' leading characters, are not young, but elderly men. They find the hoopoe, who calls out his wife, the nightingale,[1] and these summon all the birds to council. No sooner has Persuader asked a few questions about the life of the birds, than he conceives and propounds a scheme to the hoopoe of settling all the birds into a great polity, and shutting off by means of it the ways from earth to heaven, so that the gods, being starved out by want of offerings, shall come to terms, and resign the sovereignty of the world to the birds. This scheme is accordingly carried out, the city is established and there are very comic scenes, when all sorts of worthless sycophants, mountebank priests, and windy poets

[1] The beautiful invocation to the nightingale is worth quoting (vv. 209–24):

ἄγε σύννομέ μοι, παῦσαι μὲν ὕπνου,
λῦσον δὲ νόμους ἱερῶν ὕμνων,
οὓς διὰ θείου στόματος θρηνεῖς
τὸν ἐμὸν καὶ σὸν πολύδακρυν Ἴτυν
ἐλελιζομένη διεροῖς μέλεσιν
γένυος ξουθῆς·
καθαρὰ χωρεῖ διὰ φυλλοκόμου
μίλακος ἠχὼ πρὸς Διὸς ἕδρας,
ἵν' ὁ χρυσοκόμας Φοῖβος ἀκούων
τοῖς σοῖς ἐλέγοις ἀντιψάλλων
ἐλεφαντόδετον φόρμιγγα, θεῶν
ἵστησι χορούς·
διὰ δ' ἀθανάτων στομάτων χαρεῖ
ξύμφωνος ὁμοῦ
θεία μακάρων ὁλολυγή.

come to Persuader to get wings and live among the birds. Iris is caught flying through the city on an errand from Zeus to order men to sacrifice, as the gods are starving. She is sent back, and meanwhile a herald comes up from the earth to say that the mortals have consented to submit to the Birds' sovereignty. Presently Poseidon, Heracles, and Triballus—a barbarian god, who does not know how to put on his cloak—come as an embassy from the gods. But Heracles, who is very gluttonous, and moreover hungry, is ready to accept any terms, when he finds Persuader cooking a rich meal to which he hopes to be invited. Triballus is unintelligible, but sides with Heracles, and so Poseidon is forced to comply with the disgraceful terms of submitting to the Birds, and allowing Basileia (Sovereignty) to be brought down and married to Persuader. The play ends, as the *Peace* does, with the Hymeneal song.

It is full of the richest imagination and the brightest wit, but it is idle to discuss the endeavours of modern critics to pierce the disguise under which the poet may have ridiculed definite persons. As a general satire on young Athens it is full of point, and a real work of genius. I have already explained (above, p. 212) the careful and complete structure of the parabasis. It is surprising how few special editions of this play have been published in recent times. The earlier part has been reproduced for the stage, with sundry modifications, by Goethe in 1780, and the whole play has been translated by the poet Rückert. There is a handy school edition by Th. Kock (Haupt and Sauppe's series).

§ 269. The *Lysistrata* appeared in 411 B.C., after the Sicilian disaster, when ten *Proboúloi* had been appointed to manage the city, and when its democracy was just being overthrown by the oligarchs under Peisander and Antiphon. We may take for granted that comic license was forbidden. The Peisander mentioned in the play was probably therefore not the politician, and there is no allusion to Antiphon. Nevertheless, under the mask of obscene ribaldry there is no play of Aristophanes more seriously in earnest about the affairs of the state. His usual policy is enforced by representing the women of all Greece determined to refuse conjugal rights to their hus-

bands until peace is proclaimed, and at the same time seizing the Acropolis in order to secure the treasure of the Parthenon from being applied to war purposes. A chorus of old men who come to attack the Propylæa with fire, and a chorus of the elder women who defend it with water, replace with their responsive odes and comic abuse the usual single chorus. There is no parabasis. The Spartan woman, Lampito, who is remarkable not only for her splendid physique, but for her character and self-control, speaks throughout in her own dialect, as do the Spartan ambassadors at the close of the play, and they thus afford us an excellent specimen of that remarkable Doric which is hardly represented in any extant branch of Greek literature. The political advice comes not from the chorus, but from the leading character, whose typical name, Lysistrata, indicates her policy. She recommends forgetfulness of past offences, in fact amnesty and a coalition of interests with the allies, who had been hitherto treated as mere subjects. There is no vain picturing of past happiness or future glory, but rather a homely, anxious review of the situation, with a determination to do the best in a frightful crisis.[1] The spectacle of an Athenian public

[1] I call particular attention to the following passage, as the most distinctly *pathetic* which we have in Aristophanes.

vv. 588, sq. :

ΠΡΟ. *οὔκουν δεινὸν ταυτὶ ταύτας ῥαβδίζειν καὶ τολυπεύειν,*
αἷς οὐδὲ μετῆν πάνυ τοῦ πολέμου ;

ΛΥ. *καὶ μήν, ὦ παγκατάρατε,*
πλεῖν ἠὲ διπλοῦν αὐτὸν φέρομεν. πρώτιστον μέν γε
τεκοῦσαι
κἀκπέμψασαι παῖδας ὁπλίτας.

ΠΡΟ. *σίγα, μὴ μνησικακήσῃς.*

ΛΥ. *εἶθ' ἡνίκ' ἐχρῆν εὐφρανθῆναι καὶ τῆς ἥβης ἀπολαῦσαι,*
μονοκοιτοῦμεν διὰ τὰς στρατιάς. καὶ θἠμέτερον μὲν
ἐᾶτε,
περὶ τῶν δὲ κορῶν ἐν τοῖς θαλάμοις γηρασκουσῶν
ἀνιῶμαι.

ΠΡΟ. *οὔκουν χἄνδρες γηράσκουσιν ;*

ΛΥ. *μὰ Δί', ἀλλ' οὐκ εἶπας ὅμοιον.*
ὁ μὲν ἥβῶν γάρ, κἂν ᾖ πολιός, ταχὺ παῖδα κόρην
γεγάμηκεν·
τῆς δὲ γυναικὸς σμικρὸς ὁ καιρός, κἂν τούτου μὴ
ἁπιλάβηται,
οὐδεὶς ἐθέλει γῆμαι ταύτην, ὀττευομένη δὲ κάθηται

coming together in their direst misfortune, to hear a play of which the very argument could not be explicitly stated in modern society, and of which the details fully develop the main idea, shows us a great gulf between Attic and modern culture. I will only observe in explanation of so painful a phenomenon that many ceremonies of the Greek religion—nay even the spiritual mysteries of Demeter—admitted obscene emblems and obscene jokes as a necessary part of the festival, and this element was as prominent in the feasts of women as in those where men only were engaged. Thus the naturalism of Greek polytheism, as contrasted with the asceticism of Christianity, engendered a state of feeling, even in the most refined, which would be accounted among us shocking grossness. The indulgence, therefore, of Athenians in such amusements as the *Lysistrata*, though under all circumstances objectionable, is not by any means to be regarded as parallel to a similar performance in modern times.

The scene being laid at the Propylæa of the Acropolis is full of local allusions to the surrounding features, which have been missed by most commentators owing to their want of familiarity with the place. Of course the play from its very nature has been little commented on in special editions. There is a text with scholia and full commentary by Mr. Blaydes (Halle, 1880). Mr. Rogers has done all that can be done to bring it within the range of modern readers in his excellent version, and his commentary on selections from the text.

§ 270. From the following year (Ol. 92, 2) we have the *Thesmophoriazusæ*, or celebrators of the Thesmophoria, in which the poet again makes the female sex prominent, but is less in earnest about politics, which had in the meantime taken a definite turn, and permitted no interference. This play is perhaps the most comical which we have, and might be called a 'screaming farce,' but for the determined attack on the morality of the Athenian women, which is laid by Aristophanes wittily, and by the commentators stupidly, on the shoulders of Euripides. This poet appears with his father-in-law Mnesilochus in search of Agathon, whose effeminate appearance and style will enable him to attend the Thesmophoria, and defend

Euripides from the conspiracy made by the women against him, on account of his misoguny and his pictures of female passion. Agathon is cleverly parodied, with coarse asides from Mnesilochus, who is the stock Athenian of the poet. But Agathon refuses the dangerous mission among the women, and Euripides persuades Mnesilochus, with the aid of shaving and of Agathon's borrowed dress, to make the attempt. At a very comic assembly speeches are made against Euripides, but Mnesilochus ruins his case by arguing that Euripides had far understated the vices of women. This leads to altercation, and then the news brought by the effeminate Cleisthenes, that a man had entered the women's exclusive gathering, leads to the discovery and apprehension of Mnesilochus. By a device akin to that of Dicæopolis in the *Acharnians*, he threatens in his peril to slay a child, which turns out to be a wine skin, and he is at last put under the charge of a Scythian policeman. The devices of Euripides, who approaches under the guise of various characters from his plays, especially from the recent *Helena* and the *Andromeda*, and is answered by Mnesilochus, afford scope for much brilliant parody. At length, under the garb and by the devices of a procuress, Euripides entices away the Scythian, and extricates his friend.

The chorus, though prominent, sings no proper parabasis, nor is there any serious address to the audience. All the play is full of fun, and parody, and ribaldry. The attack on women is a fiercer one than all the plays of Euripides condensed could furnish. As to the travesties of Agathon and of Euripides, they are all comic, and show, I think, no personal hatred, though many hard hits are dealt. Plato makes Aristophanes a personal friend of Agathon, and the allusion to him, after his death, in the *Frogs* corroborates this. But the *Frogs* are far more severe on Euripides than this play, for here his cleverness only is ridiculed, and his plays quoted as the most popular, while his attacks on the weaker sex are more than justified. The insinuations of effeminacy against Agathon are quite as foul as those in the end of the play against Euripides for dealing in immorality. There are editions by Thiersch, F. V. Fritzsche, and Enger. Some fragments remain of a second

Thesmophoriazusæ, which continued the plot of this play, and inveighed chiefly, according to our fragments, against female luxury. Mr. Blaydes' full edition has since appeared (Halle, 1880), and Velsen's recension (1880).

§ 271. Passing by the *Plutus*, as our version of it was produced later (it was first played in Ol. 92, 4), we come to the *Frogs*, certainly the most interesting, if not the best constructed of all Aristophanes' extant plays. It came out in 405 B.C., just before the battle of Ægospotami, when Athens was approaching the crisis of her history. Phrynichus and Theramenes are still the leading men of the state; people are longing for Alcibiades, but afraid to recall him. It is at such a moment that this wonderful play occupied the public with its buffoonery, and its profound literary criticism. It obtained first prize under Philonides' direction, and defeated (the comic) Phrynichus' *Muses* and Plato's *Cleophon*. Its repetition is said to have been ordered owing to the prudent and moderate parabasis, which recommends amnesty for past offences, especially in the affair of the Four Hundred, and unity among all the citizens to avert the ruin of the state.[1] This political advice is very similar in tone to that in the *Lysistrata*. The plot is separated into two parts: first, the adventures of Dionysus on his journey to Hades in search of a good poet, Sophocles and Euripides being lately dead; and secondly, the poetical contest of Æschylus and Euripides, and the final victory of Æschylus. These subjects are logically though loosely connected together, but remind us strongly of the dramatic economy of the very poet whom Aristophanes is here attacking so vehemently. No analysis can reproduce the real brilliancy of the piece, which consists in all manner of comic situations, repartees, parodies, and unexpected blunders.

The attack on Euripides, and parallel defence of Æschylus, carried on by the poets themselves, is of course profoundly interesting as a piece of contemporary literary criticism by so great a poet; but great poets are not always good critics. Moreover, whether from dramatic propriety, or from serious conviction, the points urged on both sides are all shallow and unimportant, and only of weight before an idiotic judge, such as Dionysus. How this character can have been intended to

[1] vv. 352, sq.

represent the Athenian public without insulting them is hard to understand. For if this be the poet's meaning, the æsthetic judgment of the Athenian public, and their art criticism, is ridiculed far more bitterly than the fashionable tragedian. The attacks of the poets on one another are partly grammatical, partly rythmical, partly ethical, but hardly at all æsthetic, if we except the objection to the peculiar stage effect which Æschylus so often used, of introducing his leading character upon the stage in silence, and keeping the audience in long suspense before he spoke. The grammatical points are minute and trifling, and as to the rythmical argument against Euripides' prologues,[1] most good iambic trimeters can be concluded with ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν, so that there is no point in it at all. The melic ramblings of Euripides may be open to the charge of disconnection and of effeminate softness, but assuredly the obscurity of Æschylus is an equally important defect in poetry addressed to a listening public.

By far the most important part of the controversy is that concerning the moral effects of tragedy, for it is assumed as an axiom by all parties,[2] that the poets (whether dramatic or not) are moral teachers—in fact, the established clergy of the age—and perform the same office for men which schoolmasters do for children. Assuming this standpoint, Euripides can only defend himself by urging that the legends he represented were as he found them, and that he encouraged practical good sense and homely shrewdness among the citizens—in fact, educated them in good sense.[3]

The reply which we should make to Æschylus would rather insist that he himself was not a great poet because he had a moral object, but because in prosecuting that object he stated great world problems, great conflicts of Destiny and Freedom, of Law and of Feeling, and set them forth with extraordinary power and beauty. Euripides may have made the mere changes of human character, and the scourge of passion, his conscious objects, but in portraying these things well he was no less a great teacher of humanity, and a lofty moralist in his own way. It is as if we should contrast Sir

[1] vv. 1200, sq. [2] vv. 1056, sq. [3] vv. 948, sq.

W. Scott's romances, their chivalry, their ideality, and their obvious rewarding of vice and virtue, with the subtler and deeper teaching of George Eliot, who makes the tangled web of human life her object, and does not accommodate her catastrophes to traditional morality. Sir W. Scott wrote great novels, not because he wrote with an earnest moral purpose, but because he drew periods of history, and varieties of human character, with boldness and with poetic truth. These are the eternal features of dramatic art, but they are often most deeply felt by great artists who cannot consciously express them.

As to special editions, we have those of Welcker (1812); Pernice, with notes and version (1856), and Fritzsche (1863); also Th. Kock's (in Haupt and Sauppe's series), a good school book, and Blaydes'.

§ 272. There is a great descent in literary merit to the *Eccleziazusæ*, or *parliament of women*, which came out about 393 B.C., when Athens was striving along with Thebes and Argos to check the power and encroachments of Sparta. If the success at Knidos and the recovery of the maritime supremacy had taken place, still more if the long walls were being rebuilt, it is indeed strange that such a poet as Aristophanes should have made no allusion to these great successes and the hopes they inspired. But the political allusions of the play contain no solemn warning, no hearty advice; they are merely a bitter satire on the faults and weaknesses of the revived democracy, its unstableness and vacillation, the selfishness and greed of both poor and rich, the postponing of all public interests to private advantage. All the faults reproved by Demosthenes and Phocion are already prominent; we have before us no longer the Periclean, but the Demosthenic Athenian. The poet of a greater and better time has no heart to advise, but only to ridicule such people.[1] His main interest turns from

[1] It is chiefly from this evidence that the Germans draw their pictures of the debased ochlocracy, and no doubt they draw it according to the notions of Aristophanes and his aristocratic friends. But whether Athens was really thus debased is quite another question, and those who have studied Grote's history, and the affairs of the restored democracy, will come to a very different conclusion. There was no doubt a great decadence in energy, but not in social and intellectual qualities.

political to social questions, from practical to theoretical reforms, and he occupies himself with the schemes of socialism and communism which were floating in the air of the schools, and which may even then have had some countenance in Plato's oral lectures. These theories he satirises by making the women meet in the assembly, dressed in their husbands' clothes, and decide that they must in future assume the management of the state, with full community of goods, of husbands—in fact, of everything. There is of course a great deal of humour in all the discussions, especially in the home conversation between Praxagora, the leading character (like the Lysistrata of a former play), and her husband, in which he is fully persuaded by gross material prospects to acquiesce in the scheme. The dialogue between the honest citizen, who in obedience to the decree brings out all his goods into the street for the common fund, and the dishonest neighbour, who keeps back what he has, and waits to see how things will turn out, is the best in the play, and is an epitome of the conduct of Athens from that day onward, when patriotism was required of her. The scenes which follow are apparently written for obscenity's sake, and are too absurd to be a genuine satire upon Athenian women. These features, and the concluding appeal of the coryphæus (vv. 1155, sq.), to remember the jokes, and not to deny the author his prize because his play came first in the competition, indicate how much both poet and audience had fallen. The chorus assumes a leading part in the play, but sings no parabasis, unless indeed a choral ode which is lost may have replaced it. But the whole complexion of the piece resembles what is called the Middle Comedy, in which the chorus disappears.

The play is difficult, and has not been sufficiently commented upon, doubtless on account of the features which it has in common with the far superior and more earnest *Lysistrata*. The commentators on Plato's *Republic* have much occupied themselves with the question, what system or theory of socialism the poet had before him, as Plato's immortal dialogue was not published till many years later. We can find no more specific answer than to say that such a work had probably many predecessors, and that such speculations must have been

long in the air before they assumed the definite form in which Plato has transmitted them to us. For the history of Socialism and of the theory of woman's rights the play is an early and valuable document.

§ 273. Last in our list comes the *Plutus*, which, as we have it, was produced Ol. 97, 4 or 388 B.C., in the poet's old age. But we are informed that this was the second edition, and that it was first played in 408 B.C., before the *Frogs*. To this latter play it is remarkably inferior in every respect, but chiefly perhaps because it is of the tamer type known as that of the Middle Comedy. The characters are all general, and there is no chorus beyond a collection of neighbours, who do not interfere in the action, and sing no lyrical odes, or parabasis. The prominence of the slave is another feature which allies it to both Middle and New Comedy. Politics disappear altogether, and the whole object of the work is a dramatic satire upon the irregularities and injustices of society, and upon the apparently false distribution of wealth by the gods. The worthy Chremylus, having by the help of the oracle discovered Plutus, whom as an old blind man he does not recognise, but who at length reveals himself, undertakes to have the god's sight restored, and so to enable him to choose his residence amongst honest men. Poverty, a gaunt female figure, protests against this proceeding, and explains the advantages which she bestows on men. There are several indications of a chorus at the conclusion of each act, or pause in the plot, but these were either never written, or omitted in the revised edition. The farcical dialogue between the slave and the Chorus, vv. 291, sq., is lyrical, and clearly meant to replace a proper chorus, as in the *Lysistrata*. The slave in a long messenger's speech, only interrupted by exclamations from Chremylus' wife, recounts the cure of Plutus in the temple of Æsculapius—a very interesting comic picture of the religious quackery of the age. The rest of the play is occupied with the appearance of a sycophant priest and other characters who come to visit Chremylus on hearing of his good fortune. The general structure of the play seems imitated from the earlier *Peace*. The god of riches corresponds to the goddess of peace. The opposing figures of

War and Poverty are closely analogous. The good Hermes in both plays acts the mean part of a sort of understrapper, and not a faithful one, among the gods. Both plays end their plot early, and fill up the remainder with dialogues arising out of the successful conclusion of the enterprise. But the *Peace* is far livelier and more spirited than the *Plutus*. The tame and sober character, and the absence of special political allusions in this work, have made it an easy and suitable play for younger students, and there have accordingly been a good many scholia upon it, and a good many editions in Byzantine days. The best editions are Velsen's (critical, 1881), and since then Blaydes (Halle, 1885).

§ 274. The *Fragments* of Aristophanes (about 750) are neither long nor interesting. Were our knowledge of the poet confined to them, we should be perfectly incapable of forming any notion of his true character and transcendent merits, and this fact should make critics more cautious than they have been in estimating other comic poets, only known by the light of this delusive evidence and thus compared with the extant master. The *Amphiaraus* seems to have ridiculed superstitious treatment of diseases, like the scene of the *Plutus* just mentioned, and may therefore have been of that type. So was the *Æolosikon*, a parody on Euripides' Æolus, a play which was written without chorus, later than the *Plutus*, and committed to the care of the poet's son Araros. The *Kokalos*, also committed to Araros, was even considered a forerunner, in its love intrigue and recognition, of the New Comedy of Menander; so that this type too was probably inherent in Greek comedy, and only rose to greater prominence owing to social causes. All that can be known about the plots of the lost plays, and many conjectures besides, may be found in the collection of the fragments at the end of Meineke's second volume. There is an equally good collection in Dindorf's *Poetæ Scenici*, and many monographs about them are cited by Nicolai.[1]

§ 275. If we take a general view of the dramatic resources shown by this great poet, we shall be somewhat surprised at the poorness of his plots and the fixed lines of his invention. As is well known, old Attic comedy cared little about plots;

[1] *LG.* i. p. 231.

any extravagant adventure was sufficient to give it scope for the development of character, and for comic dialogue which sparkled by means of witty repartee and satirical allusion. Like the plays of Euripides, which pause in the middle, and then start with a new interest, it is common for the Aristophanic plays to work out at once the project of the principal actor, and then occupy the rest of the play in comic situations produced by the introduction of any stray visitor. Examples of this design will be found in the *Acharnians*, *Peace*, *Plutus*, *Wasps*, and *Birds*. The *Frogs* is a more artistic instance, as the poetical conflict which ensues upon Dionysus' visit to Hades is strictly to the point. But here too the adventures of Dionysus in search of a tragic poet are a separate play (so to speak) from the scenes in Hades after his reception by Pluto. The *Knights* and *Clouds* have more plot than the rest, though the action in the *Knights* is too much delayed by the coarse Billingsgate of the rival demagogues.

A good deal of sameness may further be observed in this, that the economy of the opening scenes preserves a certain uniformity. Either the principal character begins with a soliloquy, which explains the whole plot, as in the *Acharnians* and *Clouds*, or the first scene is a dialogue, in which one of the speakers presently turns to the audience, and explains the situation by what may be called a delayed prologue. These speakers are either two slaves under orders (*Wasps*, *Knights*, *Peace*), or the leading character with his slave or confidant (*Frogs*, *Plutus*, *Birds*, *Thesmophoriazusæ*). The *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusæ* open with a combination of both devices. The leading character comes on, but in expectation of others, as in the *Acharnians*, and the plot is presently expounded in a conversation with the new characters. These considerations show that, with all the wildness and license of the poet's imagination, he kept not only his diction, which was a model of the strictest Attic, but even his plots, under close regulations.[1]

Turning to his characters, we find the same regularity in their conception. They are almost all elderly, both men and

[1] Westphal (*Proleg. zu Æschyl.* pp. 30, sq,) has shown that Aristophanes' *form* of play resembled Æschylus, and not later tragedy.

women, and even when father and son are brought on the stage together, as in the *Wasps*, the son impresses us as already mature in age and good sense. This arises from the aristocratic temper of the poet, who only satirised and ridiculed the middle and lower classes, among whom the young are seldom prominent, especially in war times, when they were employed in field and garrison duty. The Athenian democracy is always imaged by the poet under the guise of an elderly man, and all the leading characters which are intended to be representative are very uniform in type—shrewd, somewhat coarse, and not very educated. This is likely to have been specially true of the Attic countryman, whom he contrasts sharply with the city folk. Pheidippides in the *Clouds* is the only portrait he ventures to draw of a young aristocrat, and he is very slightly sketched, until he appears transformed into a Socratic sophist. The chorus of *Knights* is purely political and impersonal, and reveals to us no social or individual features. Were we therefore reduced for our knowledge of the Athenian aristocracy to the comedies of Aristophanes, we must be content with a single passage in the opening of the *Clouds*, and we should be completely ignorant of any of their failings but that of an overfondness for horses. Yet surely the young aristocrats were fully as open to satire and comic travesty on the stage as the old dicasts.

These remarks show the error of the assertion usual in Aristophanes' German critics, that he lashed *all* the vices and defects of Athenian society in his day. They ignore that the poet was an aristocrat, who ridiculed radicalism and the advanced democracy, but spared the vices of his associates and his party. What a subject Alcibiades would have afforded! Yet in spite of his democratic leanings, his high birth and connections saved him from any but stray shafts on the stage.[1] It is in the orators that we find him painted in his dark

[1] According to various late authorities, of whom a scholiast on Juvenal is the best, the Βάπται of Eupolis were expressly directed against Alcibiades. But it must have been indirectly, and without naming him personally, for the twenty-two extant fragments do not contain a single mention or even allusion to Alcibiades.

colours. I have already noticed the constant retrospects, and longing for the good old times, which characterised all the comic poets of this period. I will only add that in his late plays Aristophanes seems to have laid aside these aspirations as hopeless, and applied himself to the practical teaching of union and forgiveness among the rival parties in the agony of the last years of the war.

As to his position in matters of religion, he is a great defender of orthodoxy against the new physical school, and is never weary of attacking Socrates and Euripides for their breaking up of the old faith. But all this seems rather from policy than from real devoutness, for he does not hesitate to travesty the gods after the manner of Epicharmus, and to present the religion of the people under a ridiculous form. Though he permits himself to indulge in orthodox profanity and ridicule about the gods, he feels a profound difference in the serious attacks of the sceptical school upon the received faith. In this he was doubtless quite correct, but it throws a doubtful light upon his seriousness as a religious thinker.

§ 276. His parody of the tragedies is to us more interesting. Though commonly aimed at Euripides, there is frequent parodying of both Sophocles and Æschylus, and of the less known tragic poets, probably much oftener than even the scholiasts detected. Of course his ridicule of Euripides was most unsparing, and most unjust, but the latter was no mere innovator in tragedy, he was also an opponent on social and political questions. There is no greater proof of the real greatness of Euripides, than that his popularity combated and overcame the most splendid comic genius set in array against it during the period of its development. The loose and irrelevant choral odes of his later plays are doubtless open to the parody of the *Frogs*, but the very same change of taste as to the importance of the choral interludes made Aristophanes himself diminish and abandon his choruses, and even replace them with a musical or orchestic performance. For this seems the meaning of the word χορου̃ inserted in the pauses of the later plays, especially the *Plutus*. Hence in this, as in most other points, the same tendencies which modified Euripides' tragedies had their effect

upon the plays of his censor. Among the features of detail, nothing is more cleverly ridiculed than those repetitions of the same word which occur in the pathetic lyrical passages of Euripides. Yet this has been felt by great hearts of various ages, and by the still greater heart of popular song, to be a natural and poetical enhancement to the expression of deep feeling. The modern poet who best understands Euripides has followed his example in this point.[1] The German lyrist von Platen, in his beautiful and artistic imitations of folk-song, has reproduced the same effect—an effect still more clearly and universally exemplified in music, where the repetition of even a single note often conveys intense feeling.

§ 277. Turning from points of detail to the general scope of Aristophanes' plays, we come upon a controversy as to the true aim of comedy, and as to the conception which the poet formed of his art. The passage on the nature of comedy in the *Poetic* of Aristotle is unfortunately lost, but if we can trust stray hints on the subject, his definition of comedy (which applied mainly to Menander) ran parallel to that of tragedy, and described the art as a purification of certain affections of our nature, not by terror and pity, but by laughter and ridicule. This deep moral object has been strongly advocated by Klein, who exalts Aristophanes to a pinnacle attained by no other Greek poet. On the other hand, Hegel, who without any special knowledge has theorised on the matter in his *Æsthetic*, speaks of comedy as the outlet of a great uncontrolled subjectivity, which feels that it is so superior to all ordinary human affairs, that it can afford to laugh them down and treat them

> Dances, dances, and banqueting
> To Thebes, the sacred city through,
> Are a care! for, change and change
> Of tears and laughter, old to new,
> Our lays, glad birth, they bring, they bring!

[1] —*Aristoph. Apol.*, p. 266. There are many more instances in this version of the *Hercules Furens*. This allusion to Mr. Browning suggests the remark that he has treated the controversy between Euripides and Aristophanes with more learning and ability than all other critics, in his *Aristophanes' Apology*, which is, by the way, an *Euripides' Apology* also, if such be required in the present day.

with ridicule. Probably both theories have their truth as regards Aristophanes. His early plays seem written with high political aspirations, and with a strong conviction that he was the adviser of the people for good, and could lead them from sophistry and chicanery to a sounder and nobler condition. This feeling transpires in his personal addresses to the audience, in his professed contempt for obscenity and buffoonery, and in the serious tone of his political advices. As the war went on, and the people became gradually impoverished and degraded, when the oligarchs broke down in their attempt to abolish the democracy, and the power of Athens was ruined by Lysander, we see the poet, not without stray touches of sadness, adopt a lower tone, abandon serious subjects, and turn almost wholly to obscenity, buffoonery, and mere literary and social satire. At this stage he may have been indulging his 'infinite subjectivity,' as Hegel chooses to call it, and may have felt that serious advice, and efforts at political and social reform, were mere idle dreams, and not worth treating except as stuff for travesty. This is indeed a melancholy contrast to the life of the extant tragic poets, all of whom seem to have risen and ripened with age, and to have left us in their latest pieces the noblest and most perfect monuments of their genius.

§ 278. A word in conclusion should be said concerning the lyric side of Aristophanes, which the old scholiasts so neglected, that they note his graceful ode to the nightingale (in the *Birds*) as a parody on Euripides. Modern writers, on the contrary, have advanced to the absurd statement, that his real greatness was not dramatic, but lyric. There can, indeed, be no doubt that the lyrical pieces in the comedies are of the highest merit; nevertheless, it would be as absurd to say that the real genius of Sophocles was lyric because he wrote beautiful lyric odes. Lyric poetry and the drama were so combined in Periclean days, that although a lyric poet might be no dramatist, every dramatist must be a lyric poet. And we have reason to think that the occasional lyric pieces of the great dramatists in that day were far finer than the works of professed lyric poets after the age of Simonides. Nevertheless, the true greatness of Aristophanes ever has been, and will be, dramatic greatness.

But it is rather in extraordinary fertility and brilliancy of dialogue, than in ingenuity of plot, that he excels.

We cannot tell whether the statement of Plato at the end of the *Symposium* was seriously meant, that the composer of comedy must have the same sort of genius as the composer of tragedy, and that the same poet should compose both. If it was, we can hardly avoid the inference that it was meant to apply to Aristophanes, who plays a leading part in the dialogue, and whom Plato evidently esteemed at his real worth. The combination of which he speaks was not attempted in classical days, though there are not wanting signs that Aristophanes could have composed with pathos and seriousness, and might perhaps have been more dangerous to Euripides as a rival than as a professed opponent.

§ 279. The later Greeks, who became accustomed to the strict form and the social polish of the New Comedy, could not bear the wildness and license of the great political comedian. Aristotle completely ignores him, and the Old Comedy generally, in his dramatic theories, and evidently regards him as nothing compared with his successors in later days and in the tamer style. Plutarch, in a special comparison of Old and New Comedy, is both severe and depreciating in his remarks upon him.[1] These tamer and more orderly people look upon the wayward exuberance of the Old Comedy with much the same temper as the French school of tragedy look upon the license and irregularity of Shakspeare. Fortunately, the Alexandrian critics did not share these prejudices, and seem to have directed more attention to this poet than to any other except Homer.[2] Callimachus collected the literary and chronological notices; Eratosthenes, Aristophanes, Aristarchus and Crates

[1] His little tract on Aristophanes and Menander is still worth reading, in order to show how completely formal excellence and polish of style outweighed the greater merits of old comic poetry in the opinion of his age. Aristophanes is blamed for violations of the later rhetorical artifices, for excessive assonances, and for such matters as he would have scorned to observe, in his writing; moreover, for allowing inconsistency in characters, which were with him only a vehicle for political satire.

[2] The following information on the Alexandrian studies is compressed from the fuller account of Bernhardy, *LG.* ii. 670.

followed (with others) in explaining and commenting upon hard passages. There seem to have been collections of these commentaries, first by Didymus, and finally by Symmachus, who added Heliodorus' theatrical studies. These form the older basis of the *Scholia*, enlarged and diluted by later Byzantine work, but, on the whole, the best Greek commentary we have on any Greek author, and of inestimable value in understanding the difficult allusions of the text. The text of these scholia was first printed (with nine plays) by Aldus in 1498. There are excellent monographs of J. Schneider, Ritschl and Keil upon them, and they have been lately critically edited by Dindorf, and by Dübner (Paris, 1868).

§ 280. *Bibliographical.* Far the best MS. of both text and scholia is the *Ravennas* of the eleventh century, a large vellum quarto of 192 pages, of which the margin is here and there badly stained with damp, so that the scholia are often almost illegible. This is one of the best and most trustworthy of our Greek MSS. It contains the extant plays, not in their chronological order, but according to their popularity, the first three being much more read and commented than the rest, viz. *Plutus*, *Clouds*, *Frogs*, *Birds*, *Knights*, *Peace*, *Lysistrata*, *Acharnians*, *Wasps*, *Thesmophoriazusæ*, *Ecclesiazusæ*.

Owing to the difficulty of reaching Ravenna formerly, few scholars have seen or collated this MS., which is preserved in the public library, and now readily shown to visitors.[1] There is a later MS. at Milan in the Ambrosian Library which seems to correspond with it very closely, but which is not mentioned by the principal critics.[2] There is besides the *Venetus* 471, the Θ of the Laurentian at Florence, and a Parisinus A, which are valued by the editors. Of the three popular plays there are endless later copies.

As to editions there is the *princeps* of nine plays by Aldus (1498), a handsome folio, followed by the Juntine in 1515, which added the two missing plays (*Thesmophoriazusæ* and *Lysistrata*) as an appendix in 1516. Bentley, Dobree, Dawes, and

[1] There is an interesting article on its history by W. G. Clark, in the third volume of the Cambridge *Journal of Philology*.

[2] This was shown to me by M. Ceriani, the learned librarian at Milan.

Porson, all worked at this poet, and wrote critical notes upon the text, and in this direction Cobet (in the Leiden *Mnemosyne*) has contributed more than anyone else to the purifying of this purest of Attic writers. The best complete editions in modern days are Bekker's, Dübner's (Didot), Bergk's (Teubner), Dindorf's and Meineke's. The veteran Mr. Blaydes has now completed his edition of the plays. Mr. Holden has also published a critical text (Cambridge, 1868), with the fragments and an index to them, but unfortunately expurgated and therefore not useful for scholars. In addition to the Greek scholia (of which a critical edition is expected from Mr. G. Rutherford) there is a general commentary of moderate merit by Bothe, an index by Caravella, edited at Oxford (1822), and a poor Lexicon by Sanxay (Oxford, 1811). We have now Dunbar's *Concordance* (Oxon. 1883), a more complete work, but still wanting in the enumeration of particles and pronouns, and in the use of good MSS. A much better index is promised by O. Bachmann ; cf. *Phil. Wochenschr.* No. 26 (1884). There is a charming study on Aristophanes and his art by A. Couat (Paris, 1889). The principal plays must be studied in the separate editions I have noticed under each, and the complete editions are chiefly valuable for embracing the pieces which have not tempted special editors. There are German translations by Voss, Droysen, Donner, and others ; French by Brumoy and by Poinsinet de Sivry (*Acharnians* and *Knights*) ; and English, a good modern prose version, by Mitchell, in addition to the splendid version of five plays by J. H. Frere,[1] and the *Wasps*, *Peace*, and *Lysistrata* of J. B. Rogers; the *Acharnians*, by R. Y. Tyrrell. There are good school editions of some of the plays in the Cambridge *Catena Classicorum*. Julius Richter has even composed a Greek comedy in our own day on the model of Aristophanes, in which he handles contemporary questions. We may soon expect a critical edition of the scholia from Mr. G. Rutherford.

[1] Frere's version, like Mitchell's *Sophocles*, was at first privately published and inaccessible; it is now to be found in his collected works. The proper preface to it is his critique of Mitchell (*Works*, ii. p. 178, sq.).

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HISTORY OF COMEDY FROM ARISTOPHANES TO MENANDER.

§ 281. THERE is no branch of Greek literature which seems to have been more prolific than comedy; and yet, of the many hundreds of pieces cited, there is not a single complete specimen surviving. We saw above how Aristophanes, towards the close of his life, produced works of a complexion approaching what is called by the grammarians the *Middle*[1] and *New Comedy*—the former produced from about the period of the Restoration to that of the battle of Chæronea (390–38 B.C). Then came the *New Comedy*.

But, as I have already remarked (p. 211), critics have drawn their lines of distinction too sharply. They assert that the Middle Comedy was rather a character-comedy than a personal and political critique on passing events. Hence there appear in the very titles the names of courtesans, of parasites, of philosophers, and of literary men—the latter generally of past generations. We find that parody of old mythology was frequent, and there are many plays devoted to the *birth of gods*,

[1] It is argued by Frelitz (*De Att. Com. bipart.* Bonn, 1866) that there should be only two divisions of Attic Comedy, *Old* and *New*, as Plutarch assumes, and this view is adopted by Th. Kock in his great edition of the Fragments. He shows that the term *Middle* is an invention of the age of Hadrian, ignored by all previous writers. Thus he carries out my tentative arguments to their legitimate consequence. In *Hermes*, xxiv. 57, Kaibel argues against Kock's view. He thinks Plutarch was only comparing styles, and hence chose the extremes. Here, then, the μέση had no place, and its omission proves nothing. Bergk also (*LG.* iv. 122) maintains the distinction, and thinks that Plautus' *Amphitruo* and his *Pseudolus* were derived from comedies of this epoch. His main distinction, however, between Middle and New Comedy is that the former had no vitality and was quickly forgotten!

such as Διὸς γοναί, which ridiculed mimetic dithyrambs, and other scenic representations of these events. In this parody of mythology, and this ridicule of general types of character, we know that Epicharmus in Sicily, and Crates, Hermippus, and Cratinus in the Old Comedy, had shown the way; and we have from Hermippus the title of a play (Ἀθηνᾶς γοναί), which, from his known antagonism to Pericles and his friends, I take to have been somehow connected with Pheidias' famous pediment on the Parthenon, representing the birth of the goddess. So also in the constant ridicule of Plato and his school we find Alexis and his fellows only following in the track of Aristophanes' attack upon Socrates.

Nevertheless, it is their general tendency to draw general pictures of life, and to abstain from the subjects of the moment, which makes Aristotle include them under comedy, which is general; while he appears to have classed the more violent and personal Old Comedy under the head of personal satire (ἰαμβοποιΐα). The days for political satire had indeed passed away. We hear of no attempts after the Restoration to bridle the license of personal libels on the stage, until the days when adulation of great men replaced nobler feelings. But the desire of economy made both the state and individuals unwilling to submit to the expense of a chorus, and the poets indicated the close of their acts by the mere word *Chorus* and a gap, which was afterwards filled up by a musical *intermezzo*.

Another leading feature in Middle Comedy was said to be the fancy for discussing riddles (γρῖφοι) on the stage, and many such appear in the fragments. But, as Meineke notes, here too Cratinus had showed the way in his *Cleobulinæ*. I do not suppose that any of their frequent literary criticisms on poets—Athenæus quotes a special work on the subject—equalled in force and pungency Aristophanes' *Frogs*. But instead of ridiculing sophists and rhetoricians, we find that Platonists and Pythagoreans, the luxurious and the mendicant philosophies, were their constant topics. There is, however, clear evidence in the fragments that only the outside of these philosophies, the dress and manners of the school, were criticised. There was no attempt at any metaphysical argument, or any serious discussion of moral tendencies. The same shallow

ethics, or want of ethics, is shown in their far severer and more earnest satirising of courtesans. They never attack the real vices of society, but warn against the folly of carrying them on imprudently.

§ 282. Thus I have shown that in every leading feature ascribed to the Middle Comedy, we have parallels in the older masters. What had they then peculiar to themselves? Nothing I fancy in *subjects* except the neglect of present politics, the decay of moral earnestness, and the increased prominence of a particular kind of street and market scenes—I mean those relating to feasts and good cheer. There was also an increased prominence of courtesan life. In fact, Antiphanes, the greatest master of this comedy, is said to have told Alexander the Great, who took no interest in such things, that he must have been used to drinking with these people, and brawling about them, to appreciate comedy. Verily a noble education!

If in subject there were only these negative or ignoble peculiarities, there was an equal decay both in the power of their diction, and the variety and richness of their metres.[1] Of course this decay was gradual. The chorus with its expensive training went out of fashion, and was gradually disused. The aspiration of the poets was not to guide and ennoble their public. Hence they studied clearness and simplicity without any rigid adherence to purity of dialect or poetic choice of words. Moreover, the enormous number of dramas they produced must have made careful composition impossible. Athenæus asserts that he had read and copied from more than eight hundred plays of the Middle Comedy, but though we hear of fifty-seven poets, many of them only left a couple of plays. On the contrary, the pieces of the acknowledged masters, Antiphanes and Alexis, were counted by hundreds. No doubt they were not all intended for stage representation, but were a sort of substitute for our modern novels and magazine articles, circu-

[1] It is observed that the shortening of vowels before βλ and γλ, which is never allowed in Aristophanes, occurs in the Middle Comedy; so also the shortening of the accusative of nouns in ευς. As to metres, they often used dactylic hexameters; once in Antiphanes an elegiac distich occurs (Meineke, iii. 82, frag. of the *Milanion*). Glyconics were rare, but we often find combinations of dactyls and trochees, at least one specimen of Eupolidean verse, and one lyric system (cf. Meineke, i. 300–2).

lated among the reading public of Athens. It is, however, possible that the great increase of theatres throughout Greece may have created a large demand for new pieces.

§ 283. It would lead us far beyond our limits to attempt any enumeration of these poets (thirty-nine of whom are still known by name), nor have their remains much literary interest. In no case are the fragments sufficient to reconstruct the plots of their plays ; and, most unfortunately, the great majority of the extant quotations are those made by Athenæus, with special reference to marketing, cooking, and the pleasures of the table. This gives a tedious uniformity to the laborious volume in which Meineke has collected their remains,[1] an uniformity not agreeably relieved by notes of impure diction from the *Anti-atticista.* Here and there comes a moral reflection from the collection of Stobæus, and it is only such passages which show us the neatness of point and smartness of expression which made them so popular in their day. In this respect they regarded Euripides as their great model. His secret, which Aristotle notices, of saying things elegantly in common words, was the perpetual riddle which all the comic poets, down to Menander, tried to solve. But this last and greatest of the *Epigoni* in Comedy was the only successful stylist.

A few words on some of the most celebrated of these poets will suffice for such readers as do not wish to make their fragments a special study.[2]

§ 284. First and probably greatest among them was *Antiphanes*, who is commonly regarded as the head of the Middle Comedy. Of course the boundary line, as I have already explained, is very vague, and a glance into Meineke's account of the later poets of the Old Comedy, such as Plato, will show how difficult it is to sever the Middle from the Old. In fact, we are obliged generally to acquiesce in the decision of Suidas on the subject. Antiphanes was probably the son of Stephanus,

[1] *FCG.* vol. iii. ; the general history in vol. i. pp. 271–435.

[2] To specialists Meineke's and Kock's works afford all the materials ; the social side of their plays has been illustrated in my *Social Greece*, in G. Guizot's *Ménandre et la Comédie grecque*, and in Klein's *History of the Drama*, vol. ii. There is a good chapter also in Bergk's *LG.* iv. pp. 121–70.

and, according to the sensible Anon. scholiast on Comedy, born at Athens, though Suidas records various other opinions. He lived from Ol. 93 to Ol. 112, and died at the age of seventy-four in Chios. His son Stephanus brought out some of his plays. He began to write at the age of twenty, and is credited with the enormous number of 260 comedies, of which about 230 titles are still known. Though Meineke [1] has collected a good many examples of debased diction in his fragments, he was celebrated as a clear and elegant writer. Among various criticisms on tragic language, we have a good fragment from his *Poetry* on the contrasts of tragedy and comedy, which I quote below.[2] The *Proverbs* (Παροιμίαι) were cited by the Isocratic opponents of Aristotle as the comic counterpart of his collection of proverbs. It may even have been a satire on the philosopher. The titles of Antiphanes' plays are very various, including many mythological names, many historical personages and courtesans, as well as names of trades or professions, and of provinces and cities. But probably owing to the ostentation

[1] iii. 309.

[2] Meineke, iii. 105 :

. . . Μακάριόν ἐστιν ἡ τραγῳδία
ποίημα κατὰ πάντ', εἴ γε πρῶτον οἱ λόγοι
ὑπὸ τῶν θεατῶν εἰσιν ἐγνωρισμένοι,
πρὶν καί τιν' εἰπεῖν, ὥσθ' ὑπομνῆσαι μόνον
δεῖ τὸν ποιητήν. Οἰδίπουν γὰρ ἄν γε φῶ,
καὶ τἄλλα πάντ' ἴσασιν· ὁ πατὴρ Λάϊος,
μήτηρ Ἰοκάστη, θυγατέρες, παῖδες τίνες,
τί πείσεθ' οὗτος, τί πεποίηκεν; ἂν πάλιν
εἴπῃ τις Ἀλκμαίωνα, καὶ τὰ παιδία
πάντ' εὐθὺς εἴρηχ', ὅτι μανεὶς ἀπέκτονεν
τὴν μητέρ', ἀγανακτῶν δ' Ἄδραστος εὐθέως
ἥξει, πάλιν τ' ἄπεισι . . . .
ἔπειθ', ὅταν μηδέν (γε) δύνωντ' εἰπεῖν ἔτι,
κομιδῇ δ' ἀπειρήκωσιν ἐν τοῖς δράμασιν,
αἴρουσιν, ὥσπερ δάκτυλον, τὴν μηχανήν,
καὶ τοῖς θεωμένοισιν ἀποχρώντως ἔχει.
Ἡμῖν δὲ ταῦτ' οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλ' ἅπαντα δεῖ
εὑρεῖν, ὀνόματα καινά, τὰ διῳκημένα
πρότερον, τὰ νῦν παρόντα, τὴν καταστρόφην,
τὴν εἰσβολήν· ἂν ἕν τι τούτων παραλίπῃ,
Χρέμης τις, ἢ Φείδων τις, ἐκσυρίττεται·
Πηλεῖ δὲ ταῦτ' ἔξεστι καὶ Τεύκρῳ ποιεῖν

of Athenæus, who desired to quote as many various plays as possible, we seldom have more than one fragment, and never more than three, from any single piece, among the 900 lines which remain. Thus all possibility of judging his dramatic power is precluded.

§ 285. Three sons of Aristophanes are mentioned, *Araros*, *Philippus*, and *Nicostratos*, the first of whom contended in Ol. 101 with a play of his own, having already brought out his father's *Kokalos* and *Æolosikon* in earlier years (circ. Ol. 98). About the parentage of the others, scholars seem doubtful; the fragments of Nicostratos, which are confused strangely with those attributed to Philetærus, are the best. Passing by *Ephippus* and *Epigenes*, we come to *Eubulos*, the author of 104 pieces, and regarded as occupying a transition place between the Old and Middle Comedy, about the earlier half of the fourth century B.C. His subjects were chiefly satires of mythic fables and of tragic poets. His diction is very pure, and his verses seem to have been often plagiarised by other comic poets.

Anaxandrides of Camirus produced plays from Ol. 101, onward (Suidas' favourite epoch for these poets). He was reputed a man of rich and splendid life, as well as of a contemptuous and haughty temper, who destroyed his works when they were not successful. He was the author of sixty-five pieces. Aristotle frequently quotes him, and he is said to have first introduced the *παρθένων φθοραί*, so common in New Comedy. This invention is, however, also ascribed to Aristophanes. Anaxandrides is also said to have composed dithyrambs.

§ 286. *Alexis* was born at Thurii just before its destruction by the Lucanians, circ. B.C. 390, and came probably with his parents to Athens, where he was made a citizen. He was said to have lived 106 years, and to have been productive up to his death. In a fragment he mentions the marriage of Ptolemy Philadelphus (288 B.C.), and thus confirms this tradition. Though writing in the style of the Middle Comedy, he lived far into the period of the new, and is said to have been the uncle and master of Menander. We have no clearer picture of his mind and work than we have of Antiphanes, though fragments amounting to 1,000 lines of his 245 plays remain. He is

called by some the inventor of the stage *parasite*, owing to the importance of this character in his plays; but the picture of one has been above quoted from a fragment of Epicharmus, and seems to have been again drawn in the Old Comedy of Eupolis. The name may be due to Alexis, for Araros' play, in which it occurred, may be posterior to Alexis' early works. Attacks on the school of Plato are frequent in his fragments,[1] but we have more remarkable passages on the hetæræ.[2]

None of them are so clever as the fragments of *Epicrates* on Plato's school, and his picture of Lais in advancing years.[3] This poet was an Ambrakiot, and lived early in

[1] Meineke, iii. 421.

[2] Cf. frag. of the *Isostasion*, Meineke, iii. 422; also pp. 382, 451, 455, 468.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 365:

Γὰς μὲν ἄλλας ἔστιν αὐλούσας ἰδεῖν
αὐλητρίδας πάσας Ἀπόλλωνος νόμον,
· · · · Διὸς νόμον·
αὗται δὲ μόνον αὐλοῦσιν Ἱέρακος νόμον.
· · · · ·

Αὕτη δὲ Λαΐς ἀργός ἐστι καὶ πότις,
τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν ὁρῶσα πίνειν κἀσθίειν
μόνον· πεπονθέναι δὲ ταὐτά μοι δυκεῖ
τοῖς ἀετοῖς· οὗτοι γὰρ ὅταν ὦσιν νέοι,
ἐκ τῶν ὀρῶν πρόβατ' ἐσθίουσι καὶ λαγώς,
μετέωρ' ἀναρπάζοντες ὑπὸ τῆς ἰσχύος·
ὅταν δὲ γηράσκωσιν ἤδη τότε . . .
ἐπὶ τοὺς νεὼς ἵζουσι πειπῶντες κακῶς·
κἄπειτα τοῦτ' εἶναι νομίζεται τέρας.
καὶ Λαΐς ὀρθῶς γοῦν νομίζοιτ' ἂν τέρας·
αὕτη γὰρ ὁπότ' ἦν μὲν νεοττὸς καὶ νέα,
ὑπὸ τῶν στατήρων ἦν ἀπηγριωμένη,
εἶδες δ' ἂν αὐτῆς Φαρνάβαζον θᾶττον ἄν.
ἐπεὶ δὲ δόλιχον τοῖς ἔτεσιν ἤδη τρέχει,
τὰς ἁρμονίας τε διαχαλᾷ τοῦ σώματος,
ἰδεῖν μὲν αὐτὴν ῥᾴδιον ἐστι καὶ πτύσαι·
ἐξέρχεταί τε πανταχόσ' ἤδη πιομένη,
δέχεται δὲ καὶ στατῆρα καὶ τριώβολον,
προσίεται δὲ καὶ γέροντα καὶ νέον·
οὕτω δὲ τιθασὸς γέγονεν, ὥστ', ὦ φίλταται
τἀργύριον ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς ἤδη λαμβάνει.

p. 370: *A.* Τί Πλάτων
καὶ Σπεύσιππος καὶ Μενέδημος,
πρὸς τίσι νυνὶ διατρίβουσιν;

the period before us. It were tedious to repeat the same remarks on *Anaxilas*, and *Aristophon*, and *Cratinus* junior, and *Amphis:* all these are but names. Perhaps *Timocles*, the satirist of Demosthenes, deserves mention, as apparently the purest Attic writer, and the most pungent in style, of all the list. He is the only one of them whose scanty remains excite a strong regret that time has not spared us more of his poetry.

ποία φροντίς, ποῖος δὲ λόγος
διερευνᾶται παρὰ τοῖσιν;
τάδε μοι πινυτῶς, εἴ τι κατειδὼς
ἥκεις, λέξον, πρὸς γᾶς · · ·
B. ἀλλ' οἶδα λέγειν περὶ τῶνδε σαφῶς·
Παναθηναίοις γὰρ ἰδὼν ἀγέλην
μειρακίων
ἐν γυμνασίοις Ἀκαδημίας
ἤκουσα λόγων ἀφάτων ἀτόπων·
περὶ γὰρ φύσεως ἀφοριζόμενοι
διεχώριζον ζῴων τε βίον
δένδρων τε φύσιν λαχάνων τε γένη.
κᾆτ' ἐν τούτοις τὴν κολοκύντην
ἐξήταζον τίνος ἐστὶ γένους.
A. καὶ τί ποτ' ἄρ' ὡρίσαντο καὶ τίνος γένους
εἶναι τὸ φυτόν; δήλωσον, εἰ κάτοισθά τι.
B. πρώτιστα μὲν οὖν πάντες ἀναυδεῖς
τότ' ἐπέστησαν, καὶ κύψαντες
χρόνον οὐκ ὀλίγον διεφρόντιζον.
κᾆτ' ἐξαίφνης ἔτι κυπτόντων
καὶ ζητούντων τῶν μειρακίων
λάχανόν τις ἔφη στρογγύλον εἶναι,
ποίαν δ' ἄλλος, δένδρον δ' ἕτερος.
ταῦτα δ' ἀκούων ἰατρός τις
Σικελᾶς ἀπὸ γᾶς καπέπαρδ' αὐτῶν
ὡς ληρούντων.
A. ἦ που δεινῶς ὠργίσθησαν
χλευάζεσθαί τ' ἐβόησαν·
τὸ γὰρ ἐν λέσχαις ταῖσδε τοιαυτὶ
ποιεῖν ἀπρεπές.
B. οὐδ' ἐμέλησεν τοῖς μειρακίοις·
ὁ Πλάτων δὲ παρὼν καὶ μάλα πράως,
οὐδὲν ὀρινθείς, ἐπέταξ' αὐτοῖς
πάλιν . . .
ἀφορίζεσθαι τίνος ἐστὶ γένους·
οἱ δὲ διῄρουν.

His picture of Autocleides sitting like Orestes at the altar, surrounded by notorious courtesans, because he had despised their charms, suggests a brilliant and effective parody.[1]

As I said before, the enormous fertility of these poets compared with the small number of their victories—even Antiphanes and Alexis each won only about fifteen times—makes it probable that they intended their plays to be read, and fulfilled the office of the critical press in our days. This very condition would explain the slight permanent effect they produced in Greek literature. Like our newspapers, these plays were only intended for momentary purposes, and in the next generation their importance had passed away for all except historians and antiquaries. This, too, would account for their want of seriousness. They had retired from the agora of politics; they had not yet unclosed the secrets of domestic life, with which their successors charmed and impressed society. So they wandered in the streets and markets without certain aim, and drew from the outside mean and trivial phases of human character.

§ 287. We pass to the *New Comedy*, to which the grammarians assign the period from the extinction of Greek liberty by Philip to the rise of the Alexandrian school.[2] Indeed, the latest poets of this epoch composed their plays at Alexandria, as, for example, Machon, who is said to have instructed the grammarian Aristophanes in the history and nature of comedy.[3] Sixty-four of these writers were known, and many hundred plays, but we now possess only a volume of fragments,[4] which give us no better information than that afforded concerning the Middle Comedy. From the considerable body of Menander's fragments no vestige of a plot could be recovered, had not later critics given us some slight sketches, and had not the Roman comedians honestly told us how they had borrowed from him both plot and language. But even here the unfortu-

[1] Meineke, i. 432.

[2] *Circ.* 340–270 B.C.

[3] This Machon was also the author of a collection of anecdotes in elegant trimeter iambics, called χρεῖαι, and often cited by Athenæus.

[4] Meineke, vol. iv.

nate habit of filling up the incidents of the plot with scenes from a second Greek original has obscured our best source.

As in the case of the Middle Comedy, I shall not attempt an enumeration of the extant titles and fragments—a dry and fruitless task, and one in which the dull uniformity of moral platitudes, commonplace complaints of human troubles, and details of cookery, weary the modern student. But this uniformity is not altogether to be regarded as the vice of the New Comedy, but rather as the consequence of our fragments being either derived from Athenæus, who searched all this literature for the archæology of cooks and cookery, or from Stobæus', and other collections of moral sayings—a most unfortunate and worthless kind of citation, which never reproduced the dramatic or really characteristic points of a play, but selected those generalities which were suitable for random quotation.

§ 288. The general features of the New Comedy as compared with its forerunners, have been carefully described by many critics. The collection of facts will be found in Meineke, who is always instructive, even when his inferences are wrong. He rightly, however, points out the mistake of believing that these poets confined themselves to domestic life in their plots. Athenæus' quotations show that in Diphilus, for example, the cook and parasite—leading features in the Middle Comedy—were still prominent figures. The philosophers of the day, Epicurus, Zeno, and the rest, were still the constant butt of the dramatists. Mythological parody, and ridicule of the tragic poets, were not extinct; and, what is still stranger and very much overlooked, political attacks on living personages, not excepting Alexander the Great, were freely and boldly made, as can be shown from the extant fragments.[1] Thus all the permanent features of the Old Comedy were inherited through the Middle by the New; indeed, I am not sure that the political boldness of Philippides, who flourished about Ol. 120, in the days of Demetrius, can be paralleled anywhere save in the Old Comedy.

§ 289. Yet these things are forgotten on account of the increased importance of a certain kind of play, which had obtained

[1] This is specially noticed by Polybius, xiii. 13, as regards Archedicus.

little prominence in older days—the drama of domestic life, in which, as in the modern novel, love affairs were the almost universal subject. The Attic family, as may well be imagined, afforded little scope for variety of incidents, or for that large psychological study which makes the modern novel so important a branch of literature. We are told that Aristophanes, in one of his latest dramas, the *Kokalos*, had anticipated the staple device of his successors—the mishap of a respectable maiden, and her rehabilitation by marriage at the end of the piece. As seduction was well-nigh impossible, owing to the secluded habits of Greek maidens,[1] the poets had recourse to violence done in consequence of intoxication, and thus they made room for the *recognition* which would otherwise have been absurd. But we may well ask whether this sort of violence was at all more probable, and whether the basis of these plots was not only an offensive, but an impossible occurrence in ordinary Attic life. In the complications which follow we have certain general types repeated without much variety, and represented by fixed marks. There were two kinds of old men, the harsh, and the indulgent, father; two kinds of sons, the scapegrace and the sedate; two kinds of women, the injured maiden, who seldom appears, and the designing courtesan. The braggart captain, the time-serving parasite, and the knowing slave, who serves his young master or mistress, and outwits the elders—these make up the remainder of the characters.[2]

This is the sort of play which is known to us as a *New Comedy*, and which has made its impress on the world through the imitation of the Romans. When we hear it repeated that all these poets went back to Euripides as a model, and that he was the real founder of this drama of intrigue, and thus of genteel comedy—such a piece of criticism conveys to me no meaning.

[1] The seduction of a married woman is also unheard of in the New Comedy, and this should be insisted on, as some German historians have spoken of *Verführer* as occurring (Nicolai, i. 235). Thus the Attic public would not tolerate what the courtiers of Charles II. enjoyed and modern Frenchmen witness without revulsion.

[2] Apuleius mentions the Roman technical names: *leno perjurus, amator fervidus, servulus callidus, amica illudens, sodalis opitulator, miles præliator* (gloriosus), *parasitus edax, meretrix procax.*

The *style* of Euripides, in which Aristotle praises the peculiar secret of saying things clearly and elegantly with the plainest and commonest words, was certainly the model of the New Comedy. Hence Diphilus said that he would willingly hang himself if he could be certain of meeting Euripides. For to poets with little variety of plot, excellence of style was of the last importance, and made the difference of success or failure. But, so far as I can see, Euripides was no more a model for Menander than he was for Antiphanes or Alexis.[1] In style he was acknowledged a model not only to them, but to Aristophanes, their master.

§ 290. I will notice a few of the more important names among the sixty-four poets of this period, reserving Menander for the last.

Philemon of Soli or Syracuse appeared as a writer about Ol. 110,[2] and died at a very advanced age, in Ol. 129, 3. Fragments of fifty-six from his ninety plays are extant. He is not easily distinguishable from his son, the younger Philemon, to whom fifty-four were attributed. His Ὑποβολιμαῖος was said to be directly suggested by, and to have criticised, Aristophanes' *Kokalos.* The majority of Philemon's fragments, being preserved by Stobæus, are elegant, but not profound, reflections on the 'changes and chances of this mortal life.' In his *Philosophus* he ridiculed the Stoic sect,[3] which was not at all to the taste of the play-going Attic public. His plays

[1] The importance of the prologue in comedy can hardly be ascribed to his example, seeing that it was the natural resource for expounding the opening situation, and as such had been used by Æschylus. Moreover, in the absence of a *parabasis*, the poet could find no other means of communicating directly with his audience, as we see in Terence. The long debates between plaintiff and defendant, which Euripides loves, were distasteful to the latter comic poets.

[2] This has been recently proved by the discovery of a choragic inscription at Athens, recording a victory in 333 B.C., in which Philemon appears as the comic poet, and already an Athenian citizen of the deme Diomeia; cf. *Bull. de Corr. hellénique*, ii. 395.

[3] Cf. Meineke, iv. 29:

φιλοσοφίαν καινὴν γὰρ οὗτος φιλοσοφεῖ,
πείνην διδάσκει καὶ μαθητὰς λαμβάνει.
εἶς ἄρτος, ὄψον ἰσχάς, ἐπιπιεῖν ὕδωρ.

were used as models by Plautus.[1] He was constantly pitted against his younger contemporary Menander, and often defeated him, so that there was much jealousy between them, as sundry anecdotes testify. *Diphilus* of Sinope was a contemporary of Menander, and younger than Philemon. His intimacy with celebrated courtesans, and his frequent representation of them on the stage, remind us of Antiphanes and Alexis. As most of the extant fragments come from Athenæus, they are full of cookery, and these, together with the occurrence of some mythological titles, make his fragments appear quite similar in character to those of the Middle Comedy. Though the *Antiatticista* complains of sundry late words used by him, his style is pure and bright. His Κληρούμενοι was the model of Plautus' *Casina*, as we learn from the prologue. So also the lost *Commorientes* of Plautus was copied from the like play of Diphilus, and then by Terence in his *Adelphi*. The *Rudens* of Plautus was likewise due to a play of Diphilus. Our longest fragment (forty-one lines) is from the *Painter*, and describes a cook telling what sort of banquets he prepares for his various clients.

From *Hipparchus*, *Lynceus*, and *Archedicus* we have similar notes on cookery.

§ 291. More important was *Apollodorus* of Carystos (there were other poets of the name), from whom we have a long fragment on the philosophy of pleasure, which Epicurus was then advocating at Athens.[2] He is remarkable as having afforded Terence the models of two plays, the *Hecyra* and *Phormio*.[3] We may perhaps venture to offer a judgment on Apollodorus from the evidence afforded by these two plays. The *Phormio* is a very ingeniously constructed comedy with a double intrigue, which seems not due to any *contaminatio* by Terence. It is full of interesting passages of great merit as stage

[1] Particularly his Θησαυρός for the *Trinummus* and his Ἔμπορος for the *Mercator*.

[2] Cf. the similar long extract from the σύντροφοι of *Damoxenus* (seventy lines) in Meineke, iv. 530, and another more dramatic scene between an angry father and a slave in *Baton's* Συνεξαπατῶν, *ibid.* p. 502.

[3] The Greek title of the latter was Ἐπιδικαζομένη, according to Donatus' correction of Terence's Prologue. Cf. Meineke, i. p. 464.

scenes, though we perceive no regard whatever towards morals, and it is only the success or failure of knavery which determines approval or censure. The *Hecyra*, which found great difficulty in obtaining a hearing, is very inferior in power, the *soupirant* being a tearful and colourless youth, and his slave confidant stupid and tiresome. The really curious feature in the play is the honest courtesan, who sets herself to restore peace and harmony in the disturbed family, and reconcile her former lover with his new wife. This Bacchis is the *Dame aux Camélias* of ancient comedy, without the tragic points. She is appealed to by her lover's father to help him. She thinks more of the young man's future than of her own selfish ends. It marks, I think, a real novelty in the New, as compared to the Middle, Comedy, that a harlot should be thus glorified. For all through the Middle Comedy, and generally in the New, they were brought upon the stage with a full display of their moral ugliness.

Of *Philippides'* forty-four plays fifteen titles remain. There is nothing to add to what I have observed concerning him already, except that a *psephism* honouring his patriotism was found in the theatre at Athens in the excavations of 1862. Our principal interest in *Posidippus*, who came immediately after Menander, is the splendid sitting portrait statue of him, now in the Vatican at Rome, which represents him as a careworn, thoughtful philosopher, not without traces of humour between the lines.[1] *Demophilus* is only known by the record of Plautus, who took his *Wild Ass* for a model in his *Asinaria*.

§ 292. I will now close this barren enumeration, merely remarking that, owing to the likeness of subject and treatment, the same titles were as frequently used by different comic poets as we formerly noted common titles used in tragedy. We have *Adelphi*, *Epidicazomeni*, and *Synephebi*, and *Philadelphi*,

[1] There is an interesting protest against the tyranny of the Attic purists in his *frag. incert.* 2 :

> Ἑλλὰς μέν ἐστι μία, πόλεις δὲ πλείονες
> σὺ μὲν ἀττικίζεις, ἡνίκ' ἂν φωνὴν λέγῃς
> αὐτοῦ τίν', οἱ δ' Ἕλληνες ἑλληνίζομεν
> τί προσδιατρίβων συλλαβαῖς καὶ γράμμασιν
> τὴν εὐτραπελίαν εἰς ἀηδίαν ἄγεις ;

and *Anargyri*, and a host of other such names. The same rule applied to characters in the plays. It is one of the remarkable negligences of the New Comedy, that it did not seek to fix a peculiar and successful picture of character by giving it a fixed name, and so handing it down, as it were, with its trade-mark to posterity. The names of characters, *Simo*, *Chremes*, *Pamphilus*, *Davus*, *Syrus*, *Sostrata*, &c. were so indifferently applied, that the Roman imitators changed them without any care. They were like the ordinary names set to the figures in the social comedies which Mr. Du Maurier draws in *Punch*. These little sketches have indeed a great deal in common with the New Comedy. In both it is not the character, but the situation, not the person who speaks, but the thing said, which is the matter of importance. Hence, though the ordinary characters of society constantly reappear, and so produce uniformity of colour, they are not distinct individuals belonging to each class, and therefore not worth being noted by a special and exclusive name.[1]

§ 293. We may fitly close our chapter on Comedy with a notice of MENANDER, the acknowledged master and representative of the period. He was an Athenian by birth, the child of Hegesistrata and of Diopeithes, the general whom Demosthenes defended in his speech *On the Chersonese*. In the very year of this speech, 342 B.C., Menander was born. He was fortunate in obtaining the friendship of Epicurus, and probably of Theophrastus, in whose school psychological studies of character were prosecuted with much care. Critics who accept the extant *Characters* as Theophrastus' work, have compared its appearance in the days of Menander with the like association between the *Caractères* of La Bruyère and the comedies of Molière. The philosophic intercourse of his friends alternated, in Menander's case, with indulgence in all the pleasures of sense. He was exceedingly luxurious and devoted to women, so much so that his connection with Glycera is not less renowned than his intimacy with Epicurus. It is indeed the

[1] This is the case even in Menander's famous play of the *Superstitious Man* (Δεισιδαίμων). We happen to know that the leading character was called Pheidias; nevertheless, in none of the references to this play, and to its excellence as a psychological drawing, do we hear of 'the Pheidias of Menander.'

weakest point in Epicurus' system, that during his life, and while he was there to correct it, the lowest and most sensual interpretation was given to his doctrine of *Utility*. He called it Pleasure (ἡδονή), and his contemporaries took him at his word.

Menander brought out his first comedy the year of Demosthenes' and Hypereides' death (322 B.C.), and so a new genius in poetry arose to survive the last great masters in prose. But it was no new kind of poetry; it was only a perfection of the already fashionable form. Doubtless the friend of Theophrastus studied the tracts of Aristotle on poetry, and we know that Menander's drama was the very kind of play which corresponded to Aristotle's theory. The poet won his first prize in 321 B.C. with the Ὀργή, and from that time brought out in rapid succession 108 plays. He enjoyed the favour, and suffered from the suspicion, of the autocrats who then ruled Athens, but doubtless found means to conciliate those in power, as he was essentially a courtier, and fond of the splendour of high society. He was drowned while bathing in the Peiræus at the age of fifty-two. The Athenians erected him a tomb near the cenotaph of Euripides, the older poet whom he most loved and imitated.

Our information on the plots of Menander is scanty, but sufficient for a general estimate. I am not aware that Plautus ever distinctly mentions him as his model, and perhaps to the older and ruder Roman master the plays of Philemon offered greater facilities for transference to a foreign stage.[1] On the other hand, Terence, living in a more polished circle, was evidently anxious to produce the acknowledged master of style, Menander, in Roman dress, but found the amount of incident so insufficient, that he ordinarily worked up two plots, or scenes from two plays of Menander, in each of his comedies. We know this to be the case even in the *Eunuchus*,[2] and in the *Self-*

[1] The *Stichus* and *Bacchides* are, however, said to be derived from the *Philadelphi* and *Double Deceiver* (δὶς ἐξαπατῶν) of Menander.

[2] Cf. the Prologue, v. 30, on his obligations to the κόλαξ. We learn from an old note on Persius, *Sat.* v. 161, sq., where a passage is adapted from Menander's *Eunuchus*, that Terence also changed all the names of the characters.

Tormentor (ἑαυτὸν τιμωρούμενος), which are professedly based on the like-named plays of Menander. The grammarian Ælius Donatus, however (in his notes on Terence), and Aulus Gellius[1] have saved for us sketches (with extracts) of three arguments: the *Treasure*, the *Apparition*,[2] and the πλόκιον.[3] The last story was treated by other dramatists, and much resembles that of the *Hecyra*.

These plots, such as we have them, offer so few distinctive features, they are so homogeneous with the plots borrowed from Philemon, Diphilus, and Apollodorus, that we may safely assert Menander's superiority did not consist in ingenuity of invention. The secret of his success was in his more elegant handling of the materials and devices common to other poets. He must have stood to them in the same sort of relation that Terence did to other Roman dramatists. A critic tells us that Philemon worked up his dialogue with such care as to be superior for reading purposes, and that on the stage only could Menander be fully appreciated. This remark does not agree with the fact that Menander was in after days chosen for the reading lessons of growing boys and girls. But there is so much of a calm gentlemanly morality about his fragments; he is so excellent a teacher of the ordinary world-wisdom—resignation, good temper, moderation, friendliness—that we can well understand this popularity. He reflected, if not the best, at least the most polite and refined life of the age; and he reflected it so accurately as to draw from an admirer the exclamation, 'O life, O Menander, which of you has imitated the other?'

We have no means of judging more closely the poet's economy. We know that he reproduced the prologue of Euripides so accurately, that he even used the various personages—from protagonists to allegorical figures—to which the

[1] *Noct. Att.* ii. 23.

[2] The φάσμα of Menander had been produced at Rome by Luscius Lavinius, to which Terence alludes in the prologue of his *Eunuchus*. In a note Donatus gives a brief sketch of the story.

[3] Whether a proper name, or the *necklace* by which the maiden Pamphila is recognised, remains uncertain.

tragic prologues had been entrusted. The very numerous fragments which are still incompletely collected, even by Meineke, are partly from Stobæus and Athenæus, partly from scholiasts or other Greek authors, partly from the notes of Donatus on Terence. Thus the notes on the prologue of the Latin *Andria* tell us of the openings of that play and the *Perinthia*, from which Terence patched together his comedy, and in some dozen other passages Donatus gives the Greek original for a Latin phrase. The Γεωργός, the Φάσμα, the Θησαυρός, the Μισούμενος, the Περικειρομένη, the Μισογύνης are all noted as celebrated plays. So was the *Superstitious Man* (δεισιδαίμων), from which Plutarch is supposed to have borrowed in his tract of the subject.[1] To this the *Priestess* afforded the female parallel. Perhaps the most brilliant was the *Thais*, in which the manners and character of that personage were painted with thorough experience as well as genius. The opening words of the prologue are preserved.[2] There is a good specimen of his gentle pessimism in the *Thesphorumena*.[3] I quote below a few more fragments.[4]

[1] Meineke, iv. p. 100.

[2] Ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν ἄειδε τοιαύτην, θεα,
θρασεῖαν, ὡραίαν τε καὶ πιθανὴν ἅμα,
ἀδικοῦσαν, ἀποκλείουσαν, αἰτοῦσαν πυκνά,
οὐδενὸς ἐρῶσαν, προσποιουμένην δ' ἀει.

[3] Mein. p. 134.

[4] *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 149:

Ὤιμην ἐγὼ τοὺς πλουσίους, ὦ Φανία,
οἷς μὴ τὸ δανείζεσθαι πρόσεστιν, οὐ στένειν
τὰς νύκτας, οὐδὲ στρεφομένους ἄνω κάτω
οἴμοι λέγειν, ἡδὺν δὲ καὶ πρᾷόν τινα
ὕπνον καθεύδειν, ἀλλὰ τῶν πτωχῶν τινα.
νυνὶ δὲ καὶ τοὺς μακαρίους καλουμένους
ὑμᾶς ὁρῶ πονοῦντας ἡμῖν ἐμφερῆ.
ἆρ' ἐστὶ συγγενές τι λύπη καὶ βίος;
τρυφερῷ βίῳ σύνεστιν, ἐνδόξῳ βίῳ
πάρεστιν, ἀπόρῳ συγκαταγηράσκει βίῳ.

Ibid. p. 211:

Τοῦτον εὐτυχέστατον λέγω,
ὅστις θεωρήσας ἀλύπως, Παρμένων,
τὰ σεμνὰ ταῦτ' ἀπῆλθεν, ὅθεν ἦλθεν, ταχύ,
τὸν ἥλιον τὸν κοινόν, ἄστρ', ὕδωρ, νέφη,
πῦρ· ταῦτα κἂν ἑκατὸν ἔτη βιῷς ἀεὶ

Attacks on marriage, assertions of the supremacy of Fortune, advices on good manners—these, expressed with the greatest neatness and clearness, and in the new Attic dialect of the better classes of his day, made Menander the delight of succeeding generations. The purists indeed attacked him for deviations from the strict laws of Attic speech; but more sympathetic critics extolled his style as far superior even to that of Demosthenes. The contrast to the latter was indeed remarkable, and brings out one leading feature in the diction of the New Comedy—its utter avoidance of rhetoric. To ears wearied with the periods of Isocrates, Demosthenes, and all the herd of their inferior followers, the ease and natural grace of Menander must have been truly fascinating. Even Aristotle's uncouthness must have been a pleasant relief.

§ 294. Accordingly Menander was widely studied. Aristophanes of Byzantium commented specially upon him, echoed by Didymus. The rhetor Alciphron, in the second century A.D., composed an elegant correspondence between the poet and his mistress Glycera, in which he utilised the plays. Plutarch drew out a comparison of Aristophanes and Menander, in which he depreciates the wild exuberance of the older poet and extols the elegance, the terseness, and the literary finish of his later rival. Moral gnomes, expressed in single verses, are still extant in collections amounting to 750 lines, many of them no doubt spurious. These, and the first score of the fragments of uncertain plays (in Meineke's collection), are the most characteristic of Menander's philosophy.

We are told that his plays were known in Byzantine days,

> ὄψει παρόντα, κἂν ἐνιαυτοὺς σφόδρ' ὀλίγους,
> σεμνότερα τούτων ἕτερα δ' οὐκ ὄψει ποτέ.
> Πανήγυριν νόμισόν τιν' εἶναι τὸν χρόνον,
> ὃν φημι, τοῦτον ἢ 'πιδημίαν, ἐν ᾧ
> ὄχλος, ἀγορά, κλέπται, κυβεῖαι, διατριβαί·
> ἂν πρῶτον ἀπίῃς καταλύσεις, βελτίονα
> ἐφόδι' ἔχων ἀπῆλθες ἐχθρὸς οὐδενί·
> ὁ προσδιατρίβων δ' ἐκοπίασεν ἀπολέσας,
> κακῶς τε γηρῶν ἐνδεής του γίγνεται,
> βεμβόμενος ἐχθροὺς εὗρ', ἐπεβουλεύθη ποθεν,
> οὐκ εὐθανάτως ἀπῆλθεν ἐλθὼν εἰς χρόνου.

and they were certainly used by Eustathius when composing his commentary on Homer (circ. 1160 A.D.). Leone Allacci even speaks of twenty-four comedies being extant at Constantinople in the seventeenth century. And this is not inconsistent with the account of Demetrios Chalkondylas, who says that the MSS. of Menander and Philemon, together with the erotic poems of the old lyric poets, were destroyed by Byzantine emperors at the instigation of zealot monks, who desired to replace them with the effusions of Gregory Nazianzen. A stray copy might easily survive such a persecution. But as yet all search for the plays of Menander in Greek convents has been unavailing.[1]

I confess to greater regret for the splendid old lyrists, Alcæus, Sappho, Mimnermus, than for this later model of exquisite style. His plays would have been excellent for school reading; they would have inspired endless imitations among the moderns; they would have shown us what was the best and purest literature which the Attic decadence was able to produce. But no modern critic would have ventured to endorse the judgment of Plutarch, and rank him anywhere on a par with, not to say above, Aristophanes. Both poets were *primi inter pares*, standing out among contemporaries not recognised as inferior till the verdict of posterity was added to the doubtful judgment of their own age. But the men of Aristophanes' day were indeed giants; those of Menander only showed how strong and thorough was the culture which in art and literature outlived the decadence of the nation.

§ 294. With Menander closes the classical age of poetry in Greece. Shortly after his death, the national centre of gravity, as regards learning, shifted to Alexandria, and there the latest poets

[1] A fragment copied years ago by Tischendorf from a very old MS. in the East, has been lately published by Cobet in the *Mnemosyne*, and is discussed in the eleventh volume of *Hermes* by Gomperz, and by Wilamowitz-Möllendorf. It turns out to be an additional scrap of the Δεισιδαίμων, and Wilamowitz endeavours to patch it up with the remaining fragments into a scene. But this combination is doubtful, and we still have no remnant of Menander's *dramatic* art, though we know so much about his style and about his philosophy.

of the New Comedy brought out their plays. Nor do we hear of any regrets at the transference. The poetry of the Alexandrian age was not without flashes of genius, but on the whole it has not maintained the standard of Attic culture. Whenever a particular poet, such as Apollonius or Theocritus, seemed worthy to be ranked among the mightier dead, I have exceeded my plan, and have spoken of him briefly in connection with the corresponding form of classical poetry. The criticism of Alexandrian grammarians has constantly occupied us in connection with Homer and the other poets whom they emended and expounded. But to write a history of Alexandrian literature is a task of a different kind from that which I have undertaken, and I therefore remand it to some future day, or to some abler hand than mine. The social life of the Greeks under Alexander and the Diadochi yet remains to be written, and for that purpose the voluminous remains of the epoch afford the most interesting materials; but this too is a huge subject which deters the serious student by its vastness and its intricacy.

But in a companion volume I have traced the history of Greek prose literature within the same classical limits.

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